



# Government formation and cabinet types in new democracies: Armenia and Georgia in comparative European perspective



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## ABSTRACT

This article is an interdisciplinary comparative research in constitutional law and political science on government formation. The article analyses the possibility of application of European model of government formation to models in the post-soviet countries based on the analyses of the constitutional frameworks and key political, contextual factors that influence the formation of different types of governments. The research looks at the processes of government formation in Armenia and Georgia and defines the extent to which the government formation processes correspond to the broader European experience. The article provides an empirical basis for further comparative research on coalition formation in Central and Eastern European as well as newly democratic post-Soviet countries. Article is based on constitutional system and political practice of Armenia and Georgia in 2003–2012.

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## 1. Introduction

The transformation of systems of government has become one of the most significant subjects of research in political and legal sciences and constitutional design since the collapse of communist regimes in the early 1990s. It should be noted, that this important issue was researched by number of scientists both from the fields of law and politics (for example, Müller & Strom, 2003, 2010; Lupia & Strom, 2010; Van Heffen, Kickert, & Thomassen, 2000; Martin & Stevenson, 2001; Meyer-Sahling & Veen, 2012 and etc.). These researches were carried out on the formation of different types of governments in Western European countries. Also these studies have tended to analyze the traditions of government formation in parliamentary democracies. The electoral systems (majoritarian, proportional, mixed) and results of parliamentary elections are the key element for the creation of government and political parties are the main actors in the process of government formation in Western Europe. Over the last 20

years, the above-mentioned works on Western Europe have been extended to Central and Eastern Europe. As a multitude of coalition studies confirm, the models of government formation and the constitutional procedures identified in Western Europe can be applied to post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. However, this article attempts to look at the extent to which these models are generally applicable when applied to post-soviet countries.

This interdisciplinary article addresses the above-mentioned question in relation to government formation issues in Armenia and Georgia. To what extent are the government formation models established in Western European and Central and Eastern European countries (in use) exercised in the South Caucasus region? In this research, author reveals the legal background of Government formation in Georgia and Armenia and defines the types of governments formed in these countries following parliamentary elections. The reasons for the formation of one type of government versus another type are discussed

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below. The research deals with the defining of the main motivations that make political parties join the government after parliamentary elections. Are they encouraged with office-seeking, policy-seeking or vote-seeking motivations? What specific contextual factors of these countries had an impact on the formation of government? These questions have a large significance for identifying the basic differences and similarities of government formation processes between the European and newly democratic post-Soviet countries.

The objectives of this work are to analyze the constitutional procedures of government formation in semi-presidential and parliamentary systems and evaluate the character of political negotiations between political parties for formation of different types of coalition cabinet. We aim to show the main principles of coalition cabinets in European and post-soviet countries. In research, we use qualitative and quantitative methods of research, comparative analyses of constitutional norms and other documents of European and post-soviet countries as well as statistical analyses of results on parliamentary election of above-mentioned countries.

## 2. Constitutional design and government formation

### 2.1. Constitutional framework in Georgia

Constitutional norms for elections, formation of coalition and checks and balances between legislative and executive powers, role of President and Parliament in formation of Government, their responsibility and accountability are very important for explaining government formation processes in these countries. Based on the constitutional design, in scientific literature Armenia and Georgia are considered as semi-presidential countries ([The Constitution of Georgia, 1995](#)). Constitution of Georgia defines that the President of Georgia shall be the Head of State of Georgia and shall lead and exercise the internal and foreign policy of the state. The President of Georgia shall be also the higher representative of Georgia in foreign relations ([The Constitution of Georgia, 1995](#)). This constitutional norms show that president of Georgia is not only head of state, but she/he has a strong power in executive branch of state. Constitution notes that the Government of Georgia shall ensure the exercise of the executive power, the internal and foreign policy of the state in accordance with the legislation of Georgia. It is clear that Government are authorized only ensure the exercise of the executive power, when the President personally exercises executive power. Thus internal and foreign policy of the state is not an exclusive competition of Government of Georgia. The second significant issue is that the Government shall be responsible before the President and the Parliament of Georgia. This constitutional norm confirms that responsibility of government is divided between President and Parliament and formation of government is not connected to Parliament as in many parliamentary systems.

The President has strong powers in executive branch, but formally head of the Government the is Prime Minister

who shall determine the directions of the activity of the Government, organize the activity of the Government, exercise co-ordination and control over the activity of the members of the Government, submit report on the activity of the Government to the President and be responsible for the activity of the Government before the President and the Parliament of Georgia ([The Constitution of Georgia, 1995](#)). Composition of government shall be also formed with active participation of the President. Constitution defines that the Prime Minister shall appoint other members of the Government by the consent of the President, be authorized to dismiss the members of the Government. And next significant issue determines role of President is that the Government and the members of the Government shall withdraw the authority before the President of Georgia and not before the Parliament of Georgia.

The President of Georgia has very strong power in working process of Government. The President of Georgia shall be authorized to convene and preside over the sittings of the Government with regard to the issues of exclusive state importance. Decision adopted at the sitting shall be formed by the act of the President. It is important that there is not defined in the constitution what are “issues of exclusive state importance” and usually President shall determine issues of state importance and convene and preside over the sittings of the Government. Practice shows that President Saakashvili has been always initiator of sitting of Government on these issues.

The constitution of Georgia allow to the President be active part of Government formation after Presidential and Parliamentary election. According the constitution, after taking the oath by the President of Georgia, the Government shall withdraw the authority before the President of Georgia. The President shall uphold the withdrawal of the authority of the Government and be entitled to charge the Government with the exercise of the responsibilities until the appointment of a new composition. There must be noted that government withdraws the authority before the President and not before Parliament of Georgia.

Authority of the Government after the consultations with the Parliamentary Factions shall choose a candidate of the Prime Minister, whereas the candidate of the Prime Minister the candidates of the members of the Government by the consent of the President within a term of 10 days. Within 3 days from the end of the above mentioned procedure the President of Georgia shall submit the composition of the Government to the Parliament for confidence.

Government of Georgia needs confidence from the Parliament. Within a week from the submission of the composition of the Government by the President of Georgia the Parliament shall consider and vote the issue of declaration of confidence to the composition of the Government and the Governmental program. In case a composition of the Government and its governmental program do not gain the confidence of the Parliament, the President of Georgia shall submit the same or a new composition of the Government to the Parliament within a term of a week. In case a composition of the Government and the program of the Governmental thereof do not gain the confidence of the Parliament for three times, the President

of Georgia shall nominate a new candidate of the Prime Minister within a term of 5 days or appoint the Prime Minister without consent of the Parliament, whereas the Prime Minister shall appoint the Ministers by the consent of the President of Georgia within a term of 5 days as well. In such a case the President of Georgia shall dissolve the Parliament and schedule extraordinary elections ([Constitution of Georgia, 1995](#)).

## 2.2. Constitutional framework in Armenia

The President of the Republic of Armenia has an almost the same powers as in Georgia. The President of Armenia is the head of the state, shall strive to uphold the Constitution and to ensure the regular functioning of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. The President of the Republic shall be the guarantor of the independence, territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Armenia. Despite the Georgian President the President of Armenia do not directly exercises the internal and foreign policy of the country and there is the second important actor in executive power are Government and Prime-minister.

Armenian constitution defines the almost the same procedure for government formation. The President shall, on the basis of the distribution of the seats in the National Assembly and consultations held with the parliamentary factions, appoint as Prime Minister the person enjoying confidence of the majority of the Deputies and if this is impossible the President of the Republic shall appoint as the Prime Minister the person enjoying confidence of the maximum number of the Deputies. The President of the Republic shall appoint the Prime Minister within ten days after acceptance of the resignation of the Government. The Government shall be formed within 20 days after the appointment of the Prime Minister. Thus, formally President has to consider results of parliamentary elections for appointment of Prime-minister and formation of the government of Armenia. At the same time, the President has strong role in executive power: President shall appoint to and dismiss from office the members of the Government upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister, shall accept the resignation of the Government on the day of the first sitting of the newly elected National Assembly, of the assumption of the office by the President of the Republic, of the expression of the vote of no confidence to the Government, of not giving approval to the program of the Government, of the resignation of the Prime Minister or when the office of the Prime Minister remains vacant. The Government shall develop and implement the domestic policy of the Republic of Armenia, but at the same time the Government shall develop and implement the foreign policy of the Republic of Armenia jointly with the President of the Republic. There is also very significant that the procedure for the organization of operations of the Government and other public administration bodies under the Government shall upon the submission of the Prime Minister be defined by the decree of the President of the Republic ([The Constitution of The Republic of Armenia, 1995](#)). This constitutional norm shows that presidential role is very important in executive power.

As in Georgia, Armenian president has a right to

participate in settings of Government of Armenia. The constitution defines that the Prime Minister shall supervise the Government activities and coordinate the work of the Ministers, shall convene and chair the Government sittings, but the President of the Republic may convene and chair a sitting of the Government on issues related to the foreign policy, defense and national security. The President of the Republic can suspend the effect of a Government decision for a period of one month and make an official request to the Constitutional Court for the verification of its compliance with the Constitution and laws.

Fundamental constitutional amendments were adopted in Armenia in 2015 and will change the country from semi-presidentialism to being a parliamentary republic. According these changes the President is head of state, but will be elected by National Assembly for seven years of term. Presidential power will be weak and Formation of government would be absolutely depends on parliamentary majority. The next Parliamentary election in Armenia is expected in 2017 and new constitutional framework will impact on government formation process.

Based on constitutional norms of Armenia and Georgia, we are able to conclude that main actors in formation of Government in these countries are President and Parliament. Formally constitution determines that nomination of Prime-minister and formation of cabinet must be based on composition of political parties in the Parliament, but Presidential influence is strong on this process as the President is decision maker after cabinet formation and personally is able to schedule agenda of the government. Thus, constitutional powers of President and Parliament are significant factors in formation of government in Armenia and Georgia and causes formation of different types of government. With constitutional mechanisms, we will consider political context of countries after elections have significant impacts on government formation process. The next paragraphs will show analyses of political results of government formation in interdisciplinary view of points.

## 3. Government formation in Central and Eastern Europe

Different types of Semi-presidential and Parliamentary constitutions have countries in Central and Eastern Europe where a lot of constitutional changes were provided since 1990s. The constitutional system is significant in government formation in these countries, but level of political competition is different comparable to South Caucasus countries. Competition and collaboration between political parties ensure formation of different types of governments in parliamentary democracies. As recent works and political practice show, the most basic types of governments are as follows: single-party majority government (where one party in government controls a parliamentary majority), minimal-winning coalition government (where there is more than one party in government and where the support of each party is needed to maintain a parliamentary majority), surplus coalition government (where there is more than one party in government and where the support of at least one party is not needed to maintain a

parliamentary majority), single-party minority government (where there is one party in government, but no parliamentary majority) and coalition minority government (where there is more than one party in government and where the government does not control a parliamentary majority). In the literature on coalition theory, government formation is considered as a bargaining game (Lupia & Strom, 2010). There are basic bargaining principles and factors that may have an influence on government formation and cause the formation of one type of government rather than another. The factors that may have an impact on the government formation include: contextual factors, resource distribution among political actors, politicians' preferences, institutional framework, critical events.

If we chart the distribution of the various types of governments identified from 1990 to 2012, then we find some differences in government formation both across countries and between Western European and in Central and Eastern European countries (Table 1).

As is obvious, there are great deals of similarities between Western European and Central and Eastern European countries. One of the most common types of governments is the minimum winning coalition majority government for Western and Central European as well as Eastern European countries. Another similarity is that

there is almost the same percentage of surplus majority government in Western European as well as Central and Eastern European countries. At the same time, there are some differences between these two groups of countries. For example, there are more single-party majority governments in Western European countries than in Central and Eastern European countries where minority governments are more common.

In addition, we see variation between the countries regarding the types of governments. Some countries are highly prone to particular types of government. For example, minimum-winning coalition majority government is a very common type of government in Austria, Iceland and Luxemburg, whereas single-party minority government tends to be common in Spain, Sweden, Norway and Portugal. As for minimum-winning, single-party majority government, it is common in Greece, the United Kingdom and Portugal. Moreover, a surplus majority government is common in Finland and a minority coalition government in Denmark.

There is also a very interesting variation in Central and Eastern European countries. For example, Romania is prone to minority coalition government, whereas Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia tend to have minimum-winning, single-party majority government, even though this type of government is not very common

**Table 1**

Government Types in Western and Central and Eastern European Countries (1990–2012). **Source:** Author's calculation from Inter-Parliamentary Unions database (PARLINE, 2015).

Country	Minimum-Winning Single-party Majority Government Number (%)	Minimum-Winning Coalition Majority Government Number (%)	Surplus-Majority Government Number (%)	Single-party Minority Government Number (%)	Minority coalition Government Number (%)	Sum Number (%)
<b>West European Countries</b>						
Austria	0 (0)	10 (91)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (9)	11 (100)
Belgium	0 (0)	4 (33.3)	6 (50)	0 (0)	2 (16.7)	12 (100)
Denmark	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (100)	10 (100)
Finland	0 (0)	0 (0)	11 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	11 (100)
France	0 (0)	5 (29.4)	7 (41.1)	1 (6)	4 (23.5)	17 (100)
Germany	0 (0)	5 (71.4)	2 (28.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)
Greece	7 (77.8)	0 (0)	1 (11.1)	1 (11.1)	0 (0)	9 (100)
Iceland	0 (0)	8 (88.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (11.1)	9 (100)
Ireland	0 (0)	5 (62.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (37.5)	8 (100)
Italy	0 (0)	4 (33.4)	5 (41.6)	0 (0)	3 (25)	12 (100)
Luxembourg	0 (0)	7 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)
Netherlands	0 (0)	5 (83.3)	1 (16.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (100)
Norway	0 (0)	2 (18.2)	0 (0)	3 (27.2)	6 (54.6)	11 (100)
Portugal	3 (33.3)	3 (33.3)	0 (0)	3 (33.3)	0 (0)	9 (100)
Spain	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	0 (0)	6 (75)	0 (0)	8 (100)
Sweden	0 (0)	1 (14.2)	0 (0)	4 (57.2)	2 (28.6)	7 (100)
United Kingdom	6 (85.8)	1 (14.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>17 (11)</b>	<b>61 (38)</b>	<b>33 (20)</b>	<b>18 (11)</b>	<b>32 (20)</b>	<b>161 (100)</b>
<b>Central and East European Countries</b>						
Bulgaria	1 (14.3)	2 (28.5)	1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)	0 (0)	7 (100)
Czech Republic	0 (0)	7 (53.9)	1 (7.7)	2 (15.4)	3 (23)	13 (100)
Estonia	0 (0)	9 (69.2)	0 (0)	2 (15.4)	2 (15.4)	13 (100)
Hungary	0 (0)	3 (30)	5 (50)	1 (10)	1 (10)	10 (100)
Latvia	1 (4.7)	5 (23.9)	6 (28.5)	0 (0)	9 (42.9)	21 (100)
Lithuania	2 (12.5)	4 (25)	3 (18.7)	0 (0)	7 (43.8)	16 (100)
Poland	0 (0)	8 (44.4)	5 (27.8)	1 (5.6)	4 (22.2)	18 (100)
Romania	1 (5.6)	1 (5.6)	4 (22.2)	1 (5.6)	11 (61)	18 (100)
Slovakia	1 (6.6)	8 (53.3)	3 (20)	1 (6.6)	2 (40)	15 (100)
Slovenia	0 (0)	8 (57.1)	2 (14.3)	0 (0)	4 (28.6)	14 (100)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>6 (4)</b>	<b>55 (38)</b>	<b>30 (21)</b>	<b>11 (8)</b>	<b>43 (30)</b>	<b>145 (100)</b>

for many countries including those in Western Europe. Also a very important point is that some countries do not experience certain types of government at all. For example Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany and other countries in Western Europe have never had a minimum-winning single-party majority government; Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands did not have a single-party minority government during the 1990–2012 period.

In sum, the research presents various types of government formation. Generally, these explanations focus on the motivations of political parties and the context in which government formation occurs. When we look at the types of governments that have been formed, it is clear that there is a considerable number of similarities between more established and newer democracies overall. However, there is great variation across countries within each of these blocks.

Now the paper turns to government formation in the Caucasus to identify the patterns of government formation there and explain the different patterns that can be observed.

#### 4. The choice of Armenia and Georgia

The goal of this section is to determine whether patterns of government formation identified in Western and Central and Eastern Europe apply to the Caucasus. In one way, democracy is less established in this region and the political context is very different. This would lead one to think that very different patterns of government formation would be observed. However, as the research reveals, all patterns of government formation were similar in both Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe. This suggests that we might expect equivalent similarities in the South Caucasus countries; as such, to what extent is government formation similar within different areas?

It was decided to focus on the situation in Armenia and Georgia in order to get answers to the questions raised above. This choice was conditioned by several reasons: first, both countries are new democracies and have the same regional and political contexts. Secondly, they are semi-presidential countries and have the same basic constitutional framework as it relates to the formation of government formation and its operation. Third, although they have had different democratic trajectories since 1990, there are some similarities. For example, according to Freedom House, Armenia and Georgia have the same index regarding democratic development and both countries are defined as partly free countries (Freedom House, 2013).

Our research is related to the period from 2003 to the present time since this is the first time when relatively free elections took place in both countries. I start with the identification of the types of governments formed in Armenia and Georgia and then examine the reasons of formation of different types of governments.

**Table 2**

Political Parties in the Parliament of Armenia in 2003–2012. Source: Author's calculation from Inter-Parliamentary Unions database (Parline, 2015).

Political Parties	No. of seats in parliament (% of seats)		
	2003	2007	2012
Republican Party of Armenia (HHK)	33 (25)	65 (50)	69 (53)
Artarutiun (Justice) Bloc	14 (11)		
Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law Party)	19 (15)	9 (7)	6 (5)
Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutiun)	11 (8)	16 (12)	6 (5)
National Unity Party	9 (7)		
United Labour Party	6 (5)		
Republic Party	1 (1)		
Pan-Armenian Worker's Party	1 (1)		
Prosperous Armenia Party		25 (19)	37 (28)
Armenian National Congress (ANC)			7 (5)
Heritage Party (HP)		7 (5)	5 (4)
Dashink Party		1 (1)	
Non-partisans, Independents	37 (28)	8 (6)	1 (1)
Total number of seats (%)	131 (100)	131 (100)	131 (100)

#### 5. Government formation in Armenia and Georgia

Three parliamentary elections have been held in Armenia and Georgia since 2003. The political practice of these countries confirmed that there were various configurations of political parties in parliament. Table 2 shows a distribution of parliamentary seats between political parties in Armenia. There was a greater fragmentation of party representatives in the legislature after the 2003 elections than after the 2007 and 2012 parliamentary elections when the role of the Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) was increased (Table 2). The results of the 2003 parliamentary elections show that not a single political party obtained a majority in parliament. It was a very unusual situation in Armenia when parliamentary seats were divided among six political parties. All political parties could have participated in formation of parliamentary majority since every party had important positions in parliament.

The situation following the parliamentary elections of 2007 greatly differs from 2012. These two elections could be considered to be similar cases. The first and most important point here is that, even though HHK was extremely close to gaining a majority with 65 seats in parliament after the 2003 elections, it failed to win a majority. Secondly, a strong position was obtained by a newly created political party – Prosperous Armenia Party – after the 2003 elections and the party became the second largest political group in the parliament of Armenia. At the same time, the support of other political parties such as Orinats Yerkir, National Unity Party and the United Labour Party, decreased. The latter two parties did not manage to exceed the election barrier. The situation has had a little bit different character after the 2012 parliamentary elections when the HHK obtained a majority in parliament. As a result, the formation of a single party, parliamentary

**Table 3**

Composition of Government in Armenia in 2003–2012. **Source:** Author's calculation from [panarmenian.net](http://panarmenian.net) (2015) and website of the [Government of Republic of Armenia](http://www.government.am) (2015).

Political Parties	No. of seats in government (% of seats)		
	2003	2007	2012
Republican Party of Armenia (HHK)	8 (53)	8 (50)	11 (57.9)
Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law Party)	3 (20)	1 (6)	3 (15.8)
Armenian Revolutionary Party (Dashnaksutyun)	3 (20)	3 (18)	
Prosperous Armenia Party		2 (13)	
Non-partisan	1 (7)	2 (13)	5 (26.3)
Overall	15 (100)	16 (100)	19(100)

majority by the HHK was expected. On the other hand, there were again an increased number of seats obtained by the Prosperous Armenia Party and the party became the second largest political group in parliament. Orinats Yerkir, Dashnaksutyun and Heritage Party lost support in parliament through the last elections.

The fragmentation of political parties was an important factor in the formation of different types of governments in Armenia. As [Table 3](#) reveals, several types of governments could have formed after the 2003 parliamentary elections ([Table 3](#)). First of all, a parliamentary majority could have been formed by HHK, Artarutiun (Justice) Bloc and Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law Party) with 66 seats in parliament. Secondly, a parliamentary majority with 69 seats could have been formed by HHK, Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law Party), Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) and United Labour Party. Third, a parliamentary majority could have been formed by HHK, Artarutiun (Justice) Bloc, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) and National Unity Party with 67 seats in parliament. Thus, there were various possibilities to form minimum-winning coalition majority government, but in the end a minority coalition government was formed by HHK, Orinats Yerkir and Federation (Dashnaksutyun) ([Table 4](#)).

The situation changed after Orinats Yerkir Party had left the ruling coalition in 2006 ([Table 5](#)). As a result, the party split into two parts ([Asberezh, 2006](#)). Ten lawmakers who left Orinats Yerkir's parliamentary faction established themselves as independents, retaining a pro-governmental orientation. The party also lost the three cabinet portfolios allocated to it under the 2003 power-sharing agreement.

After the decision of Orinats Yerkir to leave the coalition, the government, now comprising of the Republican Party (with 33 seats) and the Armenian Revolutionary Faction (ARF) Dashnaks (with 11 seats), did not control a majority in the National Assembly, but together with other political parties and independent members of parliament still controlled the parliament's decisions process on strategic issues ([Table 6](#)).

There was a relatively different political context in 2007 because party representation in parliament changed after the elections. In theory five political parties-HHK, Orinats

Yerkir, Dashnaksutyun, Prosperous Armenia Party and Heritage Party could have participated in the formation of a parliamentary majority. First of all, HHK could have formed a majority with the support of independent members of parliament as it was experienced in 2006–2007. Therefore, a formation of a single party government was expected. On the other hand, it was also possible to form a minimum-winning coalition majority government with any other political party (Dashnaksutyun, Orinats Yerkir Prosperous Armenia Party, Heritage Party, Dashnaksutyun Party). Eventually, a surplus majority government was formed.

There was also an unexpected change in government after the 2007 parliamentary elections. In 2009, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party left the coalition in protest against the signing of protocols with Turkey. This party was a partner of the Republican Party of Armenia, Orinats Yerkir and Prosperous Armenia Party in coalition. Despite this change in the coalition's composition, the type of government was not a subject to change, because the Republican Party of Armenia still had a majority with Orinats Yerkir and it was still a surplus majority government.

The formation of a single-party majority government was expected in 2012, when the Republican Party of Armenia obtained a majority in parliament. Even so, the second party – Prosperous Armenia Party that was asked by the HHK to form a coalition government, rejected the suggestion. A coalition government was then formed with Orinats Yerkir. So, the 2012 parliamentary elections led to the formation of a surplus majority government.

The situation in Georgia has been different since 2003. Here, the political context can be divided into two different periods: the elections of 2004–2012 and October elections of 2012 ([Table 7](#)). The first two elections had a very low level of party fragmentation. As [Table 5](#) shows, the National Movement–Democrats obtained a large majority in parliament after the 2004 elections. Only one political block – the “Right Opposition” – exceeded the 7% election threshold and was represented in parliament. The National Movement–Democrats formed a single party majority government. A broad opposition, pre-election coalition was created before the 2008 parliamentary elections, but the political situation remained largely the same. Giorgi Targamadze-Christian-Democrats, Shalva Natelashvili-Labour Party, the Republican Party and the “Joint Opposition” block obtained seats in parliament. However, with its majority, the United National Movement again formed a single party majority. See [Table 7](#).

The political context changed after the 2012 parliamentary elections, when the United National Movement lost the elections. As [Table 7](#) illustrates, the United National Movement has only 34.6% of seats in parliament<sup>1</sup> whereas, the “Georgian Dream” coalition obtained a parliamentary majority. The Georgian Dream coalition consisted of representatives of nine political parties on the Georgian Dream electoral list – Georgian Dream-

<sup>1</sup> The United National Movement obtained 43% of seats in the 2012 parliamentary elections, but since the elections, 13 persons have left the party (some of them are now independent majoritarians and not members of factions), the number of seats held by the UNM decreased.

**Table 4**

Government support in parliament. **Source:** Author's calculation from [panarmenian.net](http://panarmenian.net) (2015) and website of the [Government of Republic of Armenia](http://www.government.am) (2015).

Political Parties	No. of seats in parliament (% of seats)		
	2003	2007	2012
Republican Party of Armenia (HHK)	33 (25)	65 (49.62)	69 (53)
Orinats Yerkir (Rule of Law Party)	19 (15)	9 (7)	6 (5)
Armenian Revolutionary Party (Dashnaksutyun)	11 (8)	16 (12)	
Prosperous Armenia Party		25 (19)	
Overall	63 (48)	115 (87.62)	75 (58)
<b>Type of government</b>	Minority coalition Government	Surplus majority government	Surplus majority government

**Table 5**

Composition of Government in Armenia in 2006–2007. **Source:** Author's calculation from [panarmenian.net](http://panarmenian.net) (2015) and website of the [Government of Republic of Armenia](http://www.government.am) (2015).

Political Parties	No. of seats in government (% of seats) 2006–2007
Republican Party of Armenia (HHK)	8 (53)
Armenian Revolutionary Party (Dashnaksutyun)	3 (20)
Non-partisan <sup>a</sup>	4 (27)

<sup>a</sup> Non-partisans consist of three Orinats Yerkir cabinet members who saved posts after withdrawing the Orinats Yerkir Party from the government, Orinats Yerkir Members Follow Baghdasarian Out of Government, <http://asbarez.com/53656/orinats-yerkir-members-follow-baghdasarian-out-of-government/>, Monday, May 15th, 2006 [Accessed: 12.05.2012].

**Table 6**

Government support in parliament. **Source:** Author's calculation from [panarmenian.net](http://panarmenian.net) (2015) and website of the [Government of Republic of Armenia](http://www.government.am) (2015).

Political Parties	No. of seats in parliament (% of seats) 2006–2007
Republican Party of Armenia (HHK)	33 (25)
Armenian Revolutionary Party (Dashnaksutyun)	11 (8)
<b>Type of government</b>	Minority coalition Government

Democratic Georgia, Georgian Dream-Free Democrats, Georgian Dream-Republicans, Georgian Forum, Conservative Party, Industry Will Save Georgia, People's Party, Georgian Greens, Social-democrats for Development of Georgia, and non-partisans. After the elections, there were various government formation options. For example, a combination of Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia with the Georgian Dream-Free Democrats, Georgian Dream-Republicans, Conservative Party and Georgian Forum could

**Table 7**

Political Parties in Parliament in Georgia, 2004–2012. **Source:** Author's calculation from [Inter-Parliamentary Unions database](http://inter-parliamentary-unions.org) (2015) and party list of Georgian Dream Coalition ([Georgian Dream](http://www.georgiandream.com), 2012), final protocol of 2012 elections ([Election administration of Georgia](http://www.electionadministration.gov.ge), 2012) and website of the parliament of Georgia ([Parliament of Georgia](http://www.parliament.gov.ge), 2012)

Political parties	No. of seats in parliament (% of seats)		
	2004	2008	2012
National Movement-Democrats	130 (87)		
The United National Movement		119 (79.4)	40 (26.6)
The National Movement Majoritarians <sup>a</sup>			6 (4)
The National Movement – Regions			6 (4)
Right Opposition	15 (10)		
“The Joint Opposition (National Council New Rights)”		17 (11.3)	
“Giorgi Targamadze-Christian Democrats”		6 (4)	
“Shalva Natelashvili-Labor Party”		6 (4)	
Republican Party	5 (3)	2 (1.3)	
Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GDDG)			48 (32)
Georgian Dream-Free Democrats (GDFD)			10 (6.7)
Georgian Dream-Republicans (GDR)			9 (6)
Conservative Party			6 (4)
Georgian Forum			6 (4)
The Georgian Dream – Entrepreneurs			6 (4)
Non-party, Independent Majoritarians <sup>b</sup>			6 (4)
Non-partisans, out of faction <sup>c</sup>			7 (4.7)
Total number of seats (%)			

<sup>a</sup> After 2012 parliamentary election The United National Movement has been divided into three parliamentary factions: The United National Movement, The National Movement Majoritarians and The National Movement – Regions. They are now members of parliamentary minority in the Parliament of Georgia.

<sup>b</sup> There are former members of UNM who have been nominated by the UNM and won parliamentary election in majoritarian districts, but have left the UNM after the parliamentary election.

<sup>c</sup> There are MPs who have left the UNM after the parliamentary election, but did not join any faction in the parliament and Koba Davitashvili who has left the parliamentary majority on August 2, 2013 and announced to run in the October 27 presidential elections.

**Table 8**

Government Composition in Georgia, 2004–2012. **Source:** ([Civil Georgia](http://www.civilgeorgia.org), 2012) and ([Parliament of Georgia](http://www.parliament.gov.ge), 2012).

Political Parties	No. of seats in government (% of seats)		
	2004	2008	2012
United National Movement	21 (100)	18 (100)	
Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GDDG)			7 (36.9)
Georgian Dream-Free Democrats (GDFD)			4 (21)
Georgian Dream-Republicans (GDR)			1 (5.3)
Georgian Forum			1 (5.3)
Non-partisans			6 (31.5)
Overall	21 (100)	18 (100)	19 (100)

**Table 9**

Government support in parliament 2004–2012. Source: (Civil Georgia, 2012) and (Parliament of Georgia, 2012).

Political Parties	No. of seats in parliament (% of seats)		
	2004	2008	2012
National Movement-Democrats <sup>a</sup>	130 (87)		
The United National Movement		119 (79.4)	
Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GDDG)			48 (32)
Georgian Dream-Free Democrats (GDFD)			10 (6.7)
Georgian Dream-Republicans (GDR)			9 (6)
Georgian Forum			6 (4)
Overall	130 (87)	119 (79.4)	73 (?)
<b>Type of government</b>	Single Party Majority Government	Single Party Majority Government	Minority Coalition Government

<sup>a</sup> National Movement-Democrats was an electoral block formed before 2004 parliamentary election and consist of political parties: United Democrats, National Movement, Republican Party and Union of National Forces. United Democrats and National Movement have been united and participated in parliamentary election 2004 as one party. Representatives of the Republican Party and Union of National Forces have been also included in a new party list.

have formed a minimum-winning coalition majority government. Alternatively a surplus majority government could have been formed by these parties since they had more than 51% of seats in parliament together. Despite these options, a minority coalition Government was formed by Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia, Georgian Dream-Free Democrats, Georgian Dream-Republicans and Georgian Forum (Table 8). Other political parties were part of the parliamentary majority, but they did not have posts in the coalition government (Table 9).

Based on all of the above mentioned, it is obvious that government formation processes in Armenia and Georgia were not typical of Europe generally. We see that a surplus majority government was common in Armenia (2007, 2012) and single party majority government in Georgia (2004, 2008) while these types of governments are less common in Europe. Minimum-winning coalition, majority governments and minority coalition governments are more typical of Western and Central Europe, while we observed two cases of minority coalition government in Armenia (2003, 2006) and one case in Georgia after the 2012 parliamentary elections. How can the formation of these patterns of governments be explained?

## 6. Motivations of formation of different types of governments in Armenia

One of the most important factors of government formation in Armenia is the institutional framework of the country. There is a semi-presidential constitution in Armenia and political parties are not even the main actors in the government formation. The role of president is also very important as he/she has very strong powers unlike the presidents in many European semi-presidential countries. According to Siaroff's measure of presidential power, Armenia has 6 and Georgia – 7 scores on a scale from 0 to 9 while the scores, for example, in Bulgaria equal to 3, the score in Croatia is 4, Finland 2, Germany 5, Ireland 3, Lithuania 4 and Macedonia 4 (Siaroff, 2003, p. 299). The president (who might be a partisan figure) is the main political actor in government formation as constitutionally she/he appoints the government nominated by the

parliamentary majority after the parliamentary elections. Moreover, the president appoints three ministers in government so that in that way it is possible to influence the government formation process. The main aim of parties is to win the presidency. Government formation is a secondary issue to coalition-building for the presidential election. The formation of government mainly depends on the decision of the president. For example, after the 2012 parliamentary elections the President Serzh Sargsyan announced that all ministers in Government would continue to exercise their responsibility in the Government. He also appointed non-partisan ministers in the government. That is why direct presidential elections (scheduled on February 18, 2013 after the parliamentary elections on May 6, 2012) had an impact on political parties' campaigns in the parliamentary elections as well as the government formation after the parliamentary elections. Pre-election competition among the political parties around their presidential candidates influenced the government formation process. Armenia experienced cases when political parties did not stand a candidate at the presidential elections, but supported candidates from other political parties. Thus, usually these were only the parties supporting the winning presidential candidate that were invited to coalition government during the last parliamentary elections.

In order to make it clear why some political parties did not join, whereas others went to the government, we need to analyze the relationship between the political parties and president before and during the presidential elections. The configuration of political parties before the 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections was mainly conditioned by the October 27, 1999 attack on the National Assembly, when the Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan, a leader of the Republican Party of Armenia, the Speaker of Parliament Karen Demirchyan, a leader of the Peoples Party and six other parliamentarians were assassinated. It was a significant event in Armenian politics which changed the political configuration in the country. It led to a split between the People's Party and the Republican Party of Armenia, which had been members of the Unity Block previously with a majority in parliament. After the incident, the Armenian People's Party moved in opposition. Later some members of the Republican Party of Armenia

also moved in opposition and formed the Republican Party. Consequently, the 2003 presidential elections were very significant for the consolidation of political parties against President Robert Kocharyan's power.

There was a very intensive pre-election campaign in 2003 and political parties were divided into two political camps around two presidential candidates, Stepan Demirchian, the son of the murdered speaker of parliament, Karen Demirchyan, from the "Justice" alliance,<sup>2</sup> and Robert Kocharian supported by Republican Party of Armenia, Orinats Yerkir and Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaksutiun. In the first round of the election, Kocharian officially received 49.48% of votes, followed by Stepan Demirchian with 28.22%. Kocharian was reelected in the second round with 67.44% of the votes, while Demirchian obtained 32.56%. The opposition refused to recognize the results of the elections (*Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003*). In this situation political parties which supported Demirchyan in the second round of presidential elections and were enrolled in Justice Alliance could not join the coalition government.

On the other hand, there was another group of political parties, specifically the "Rule of Law" party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation willing to form a minority coalition government with the Republican Party of Armenia. These political parties officially supported Kocharian's candidacy in the presidential elections and as the political partners were invited by the president into the coalition government. President Kocharian, who was re-elected for his second round, also needed to re-establish the legitimacy of presidential power after the disputed election and the support of other parties was important in this regard. He suggested forming a coalition government between the Republican Party of Armenia, Orinats Yerkir and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Despite disagreements over some substantive policy issues, they agreed. Therefore, in 2003 Kocharian's only option was a minority coalition government with two political partners. The motivation of Orinats Yerkir and Armenian Revolutionary Federation was most likely office-seeking. For example, in addition to their government posts, the leader of Orinats Yerkir was appointed on the post of chair of the National Assembly.

The Republican Party of Armenia had a majority in parliament after the 2007 parliamentary elections and could have formed a single-party majority government, but decided to form a surplus majority government with the Rule of Law Party, Dashnaksutyun and Prosperous Armenia Party. The presidency was still an important contextual factor here. It is important to note that this was President Kocharian's last term in office and he needed to transfer power to the candidate of his preference, Serzh Sargsyan, who was appointed as prime minister on March 26, 2007. Sargsyan invited Kocharian's political partners to the last coalition government – Orinats Yerkir and Armenian Revolutionary Federation – into the coalition after the

parliamentary elections on May 12, 2007. Again, he needed their support for the presidential election. He also invited the newly established Prosperous Armenia Party, which was a political project founded by former President Kocharyan and led by the oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan, a key business partner of Kocharyan (*Petrosyan, 2010, p. 10*). The Prosperous Armenia Party did not have its own presidential candidate and supported Sargsyan. Orinats Yerkir did run a candidate in the presidential election, but he opposed to the main opposition candidate, former President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, and really supported Sargsyan (*Fuller, 2008*). In contrast, the Heritage party and Dashink Party were not invited to join the government. The Heritage Party was led by Raffi Hovannisian, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia appointed by President Ter-Petrosyan, has been opposed against the ruling coalition and supported Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Therefore, the Heritage party could not join the government. The Dashink Party had only one member in parliament after the 2007 elections and the party was not invited into the coalition as its presence in the coalition was not important.

Six political parties obtained seats in parliament after the 2012 parliamentary elections. Even though the Republican Party of Armenia with 53% of seats did not need the support of any other political party and could form a single party majority government, the Rule of Law Party was included in surplus majority government. Presidential power and the 2008 presidential elections can still be directly linked to the formation of this government. The following parties nominated their own presidential candidates: Republican Party of Armenia, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Rule of Law Party and Armenian National Congress. The Prosperous Armenia Party supported the candidate of the Republican Party of Armenia. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation went into the coalition government in 2008, but left the coalition in 2009 in protest against the signing of protocols with Turkey by the government. Consequently, in 2012 the ARF was not expected to join the coalition. The Armenian National Congress could not go into government as the party's presidential candidate, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, did not recognize the legitimacy of the election. The Prosperous Armenia Party supported Serzh Sargsyan's presidential candidacy, but later announced that it would not be joining a new government (*Asbarez, 2012*). One of the reasons for not going in government was that the party leader, Gagik Tsarukyan, wanted the office of Prime Minister and did not enter the coalition when the party was not able to gain this position (*Lütem, 2012*).

Only the Orinats Yerkir agreed to participate in the formation of the government. The leader of the party, Artur Baghdasaryan, did not take part in protests against the election led by Levon Ter-Petrosian after the presidential elections. Moreover, he recognized the legitimacy of the victory of Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan on February 29, 2008 and received the post of Secretary of the National Security Council in the coalition government. Therefore, Orinats Yerkir appeared to have an office-seeking motivation.

<sup>2</sup> The Justice Bloc consisted of: Armenian People's Party, Republic Party, National Democratic Union, National Democratic Party, National Democratic Alliance, Armenian Democratic Party, Constitutional Right Union (formerly part of "Right & Accord").

## 7. Motivations of formation of different types of governments in Georgia

Two single-party majority governments and one minority coalition government were formed in Georgia from 2004 to 2012. A single-party majority government was formed after the 2004 and the 2008 parliamentary elections. Unlike the situation in Armenia in 2007 and 2012 there was no surplus majority government. The Rose Revolution in 2003, the early presidential elections in 2008 and the presidency and presidential elections in general were the main reasons. In Armenia, the President was elected with 52% of the vote after two ballots whereas in 2004 President Saakashvili was elected with 96% of votes in the first round. Consequently, the President did not need to collaborate with any other political parties. Furthermore, in 2008 parliamentary elections were directly linked to the early *presidential elections of that year*, which was held after a series of anti-government demonstrations in November 2007. Seven presidential candidates ran at 2008 presidential elections and Levan Gachechiladze, the main rival of President Saakashvili, was supported by the 'National Council', a coalition of nine opposition parties. Saakashvili won the elections with 53.47% of the votes for the first round, but the opposition parties protested the result until the parliamentary elections on May 21, 2008. The Central Election Commission announced that the United National Movement won the parliamentary elections with 59.18%. The Joint Opposition – the National Council-New Rights, obtained only 17.73%, while the Christian Democratic Party and the Labour Party also exceeded the election threshold and obtained seats in parliament. Thus, the 2008 parliamentary elections were in fact just the continuation of the protests against President Saakashvili after the political crisis of November 2007. Therefore, the Joint Opposition could not join a surplus majority government as this bloc did not recognize a legitimacy of the election results. Indeed, it refused to even enter the parliament. The Christian Democratic Party could not go into the government as the party was the vehicle of former journalists of a private television station, Imedi TV, which closed in November 2007 after a mass protest against the government. The Georgian Labour Party also could not enter the government because Shalva Natelashvili, the chairman and the founder of the party, was one of the presidential candidates in 2008 presidential elections and did not recognize the legitimacy of the election results. Thus, a single-party majority government was the only option.

In 2012 the situation was different. Ten political parties obtained seats in parliament after the elections. The ruling United National Movement party lost the elections and obtained only 43% of seats in parliament. Consequently, although, a minimum-winning coalition and a surplus majority coalition could have been formed, a minority coalition government was formed instead. Office seeking motivations were important. It seems that different political parties achieved an agreement not only on the distribution of posts in the government, but the posts in the parliament as well. For example, Zviad Dzidziguri, leader of the Conservative Party was nominated as the Vice-speaker, the leader of the Industry Will Save Georgia became a chairman of the committee of Sector Economy and

Economic Policy and one of the leaders of Georgian Forum Gubaz Sanikidze became the chairman of the committee of Diaspora and Caucasus Issues.

This agreement had an impact on the composition of the cabinet. There are 19 ministers in the government out of which only 13 are partisans. The six non-partisan ministers are technocrats, but have a support of PM and the leader on the Georgian Dream list, Bidzina Ivanishvili. The Minister of Healthcare, Davit Sergeenko, was the director of the local medical clinic in Ivanishvili's district Chorvila and the Minister of the Economy, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, was the president of Ivanishvili's company "Kartu Group". Officially they are not members of any party, but have close contacts to Bidzina Ivanishvili. PM Ivanishvili's position as a billionaire and successful businessman was decisive in the selection of economic team's ministers. In these circumstances 13 ministers were appointed by Ivanishvili and only 6 posts were available to be distributed between three coalition parties (Georgian Dream-Free Democrats, Georgian Dream-Republicans and Georgian Forum). Thus, this explains why there were so few parties in the government, but it interesting why it was only Georgian Forum that joined the government whereas others did not.

The inclusion of Georgian Forum was motivated by policy-seeking. They accepted the post of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees. The term Occupied Territories refer to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The leader of Georgian Forum is Kakha Shartava. His father, Jiuli Shartava, was the Chairman of Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and was killed publicly in 1993 by Abkhazian soldiers in Sokhumi. While Kakha Shartava did not accept the invitation to be part of the government personally, a party colleague, David Darakhvelidze, has appointed on the post of minister. Office-seeking motivations were also present. Georgian Forum eventually gained positions outside the cabinet, including the President of the National Bank and the Chairman of the Chamber of Control of Georgia (Rekhviashvili, 2012). The party had well-known candidates for both positions and they were appointed on October 8, 2013 when the posts became vacant.

Policy-seeking could be also a motivation for the Georgian Dream-Free Democrats and the Georgian Dream-Republicans. These two parties had almost the same results in the parliamentary elections, but the Georgian Dream-Free Democrats received four positions, whereas the Georgian Dream-Republicans received just one. The Georgian Dream-Free Democrats had a good team of experienced politicians with diplomatic and legal careers and they were appointed to the Ministries of Defense,<sup>3</sup> Justice, Diaspora and European Integration. Similarly, the Georgian Dream-Republicans held the post of State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration, which is mainly responsible for issues related to elaborating and suggesting proposals for peacekeeping in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the former South Ossetia

<sup>3</sup> The leader of Georgian Dream-Free Democrats, Irakli Alasania, a former Ambassador of Georgia to the UN, was appointed as Defense minister and vice-prime minister, but later was dismissed from the post of vice-prime minister by the prime-minister. The official reason was considering of his candidate for presidency by Alasania without co-ordination with the coalition leadership

Autonomous Region. The Minister Paata Zakareishvili is a well-known Georgian expert in issues related to these regions and has very good personal contacts with officials of these unrecognized regions. The process of government formation showed that the professional activities and experiences of political parties were key points for joining the government.

Finally, one of the significant factors in the formation of a minority coalition government was the personalization of politics. It is a well-known fact that politics is personalized in the post-Soviet space and the role of political leaders is very important. In the case of Georgia, the personality of Bidzina Ivanishvili was very significant. The availability of financial resources helps to explain the formation of such a broad electoral coalition and then minority coalition government. This is the first time in Georgia since 1995 when so many political parties are represented in the parliament. Previously, some of these political parties did not manage to exceed the election barrier and did not play an important political role in the political life of the country. Some parties were newly created and had just a little political experience. Most of these parties did not have any significant support in the 2012 elections and entered parliament only after joining the Georgian Dream pre-election coalition. They would not have been able to obtain any seats in the parliament without the coalition. As a result, the pre-election coalition was formed around one leader as it was experienced in Armenia when process of government formation was highly personalized. There were cases when Ivanishvili announced the ministers when nobody from his team had any knowledge about them. This fact helps to explain why he appointed so many technocratic ministers who were close to him.

## 8. Conclusions

The results of this interdisciplinary research suggest that the models of government formation in Armenia and Georgia are characterized by the domination of single party and surplus majority governments in a way that is not entirely typical of Western and Central and Eastern Europe patterns. Since office and policy-seeking motivations were present, the evidence suggests that different contextual factors (for example, strong presidency, weak party system) are important in Armenia and Georgia.

Unlike European democracies, the presidency, presidential elections and the personalization of the political processes are significant determinants of the government formation processes. Presidents participate in government formation and with their strong political powers they are able to impact on the coalition-building process. In addition, the experience in Georgia shows that a powerful individual was also able to shape the government formation process in a period when the president was powerless.

Based on the analyze of constitutional norms of Armenia and Georgia in comparison to European countries constitution, relevant constitutional amendment would be recommended to the constitutions of these countries to provide more balanced relations between President, Parliament and Government, weakening strong presidential powers, ensure

more competition of political parties in coalition formation.

In conclusion, future research on government formation in newly democratic countries should pay greater attention to constitutional norms on coalition formation and contextual political factors in this process.

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