Civil Society in Authoritarian Regimes
Government Policy Towards NGOs and NGOs Responses in Georgia
in 1994-2012

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Abstract

The research is dedicated to analyse the relationship between the civil society groups and the two authoritarian regimes in Georgia. Throughout the world the role of third sector has always been actively discussed. Many country cases such as the Ukraine, Poland and Serbia have a lot of research dedicated to the analysis of the relationship of civil society groups and authoritarian systems. However, in case of Georgia there has not been done such kind of research and for this reason my research paper will provide a new findings and create a fundamental basis for comparative analysis of Georgian case with other countries. The research used qualitative method of semi-structured interviews with 9 key-informants. The empirical findings are divided into two major parts as the period of research is from 1994 to 2012. First part of the findings is dedicated on analysing the relationship between civil society groups and the Shevardnadze government. The second part is dedicated to the Saakashvili government, which succeeded previous regime in 2003. The findings show that the relationship between the civil society groups and the two authoritarian regimes was hostile. Civil society groups in forms of NGOs were major opposition power against both authoritarian regimes. Regardless of numerous attempts from both regimes to limit the power, the NGOs were very strong and managed to challenge the authoritarian regimes resulting in peaceful power transition in both cases. Opposing aims and goals of state and NGOs made it impossible for the two sides of the conflict to avoid hostile relations and establish more cooperative relationship.
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List of Abbreviations

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation
CS- Civil Society
GYLA- Georgian Young Lawyers Association
ISFED- The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy
EU- European Union
CEE- Central Eastern Europe
ISAR- Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia
DCFTA- Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
1. Introduction

In today’s world, the importance of the third sector is increasingly high throughout the world it is evident that civil society groups in form of non-governmental organizations are taking huge a part in the process of helping society in removing authoritarian regimes. Many cases including in post-soviet countries like Ukraine, Poland and Serbia have shown that NGOs are often on the front lines fighting against authoritarian regimes. NGOs played a very important role in challenging authoritarian regimes and bringing an end to their terror (Nodia, 2005). However, no research has been done on the relationship analysis between the NGOs and authoritarian regimes in Georgia. This research will contribute to broadening of the knowledge on the state - third sector relationship in Georgia. Additionally, the empirical findings could contribute to the comparative analysis of relationship between the civil society groups and authoritarian regimes in various countries. Numerous countries are still in the important phase of development and they are trying to eliminate old soviet authoritarian means of repression, terror and fighting freedom of speech and move forward towards further democratic improvement. Georgia as one of the countries, with a short history of independence is a good case for analysing the role of NGOs in supporting the development of democratic path from the authoritarian regimes.

Collapse of the Soviet Union and creation of new independent countries had a huge impact on the world as it was a decisive moment when millions of people in numerous countries were given a new hope and opportunity to direct their countries towards democratic development. Thus analysis of Georgian case, where people have been trying to change authoritarian regimes with new ideology based on freedom, equality, and justice could be used for a broader understanding of what people in post-soviet countries have gone through.

Between the years 1994-2012 Georgian experienced two different authoritarian regimes one followed by the other. It was exactly from the period 1994 when the first NGOs began working in Georgia and from this date analysis of the NGO-state relationship is possible. The first authoritarian regime under the rule of Eduard Shevardnadze, which took power by coup d’état and removed legitimately chosen president from the office, lasted up until 2003, when after a massive rallies the regime
was forced to resign and peaceful power transition occurred through “Rose Revolution”. The period was very instable as it was the first steps of Georgia since its independence from the Soviet rule. The second regime, which took power after the “Rose Revolution” was mainly made up of ex-NGO members with the leadership of Mikheil Saakhashvili, who after the first few progressive years turned into a bloody authoritarian ruler. The relationship between NGO representatives and the ex-NGO members from the new government was changing drastically up until the year 2012, when once again the authoritarian government was forced to give up the power after the loss in the parliamentary elections.

The empirical findings will provide new information on the various policies used by the two regimes towards the CS/NGOs and at the same time provide information on the reactions of the third sector on these policies. Georgian civil society groups after the collapse of Soviet Union had a very similar characteristics as civil society groups from CEE countries, where this associations have become the fundamental resistance to the authoritarian rule and have dedicated a lot of energy and commitment to become closer to the western liberalism (Chandhoke, 2007). A lot of work has been dedicated to the theories explaining the relationship between the civil society and the state. My theoretical framework will be based on the perception of Popper, Dahl and Tocqueville as the empirical findings at the end will suggest if their theories are applicable on the Georgian case.

My research intends to divide the period of analysis into a two-part structure. Considering that in the above-mentioned period, there were two authoritarian regimes established in Georgia one following the other, the research includes analysis of how the NGOs managed to adapt themselves to these two systems and challenge them in such way that at the end both of these regimes were eliminated. The first period of analysis is from 1994-2003, this was the years when Shevardnadze’s authoritarian regime was ruling country and it was full of injustice as well as every government action was based on violence, torture and corruption (Key-informant 5, personal communication, January 16, 2018). The second period of analysis is post-revolutionary period from 2003-2012, will be dedicated to the relationship of NGOs and the following regime of Saakashvili, which was mainly made up of ex-NGO members, in the beginning, had acted as a follower of liberal democracy, but soon it had turned into the nearly exact analogue of the previous regime.
The analysis will show the difference between the two regimes with their authoritarian methods and their attitudes towards the civil society groups. The research will provide information on how the NGOs had managed to adapt to the two different authoritarian regimes and put pressure on both of the governments to avoid rigged elections and suppression on the opposition. This period has shown a lot of important changes in the country and the events, which will be analysed in the research have acquired a lot of attention both from internal and external actors in the international community.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Analysis of relations between the civil society and authoritarian regimes, which my research intends to follow, is closely linked with the work of Karl Raimund Popper. The theory of Popper considers open society to be base for the creation of liberal democracy and challenge to authoritarianism. In specificity analysis is dedicated to distinguishing an open society from the closed one and explore both of them in connection with the democratic development. Popper considers closed society as a base for authoritarian regimes and highly criticizes it considering as a primary source of challenge to democracy and for this reason he assesses it as a fundamental part of totalitarianism. On the other hand, the open society is regarded as a progressive idea and a key to liberal democracy, since it is based on the assumption of freedom of united intellectual society, who has a possibility to think and discuss the important political issues and as a result control and limit the government actions. For Popper civil society is the sole criteria and no other factors such as a market are given any value in establishing liberal democracy. Popper identified open society as an association, which was based on rational thinking, analysis, criticism of individuals unions, which created a liberal environment and limited government from turning into authoritarian regimes (Vernon, 1976). Popper considers civil society a source of resistance against authoritarian regimes. Analysis of Popper is directly linked with my research as it provides a substantial base to consider that the relationship between the civil society groups and authoritarian regimes will always be full of hostility as the author states that
civil society is made up of progressive and rational thinkers who limit the governments from turning into authoritarian regimes.

Tocqueville has a similar perception on the civil society-state relationship. There is a higher possibility of governments turning into authoritarian regimes when there are a limited control and scrutiny from the civil society groups. Associations of rational thinkers and scrutinizers of the government are very important for avoiding a tyranny of the majority in a democracy. Government and powerful groups tend to move towards power abuse when they are not controlled and challenged by various associations and groups of society. Along with institutional restrictions to avoid despotism, huge importance is given to social structure and activities. Educated individuals with the belief of interdependence gather together into associations and groups, which ensure that despotism and individual priorities do not dominate. Freedom of expression and continuous involvement of the masses in the decision-making is a guarantee for a liberal democratic rule. Associations and groups where individuals can discuss and argue for government decisions and get involved in the process is a source of education for the society. People learn how to defend their right and express their opinions on various matters and this process is in direct connection with the development of democracy. In the absence of associations and mutual cooperation, there is a danger of individuals pushing forward their personal priorities and increasing chances of establishing tyranny (Tocqueville, 2002). As stated civil society groups are a guarantee to ensure liberal democratic development. The relationship between the authoritarian regimes and the civil society groups cannot be cooperative due to the fundamental difference in the goals of these two actors. While governments tend to move towards power expansion, the civil society groups tend to resist and limit the state in becoming powerful enough to disregard the society.

Analogously to Tocqueville and Popper, Dahl has a very similar opinion and states that a strong society is the fundamental basis for ensuring liberal democratic government and limiting government attempts to become tyrannical. The idea of the examination is that social interaction and civic involvement is the fundamental idea of restraining groups from turning into tyrannical rulers. External scrutiny and monitoring of state actions from the civil society groups is the key to controlling the individuals to be respectful and considerable of other groups and vice versa. The idea of institutional checks and balances cannot guarantee that the majority will not exploit and use power to its own advantage. More attention must be dedicated to social structure and
arrangements, meaning that the society has to have an opportunity to join civil society groups where rational thinking and government criticism is possible and this will result in ensuring equal treatment from the state. A society with the ability to control and freedom of expression is the guarantee of liberal democratic rule within the country. Polyarchy is the system, which can evade autocratic rule and despotism. Mass participation, freedom of speech, external scrutiny and civic engagement are the main concepts of the polyarchic system necessary to ensure equality and avoid the tyrannical rule of any groups (Dahl, 1956).

All three authors similarly make a clear point on the civil society-state relationship and define the role of civil society groups as vital instrument to control governments. These theoretical perceptions are closely linked with my empirical findings, as I will be exploring what type of relationship there was between the NGOs and two authoritarian regimes. Other country cases have clearly confirmed the views of Dahl, Popper and Tocqueville and that is why I would like to relate to these theories on the Georgian case. Empirical findings from my research will provide new information by which I will examine whether the theories Dahl, Popper and Tocqueville can be applied on the relationship of the NGOs and the two authoritarian regimes in Georgia.

2.2 Civil society and Authoritarian regimes in the CEE

There are many publications discussing the role of CS/NGOs in the fight against authoritarian regimes in various CEE countries. Following I examine the CEE region and more specifically Polish case and afterwards continue on with Serbian and Ukrainian cases where the civil society groups were considered as a primary source of opposition in the fight against the authoritarian regimes. As the literature review will show in various countries civil society groups were the main power of opposition that limited the excessive power of the governments. Countries described in the literature review seem to support the accounts of Popper, Dahl and Tocqueville on the characteristics of the relationship between the civil society and regimes in terms of conflict and at the same time they highlight the importance of civil society and NGOs in the collapse of the authoritarian regimes.
Emergence and strengthening of civil society organizations in Central Eastern Europe were directly linked with reforms of Gorbachev, which intended to remove strong censorship and introduce transparency in the Soviet states. As soon as these reforms were introduced the civil society groups were able to begin their fight for the power transition. The reinstitution process and fight against the regime had several stages, as the civil society groups needed time to strengthen and increase their popularity (Weigle & Butterfield, 1992). The events that ended communist reign in Central Eastern European countries was a sign of rebirth and strengthening of civil society groups as major opposition powers against authoritarian regimes. These groups sometimes in form of trade unions or various associations fought against communist authoritarianism and demanded freedom of speech, respect for individual rights and political liberty. Many country cases from this region have shown that the rallies and protests organized by the civil society groups were the fundamental base for ending authoritarian regimes (Chandhoke, 2007).

The role of “Solidarnost” as a civil society movement was phenomenal in the CEE during the communist era. A workers trade union had slowly turned into a massive civil society movement, which in a period of 10 years actively challenged the Polish authoritarian regime and in 1989 brought an end to it. It was a unique social movement for several reasons. Firstly, “Solidarnost” was the first of its kind that was created in the Soviet bloc. Poland was the first case for civil society union directly challenging government and openly demanding respect for human rights, transparency, civic engagement and freedom of speech. “Solidarnost” was a phenomenal union as it managed to unite millions of people, who had different ideas, demands and views towards various strategies and aspects on how the organisation was run. Strong determination for democratic institutions, free speech and end for authoritarianism had united all these different individuals into one strong civil society, which by using peaceful approaches managed to bring an end to the communist regime (Mason, 1989).

The period starting in 1989 was the moment when civil society re-established itself the Central Eastern European Countries and began fighting against the socialist rule. This phenomenon was very important, as it was the base for the collapse of authoritarian regimes, which were brought upon by the long-term Soviet rule. It was exactly the civil society groups who brought new energy and determination to move away from old authoritarian regimes towards western liberal values. Polish case clearly shows how civil society directly challenged the authoritarian rule and after a difficult
and long battle managed to achieve a peaceful power transition. Creation of civil society was a continuation of the fight of dissidents, who have been suppressed and purged for many years. The aim of civic engagement was freedom, respect for human rights, democracy and transparency. This specific period is a great example for analysing the power of civil society against authoritarian regimes (European Alternatives, 2014).

The period of 1989 was a decisive moment in the history of Poland, as the civil society had managed to finally achieve victory based on strong union and firm attitude against the Soviet authoritarian rule. For many years suppressed dissidents and fighters for freedom had managed to evolve and unite into one strong civil society movement, which was powerful enough to stand firm against and bring the end to the existing regime, which was repressive and authoritarian (Brinton, 2002). The Case of Poland was one of the examples of re-emergence of civil society groups globally. As time passed more organized and specifically defined organisations such as the NGOs were developed which dedicated their work on monitoring various democratic values within the countries (Dvorakova, 2008).

In Serbia authoritarian regime of Milosevic, which lasted for 10 years, has fought against democracy, human rights, equality and freedom. The country had become in a severe political and economic condition and the only opportunity to challenge the system and bring authoritarianism to end came from opposition and strong NGO activity. The opposition parties were weak, did not cooperate and their ideological base was mainly nationalist, which supported an expansion of Serbian power in its neighbouring region and gave little importance demands for more democracy, transparency and human rights. On the other hand, many NGOs have begun actively working to demand freedom of speech, the release of political prisoners, peace and more democratic environment. Such demands attracted more attention from the society and many people became actively involved in civil society groups. The role of civil society groups in the forms of NGOs was vital in eliminating the authoritarian regime. There were two main directions of NGO activity. First, was “Otpor” a student NGO, which was responsible for mass mobilisations of young members of society in the streets and protesting the authoritarian actions of the Milosevic regime by various shows and satirical performances. Rallies and performances had gained a lot of attention all around the country and motivated many individuals to join “Otpor”. Second fundamental NGO was called “the Centre for Free Elections and Democracy”
which aimed to avoid rigged elections by using parallel counting of votes and monitoring of election processes. Such kind of active involvement from the NGOs had affected the union of the opposition powers and together they had a direct influence on the democratization process and end of Milosevic regime (Bieber, 2003). “Otpor”, which had clearly defined strategies and was very well organised by students swiftly managed to expand its influence and popularity throughout the country. One of the successful characteristics of the movement was the dissolution of leadership within the group and introduction of equal power sharing, which allowed the movement to always have active decision makers regardless of some members being imprisoned and persecuted. Due to the leaderless system of the student movement, the government secret police was unable to weaken the group by imprisonments and intimidation. Quick thinking and ability of networking allowed “Otpor” to become one of the biggest and strongest movements, which had a fundamental role in bringing the end to the regime of Milosevic (Sandford, 2000).

In a country, with no united opposition, freedom of speech and strong suppressive secret police, “Otpor” with in cooperation with other NGO managed to pressurize the government and limit its undemocratic activities. Due to the frequent NGO scrutiny, the government was forced to admit local election losses to the opposition powers and soon it became clear that the victory over the authoritarian regime was inevitable. “Otpor” had very clear strategies in choosing the presidential elections, as the correct timing for the movement to act and state demands which where very popular among the society. Request for free elections, freedom of speech and depoliticized education system motivated general society to join “Otpor” and various NGO movements, which resulted in peaceful power transition (Nikolayenko, 2013).

Another similar case where authoritarian government change is highly attributed to the NGO activity is in the case of Ukraine. A decade rule of Leonid Kuchma came to end in 2004 when the pro-western opposition with the help of NGOs managed to expose the government in rigging the elections and began massive rallies resulting in a revolution. NGOs had a huge importance in the events that took place during “Orange Revolution” as they participated in mobilising people and providing objective information on various government violations. NGO actions had serious impact on the government image and its power, which resulted in limiting government opportunities to openly rig elections and oppress opposition powers. George Soros, an open supporter of strong civil society, provided a huge amount of financial support to various NGOs
including “New Choice 2004” and “Freedom of Choice” so they could fight the authoritarian regime and bring it to end. Additionally, there were many other NGOs such as National Democratic Institute, Pora and National Endowment for Democracy, which had divided their roles and responsibilities in such way that all activities were directly challenging the attempts of the state to maintain authoritarian power. Among the strategies were parallel vote counting-exit polls, close election process monitoring and arrangement of mass youth protests by Pora. The western supported NGOs played a huge role in the fight against authoritarian Kuchma regime, as they were responsible for election process monitoring, arranging peaceful rallies and exposing illegal government actions to the people (Wilson, 2006).

It is argued that an active and strong civil society is one of the vital aspects of creating a strong democratic country. Strong civil society is an instrument of conciliation that establishes close links between the government and the society. Arguments for support are visible in the example of various countries such as Ukraine, where even today various NGOs are trying to fight for civil rights and challenge censorship and pressure from the governments. Many historical events support the argument on the importance of NGOs as source of opposition against authoritarian regimes. The hostile actions of NGOs against the government using excessive use of power often resulted in peaceful power transition (Von Sydow, 2013). Strong civil society is one of the fundamental components needed for a country to reach democratic consolidation. Strong civil society limits government from using excessive power and promotes democratic development. Democratic consolidation and liberal values were always in close relations with an active and strong civil society (Bernard, 1993).

3.Methodology

3.1. Conceptualisation

Civil society - “The realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules” (Diamond, 1994:5)
Non-governmental organizations - “Private Organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services or undertake community development” (World Bank, 1995:13)

Democracy - “important public decisions on questions of law and policy depend, directly, or indirectly, upon public opinion, expressed both formally and informally” (Weale, 1999:14)

Both Georgian governments in the period of 1994-2012 are defined as authoritarian regimes based on Robert Bedeski’s understanding “a theory and a system of government customarily linked with dictatorship, in contrast to democracy. It is a principle based on obedience to authority and opposes autonomy of individuals in thought and action.” (Bedeski, 1: 91)

3.2. Subject of Research and Justification

As the literature review has shown a lot of research has been done on the analysis of the relationship between the CS/NGO and authoritarian regimes. However, there was no such research done in case of Georgia. Considering that Georgia is one of the transitional countries that have had similar characteristics and history as other countries, it is worth to analyse what the relationship was between the CS/NGOs and authoritarian regimes in this country. The empirical findings will allow for deeper understanding of the specific situation of Georgia and provide information, which can possibly be used for comparative analysis with other countries.

The review has already shown that in case of Ukraine and Serbia, there has been a very close link between the activities of “Otpor” and “Pora”. Basically, creation of “Pora” was based on the idea of “Otpor” in Serbia. Such kind findings show that these countries had many similarities and interdepended links concerning civil society groups and authoritarian regimes. Thus, empirical findings of the Georgian case will provide new information on the CS/NGO-state relationship and create possibility for deeper study of comparative analysis between above-mentioned countries.

The empirical findings will clearly show how government policies can influence on the third sector activity and relationship. It is important to observe how authoritarian
regimes regard CS/NGOs and what influences these governments in various policy formulations. The Georgian case will show what reasons stood behind the policies that the authoritarian regimes chose to use towards CS/NGOs and how the third sector responded to these challenges.

3.3. Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question of the thesis is the following: What was the relationship (understood as government policies and NGOs responses to them) between the CS/NGOs and the two authoritarian regimes of Georgia in the period of 1994-2012?

The hypothesis of the research is: The relationship between the CS/NGOs and the authoritarian regimes was mostly hostile and there was only limited cooperation throughout the period of 1994-2012.

3.4. Method of Data Collection

My research is based on a qualitative method – case study, where data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews include 9 individuals, who have had a direct connection with NGOs activities in Georgian between the years 1994 and 2012. Use of the qualitative research method is based on the fact that my research requires thorough information on the role of the NGOs in fighting authoritarian regimes in the given period. The thesis is based on a single-case study method with multiple units of analysis specifically analysing the relationship between the civil society and the two authoritarian regimes in Georgia. As there have been a lot of researches on various countries and not in case of Georgia it is relevant to examine how the way towards democracy have been developing in this country. Since we have information on other country cases with similar characteristics, Georgia can be considered as a typical case (Yin, 2002). The choice of semi-structured interviews with key-informants will give me the opportunity to retrieve the maximum amount of information with the minimum possibility of leaving behind any valuable evidence that can support verification of my hypothesis.
The interviews took place both in Hungary and in Georgia. The interviewees included both members of NGOs and government representatives, who have actively worked in the fight against authoritarian regimes during the period of 1994-2012, which the research intends to analyse. Members of several NGOs, which have a long historical background in Georgia among them, are Open Society Foundation, Transparency International, KMARA, ISFED and GYLA, were among the interviewees. Primary sources of information will help determine what type of relationship was between the non-governmental organisation sector and the two authoritarian governments and what was the role of non-governmental organizations in bringing end to both regimes. The interview questionnaire is included in the annex section of the research.

3.5. Operationalization

Various level and types of interactions are used as indicators of the relationship between the NGOs and authoritarian regimes. Indicators could show that the interaction included two opposite poles from limited cooperation to immense hostility. Mutual support and co-working could be attributed to cooperative nature of relations between the two actors. Scrutiny, criticism and competitive nature could be linked with hostile relations, which in most of the period was visible between the NGOs and authoritarian regimes.

Indicators of hostility from the side of the state are censorship, limitation, threats, and barricades that government uses against the third sector. On the other hand, from the side of NGOs hostility means a high level of scrutiny, criticism and mass information campaign intending to mobilize people against the government, which disregards democratic values and promotes authoritarian rule. The empirical findings will provide clear information on the relationship of the NGOs and authoritarian regimes based on the predefined indicators.

Variable 1: Cooperation

Values of variables 1: High/Low level of cooperation

The indicators of level 1 of variable 1 (High level of cooperation):

1. Frequent discussions on various topics.
2. Regular participation of NGOs in decision-making.

The indicators of Level 1 of variable 2 (Low level of cooperation):
1. Isolation from discussions.
2. Limited considerations of recommendations during decision-making.

Variable 2: State Openness
Values of Variable 2: High/Low level of openness

The indicators of level 1 of variable 2 (high level of openness):
1. Frequent publications of official documentation.
2. Regular invitation of NGO members for discussing/creating legislations.

The indicators of level 2 of variable 2 (low level of openness):
1. NGOs limited/isolated from observing various decision-making processes.
2. NGOs restricted from having access to official documentation.

Variable 3: Terror
Values of Variable 3: High/Low level of terror

The indicators of level 1 of variable 3 (high level of Terror):
1. Frequent threats by government both physical/psychological.
2. Numerous cases of blackmailing by the government representatives.

The indicators of level 2 of variable 3 (low level of terror):
1. No cases of intimidations from the government.
2. No cases of blackmailing from the government representatives.

Variable 4: Oppression
Values of Variable 4: High/Low level of conflict

The Indicators of level 1 of variable 4: (high level of conflict)
1. Continuous fight for dominance by the government.
2. Numerous cases of oppressive behavior by the government.
The indicators of level 2 of variable 4: (low level of conflict)

1. No fight for dominance from the side of the government.
2. No cases of oppressive behavior from the government.

“High” values for variables 1 and 2 indicate good relationship between NGOs and the two governments. Frequent discussions on various topics and regular participation of NGOs in decision-making are indicators of high level of cooperation. Additionally, frequent publication of official documentation by the government and invitation of NGO members for discussing legislations on regular basis are high indicators of openness. If both of these variables will be high, then it will suggest that the relationship between the two actors was friendly.

However, if the value for 1st and 2nd variables is “low” it means that the relationship was hostile. The value will only be “low” if the NGOs were isolated from the discussions, NGO recommendations were not considered by the government and there was limited scope for the NGOs to observe decision-making process. Such indicators will prove that there was a hostile relationship.

In case of 3rd and 4th variables “Low” values suggest that the NGO-state relationship was friendly. “Low” value in 3rd variable suggests that there were no cases of intimidation on blackmailing attempts from the government side. Additionally, “low” level in the 4th variable suggests that the government did not fight for dominance and there were no cases of oppressive behaviour against the NGOs.

On the other hand, if there will be “high” level of values for 3rd and 4th variables will prove opposite as the indicators will suggest that the government was fighting for dominance and there were numerous cases of oppressive behaviour. In addition, there were numerous cases of blackmailing and frequent threats against the NGO members.

The analysis of the empirical findings gathered from the key-informants will be based on the above-mentioned indicators. The analysis will provide information on what was the nature of policies of two authoritarian regimes in Georgia towards NGOs, and NGOs responses to them, which will show the relationship between the NGOs and the state. Indicators will help to clearly define the level of hostility or the cooperation between the two actors between 1994-2012.
4. Empirical Findings


Key-informant 1: “In 1992 Georgia became a member of the United Nations and therefore took the responsibility of following the rules and duties prescribed by the organisations. It was important for Shevardnadze to achieve support from the West and the international community. Thus, the government did not show opposition to the creation of civil society organisations and as a result introduced the act on registration of the civil society organisations in 1994, which was a very decisive step towards progress and development. From this period a lot of international and local NGOs began working in Georgia.”

Due to the international pressure Shevardnadze was forced to accept creation of civil society groups, as he was well aware that a lot of attention would be given to his attitude towards the CS/NGO sector. It was exactly the need for international support that persuaded Shevardnadze to act as if his regime wanted to establish cooperative relations with the third sector. On the other hand, the civil society groups saw government actions as true determination for democratic improvement and this motivated them to begin first steps of limited cooperation.

One of the first NGOs were Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Eurasia, ISFED, National Democratic Institute, The Open Society Foundation and ISAR-Georgia. It was clear from the beginning that these new organisations would not manage to have friendly relations with the government, as the values which they believed in was opposite of what Shevardnadze government wanted to pursue within the country. The regime would never allow open criticism and demands from CS/NGOs for free and fair elections and fight against corruption.

Key-informant 5: “The creation of NGOs was the beginning of the new era of professionalising individuals and preparing them to contribute to the progressive development of the country. NGOs were a source of education, preparation and professional development. It was a well-known fact that people working for the NGO sector were very experienced professionals, who could provide a very valuable assistance not only for the general society in promoting various democratic values but also for the Georgian government, which was lacking effective decision making and proficiency.”
Additional reason why Shevardnadze allowed limited cooperation in the beginning was based on the fact that his government was in severe need of well-trained professionals. Georgia had begun active work on the international arena, but the government lacked professionals within the administration. Due to this fact, the government showed signs of wanting to cooperate with the civil society groups and NGOs, who could provide the government with valuable strategies and advices. The NGOs were clearly aware that such kind of limited cooperation would not bring huge changes within the Shevardnadze regime, but it still was a step forward towards improvement of the political situation.

The first period of relations between the NGOs and the Shevardnadze government, which could be considered up until 1999, was slightly cooperative for mutual advantage. There was no resistance from Shevardnadze government against NGO activities, in opposite there were many cases when NGOs provided a very important support for the government. Such situation was based on several important factors. First, Shevardnadze knew very well that in order to gain support from the international community and achieve acceptance of Georgian in various international organisations he should not have pressurised NGOs and limit their capabilities within the country. The second reason was that the government was truly in need of support from well-trained professionals in judicial, health and various sectors of governing. The cooperation was advantageous for both sides as NGOs were benefitting by being allowed to participate in various committees, where they could receive all needed information from the government on various topics and closely monitor the decision-making process.

Due to lack of effectiveness and efficiency in the decision-making in the government, when there was a need for finding a solution on various problems the government was creating various commissions, where with the participation of NGOs in various policies formulation was analysed and discussed. Knowing that the government could not make many progressive decisions solely they needed the help of these professional groups. Finally, cooperation with the NGOs gave the government opportunity to be aware of NGO plans and strategies for government scrutiny. Such kind of information was supporting Shevardnadze government to maintain control and stability in relations with the third sector and as a result avoid major protests within the country.
One of the fundamental Georgian NGO, Young Georgian Lawyers Association (GYLA) dedicated its work towards 3 main directions. First, preparation of new generation of lawyers and judicial experts, people who could support the country from moving away from failure and achieving significant progress. Second, the organisation actively worked on controlling human rights violations, many members of the opposition and generally people were facing various torture methods in prisons and police institutions. However, GYLA did not work on the individual cases but instead work on reforming the whole judicial system, which would result in changing the inherited Soviet ideology of torture and violence as an acceptable government instrument. Final direction of the GYLA was fighting against corruption, many resources were used by GYLA to support various committees and anti-corruption groups until it was openly visible that the Shevardnadze government was not planning to change anything and cooperation with the third sector was just a formal disguise.

The slightly cooperative nature between the government and the NGOs was visible in the support of GYLA to Shevardnadze government in the year 1995 when the new constitution was created. GYLA, which was well known for its high level of professionalism in the legal field, supported the government in organising and establishing progressive and respectable constitution. The government was well aware of their capabilities and knew that without the support of GYLA they would have had serious difficulties working on the constitution alone. The determination of NGOs to support the development of Georgia and its progress in the international community was very high. GYLA was actively involved in helping the government in preparing lawyers for the Strasbourg court. This was a clear signal that the NGOs had hope that the Shevardnadze government could progress and push the country towards democratic development.

Key-informant 5: “Before the year 1999 the relationship between the NGOs and the government was stable and was seen as a form of cooperation. As an example, during the acceptance period of Georgia in the council of Europe, the government had asked GYLA for support in reforming its legislature and as a response, GYLA provided more than 54 law specialists to help the government in changing and establishing necessary legislative acts. As visible from this specific example, the NGOs were very supportive of the government. GYLA and other NGOs assisted progress and development of Georgia by helping the government with an experienced and professional workforce.”
Provision of professionals to support government in the international arena was a very important signal from the side of the third sector. Members of GYLA did not hesitate to support the Shevardnadze regime with 54 specialists because they believe that such cooperation could create a chance to slowly push the authoritarian system towards democracy. On the other hand, Shevardnadze was well aware from the beginning that this cooperation would not bring any changes and that the support from the GYLA was only for the advantage of his government. It could be said that Shevardnadze used the NGOs by tricking them as if he had a wish to move his government towards democratic progress, but in reality it was all a well-disguised lie.

Cooperation between the two actors did not last long, soon the NGOs realised that the committees and teamwork with the government brought no changes. The government acted as if there was a will to fight against human rights violations, corruption and increase democracy but there was no progress made in any field. Soviet inheritance of torture and violence mixed with fully embedded corruption was so rooted in the high-ranking officials of the national security institutions, police and executive offices that it was impossible to make progress without changing the system. The realisation of the fact that no reforms would take place the NGOs began transforming their cooperative relations into a hostile resistant form.

Key informant 5: “Nearly all-Georgian governments made same mistakes during their time in office. Both Shevardnadze and his successor made the identical error when they decided to cross all legal boundaries and lose control of their actions.”

It was exactly the parliamentary elections of 1999, which was a turning point for the NGOs war against Shevardnadze government. According to my informant, the fact itself that parliamentary elections were rigged was not much of amazement or a fundamental base for the revolutionary movement to start. The main reason why the elections were the red line for people to challenge government was that the government had lost its legitimacy. Regardless of massive rigging and manipulation with elections results, the majority of the people with the help of ISFED and other NGOs were well aware of the reality and the extent to which the elections were biased for the government’s advantage. The strategies to rig elections were so much unprofessional and obvious that it was cynical from the government side to officially state their victory. Among the rigging strategies were the use of special forces to steal ballots, the use carrousel method- one individual voting for several times and the use of votes of individuals who had passed away several years ago. This specific period clearly showed
to what extent the respect for government and government’s possibilities have fallen down and people began realising that it was time for a change.

This was a very important period as it was first time for many years that the government created a strong opposition power in form on CS/NGOs that could actually provide a very damaging resistance to the Shevardnadze regime. Corrupt elites of the government could not predict the powerfulness of the third sector and as a result the Shevardnadze regime encountered a new force who could challenge and limit government power.


The events that unfolded during the 1999 elections mentioned in the previous chapter were a clear signal for the NGOs to move towards different dimension of relations towards the Shevardnadze government. The hostility between the two actors increased to such extent that it ended with NGOs-backed revolution. The “Rose Revolution”, which started on 3rd of November 2003 and ended on 23 November with victory, was a logical outcome of the sequences that took place after the parliamentary elections of the year 1999.

After the year 1999, the situation drastically changed. The government moved from passive cooperation and ignorance into a direct hostility with the NGOs and began limiting their spheres of activity. On the other hand, the NGOs began active mobilisation to create a base for the power transition. This period was important as at this moment began a conflict between the two groups of government, which resulted in a creation of new opposition of progressive individuals, who openly began demanding the change for the system. The situation turned such that only those people had been left with the government who were openly blamed for corruptive activities, violations of human rights and limiting democratic opportunities for the country.

From this period began a new era of relations. On one side government began creating its government organized non-governmental organisations to create confusion and spread of unreliable information within the society. The main aim of these groups was to support the government and create alternative opinion in the country. Shevardnadze began openly criticising and questioning the financial sources of the various NGOs within the country and attached their anti-government statements to the
interest of foreign forces. Shevardnadze did not hesitate on comparing the NGOs to terrorist groups and demand for higher control on their activities. Among the target of criticism was George Soros, as he was blamed to be an enemy of the country, who with the financial support of the NGOs tried to halt development of Georgia. There even was an attempt by The Ministry of Security to introduce new regulation, which would bring an end to the work of EURASIA, GYLA, ISFED and other NGOs within the country. Regardless of many efforts the government was in such illegitimate position that their biased information and attempt to damage the image of the GYLA, Open Society Fund, Liberty Institute and other NGOs was a failure and the organizations continued their work even more actively.

In the year 2003, as the parliamentary elections were coming close the NGOs began establishing a united strategy for cooperative activities against the government. Some of the NGOs like Liberty Institute began working on freedom of speech and liberation of media sources. GYLA’s role was to provide well-trained lawyers and support anti-government movements in solving judicial problems as well as promote the spread of objective information on the realities in Georgia both in local and international communities. Many members of government were openly blamed for corruptive schemes as well as violations of human rights. 

Key-informant 5: “The political illiteracy and inexperience of the government officials appeared to be a great advantage for the NGOs, as it was very easy to gather information on illegal government activities on human rights violation, corruption and terror. Throughout the period until 2003, the NGOs managed to use various techniques including independent journalist and various researchers to expose violations of the authoritarian regime.”

Additionally, NGOs such as ISFED and Free and Fair Elections of Georgia, whose main direction was assurance of democratic elections, began active preparation for safeguarding avoidance of rigging in future elections. These organisations were very successful in mobilising a lot of professionals and well-trained workforce who managed to control government activities during the elections period and avoid major riggings. One of the examples where the government was forced to admit their loss in the elections was the local government election in 2001. This was a very important moment as the ruling party due to the strong NGO monitoring and scrutiny was unable to use massive rigging techniques and was forced to admit their failure in the capital, Tbilisi. The loss of elections showed that the CS/NGO determination was successful in limiting
government opportunities misuses the power. Such kind of event was a clear sign that there was a possibility for a peaceful power transition.

At this moment with the help of a Liberty Institute, a new NGO - “KMARA” was created, which had a very important role in the process of ending Shevardnadze government. The role of “KMARA” was mainly to mobilise students and young members of society and organise massive rallies against Shevardnadze government. During the rallies, which were peaceful and well planned, these students would use satirical performances to mock the government and demand changes. Mocking include caricatures of President Shevardnadze and other government leaders sitting on an airplane and flying away or being flushed in toilets. “KMARA” was a similar organisation to the “Otpor”, which successfully managed to change the Milosevic regime in Serbia. Many members of “KMARA” were in direct communication and contact with the members of the Serbian organisation, who actively worked on training and preparing Georgian students for peaceful rallies.

Shevardnadze’s response to “KMARA” was a full-scale violence and imprisonments of the students. Georgian police and secret services had specific orders to create fear and chaos within the opposition groups. Regardless of the fact that the protestors were very well organised and took place in a peaceful activities, many students and other protesters were imprisoned for fake accusations and beaten in the police stations. In this situation, GYLA showed a very strong support for the student movement and used its professional lawyers to defend the imprisoned protestors and protect them from torture and beatings. Regardless of terror and imprisonments the students dedication and determination towards the change of the system was not affected. The popularity of “KMARA” was spreading throughout the country and thousands of people were joining the organisation with the hope to end the Shevardnadze government.

The success story of “KMARA” as an organisation, which was based on the foundation of “Otpor”, was actively used in the “Orange Revolution” of Ukraine in 2004-2005, where similar youth movement “Pora” was established. All these organisations had very similar characteristics and to a great extent, they helped each other in preparations and training individuals against the authoritarian regimes.

Key-informant 1: “One of the instruments used by the NGO sector to scrutinize the government was support of independent journalist investigations on government violations. NGOs such as GYLA and Liberty Institute were in a very close cooperation
with the journalist by giving them reliable evidence on abuses and illegal activities of various members of the government.”

The NGOs had realized the importance of supporting journalists on investigating various government violations. This was one of the important instruments with which the CS/NGO groups challenged the dominance of the Shevardnadze propaganda within the country. Considering such cooperative attack on the government from the NGOs by supporting journalists, the regime responded with threats and terror on its opponents. The level of terror was so severe that it even took life of a journalist cooperating close with NGO sector. In order to erase all evidence the government falsified entire documentation on the murder case.

As the hope for changing the system was the elections of 2003, the NGOs began preparations by defining clear strategies and stages upon which different actions were to be launched. The first stage was directed on the pre-election period, intending to motivate people and ensure that majority of the population would vote and show their position. This stage was regarded by the NGOs as “Get out and Vote” process. Many time and resources were put by various organisations to spread information and persuade people to vote, as their choice would have been decisive in the government change. “KMARA”, GYLA, LIBERTY INSTITUTE, Open Society Foundation and many other NGOs supported the process.

The role of Open Society Foundation in this specific program was very significant. A lot of resources were dedicated to the support of information campaigns, which intended to increase awareness on the importance of elections and individual decision-making. The campaign was a direct attack on the regime as it intended to increase opposition among the population against the injustice of the regime. The campaign was very successful in mobilising Georgians and informing them on the government violations. Shevardnadze government knew very well that these NGO activities were very hostile for the stability of the regime but was unable to halt the process.

As the parliamentary elections of the year 2003 were coming close, parallel to the information campaign and strong government scrutiny, the NGOs began considering specific strategies, which would limit the government in its actions and avoid massive rigging during the election period. It was not difficult to create a strategy that would expose government in falsification the elections, As the Georgian government mainly used obvious and cynical methods for distorting elections such as sending police troops
and stealing ballots or just simply making individuals vote for several times. The NGOs have decided to introduce two important strategies that would ensure objectiveness of the election results. The first method was the use of exit polls, this was a method used directly in front of the election offices, where members of NGOs asked individuals who had just voted on their choice. The information gathered by the exit polls would create more or less objective image of how general society voted and which party had the majority of votes.

Along with exit polls, ISFED successfully prepared approximately three thousand members, who would monitor every electoral district and hinder government from falsifying the votes. These individuals were well trained and highly motivated members of society, who knew very well the importance of limiting government opportunities to use falsification for their advantage. Another important strategy, which would directly challenge the government results, was the Parallel Vote Tabulation. All these techniques created and organised by the NGO sector put the Shevardnadze government in a very severe situation. On one hand, the government was very weak as it had lost all legitimacy and majority of the population supported regime change. On the other hand, NGOs had managed to introduce such actions against falsification of elections that the government would not have an opportunity to legitimise the results it wanted. Such kind of hostility from the CS/NGOs brought a huge damage to the supremacy of the government.

Never before had the government faced such opposition and resistance from any groups during the elections period. Shevardnadze and his team did not have any experience on how to rig elections or disguise illegal activities in case there were people monitoring them. The CS/NGOs knew very well that the government was made up of inexperienced individuals and catching them on various violations would not be a problem for well prepared professional groups. The main strategy of the NGOs was to continue the rise of anti-government movement throughout the elections period. All the evidence on rigging and government illegitimacy had to be used for motivating people to bring end to the regime.

Considering that the government has openly rigged all previous elections, the NGOs were aware of the high possibility of similar falsification happening in the 2003 parliamentary elections. Thus, as a final strategy decision had to be made what would the NGOs in cooperation with the opposition would do if the elections would be rigged and the government would not let power transition. A plan was agreed that in case of
government not admitting the loss peaceful protests had to take place in order for the people to defend their votes. It was unimaginable for NGOs, opposition and general society that government, which had minor support from the society, would still try to maintain the power. It was necessary for the NGOs to ensure that in case of falsified elections they had to mobilise massive rallies and peacefully demand the resignation of President Shevardnadze.

4.3. NGO backed “Rose Revolution” (2003)

As it was expected the parliamentary elections of November 3rd, 2003 showed that Shevardnadze government was not willing to admit the loss and give way to the new political party supported by the majority of the people. NGOs and opposition realised that it was time for massive mobilisation of people and demand for the resignation of the defeated government. People have begun gathering in front of the old Georgian parliament later moved to Freedom Square and it was the beginning of the first days of the “Rose Revolution” (Key-informant 4).

Regardless of strong resistance from the NGOs by close monitoring, the use of exit polls and Parallel Vote Tabulation the government still used various techniques to falsify the voting and try to make people believe that the leading party had won the elections. As a result, NGOs decided to follow the plan, which was agreed beforehand in case of election result falsification. At the same time as the government publicized result so the elections, ISFED, which was responsible for ensuring free and fair election procedure and Parallel Vote Tabulation provided its own results on the election and the difference was huge. At this moment the relationship between the NGOs and the Shevardnadze regime had reached the peak of hostility, as it was clear for both sides that none of them were ready for a compromise.

CS/NGOs were aware of the fact that if the Shevardnadze government would maintain power by rigging the elections their violations would grow even stronger and results would have been devastating. The parliamentary election was the only chance to stop the government oppression and terror. Full-scale mobilisation from the NGOs was a necessity to avoid possible out in future.

Key-informant 7: “Pre-election mobilisation of NGOs against the regime proved to be very advantageous. The ISFED publicized Parallel Vote Tabulation results and
began openly blaming the government for rigging the elections. Meanwhile, GYLA was working on challenging the government on election violations at court.”

As one of my key-interviewees stated during the revolutionary period she was personally responsible for protecting people’s votes at court against. In this period the events have showed that ISFED, GYLA and other NGOs had become one of the main sources of opposition to the Shevardnadze government, who regardless of hostility against the CS/NGOS was unable to weaken their activities. Close cooperation of various NGOs such as the ISFED and GYLA strengthened their position against the government. Opposition from multiples sides made it easier for the NGOs to expose Shevardnadze regime violations and weaken the government dominance.

The main NGO whose role was to mobilise people and organise peaceful protests was “KMARA”, who very correspondingly managed to mobilise a huge amount of people as soon as ISFED had announced their own version of election results. The NGO activity soon had a visible effect on the population. People believed the information provided by ISFED and began gathering in the streets where “KMARA” took the responsibility for uniting the correct flow of protestors. This was a direct hit for the Shevardnadze government, who knew very well that the NGO activities had created a strong determination and union among the government opposition (Key-informant 2). The success of the revolutionary movement is attributed the NGOs, who were responsible for publicizing objective election results and defending individual votes at court. Throughout last 70 years, Georgia has never had a situation when thousands of people gathered with the demand for resignation of the government in a peaceful manner.

Key-informant 2: “This was a historic day for Georgian society as the civil society groups had defeated a violent government of Soviet inheritance. The majority considered this period as a moment when Georgia had begun its path towards westernisation and liberal democracy. International community regarded this as the liberation of Georgia from Russian control. The success “Rose Revolution” was a result of strong cooperative relations of NGOs and opposition, which began in 1994 and culminated after 1999.”

The wrong policies of Shevardnadze had brought severe consequences for his government. Attempts to isolate and limit the third sector caused opposite effects, it strengthened the determination and hostile will of the NGOs to fight the corrupt Shevardnadze government and end elite rule in Georgia. There was a huge contrast
between the NGO attitudes in the beginning and afterwards during the “Rose Revolution”. The same groups, which provided judicial experts for supporting the government in the beginning, had caused the revolutionary movement. As soon as they realised that the government would never accept their work and dedication, these individuals turned into hostile opposition of the Shevardnadze team.

The change of the authoritarian regime was directly attributed to the active work of CS/NGO group, who had scrutinized and attacked government on its violations on continuous basis. Shevardnadze regime could not predict that the hostility with the third sector would bring such severe consequences. The “Rose Revolution” has shown that the CS/NGO groups were much more stronger and competent that expected by the authoritarian regime. Little did general society and NGOs knew that Saakashvili, future president of Georgia who openly supported liberal democratic values and Georgian path towards westernisation would turn into an authoritarian leader limiting freedom of speech, using violence and terror upon the same NGOs and people who had supported him in coming power by “Rose Revolution”.

As events have shown with the power transferring into the hands of the new government Georgia entered a new chapter which in the beginning brought very progressive and positive results for the country in the first few years, but as time passed people began to face new much stronger and experienced face of authoritarian rule.


The “Rose Revolution” had brought drastic changes in the country. The new government with the leadership of President Mikheil Saakashvili came to power. Saakashvili was openly supporting strong cooperation with the United States and Western Europe. As the “Rose Revolution” was launched by a close cooperation of United National Movement- opposition party and NGO sector the links between these two actors were closely attached. Mikheil Saakashvili decided to use NGO sector as a source for bringing professional and experienced individuals on top positions in the government. The period of 2003-2004 was the era of politicizing of NGO sector as all major actors from the third sector began working for the government. Leading actors from Open Society Foundation, Liberty Institute, “KMARA”, GYLA became minister
and advisors of the newly elected government. Due to such circumstances the possibility of hostility was eliminated in the relationship between the CS/NGOs with the Saakashvili government and in the beginning it was stable and cooperative.

Both international and local community regarded this phenomenon as a fundamental basis for establishing cooperative relations between the CS/NGOs and the new government. At this moment no one could imagine that ex-NGOs would drive the government towards immense hostility against the third sector. Saakashvili and his government showed positive signs in the first few years, which motivated the CS/NGOs to cooperate with the government. Firstly, the fact that the government was made up from ex-NGOs created positive basis for establishing close relations between the two actors. Secondly, open determination towards democratic development by Saakashvili expanded further possibility of friendly interaction with the CS/NGO groups.

Key-informant 4: “The relationship between the NGOs and the government of Saakashvili in the years 2003-2006 was more or less peaceful and cooperative. The fact that majority of the government was made up from ex-NGO members with high a level of professionalism, progressive thinking and educational background done abroad created impression that there would be no need for strong NGO scrutiny or disagreement. Considering that it was a new government, which took control of a country with the ruined economy and devastating social problems majority of NGOs had agreed to give some time to the government to adapt itself with the new environment.”

The fact that international community was assured by the government on the desire to follow democratic reforms and direct Georgia towards the strengthening of the values of the European Union affected the perception of the local NGOs who agreed with the foreign observations and considered unnecessary to closely scrutinize the first steps of the new government at this moment it was impossible to imagine that the CS/NGOs would have hostile relationship with their ex co-workers. All actors had agreed that the new government should have been given some time to adapt to the new environment.

Key-informant 2: “The first three years of the new government from 2003-2006 was truly a period for Georgian democratic development and direction towards becoming the member of the European Union. The government openly stated its desire to modernise country and improve the quality of democracy.”
It could be said that the reforms, which the government launched in its first three years in government were highly attributed to the cooperation with the NGOs. Firstly, the reforms introduced by the new government were mainly organised by the ex-NGO ministers, who were well aware of the problems of the Shevardnadze regime and identified exact areas, where reforms were necessary to promote the progressive development of Georgia.

At this moment the third sector could not imagine a better government than the Saakashvili’s new group. After Shevardnadze the CS/NGOs thought that the new government made up of ex-NGO members would start listening to people, fighting corruption and respecting human rights. Nearly all of the high-ranking officials in the Saakashvili government had a very close bond with the NGO and this created a very hopeful and friendly atmosphere within the two actors. On one side, the NGOs supported the new government and showed will to provide assistance in introducing reforms. On the other hand, the new members of the government assured the third sector that they would stay loyal to the principles, which they pursued during their work in the CS/NGO groups. The first stage of relations was positive and signalled will for cooperation from both sides.

One of the first reforms was directed towards fighting human rights violations and corruption. Post-Shevardnadze police system was made up of ill-trained, poor and corrupt police officers, whose main source of income was extortion of money from the people. The new reform, which was launched with the cooperation with various human rights NGOs, intended to bring end to countless police violations. The fear of punishment and increase in quality of salaries had enormous results on destroying the corruptive system throughout the country. The successes of these reforms are highly attributed to the cooperation of ex-NGO members and active human rights NGOs within the country.

Another example of reform, which was based on the NGO-government cooperation, was the “Deer Leap” program. The reform intended to modernise and develop Georgian education system by introducing information and communications technology programming in schools. Ex-NGO minister of Education who continued to have close links with the third sector even after moving to the government launched above mentioned reform. Knowing that the state administration was made up of inexperienced individuals the ex-NGO minister used the opportunity to cooperate with the third sector professionals and determine the specific type of reform.
**Key-informant 3:** “it was impossible for the NGO sector to imagine that after such reforms and open statements towards liberal democratic development Saakashvili’s government would turn into a repressive authoritarian regime”

Above-mentioned reforms are part of the big group of modifications that the Saakashvili government began from its first days to the office. Such kind of reforms and determination created an image that the government was really trying to direct Georgia towards an improvement of democracy, respect for human rights violation and elimination of corruption. Several of my key-informants have stated that at that moment the third sector could not predict the possibility of establishing hostile relations with the new government. Saakashvili had created well-disguised image of a democratic leader and with such actions increased trust in the CS/NGO groups.

In the first three years of the new government, the NGOs did not make any open criticism or strong argument. The NGOs very patiently waited for the government to follow its reforms and move Georgia away from the inherited devastation of Shevardnadze regime. New members of government were motivated individuals with many initiatives and strong determination to work on the improvement of democracy in the country and as a result, they were sympathised by the general society and other NGOs. The trust by the members of NGOs towards their ex-co-workers was so huge and strong that it was unimaginable that something could have affected these newly elected high-ranking government officials and turn into people they previously fought against. These individuals were friends and co-workers who for many years fought for an idea, thus it was difficult for those members of NGOs who maintained their position to openly criticize the new government for minor violations.

At the same time before year 2006 the government supported NGO involvement in various reform management and introduction. The NGOs had information from committee and preliminary sessions in parliament, while the government listened to the advices and ensured the NGOs in the success of the future reforms. New minister and leaders of the government based on their previous work experience were well aware of the NGO scrutiny strategies and easily managed to find common language with the third sector. If some violations would take place in this period the government representatives assured their ex-co-workers that these minor violations were on individual basis and it would not take place in future.

The passivity of the NGO sector from 2003-2006 was caused by several factors. First, the government was truly determined to introduce progressive and democratic
reforms for the development of Georgia and these progressive changes were very visible within the first years. Second, The NGOs believed that their ex-cooperates who once fought for the same idea would never move away from the correct path and thus they should have been given time and space to reform devastated government institutions of the old regime. The third reason was based on the fact that the new government had very close and friendly links with the leaders of Western Europe and United States. Supportive statements of the leaders of international community strengthened the legitimacy of the new government and minimized the possibility of someone openly questioning Saakashvili’s path towards democratic development. Finally, experienced and professionalised ex-NGO ministers knew every strategy and technique, which was necessary to assuring and quieting the NGO sector from scrutinizing and openly damaging the image of the new government.

As mentioned Saakashvili government had managed to gain massive trust and support from the international community. The fact that majority of the leaders in the government had the educational background done abroad was a huge advantage in establishing the friendly relations with the leaders of the United States and Western Europe. Saakashvili government was a perfect type for the international community to support. It was a government, which openly claimed its distinction from the Russian expansive policies and firmly stated its will to join the European Union. Additionally, a lot of resources were put to strengthen Georgian lobbyism throughout the world, which brought very successful results for the new government. In the year 2005, during the visit of President George W Bush, speaking on the Freedom of Square in front of thousands of people, he stated that Georgia was a “Beacon of Liberty”. Such kind of supportive statements and cooperation with the United States and Western Europe guaranteed the maintenance of the image of a democratic government by the government of Saakashvili.

Peaceful coexistence of the new government and the NGO sector lasted from 2003-2006 as in this period the Saakashvili government was truly pursuing policies for democratic development within Georgia. From the year 2006 situation drastically changed as the new government began openly showing signs of authoritarianism.

Key-informant 8: “The year 2006 was the beginning of a very difficult and bloody period for Georgian society. The government of Saakashvili began showing very alarming signs of the authoritarian regime.”

The government, which came to power with the support of the majority of the population and the NGOs, began moving away from its initial road towards democratic development. Saakashvili and his team who were previously open supporters of transparency; equality and democratic development became one of the most tyrannical rulers in latest Georgian history. From 2006, the government began a very strong campaign against the NGOs, which intended to isolate them and limit their capabilities to such extent that the third sector would not have an opportunity to monitor and criticize government actions. Additionally, the government directed its full attention and resources on establishing concrete one-party monopoly throughout the country. Strategies included the spread of control on all media sources available in Georgia. Police forces and secret services were actively used to deal with opposition leaders and generally everyone who would openly show dissatisfaction with the government. Illegal tapping and observation on private life became an acceptable form for the government to control alternative opinions and government criticism.

This period of the relationship between the NGOs and the government was most difficult and hostile among all the interactions that have been taking place since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The new government was much more flexible, experienced, cunning and professionalized in dealing with external scrutiny and open criticism. Ex-NGO government, which had the majority of the high ranking officials with foreign educational background knew very well how to control and manipulate NGO sector within Georgia. The NGOs who had believed that after the “Rose Revolution” Georgia would not have to face a fear of authoritarianism rule were suddenly under surprizing attack from the government. Since 2006, the government closed all doors for the NGOs, as they were not invited on any committees or discussion on future government actions and legislations. Additional support to the government was that they had a very respectable and pro-democratic image among the western
community as well as in the United States, thus it was very difficult to legitimize all the criticism that came from the NGOs and other organisations towards government actions.

*Key-informant 2:* “The government, which stated openly support for progress and westernisation, had brought a new era of terror in the country. Nearly all media sources were shut down, the opposition was persecuted, people threatened and NGOs isolated in such manner that there was no any major group, who could openly challenge government activities. Regardless of such severe conditions, the NGOs had managed to unite and create a strong power against the authoritarian regime”

It could be said that the government of Saakashvili was a better, stronger and more terrifying version of Shevardnadze regime. In the first case from 1994-2003, the NGOs found it very easy to find government violations and openly blame the government for these abusive actions. However, from the period of 2006 up until 2012 the new government had used huge resources and expertise to cover up all of their authoritarian actions against democracy, human rights violations and corruptive schemes. Even today many of Saakashvili minister still have court proceedings on their violations and the new government finds it very difficult to find proof for them. All of my respondents agree that never before have NGOs faced such oppression and limitation from the government, which occurred during the second phase of the Saakashvili regime.

The drastic change of the government actions could be attributed to the fact that these new members of the government were revolutionists who had little experience and training for becoming high-ranking officials with an unlimited source of power. These ex-NGOs believed that they should not have considered external scrutiny from the NGO sector as these individuals believed that they already knew very well what was necessary for Georgian development and external opinions were no necessity. Saakashvili, himself was a person who fought for free and fair judicial system during the Shevardnadze regime but now he was doing the opposite, he revolutionised the judicial system to such extent that court decisions were made only by the approval of high ranking government officials.

Additionally, another important difference between Shevardnadze government and the post-revolutionary government was that Saakashvili did not like individuals who had the sufficiently big support of the people except him; he fought against influence, against people who had a voice in the society, including the NGOs. The
situation was different in the previous regime; Shevardnadze never used such severe and violent techniques against the NGOs. The previous regime was made up of inexperienced individuals who to some extent required support from the NGOs for various decision-makings. To some extent Shevardnadze allowed external scrutiny and often invited NGOs for cooperation and advice. In the new case, the government was much more professionalized and determined to make decisions solely. Saakashvili and his team were directly limiting and challenging civil society and media using violent techniques.

One of the main reasons that intensified the hostile relationship between the CS/NGOs and the Saakashvili government was the Gvirgvliani death case. This specific murder outraged both international and local community as the death of young Georgian man, Alexander Gvirgvliani was ordered by the direct command of a high-ranking government official on the basis of the personal dispute. Gvirgvliani case caused a huge outcry from the NGO sector but the government used all its power and resource available including politicized court to openly threaten anyone who would criticize the government. NGOs played a very important role in supporting the Gvirgvliani family for finding justice. Many GYLA professionals fought to achieve open and objective investigation of the case and demanded from government to allow media broadcast of the court case. It was exactly the determination of NGOs and several opposition groups that achieved restoration of justice on Gvirgvliani case after the change of the government. Today president Saakashvili is sentenced 3 years to prison for being guilty of abusing power in this specific murder case.

Other reasons that ended stable relation between the two actors was the suspicious circumstances of the death of Prime minister of Georgia on 3rd of February 2005. The family of Zurab Jvania and CS/NGOs knew very well that the theory of the accidental death was just made up story by the government. The government of Saakashvili destroyed and hid a lot of evidence and due to this fact even today the truth about the death of ex-prime minister is not exposed. However, all the evidence directs the case towards the role of government involvement. Throughout the investigation, a lot of NGOs were actively involved and demanded the objectiveness of the investigation. The NGOs did not trust government-controlled experts and openly supported the creation of independent journalist and medical groups for finding out the truth.

**Key-informant 7: “The outrage and frustration caused government violent actions and terror on the people during the protests on 7th of November 2007. Thousands of**
people rallied in front of the Georgian parliament and peacefully protested censorship, one-party rule and undemocratic actions of the government. In response, the government brought thousands of police officers and members of secret police ‘Zonders’ who were given specific directions to use excessive force on the members of opposition and other protestors.”

Both international community and local NGOs were shocked and published open criticism towards the excessive force and authoritarian actions of the Saakashvili government, but in response, the government falsified documents and stated that the opposition and its leader Badri Patarkacishvili were planning a pro-Russian backed coup and all violent actions were legitimate to stop the coup. The government actions were clearly showing to the CS/NGOs that cooperation was impossible and only possible way to solve these problems was to challenge the government and limit its excessive power. It was clear that Saakashvili would not compromise and that the third sector had to increase its hostile actions against the regime.

On the same day Special Forces burst into one of the leading independent media station TV IMEDI. The news channel was directly transmuting the process how fully equipped and masked gunmen of the Saakashvili regime burst into the media channel imprisoned hundreds of journalists and destroyed all computers and devices. This was a clear message from the government that it would not tolerate freedom of speech, which could damage the power of the government. Weakened NGOs whose power had declined since 2003 as main human resource had moved to government and the same people began isolating them put a lot of effort to spread the truth about government actions both in international and local communities. Unlike the majority of NGOs GYLA, Open Society Institute, National Democratic Institute, Transparency International and ISFED had more or less managed to maintain power and stability to some extent after the “Rose Revolution” and use the resources to direct against the new government.

The country had fallen into a severe condition as it had moved away from democratic development to a path of bloody tyranny. Media sources were politicized, including Rustavi 2, which once was considered, as a symbol of independence had become direct source of government propaganda. Many cases occurred when masked men beat those people who openly criticized government to death. The court neglected all these cases and none of them were investigated. In the same period began terror on the business sector. Every individual who has its personal business in Georgia was
visited by the high-ranking officials and asked to pay the contribution to the government activity. This was a clear corruptive scheme, which absorbed money from the business sector and went directly to the pockets of the government. Refusal resulted in the imprisonment of these people with false allegation such as drug use or storage of weapons without a licence. At this moment CS/NGOs were very weakened due to the Saakashvili putting a lot of effort trying to isolate and limit the third sector from having opportunity to criticize the government violations.

The whole country was aware of the secret service groups “Zonders” who were well-trained Special Forces groups under the direct supervision of high government officials. These groups were created for doing “dirty work” of government. After the regime change hundreds of secret rooms and apartments were found throughout Georgia were according to high-ranking police officials many oppositionists and anti-government supporters were tortured and kept. Additionally, the new government found out thousands of private life videos of opposition leaders and individuals. These videos were captured by secret cameras and devices, which were stored by the secret forces of Saakashvili regime in order to blackmail these individuals and threaten them if they would challenge government power. This was the reality, which once the pro-democratic government had turned into a tyrannical regime spying on people private life and threatening them with exposure. Among the videos were ex-ministers, political leaders, and journalists.

One of the important roles of NGOs in fighting these tyrannical actions was to spread the truth on Saakashvili regime to the international community. GYLA and other human rights NGOs were actively working on documenting and spreading the information on government violations. As mentioned previously, Saakashvili and his government had a very pro-democratic image in the international arena and it was very difficult to make external actors believe about the government realities that were taking place. However, with strong dedication, Georgian NGOs had managed to establish links with international human rights organisations such as International Federation of Human rights, which supported GYLA, Transparency International, Human Rights Centre and other Georgian NGOs to reach their voice to international leaders and demand criticism towards Saakashvili government. Use of international arena and information spread to the EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, UN and other organisations was one of the important advantages of the Georgian NGOs against fighting the Saakashvili tyranny.
Another major issue, which increased conflict between the NGOs and the government, was the misuse of the state budget. The government of Saakashvili actively used public money for personal political purposes, including pre-election preparations and advertisement. Such kind of government action created an unequal situation between the leading political party and opposition groups. The only source of resistance to this irresponsible activity was the NGO sector. Continuous scrutiny and monitoring of public money spending from numerous NGOs forced the government to limit its use of resources and illegal activities as such scandalous reports were very harmful both on the international and local level. The successful NGO scrutiny and limitation of public spending by the high government officials resulted in equalising the power between the government and the opposition parties who had more opportunities to challenge the ruling party in the elections. Regardless of the government attempt to isolate NGO and limit their opportunities to monitor government activity above-mentioned example shows that they were successful in creating certain boundaries for government to limit their unlawful activities.

From the year 2011, the relations between the NGOs and the government reached the peak of extreme tensions. Leading party was aware of the threat coming from the 2012 parliamentary elections and began actively working on strengthening its control and pressure to avoid power transition. NGOs found it very difficult to challenge the new strategies of Saakashvili government to win the elections in 2012. The difficulty was caused due to the fact that during the Shevardnadze regime the falsification and rigging of the elections took place during the voting period and the government did not have any specific strategies in the pre-election period. Additionally, the previous regime was very inexperienced and their violations were easy to protest and monitor. In case of Saakashvili, the situation was very different, as their team had learned a lot of new strategies based on the mistakes of the previous regime.

To maintain in power the government dedicated main energy and resources to the pre-election period. These resources and energy were used to threaten and control the population and limit the third sector activities. The first strategy which government used was to ensure that the voters did not hear the voice of opposition parties by blocking all sources of alternative information. All the media sources were under direct government control and they were forced to advertise only the candidates of the leading party. Additionally, people working for the government were summoned to massive meetings where they were asked to vote for the government in the future elections and in case of
refusal they were threatened with resignations. The fear of the government was so enormous that it was impossible to imagine that people would stand against the regime and the power transition would be possible.

The important event that shocked NGOs in 2011 was the government attempt to introduce new legislation on pre-election period, which was directed in limiting any kind of support of opposition parties. The aim of this legislation was to introduce regulations that would strictly bound all possible channels of support to political parties. The legislation was such imaginably unlawful and authoritarian that the NGOs were in shock and could not imagine what the government was turning into. The legislation was a direct attack on those people who would attempt to support opposition groups in any way. According to the legislation any kind of agitation was forbidden, people would not have been able to openly state on their vote preference and simply the government would have an opportunity to imprison thousands of Georgians or confiscate private properties with the help of this new law.

Key-informant 8: “In response to the government attempt to establish full authoritarian control on the elections period, the NGOs began a new campaign ‘This Concerns You’, which was created by the coalition of Georgian NGOs and it was dedicated to limit government and give an opportunity to the opposition parties in the 2012 parliamentary elections. The coalition included more than hundred Georgian NGOs among them were the major actors: Open Society Institute, GYLA, ISFED, Transparency International, National Democratic Institute and Coalition for Justice who were the leading power in the alliance.”

The campaign ‘This Concerns You’ had several directions. The first direction was dedicated to spreading the information throughout Georgia and informing voters on their rights. The second direction was to challenge the government in introducing various illegal anti-opposition legislative acts. The coalitions of NGOs were the main power that managed to halt the introduction of the tyrannical legislation, which the government was trying to introduce. The government due to the external NGO scrutiny and pressure took out all points, which were the most dangerous ones directed against the opposition parties. Third, the direction was to fight for freedom of speech and support independent media sources. It was the NGOs who managed to pressurise government and force them to allow media channels the use of satellites in the regions and throughout the country to broadcast objective information and opposition advertisements during the elections period. Due to the active and strong challenge of the
NGO sector, the government was forced to back off and hold its plans on confiscating all cables from various media sources that were broadcasting various TV channels including the ones, which were not under government control.

The NGO sector actively worked on providing information for the diplomatic corps in Georgia and for an external actor on the international arena. It was exactly the strong determination of NGOs to gain access to all the important government violations and provide them to the diplomats and various actors that put the government under strict restrictions. The Saakashvili regime fell into it very difficult and constraining situation as they realized that that the government actions were strongly monitored by NGOs who would direct all the information to the international community and in case of serious violations the government would lose official legitimacy in the international arena. Due to strong NGO support and monitoring the opposition party and general society were not fully suppressed and terrorised by the government. Freedoms of speech through various media sources were weak but they still managed to spread the objective information on the government violations and pre-election period and government was unable to take fully authoritarian measures.

According to my key-informant from ISFED, their NGO began preparation for elections from the period of April. Their organisation was actively working on avoiding all kinds of election rigging and violations. According to the informant the NGO worked throughout Georgia in every region. The main base was in Tbilisi where leaders mapped all incidents on special maps and coordinated activities to all cities. Due to the long historical experience of ISFED as an NGO fighting for democratic elections in Georgia, it was a very strong power challenging the government and limiting its authoritarian techniques in the elections period. ISFED trained thousands of activists to monitor and participate in the elections, which pressurised government and limited possibility of provocations, rigging and various violations in the 2012 elections.

After the introduction of “This Concerns You” policy, ISFED was among one of the leading NGOs who contributed in the launch of another vital campaign “Must Carry, Must Offer” which was a very successful challenge to the limitless power of government by the civil society. This campaign was a direct hit against government policy to ban all uncontrolled media sources and confiscate their property to limit the spread of pre-election information. The NGOs used the opportunity to introduce their new campaign during the visit of US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton. The visit of such high influential politician was very important for the civil society, as they were
aware of the government fear and caution of receiving international criticism. The
NGOs managed to use all sources of information to openly publish their demands and
spread the information to all embassies including informing Hilary Clinton on the
matter. As a result of timely planning the campaign and using all sources effectively,
the government had no other choice than to agree on the legislation and legally allow
people in the capital and all other regions to observe the broadcasting of various non-
governmental media sources. “Must Carry, Must Offer” campaign introduced the NGO
coalition created a huge problem for the Saakashvili regime, which was forced to soften
its policy on freedom of speech and loss of monopoly on media broadcasting.

Key-informant 7: “One of the serious problems in pre-election period for the
Saakashvili government was the leak of recordings of torture and suffering in Georgian
prisons. The videos, which were anonymously given to various media sources, showed
numerous cases of torture and rape in Georgian prisons.”

Response to these videos was very swift and strong from the civil society groups,
who realised that the government had crossed all lines and these videos would finally
end the authoritarian regime. CS/NGOs took quick actions by demanding an open
investigation on the tortures and rapes and strongly insisted on supporting the
rehabilitation of those victims of the government tyranny. The response from the civil
society groups was decisive at this moment, as the videos had erased smallest hopes in
those supporters who still believed that the government of Saakashvili was democratic
and could bring development for Georgia.

The NGOs showed exemplary cooperation during the 2012 elections and as a
result, the Saakashvili regime was forced to limit its authoritarian actions. Both
campaigns “This Concerns You” and “Must Carry, Must Offer” were the fundamental
basis for increasing chances for the opposition and people to change the government in
a peaceful manner by the parliamentary elections. NGOs were the primary source of
information for local diplomatic corps and international political observers, who closely
monitored elections period. Saakashvili government realised that the NGOs were
providing very important information for the international community and that the NGO
supervision limited their abilities to use undemocratic and illegal actions for winning
the parliamentary elections. NGOs were a safeguard for opposition parties and a
 guarantee for freedom of speech. The government of Saakashvili would have been very
successful in erasing opposition and being the dominant power in the elections period if
not the strong and interdependent work of hundreds of NGOs that chose to stand against authoritarian rule and fight for the democratic development of Georgia.

An October election of 2012 was a symbolic victory of people winning over tyrannical rule. Georgian society has been through a very rough road of Saakashvili regime, which was considered to be a more modified version of Shevardnadze government. The ex-NGO government, which had turned into one of the unconstitutional regimes in Georgian history, was responsible for tortures, deaths, false imprisonments, prisoner raping and property confiscations throughout whole Georgia. If not the strong determination of civil society groups in forms of NGOs to support the opposition and limit the government illegitimate actions as well as promote the spread of objective information the peaceful power transition would have been impossible in parliamentary elections October 2012.

It was clear that the government of Saakashvili was highly dependent on the international community and its reactions to the events unfolding in Georgia. It was exactly the strong work of NGOs, who managed to spread the real voice of Georgian people who were asking for help and support of international actors in 2012 when the country had fallen into a terrible situation. Due to the fact that all major countries were highly interested in the elections process and observed the parliamentary elections from a very close view the government of Saakashvili was forced to limit itself in using authoritarian techniques to win the elections. It was clear that in case of open imprisonments, tortures and threats of opposition the NGOs and other sources would directly inform international community on the violations and Saakashvili would lose its legitimacy. In 2012 Saakashvili was forced to admit the loss of the elections and to give the authority to the new political power the “Georgian Dream” which had a support from the majority of Georgians and was seen as the only way of liberation from the authoritarian rule.

Key-informant 7: “The year 2012 was once again a decisive moment for the Georgian society as with incredible dedication of NGOs support to the opposition powers, the people were given an opportunity to make a democratic choice and free themselves from the tyrannical regime of Saakashvili.”

The hostility between the third sector NGOs and ex-NGOs of the Saakashvili government, which began few years after the “Rose Revolution”, ended with the government change and peaceful power transition in 2012. Regardless of the fact that the post-revolutionary government was a more modified version of its former
administration with more experience on how to monitor NGOs and control external scrutiny, they still were unsuccessful in the hostile conflict with the third sector. Strong determination and a very close union of hundreds of both international and local NGOs resulted in the successful launch of various anti-authoritarian programs and limited illegitimate government actions to such extent that they were unable to maintain dominance of power within the country.

Saakashvili was unable to learn on the mistakes of the previous government. Both regimes lost their power due to wrong policy formulation in the relations with the third sector. In the moment when the CS/NGOs were openly signalling for cooperation and support towards government, both regimes in contrast showed attempts of establishing dominance and limiting the sphere of activities of the third sector. The cause of such hostile policies was due to the fact that Saakashvili and the previous regime wanted to pursue demands of a limited high elite group which intended to control the country based on individuals demands and high corruptive schemes. Any kind of cooperation with the NGOs would limit the opportunities of the elites to divert their power or increasing the level of corruption and their authority.

5. Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Openness</th>
<th>Terror</th>
<th>Oppression</th>
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<td>Unit of Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS/NGO relationship with the two authoritarian regimes in 1994-2012</td>
<td>Low level of cooperation</td>
<td>Low level of openness</td>
<td>High level of terror</td>
<td>High level of oppression</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Limited discussions on various topics between the two actors. Mostly the CS/NGOs were isolated by the authoritarian regimes.</td>
<td>• The government blocked all opportunities for the NGOs to have access on the official documentation.</td>
<td>• Frequent threats against the members of CS/NGOs.</td>
<td>• Continuous fight for dominance by the government</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No recommendations provided by the CS/NGOs were considered by the two authoritarian regimes through the research</td>
<td>• The CS/NGOs had limited scope for observation.</td>
<td>• Frequent cases of blackmailing by the government.</td>
<td>• Many cases of oppression from the government side.</td>
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Table 1. Empirical findings based on 4 variables that define the exact relationship between CS/NGOs and the two authoritarian regimes.

An empirical finding summarised in table 1 clearly shows that the relationship between the civil societies groups in form of NGOs and the two authoritarian regimes were mostly hostile with limited cooperation. Georgian case has shown that the NGO-state relations have very similar characteristics with other countries such as the Polish, Ukrainian and Serbian cases. The research confirms my hypothesis. Georgian NGOs just like other civil society groups discussed in the research on various cases had a hostile relationship with two governments. Data show that the civil society groups were one of the main opposition powers to the Shevardnadze and Saakashvili government.

The hypothesis is confirmed based on 4 variables:

1. Level of cooperation
2. Level of openness
3. Level of terror
4. Level of oppression

As the empirical findings have shown the level of cooperation and openness between the CS/NGOs and the two authoritarian regimes was very low and limited. Throughout the research period CS/NGOs were always under pressure and limited from having access to decision-making process in the government. If the government would allow CS/NGOs to have access to decision-making process, then the government would not manage to put forward its authoritarian strategies. Civil society groups would never allow Saakashvili or Shevardnadze to use the legislation for their own advantage.
Additionally, very few information was provided by both governments as they intended to isolate the third sector and bound their choice of actions against the government. Both Saakashvili and Shevardnadze were well aware that if the NGOs would have access to official documentation it would be easier for the third sector to find government violations and the criticism. Such kind of situation minimized the opportunity of establishing friendly and cooperative relations between the two actors.

On the other hand, the level of terror and conflict was very high, which was mainly based on the hostile actions of the authoritarian regimes, which did not want to allow the CS/NGOs to strong position against government. There were many cases of threats and oppression on the members and supporters of the third sector. Many of my key-interviewees have openly stated in the conversation that government controlled forces often threatened them and there was continuous spying on the NGO activity. Furthermore, government often used various illegal methods like blackmailing and illegal tapping to control the CS/NGO members and limit their scope of activity. Many NGO members were blackmailed and threatened that their family members and close friends would lose jobs or get hurt in case these individuals would not stop government criticism.

In response, CS/NGOs accepted the hostility and used various strategies to limit government dominance within the country. It was visible that that both Saakashvili and Shevardnadze did not wish to cooperate and consider the recommendations of the third sector and that the only opportunity to end tyranny was through hostile conflict. None of the presidents had fully realised the true power of the CS/NGO groups within the country, which as the empirical findings show brought drastic results for both regimes. As stated by key-interviewees blackmailing and threats increased determination and motivation to bring the end to the authoritarian rule.

Both governments of Shevardnadze and Saakashvili showed some slight cooperative nature with the NGOs in the beginning of the period and strong hostility at the end. During the Shevardnadze regime, the cooperative relations, which took place in the beginning between the NGOs and the government, was due to the fact that the NGOs had hoped to put the government on the democratic path by their support and assistance. However, the NGOs soon realised that the cooperation would not make significant changes in democratizing Shevardnadze regime and as a result a period of very hostile relations were established, which led to end of the regime with the NGO backed “Rose Revolution” in 2003.
However, during the Saakashvili regime the situation was very different and at the same time exceptional. The post-revolutionary government, which was made up of ex-NGO members, was very strong supporter of liberal democratic development. This was the reason why the NGOs and the government of Saakashvili could manage cooperative relations in the first years. However, the time has shown that authoritarian rule of ex-NGOs had turned into one of the bloodiest regimes of Georgian history. The role of NGOs in challenging both authoritarian rulers and bringing end to their regimes was enormous. In both cases 2003 and 2012 it was the strong cooperation and determination of NGO sector that ensured peaceful power transition and end of authoritarian rulers.

The findings of the research support the hypothesis that the relationship between the CS/NGOs and both authoritarian regimes were hostile. There was a period of limited cooperation when the CS/NGO sector had an attempt to move both governments away from authoritarian rule. However, as soon as it was visible that none of the regimes were ready to refuse authoritarian characteristics the relationship turned into hostility.

Variables used to define the relationship clearly support the hypothesis. Firstly, the level of cooperation between the two actors was very low. Secondly, the level of openness was similarly low as the CS/NGOs were always forced to be isolated from accessing official information. On the other hand, level of terror was very high as both authoritarian regimes tried to threaten and limit the power of CS/NGOs as they were considered to be one of the main forces of the government opposition. Finally, the level of conflict was very high, as the empirical findings have shown both actors were in continues disagreement on various topics and their determination was to weaken the power of opposite actors. Based on these indicators the research has shown that the hypothesis is confirmed and the relationship was truly hostile throughout the given period.

As the analysis has shown the NGO-state relationship in Georgia between 1994 and 2012 was very hostile. Both actors used a lot of challenging techniques. The indicators based on which the spectrum of various variables was defined as the following:

The two authoritarian regimes fought against civil society groups by:

1. Providing no/limited public information on the government activities.
2. Threats and terror against civil society groups.
3. Imprisonment and violence against many members of the NGOs.
4. Isolating NGO and closing all doors from any major discussions.
5. Terrorizing all individuals who had close contact to NGOs.
6. Illegal wiretapping, recording and monitoring of various NGOs.

Regardless of numerous techniques used by both authoritarian regimes, they were unable to halt the expansion of CS/NGO influence within the country. Imprisonments, threats and various illegal activities pursued by Shevardnadze and Saakashvili brought opposite effects as it only supported strengthening of the third sector. Government hostility and distrust towards CS/NGOs persuaded these organisations to fully devote their activities for bringing end to both regimes.

The information provided above conveys the relationship between the two actors was very hostile and there was only limited cooperation periodically. The limited cooperation occurred only in the periods when the regimes were not openly pushing the further expansion of authoritarian power. The limited cooperation took place during the Shevardnadze regime when the NGOs had an attempt to cooperate with the government by supporting the state to deal with human rights violations and create anti-corruptive schemes. The limited cooperation was a failure and the NGOs had begun hostile resistance to the Shevardnadze regime. Similarly, limited cooperation occurred during the second authoritarian regime. NGOs and the government of Saakashvili had a cooperative relationship up until the period when the government had moved from the path of democracy towards authoritarianism.

The response of the NGOs against the policies of the two authoritarian regimes was very firm and powerful. The cause of the NGOs becoming powerful opposition group was intimidation and aggression from the state. The third sector very successfully rearranged its strategies and campaigns and began pressurising the government.

The response of the civil society groups against government policies:
1. Close monitoring of government activities.
2. Continuous and strong government scrutiny of various violations.
3. Information campaign on the awareness of the government violations.
4. Close monitoring of the elections period and publication of government violations.
5. Mobilization of people both mentally and physically against the authoritarian rule.
6. Spread of information on the government violations both in the international and local communities.

All these instruments were used by the CS/NGOs as a response to the hostile policies. As soon as it was clear that there, as no room for friendly relations, the aim of the CS/NGOs became to weaken the dominant power of authoritarian regimes. The success of above mentioned strategies was confirmed by the fact that both of the authoritarian regimes were forced to peacefully give up authority and let new political powers governing. Throughout the research period CS/NGOs had positioned themselves as the main force of opposition against governments.

The empirical findings show that CS/NGOs did not have direct intention to be in hostile relationship with the two different states, but their hostility and conflict was based on the actions from the two governments. CS/NGOs had shown their will to support government in directing Georgia towards democratic development. One of the examples of CS/NGO support was when they provided 54 professionals to support the Shevardnadze government in the preparation for cooperating with the council of Europe. Similarly, CS/NGOs had supported post-revolutionary government by giving them time to adapt to the post-“Rose Revolution” period. However, both Shevardnadze and Saakashvili regimes misused supportive attitude of the NGOs and in response tried to limit and isolate the third sector. Only after such irresponsible actions from both governments, the CS/NGOs directed all their resources against limiting government power.

Empirical findings have shown that both level of cooperation and openness between the CS/NGOs and two authoritarian regimes was very low. On the other hand, level of conflict and terror between the two actors was very high. The relationship between the two actors from the period of 1994 up until 2012 goes in line with the theoretical analysis of Tocqueville, Dahl and Popper. As these authors stated, the civil society groups were a source of power that could limit the government and stop them from pursuing authoritarian actions. As the Georgian case has shown both authoritarian regimes were under a high level of criticism and scrutiny from the civil society groups. Additionally, it was the NGOs that have highly contributed in bringing an end to both of the regimes. The research shows that active civil society groups are very important in order to control governments and push them towards democratization and consideration of public will. The fact that one by one two authoritarian regimes were brought to end by peaceful means with the active work of civil society groups is a clear support for the
theories of Dahl, Tocqueville and Popper. The case of Georgia has shown that criticism and alternative opinion in civil society groups is the powerful source, which limits the power of the governments and in case of authoritarianism, strongly challenges the system.

6. Conclusion

The period of 1994-2012 has been one of the most decisive and remarkable periods in the Georgian history. This specific stage of Georgian history is conveying the first steps of an independent country, which for hundred years was under the strict rule of communist invaders. The new era has shown the rebirth of civil society groups in forms of NGOs and creation of multiparty political system. Regardless of the strong determination of Georgian people for democratic development the path was very rough and bloody. The research has shown that the people went through a very cruel road until they reached progress and solidification of liberal democratic values in the country. The rough road towards democracy included the period of two different authoritarian regimes, which as the research shows was well known for its torturing and bloody practises. However, since the period of 1994 the establishment of NGO sector in Georgia brought a very significant support for democratic development, as they became one of the major opponents of the authoritarian rule of Saakashvili and Shevardnadze.

In the period of 1994-2012 the NGOs actively worked on challenging unlawful government actions and promoting democratization of the country. Regardless of periodical limited cooperation between the NGOs and the two authoritarian governments the general relationship between the two actors were very hostile. As the research has shown the only reason why the NGOs periodically cooperated with the Saakashvili and the Shevardnadze government was an attempt to encourage the leaders to diminish authoritarian characteristics and promote democratic features in the government. However, in both cases the research has shown that the cooperative relationship was only temporary and the general attitude of these actors towards each other was full of hostility.

Considering that there is no analysis of the NGO relations with authoritarian governments in case of Georgia the empirical findings provide very important information, which could possibly be used for comparative analysis in future. There is a
clear similarity between the events that took place in Ukraine, Serbia and Poland, which similarly to Georgia CS/NGOs were the primary source of power bringing end to the rule of authoritarian regimes.

From the period of 1994 when the country was devastated by civil war and ethnic conflicts the CS/NGOs were the only source for preparing individuals with professional expertise in various fields of justice, human right, and anti-corruption. As the time passed individuals working in the NGOs had gained enough expertise and knowledge to begin external scrutiny of the Shevardnadze government. The political illiteracy and inexperience of the government officials appeared to be a great advantage for the NGOs, as it was very easy to gather information on illegal government activities on human rights violation, corruption and terror. Throughout the period until 2003, the NGOs managed to use various techniques including independent journalist and various researchers to expose violations of the authoritarian regime. As the only source of information and opposition to the government actions was coming from the third sector, it was the NGOs who managed to spread objective information and mobilize the society to speak up against the severe situation in the country. The “Rose Revolution” which has ended Shevardnadze’s tyrannical rule and led to the power transition into the hands of the people was a decisive moment in the history of Georgia.

Similarly CS/NGOs had maintained their role as a leading opposing power during the Saakashvili presidency, which turned out to be one of the bloodiest regimes in the Georgian history. One of the main differences between the two authoritarian regimes was that the government of Saakashvili was mainly made up of ex-NGO members, which twisted a very phenomenal situation between the two actors. The incorrect policies used by the ex-NGO government representatives against the third sector once again resulted in a government defeat and loss of power.

As the research has shown both governments used incorrect methods and strategies to cope with the CS/NGO groups within the country. Hostility and continuous attempts to weaken the third sector brought opposite consequences. In response to government hostility the CS/NGO determination had strengthened against both regimes, resulting in the loss of power by the leading political parties. Based on the empirical findings it could be said that in both cases the CS/NGO hostility against the governments was provoked by the regime policies. The third sector has tried to support both of the governments in beginning by various means, but as a response they had
received criticism and systematic attacks, which convinced the third sector in rethinking their attitudes and strategies towards the state.

I believe that the research done through interviews for the thesis has provided very clear information on the role of NGOs in challenging authoritarian regimes. Third sector is one of the strongest sources of opposition of authoritarian governments throughout the world. Georgian case clearly showed that the CS/NGO-state relationship would never be cooperative and friendly as long as the government tend to move towards authoritarianism. Based on the empirical evidence CS/NGO groups could be considered as a main source of opposition fighting for limiting the government powers in order to secure necessary democratic standards within the country.

The research has shown that high level of corruption and elite rule within the government had very significant effect on the policy formulation process. The hostility towards CS/NGOs was highly attributed to the corrupt individuals who were not prepared to give up their dominant power within the government. Signs of elite rule were visible in both governments were decision was made by few high corrupt individuals, who were ready to violate human rights and use various illegal actions in order to maintain the power and leadership. Georgian case is one example out of many in today’s world, when individuals with power are ready to violate all laws and oppress their populations in order to maintain the position in the high rankings of the government.

Both regimes have failed to maintain power as the decision-making and policy formulation was based on needs of a small elite groups. The Georgian case has shown that governments failed to maintain power as long as they did not consider the demands of the civil society groups who tried to speak for the people. Both Shevardnadze and Saakashvili were under the influence of corrupt elites who pursued only their interest. As a result to such limited government functioning both of the regimes failed to maintain control and finally were forced to transfer the power to other political parties.

As the research has shown the governments must carefully consider their policies towards the CS/NGO groups as they are very powerful actors and in case of hostile policies they are capable of transforming from supportive groups into powerful opponents. Georgian case has clearly shown that post-soviet governments had limited knowledge on the importance of the civil society groups and by underestimating their power both governments had introduced wrong policies that brought end to both regimes. Furthermore, one important aspect that the empirical findings have shown is
that the CS/NGO-state relationship will only be cooperative and friendly when the government will be administered by a democratic leader whose priority will not be to pursue interests of elites but to understand the need of people and divert the country towards the path, which will be supported by the majority of the population. Policies formulated by the corrupt and authoritarian regimes will always bring contrasting results and created hostility between the CS/NGOs and state.
7. References


Retrieved from:
8. Appendixes

Appendix 1. This interview sample was used both in Hungary and Georgia with all key-informants.

Non-Governmental Organisations and Authoritarian Regimes

Interview Structure

Thank you very much for finding a time to help with my thesis research. I would like to inform you on several important notices:

- The interview will be recorded and a transcript will be introduced.
- The interviews will be used as a primary source of information in my thesis research.

My thesis research analyses Relations between the Non-Governmental Organizations and Authoritarian Regimes in Georgia from 1994-2012. You have been selected as Key-informants of my research as you have had close links with the above-mentioned period.

Questions

1. How was the country ruled under Shevardnadze regime and what were main problems in Georgia in 1990’s? (Level of democracy/censorship/Freedom of Speech)
2. Could you tell me about the first non-governmental organizations, which established themselves in post-soviet Georgia and what were their main tasks and spheres of activity.
3. As I know Open Society Foundation, GYLA, ISAR, Eurasia were one of the first NGO in Georgia, which actively began their work how new were the values promoted by these NGO’s (was the post-soviet society problematic?) and in which problematic spheres did these NGO’s work with
4. How supportive was the Shevardnadze government with Non-Governmental organizations. Please describe the level of cooperation between the government and the NGOs
5. What achievements could you attribute to the NGO activity during the Shevardnadze government?

Revolutionary Period

6. Please tell me about the revolutionary period, what was the situation and what process brought people out in the street?
7. Could you mention several NGOs during the revolutionary period and what were the main activities that they pursued during the revolution (KMARA,
ISFED—International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, GYLA, Liberty Institute)

8. To what extent did the NGOs support the Georgian people to have a peaceful power transition in 2003?
9. Do you think the NGOs had a crucial importance ending the authoritarian regime of Shevardnadze and supporting new political power?

Post-Revolutionary Period

10. What was the role of NGOs in providing human resources for the government?
11. How was the role of the NGOs affected by the new government and what was the reaction of the government on NGO scrutiny?
12. Was the new government a democratic success in the beginning and how did the government priorities change throughout time?
13. How do you think, where would Georgia be now if there was no high NGO involvement since 1994 till present day?