
POST-SOVIET TRANSFORMATION

DOI: 10.19266/1829-4286-2019-02-103-123

**Implementation of Consociational Democracy in the South
Caucasian Plural States: Possibilities and Challenges**

EMIL ORDUKHANYAN

Brusov State University, Armenia

Two of the three recognized states of the South Caucasus - Georgia and Azerbaijan - have plural, i.e. multi-ethnic, societies. Both have declared the establishment of democratic regime as a constitutional purpose. However, nearly three decades the efforts for democratization have not yet succeeded, regardless of the optimistic opinions on the establishment of democratic regimes in these states at the initial stage of the post-Soviet transformation. Difficulties stem both from the unique nature of the phenomenon, i.e. the transition from the communist regime, and the lack of theories and models specific to the study of this phenomenon. For this reason, attempts are often made to apply other theories and models sharing similar characteristics. In the South Caucasian plural states, the use of a consociational model seems attractive since there is an effective experience of overcoming ethnic tensions in a number of plural European states based on this model. The article discusses the possibilities and obstacles of applying this model in Georgia and Azerbaijan, given the peculiarities of these societies.

Keywords

Consociational democracy, political stability, civic culture, ethnocentrism, consociational discourse, Georgia, Azerbaijan

Introduction

Almost three decades of the post-Soviet transformation proved that this process is neither a belated continuation of the third wave of democratization, as Huntington believed¹, nor it complies with the third-wave patterns. The need to overcome the serious challenges of

¹ **Huntington S.**, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, 1991.

democracy consolidation in post-Soviet transformation states requires either using the existent theories of other applications or developing entirely new, specific theories. Given the lack of experience of political studies in this region and the fact that specialists have only been trained for the last three decades, it can be stated that the first option is often the preferred one. Recently attempts have been made to apply theories to particular cases or particular groups of countries, taking into account the shared characteristics of the countries under study. For instance, given the fact that Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan are plural states and have conflicts, it is sometimes suggested to use the option of consociational democracy to overcome the challenges of democracy establishment in these states. In particular, T. Khidasheli proposes the creation of confederation based on a consociational model to resolve the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia. The author believes that this will be possible only when political elites have the will to guarantee regulations and when the population is ready to support them. There is also an opinion that economic reforms are needed, aimed at equal distribution of economic resources within the state, and that regional or federal arrangements should be based on a culture of self-government². The opportunities and obstacles of applying this theory in Georgia and Azerbaijan as countries located in the same region are discussed below. The issue will also be considered in terms of the existence of a relevant civic culture in those countries.

The Application of Consociational Democracy in Plural States

Under the consociational model used in plural states, state power can not be legitimized without broad participation. At the same time, the consolidation of the political power of any racial or ethnic group can be historically permanent and in some cases impede the principle of

² **Khidasheli T.**, Federalism and Consociationalism. Perspectives for Georgian State Reform, Federal Practice. Exploring alternatives for Georgia and Abkhazia, *Bruno Coppieters, David Darchiashvili and Natella Akaba (eds), 1999*, pp. 195-205.

social segregation³. Thus, the consociational model cannot be regarded as a universal form of democratic regime establishment even in plural countries, and there is a need to clarify the conditions under which it is more likely to be established.

First, it should be borne in mind that consociational theory has been proposed in deeply divided European democracies to ensure political stability. According to this theory, the destabilizing effects of sub-cultural segments in such countries have been neutralized at the elite level, by embracing non-majoritarian mechanisms for conflict resolution. The theory was extended due to the emergence of new democracies conducive to the government by a consociational model, given their plural social structure. This theory incorporates a broader concept, i.e. “consensus democracy”, to which the normative component was added as a more promising way to achieve stable democracy in strongly segmented societies. The characteristics of consociational democracy are: segmented society, grand coalition, proportionality, segmental autonomy, mutual (minority) veto.

Among the characteristics of consensus democracy are the oversized cabinet (executive body), the separation of powers, multi-party system, proportional representation, corporatist interest group system, bicameralism, (non-)territorial federalism and decentralization, entrenched constitution (which requires broad consensus), judicial oversight (the judiciary is empowered to review and revoke the decisions of the legislative and executive), an independent central bank⁴.

The characteristics set up for consensus democracy are more specific and detailed than those for the consociational democracy. Thus, the uncertainty of success of consociational democracy is greater. At the same time, this uncertainty provides greater flexibility, and success depends more on application skills rather than on the completeness of the theory. Although it is maintained consociational

³ **Issacharoff S.**, Constitutionalizing Democracy in Fractured Societies, *Journal of International Affairs*, 2004, **58**, 1, 73-93.

⁴ **Andeweg Rudy B.**, Consociational Democracy, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2000, 3, 509-536.

democracy helped to reduce the ethnic tensions in some of the European plural states, this model has always been quite controversial. The debates are mainly related to the validity of the theory, while there is a little criticism on the achievements, consequences and difficulties of its application in various countries. These debates can become more fruitful if consociational theory is formulated less inductively and at a higher level of abstraction, and if the critics of consociationalism focus more on its principles and less on the operationalizations. The erosion of social cleavages in many consociational democracies raises the question of whether consociationalism should lead to a prescription of more adversarial politics in those countries⁵.

The above characteristics are seen as advantages over the classical approaches to democratization in applying a consociational model to plural societies. They provide a real opportunity to have certain levers of power for various segments of plural societies, and a veto power as a legal mechanism for representing and defending their own interests. In his recent works, the author of consociational model A. Lijphart, highlights a set of favorable conditions for the application of a consociational model of democracy in divided societies or in those under such danger. Those are non-majoritarian segment, even segments, small number of segments, external dangers, small population, socio-economic equality, geographically concentrated segments, tradition of consensus, harmony and coexistence of political elites, overarching loyalty⁶.

Along with the advantages presented above, the consociational model may also have some difficulties in terms of its application.

According to A. Pappalardo, the predominance of political elites over a politically differential and organizationally encapsulated follower is only one of two conditions that clearly promote

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ **Lijphart A.**, *The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation*, *American Political Science Review*, 1996, 262-263.

consociationalism⁷. But presumably it could hide behind a massive political apathy when the leaders of different segments decide to cooperate with each other (which is favorable for consociationalism), while their followers do not want their leaders to move from competition to cooperation⁸.

In this case, the members or followers of the dominant ethnic group will obviously begin to treat consociationalism with less enthusiasm. Social differences do not automatically become divisive factors; they are made visible by politicians who use this lever to gain political support from their followers. The more persuasive the politicians have been in this regard, the more difficult it will be for them to carry their followers with them when they start cooperating with the “other side”⁹. This shows that the ruling elite is not in favor of a consociational model in terms of maintaining political leadership, as it may lose its complete power. This may explain, for instance, the process of transfer of power in Azerbaijan, when it was transferred from Heydar Aliyev to his son through elections, as well as the appointment by Ilham Aliyev of his wife as country’s vice president. This phenomenon further aggravated ethnocratic and clan manifestations in Azerbaijan.

An important feature of the consociational model is that it provides stability in the event of proper use or proper conditions. If leaders of different segments cooperate, and if their followers do not seriously hamper it, then the strengthening of stability is in fact predetermined. But at the same time, there can be unintended consequences. Lijphart warns that sometimes consociationalism can lead to uncertainty and inefficiency. Bargaining on the grand coalition within the elite can hinder the decision-making process. The application of proportionality in the formation of the civil service institute may overlap with the issue of appointment to the post of

⁷ **Pappalardo A.**, The Conditions for Consociational Democracy: A Logical and Empirical Critique, *European Journal of Political Research*, 9, 4, 1981, 365-390.

⁸ **Huyse L.**, Passiviteit, Pacificatie en Verzuiling in de Belgische Politiek: Een Sociologische Studies, Antwerp, Standaard Wet. Uitg., 1970, p. 125.

⁹ **Andeweg Rudy B.**, Op. cit.

worthy candidates, and the segmental autonomy may lead to a multiplication of the number of state institutions. The right of mutual veto, in turn, can lead the political process to a deadlock, which Lijphart believes to be the major problem of consociationalism¹⁰.

Given the importance of these potential difficulties, Lijphart points out that a distinction must be drawn between short-term and long-term effectiveness. In the short term, the consociational model may be less effective considering the reasons above. But in the long run, it will be more effective than competing policies, as consociationalism is the cornerstone of stability and legitimacy in deeply divided societies¹¹.

Salamey distinguishes corporate and integrative models of consociationalism. The author questions the effectiveness of the corporate consociational model in plural societies undergoing a democratic transition, as demographic and territorial shifts of power lead to controversies, which in turn lead to conflicts and state fragmentation. Therefore, as an alternative, more flexible way of government, Salamey proposes an integrative consociational model combining national and community interests in the separation of political power. National electoral strategies as well as administrative reforms are also included in the context of an integrative consociational model¹².

The approach of Norris on consociational theory is also worth of mentioning, which assumes that power-sharing in plural societies has many important consequences. This institute is meant to facilitate accommodation and cooperation among leadership elites, making them most suitable for states struggling to achieve stable democracy and good governance in divided societies. The author compares several multi-ethnic states to investigate the impact of formal power-sharing institutions (proportional electoral systems and federalism) on

¹⁰ **Lijphart A.**, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Explanation*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press. 1977, pp. 50-51.

¹¹ **Lijphart A.**, *Op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

¹² **Salamey I.**, Failing consociationalism in Lebanon integrative options, *International Journal of Peace Studies*, **14**, 2, Autumn/Winter 2009, 84-105.

several indicators of democratic stability and good governance. The research demonstrates three main findings:

- Worldwide, power-sharing constitutions combining proportional representation and federalism remain relatively rare (only 13 out of 191 states).
- Federalism was found to be unrelated to any of the indicators of good governance under comparison.
- In multiethnic states, proportional electoral systems, however, are somehow related to good governance.

According to the author, this provides strictly limited support for the larger claims made by consociational theory. Nevertheless, the implications for policymakers suggest that investing in basic human development is a consistently more reliable route to achieve stable democracy and good governance¹³.

O'Leary points out that anti-consociationalists fear that the consociation will lead to racism, radicalism and patriarchy, while consociationalists fear that the integrationists will provoke wars and adopt a biased attitude towards the dominant communities. The intensity of this debate shows the power of consociational thought¹⁴. Meanwhile, it should be noted, that despite some of the difficulties that the consociational theory has faced in practice, it is still applied successfully in many plural states.

In general, the difficulties must be overcome, since otherwise it will be impossible to solve the deeper problems existent in plural societies. The consociational model provides realistic opportunities to their solution. Consequently, to avoid the deepening of inter-community conflicts, appropriate mechanisms should be set up for the application of a consociational model in the South Caucasian plural societies. One of these mechanisms may be the consociational

¹³ **Norris P.**, Stable democracy and good governance in divided societies: Do power-sharing institutions work? Harvard University, 2005, p. 1.

¹⁴ **O'Leary B.**, Debating Consociational Politics: Normative and Explanatory Arguments. *From Power-Sharing to Democracy: Post-Conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies*, (Ed.) S. J. R. Noel. (Toronto: McGill-Queens University Press), 2005, pp. 3-44.

discourse as an important tool of political communication without which it will be quite difficult to form a relevant political consciousness.

In the context of cultural relativism, consociational discourse can become the cornerstone of overcoming inter-ethnic and intercultural differences within the same society. In this case, it is necessary to build political will on the basis of shared interests, aimed at equality and security for all segments of a plural society.

Plural societies are also distinguished by various internal conflicts. Such are the South Caucasian plural states - Georgia and Azerbaijan - characterized by inter-ethnic conflicts. There are different ways of resolving conflicts, but the most preferred of them is the search for consensus.

By their nature, ethno-political conflicts are divided into two major groups: self-determination and non-self-determination conflicts. Their main difference is in the legal component¹⁵. This seems to simplify the task as legal issues are easier to handle than political ones. However, this is true in case there are appropriate instances and mechanisms to impose their decisions on the parties to the conflict. Of course, there is also the possibility of a consensual solution to the conflict. However, this becomes an effective mechanism when the parties are convinced that in the absence of agreement, legal solutions will be unconditionally imposed. Meanwhile, as the international experience shows, the resolution of conflicts of self-determination is highly influenced by the political component, the solution is not always in line with legal norms and, at best, the solution is internationally binding.

Theoretically, two perceptions of consensus are distinguished: narrow consensus, as a means of political resolution of various conflicts and disputes, and broad consensus, also called civil

¹⁵ **Torosyan T.**, Perspectives of Rights and Challenges of Political Interests in Conflict Resolution: The Cases of Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh, *Essex Human Right Review*, 2015, **10**, 1, <http://projects.essex.ac.uk/ehrr/v10n1/torosyan-perspectives-of-rights-and-challenges-of-political-interests-in-conflict-resolution.pdf> (30.03.2017).

agreement. The broad perception of consensus is closely linked to the socio-political component, according to which the consensus is the agreement of the vast majority of people about the social order manifested in their actions.

Within the framework of political discourse theory, there is also a classification of discourse into conflicting and consensual types. The first of them narrows the consciousness of the parties to the conflict, diminishing the prospect of conflict resolution, while the consensual type broadens the awareness of the parties to the conflict and creates more realistic opportunities for conflict resolution¹⁶. Referring to consensual methods, Aklayev notes that they are of particular importance for ethno-political conflict management strategies. In this respect, the author distinguishes consociation and arbitration as consensual methods¹⁷. The first of these two methods is more preferable, as it is not only aimed at overcoming internal conflicts in plural societies, but also provides the basis for the transition to democracy. It should be noted, however, that the problem is not limited to the choice of consensual method, as a number of factors are essential for the establishment of democracy (civilization, values, situational factors, etc). Moreover, an important precondition for applying the consensual method is the rapid and decisive use of arbitration by the international community. In that case, the parties to the conflict will find that the consensual method is more preferable. Otherwise, it would be desirable for at least one of them to reach a solution that is more favorable to him through political methods.

Although the consociational theory was mainly developed for the peaceful resolution of problems in multi-ethnic societies, it has an obvious potential for expansion¹⁸. McGarry believes that territorial disputes on the basis of pluralism continue to be the roots of conflicts

¹⁶ **Ordukhanyan E.**, *Government and Opposition: Analysis of Political Discourse*, Limush, Yerevan, 2009, p. 79, (in Armenian).

¹⁷ **Aklaev A.**, *Ethnopolitical conflictology: Analysis and Management*, M., 2005, p. 346-354, (in Russian).

¹⁸ **Rubinstein A.**, *Elements of a general theory of the flaws of a mixed economy*, *Issues of state and municipal management*, 2017, 1, 71-102, (in Russian).

in former Soviet countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Georgia¹⁹. Current internal developments in Azerbaijani society show that these contradictions can be exacerbated if authoritarian approaches on ethnic basis and particularly dangerous manifestations of ethnocracy continue to deepen.

As McGarry and O'Leary mention, there are two ways of resolving conflicts in the territorially concentrated communities. The first strategy is integrationist, which emphasizes the unity of differences in plural states. But this option is hostile in terms of its territorial inclusion. The second strategy is the accommodationist, which supports the autonomy and integrity of different political communities through broad institutional approaches. In this case, federalism may be the preferred solution²⁰. At the same time, the authors emphasize that territorial self-government can be viable by incorporating consociational elements recognizing cultural and other differences between segments and institutionalizing them through proportionalism and mutual veto²¹.

From the point of view of conflict management in socially hostile societies, Wolf also emphasizes the consociational approach, which attributes two important elements: power sharing and self-governance. In this context, Reilly emphasizes the theory of centripetalism of power, which fosters the electoral system, in which political parties are given much greater opportunity to meet inter-ethnic demands. Roeder views the same problem in terms of power dividing or the multiple-majorities approach. This theory is based on the idea that when power is concentrated in the hands of a small number of people, then managing conflict in divided societies becomes a much more difficult task²².

¹⁹ **Basta K., McGarry J., Simeon R.**, *Territorial Pluralism. Managing Difference in Multinational States*. UBC Press; Reprint edition, 2015, p. 3.

²⁰ **Basta K., McGarry J., Simeon R.**, Op. cit., p. 4.

²¹ **Basta K., McGarry J., Simeon R.**, Op. cit., p. 7.

²² **Wolff S., Yakinthou Ch. (eds.)**, *Conflict Management in Divided Societies: Theories and Practice*, Routledge, London, 2012, p. 128.

This can be seen in the Azerbaijani society, when the real political power is completely concentrated in the hands of one ruling family. Consequently, overcoming the conflicts in Azerbaijan remains a serious problem.

Papagianni argues that NGOs, which create channels of communication, can make a major contribution to conflict management, thereby fostering trust between political parties to the conflict²³. Without denying the effectiveness of such mechanisms, it is still difficult to point out at least one conflict resolution process where this factor was relevant. However, in this respect as well, civic organizations in Azerbaijan are also subject to various pressures, which again proves the consolidation of an ethnocentric authoritarian regime. In case of Georgia, the problem is not that hard because NGOs operate rather effectively. If the goal of conflict management is to seek or support institutional mechanisms, then there are more incentives for conflicting parties to follow political rules rather than return to violence for their incompatible goals²⁴. However, it should be noted that these realities may vary in each case, as each conflict has its own specificity.

A number of researchers are focusing solely on conflict resolution or transformation in divided societies. This is mainly due to the fact that conflict management has traditionally been identified with conflict containment²⁵. However, in divided societies, in addition to the institutional approaches to conflict management, it is also important to consider the question of satisfying human needs, as the realization of these demands, as Azar²⁶ and Burton²⁷ note, can be crucial to conflict management in these societies. In addition to this, it

²³ **Kewir Kiven J.**, Conflict Management in Divided Societies: Theories and Practice, *Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security*, 2012, 136-138.

²⁴ **Wolff S., Yakinthou Ch. (eds.)**, Op. cit., p. 79.

²⁵ **Hamad A.**, The Reconceptualisation of Conflict Management. *Peace, Conflict and Development: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 7, 2005.

²⁶ **Azar E.**, *Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*. Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1990.

²⁷ **Burton J.**, ed., *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. Conflict Series, Vol. 2, Macmillan, London, 1990.

is also necessary to take into account the cultural characteristics of the environment, which mainly include the non-political needs of relevant groups. At first glance, it may seem that since broad consensus is fully consistent with the theory of consensual discourse, thus in plural societies, such as Georgia and Azerbaijan, the consociational discourse can help to overcome the contradictions between different ethnic, religious and cultural groups and build a harmonious and balanced society. However, if the problem is viewed on the above three dimensions (institutional approaches, meeting needs, cultural peculiarities of the environment), the solutions face complex challenges and serious obstacles with regard to conflict resolution, and especially democratization.

Ethnocracy as an Obstacle to Democratization

In the two South Caucasian post-Soviet states, Azerbaijan and Georgia, one can trace the elements of a strongly emphasized ethnic supremacy of the titular people, which is highly characteristic of ethnocratic political regimes. Ethnocratic aspirations are usually typical to plural societies where the population has ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and other differences. There are clear differences between Georgia and Azerbaijan in democratization, European integration and in a number of other ways affecting stateness, but this has only influenced the differences in forms of ethnocracy in this or that country.

In ethnocracies, *de facto* rights are defined by ethnic origin rather than by universal citizenship. In these states, the source of legitimacy of the political regime is not the civilians (*demos*) themselves but the dominant ethnic group. The latter appropriates the state apparatus and starts to implement a discriminatory policy against other ethnicities. The dichotomy divides the *ethnos* of the state into natives and settlers, though both are in their turn divided into different ethno-classes. Ethnocracy is inherently undemocratic in spite of the fact that it can display characteristics of democracy, such as universal

suffrage or democratic institutions²⁸. Moreover, Azerbaijan is a member of the Council of Europe, is included in the Eastern partnership. Georgia is also a member of the Council of Europe. In 2013, it has signed an Association Agreement, and the country's leadership has repeatedly stated its determination to join the European Union.

In ethnocratic states, democracy is flawed because it lacks the “democratic structure”. Ethnocracy seeks to breach a number of democratic principles, such as equal citizenship, the existence of territorial political communities (demos), and protection against the tyranny of the majority²⁹. In particular, although Georgia has been a member of the Council of Europe for nearly two decades, it has failed to fulfill commitments under the Convention on Regional Languages assumed at the time of accession. The purpose of such steps is to make the complaints of non-titular ethnic groups illegal by the dominant ethnic group, creating a “basis” for suppressing them. It is clear that neither the addition of the word “ethnic” to “democracy” (in case of Georgia) nor the use of the term “normative democracy” (in case of Azerbaijan) can conceal the elements of ethnic discrimination in those countries. In such states, concepts such as public and elite aspirations for democracy, fair elections, free press, effective use of democratic mechanisms, non-violent struggle against non-dominant groups, etc. are distorted. These regimes are characterized by internal controversies between democratic and non-democratic tendencies, leading domestic political life to turbulent and volatile state or unleashing ethno-political conflicts³⁰. It is no coincidence that ethnic democracies have a high incidence of conflicts, and violent means, sometimes even military force, is generally used for their resolution. Medvedev believes that under the radical modernization of society (which is also the case with post-Soviet transformation),

²⁸ **Smootha S.**, The Model of Ethnic Democracy, European Center for Minority Issues, ECMI Working Paper 13, October 2001, p. 22.

²⁹ **Yiftachel O.**, Ethnocracy: The Politics of Judaizing Israel/Palestine, *Constellations* 6, 3 (September): 1999, pp. 364-390.

³⁰ **Smootha S.**, Op. cit., p. 23.

ethnocentrism becomes a dominant worldview through which all spheres of society's development, from economy to culture, are evaluated, dividing people into two categories: ethnic insiders and ethnic outsiders³¹.

The belief of titular ethnic group that their way of life and their type is the best and that they are better than others is easily transformed into discrimination against other groups, even directed to their elimination³². In particular, such manifestations occurred towards the Armenians and other ethnic groups in Azerbaijan and Artsakh in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the Turkish ethnicity of Azerbaijan³³.

The existence of non-democratic elements in the model of ethnic democracy has become a major cause of criticism and rejection of this model. According to Smooha, ethnic democracy is criticized for its illegitimate nature (non-democracy is presented as democracy), for its instability (the political system built on hostile contradictions cannot be sustainable), for its ineffectiveness (ongoing conflicts)³⁴. The author emphasizes that ethnic democracy is especially attractive to states with multi-ethnic elements that have adopted the path of democracy. For these states, the transition from a non-democratic regime to a liberal, multicultural or consociational democracy is rather difficult. Thus, they prefer ethnic democracy as a compromise between maintaining democracy and maintaining ethnic supremacy and nationalism based on the experience of the previous regime. Some former Soviet states, among which Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, and especially Azerbaijan, are moving in that direction³⁵. Analyzing

³¹ **Medvedev N.**, Consensual Aspects of Modern Russian Federalism, Bulletin of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Series: Political Science, 2001, 3, p. 66.

³² **Pashukova T.**, Ethnocentrism in Intercultural Communication, MSLU Bulletin, 563, p. 50-61, p. 59, (in Russian).

³³ **Cox C., Eibner J.**, Ethnic Cleansing in Progress: War in Nagorno-Karabakh, Zurich, London and Washington, 1993.

In Azerbaijan, talking about ethnicity is considered a crime, <https://armenpress.am/arm/news/881095/adrbejanum-etnik-patkanelutyanyan-masin-khosely-ditarkvum.html> (03.03.2017)

³⁴ **Smooha S.**, Op. cit., p. 84.

³⁵ **Smooha S.**, Op. cit., p. 85.

political regimes established in the post-Soviet states, Torosyan and Sukiasyan place Georgia in a “waiting group” of states³⁶, along with those states the regime changes of which are still ongoing. The results of recent assessments of political regimes (Freedom House: Nations in Transit) also register this fact: Azerbaijan is characterized by a strong authoritarian regime, whereas Georgia – by a transitional government or a hybrid regime³⁷.

Referring to the form of political regime in Georgia, Sabanadze defines it as ethnic democracy. The author points out that the main cause of instability in Georgia is the combination of weak statehood and ethnic democracy. The latter can lead to a very fragile and unpredictable situation. Ethnic democracy is rather perceived as improper, unfair political regime, as it is clearly in the interests of the main ethnic group³⁸. In this case, instability stems primarily from the nature of the regime rather than weakness of the state, as the authors of the model of ethnic democracy often see it as a phase of transition from non-democratic to democratic regime, which is particularly true of weak states and those under democratic transformation³⁹.

Ethnic democracy becomes the source of instability in two main ways: first, it alienates minorities and by doing so undermines their loyalty to the state and “legitimizes” their claims which disrupts state security and stability; second, it ethnicizes political, socioeconomic and other contradictions and by doing so removes them from the sphere of normal political bargaining and transforms them into an uncompromising struggle over non-negotiable categories, such as ethnic identity, national pride and recognition⁴⁰.

³⁶ **Torosyan T., Sukiasyan H.**, Three Stages, Three Groups and Three Paradigms of Post-Soviet Transformation, *Armenian Journal of Political Science*, 1, 1, 2014, 51-61.

³⁷ *Nations in Transit 2016*, available from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2016> (20.04.2017)

³⁸ **Sabanadze N.**, *Georgia's Ethnic Democracy: Source of Instability/ The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, Open Society Institute, 2005, pp. 115-139.

³⁹ **Sabanadze N.**, Op. cit., pp. 115-139.

⁴⁰ **Sabanadze N.**, Op. cit., p. 116.

The societies that combine semi-democracy with politicized ethnicity can be described as “ethnic democracies”. This is the type of democracy characterized by non-democratic institutionalization of dominance of one ethnic group. In this case, the state is designed to serve the interests of the members of the majority group rather than those of all its citizens⁴¹.

Yarve also considers that ethnic democracy should be placed in the context of regime change from authoritarian to democratic. Ethnic democracy should not be considered as an end station, at which a country has arrived, but rather as a part of its eternal journey towards a more democratic society⁴². Therefore, it can be argued that the approaches of the authors of the above model cannot fully characterize all the states with plural societies. In some instances, their aspirations from a non-democratic regime to democracy through the interim application of the model of ethnic democracy turn to an already established regime rather than a transitional one, like the case of Azerbaijan. Consequently, aspirations from a non-democratic regime to a model of full-fledged democracy may in some cases lead to the re-establishment of the non-democratic model, but with different features. In this case, the endpoint of ethnic democracy as a transitional regime is the ethnic authoritarian regime, with prevailing interests of the dominant ethnic group (ethno-authoritarianism). Ethnic democracy cannot be an intermediate path to democracy; in such cases it is a direct path to ethno-authoritarianism. Very often, ethnic democracy serves as a political tool to hide the real regime preferences of states or to conceal the existing problems. By applying this model, states are trying to show that they are striving for democracy, but they are actually trying to strengthen the established authoritarian regimes.

Sabanadze argues that in case of Georgia, ethnic democracy is not only the cause of instability, but it can also lead to disintegration⁴³,

⁴¹ **Smootha S.**, *The Model of Ethnic Democracy*, ECMI Working Paper No.13, Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2001, p. 24.

⁴² **Yarve P.**, *Ethnic Democracy and Estonia: Application of Smootha’s Model*, ECMI Working Paper No.7, Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2000, p. 29.

⁴³ **Sabanadze N.**, *Op. cit.*, p. 118.

which can become a real threat to state security. The author highlights that the Soviet legacy played an important, if not decisive, role in shaping nationalism in post-communist Georgia. This was the reason why Georgia made a transition from the communist authoritarian regime to weak ethnic democracy⁴⁴. The same can be said with regard to Azerbaijan, but with some reservation, given the fact that nationalism of the Azeris continues to grow there, threatening even the physical security of the indigenous ethnicities.

Georgia has failed to build a viable ethnic democracy. Sabanadze believes that Georgia's weakness as a state largely stems from the ethnic factors. Possible causes for weakness are poor resources, political divisions within the majority, corruption, mismanagement and an undemocratic culture. The author also argues that ethnic democracy will further weaken the state⁴⁵. Despite the progress of democratization noticeable in the Georgian society in recent years by the efforts of the West, ethnic dominance continues to be maintained, and thus the likelihood of pressure on other ethnicities remains high, as the latter do not yet have proportional representation in state representative bodies.

Deutsch and Collins point out that overcoming inter-group hostility and establishing positive relations can help to strengthen ties between members of different groups. To this end, the representatives of different groups should work together and pursue the same goal⁴⁶. In this regard, the consociational model can serve as an effective tool for activating inter-group relations, with the collective security of all groups as a common goal. If these groups want to live in safety, they should not only view the security within the scope of their own group, but they should consider everyone's safety as a common goal, since the security threats to their group stem from other groups.

⁴⁴ **Sabanadze N.**, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁴⁵ *The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, Edited by **Smootha S., Yarve P.**, ECMI, 2005, p. 247.

⁴⁶ **Deutsch M.**, *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973.

Thus, under the models of ethnocratic and ethnic democracy established in Azerbaijan and Georgia with some differences, the interests of non-dominant ethnic groups are de facto suppressed by dominant ethnic groups. Such a situation creates the illusion of democratization, which is explained by the fact of being in a transition phase. In case of Azerbaijan, the problem is much more complex as compared to Georgia, as the Georgian society has seen a certain increase in the level of democracy in recent years. As opposed to this, in Azerbaijan there has been a steady backward towards the ethnic authoritarianism.

Consociational democracy in South Caucasian plural states can be an effective way of transition from non-democratic to democratic regime, with the modernization of political culture as a precondition. This model initially rejects the supremacy of any ethnic group over other ethnicities, which is one of the mandatory principles of the classical democracy.

Inglhart believes that economic progress is gradually leading to social and cultural changes that strengthen democratic institutions. This explains why democracy has recently extended over economically developed countries, that is, where “values of self-expression” are preferable to “values of survival”⁴⁷. This approach is surely not universal, and works only under certain conditions. This is illustrated by the cases of the South Caucasian countries. Azerbaijan has the highest economic level and the lowest democracy level (a stable authoritarian regime⁴⁸). This means that economy is not an essential but a supporting element of democratic progress. As Almond and Verba maintain, the key element of democracy is a culture (or in other words, the civilization to which a society belongs⁴⁹). In this respect, Harrison's approach of how culture affects social progress is

⁴⁷ **Inglehart R.**, Culture and Democracy. *Culture Matters. How Values Promote Social Progress* (ed. by Harrison L. and Huntington S.), M., Moscow School of Political Studies, 2002, p. 125, (in Russian).

⁴⁸ **NIT2016 Azerbaijan**, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2016/azerbaijan> (01.04.2017).

⁴⁹ **Almond G., Verba S.**, Civic Culture and Stability of Democracy, *Polis: Political Studies*, 1992, 4, 122-135, (in Russian).

remarkable. The author identifies different elements the various manifestations of which allow to classify cultures into two groups: progressive and static. These are education, encouragement, social solidarity, justice, honesty, etc⁵⁰. For instance, in developing cultures, education is a key to progress, whereas in static cultures, education is seen as a secondary value. In progressive cultures, individual abilities are an important factor in personal career growth. In static cultures, this role is played by social origin and relationships. In progressive cultures, the line of social identity and trust goes beyond the family and encompasses a much broader social whole. In traditional static cultures, the line of trust is limited to family. Social systems with a low radius of identification and trust are more prone to corruption, nepotism, tax evasion and do not strive for humanity. In progressive cultures, justice and honesty are the most expected outcomes. Conversely, in static cultures, justice as an individual success can only be accomplished by the power of money or personal ties. In progressive cultures, power is horizontal, whereas in static cultures it is centralized and vertical⁵¹. It is easy to notice that all the elements of static culture are present in Azerbaijan, while Georgia has partially overcome some characteristics of static culture. But this does not mean that culture is leading to complete development. In plural societies, such as Azerbaijan, the division of power is vertical, and the problem of equality between different ethnicities, with regard to cultural autonomy and political initiative, remains unresolved.

The problem under study has different manifestations in consolidated and emerging democracies. Anderson argues that in full-fledged democracies, political culture and the effectiveness of political system depend on the level of political satisfaction. In addition, the impact of political culture is lower than the effectiveness of the system when alternative explanations are taken into account. Conversely, the level of political satisfaction in emerging democracies is not related to

⁵⁰ **Harrison L.**, Promoting Cultural Progress. *Culture Matters. How Values Promote Social Progress* (ed. by Harrison L. and Huntington S.), M., Moscow School of Political Studies, 2002, p. 294-295, (in Russian).

⁵¹ Ibid.

the effectiveness of the political culture or system. In general, Anderson's research show that the structure of democracy satisfaction in full-fledged and new democratic systems is not alike⁵².

Thus, in plural societies, democracy cannot have a future if the absence of conditions of equal competition between different segments of society as sub-cultures weakens the influence and importance of political culture on the stability of the political system. This also conditions the conflicting potential of inter-ethnic, religious or other issues existing in new democracies, which not only threatens effective democratization but also undermines public security. Consociational democracy can therefore be seen as a model for overcoming the above problems if there is a place for consociational discourse between different segments, aimed at building and satisfying common interests rather than individual or group interests. In this case, political culture will turn into a more important factor for democratization, as the case with full-fledged democracies.

Conclusion

The analysis of the impact of various factors determining the effective application of consociational democracy, as well as the consideration of the possibilities of introducing this model in the South Caucasian plural states, lead to the following conclusions:

1. In addition to the general difficulties of democratization in the post-Soviet transformation countries due to the unique features of this unprecedented process of transition, there are also a number of specific problems. These problems in the two recognized plural states of the South Caucasus - Georgia and Azerbaijan - are the result of multi-ethnic structure of the society and their belonging to a particular civilization. Due to

⁵² **Anderson Christopher J.** *Political Satisfaction in Old and New Democracies.* Center on Democratic Performance, Binghamton University, New York, 1998, p. 22.

the last factor, the problem of democratization of Georgia is related to the modernization of the value system and the formation of a political culture, whereas Azerbaijan has practically no prospects, since the vast majority of the population belongs to a totally different civilization.

2. Consociational democracy is not an opportunity to build a democracy in plural societies, but an opportunity to overcome the issues of pluralism in democratic societies through the elaboration of democratic mechanisms for organizing public life.
3. In the Georgian society, ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and other segmental differences are displayed between different groups, and there are elements of ethnocentricity, which create conditions for the predominance of some ethnic groups over the others. Meanwhile, there are also some factors contributing to democratization through consociational democracy, such as the small population and geographical concentration of segments.

These factors may contribute to the formation of consociational discourse in the context of the gradual reinforcement of civic culture since they create additional potential for segments to pursue a common goal. In this respect, security can serve as a common goal, otherwise the dominant ethnicities will always strive for dominance, imposing their own political culture. The underrepresented ethnicities, in their turn, will try in every way to counter, resist, and deter the various threats posed by the dominant ethnic group, thereby always creating conflict situations. Such processes may exacerbate the internal crisis and lead to the entrenchment of authoritarian, ethnocratic regimes in order to preserve the advantage of a dominant ethnicity. However, it is not possible to permanently suppress the natural need for self-realization of these segments using the force. Violence can pose permanent threats to instability and security, such as the case with the two recognized plural states of the South Caucasus.