
European integration as a historical desideratum of the elites in the Central and Eastern European states

ALIONA BALAN¹

“GEORGE EMIL PALADE” UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE, PHARMACY,
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF TÂRGU MUREŞ

Abstract: *In the late 1980s - early 1990s, the European continent was marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union and by the fall of the totalitarian communist regimes in the USSRs' satellite states. The end of the communist era was emblematic for the history of the European continent and represented the beginning of a new page in contemporary history. The times were new for the peoples who chose to be liberated from totalitarianism, or were awakened to the inevitable context of the paradigm shift. This article aims at presenting an overall analysis of the effects generated by the paradigm shift and the role of elites in managing and administering the change processes that took place in the countries that once belonged to the Eastern Bloc through a comparative analysis of two groups of states.*

Keywords: *Transition to a market economy; Central and Eastern European states; European integration process; Europeanisation; political elites; privatization.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The critical mass of the communist states dissolved in the circumstances in which, on one hand, starting 1989, the states of Central and Eastern Europe declared their sovereignty and independence, on the other hand, in December 1991, the Soviet Union as state structure ended its existence once the Communist Party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was banned.

The unimaginable swift collapse of the regimes based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology and, with few exceptions, on the model of the planned economy, propelled the aspiring democracies into a new socioeconomic reality, the so-called “transition to a market economy”. Practically, for some of the countries that very same transition through democratic reforms has not been yet finalized. However, understanding and treating the transition period exclusively from its economic perspective would not offer the big picture of the reality. The transition to a market economy from communism to capitalism implied as well a transition to democratic political systems, to the allocation of the scarce resources in society.

This article presents an analysis of the situation, causes and effects of the transition to the market economy and to democracy - a phenomenon that brought along significant changes in the social welfare. The paper highlights the main differences in the process of Europeanisation between two groups of countries that were once part of the Eastern Bloc. The first group is made up of the so-called former communist satellite states of the Soviet Union, in particular, the Central and Eastern European countries that managed to join the European Union. The second group concentrates the former Soviet states that are aspiring to become fully-fledged member states of the European Union. In the case of the latter example, the time distance needed to reach the level of convergence required for obtaining the EU candidate status is so far uncertain.

The European integration process of the Eastern European states materialized in different ways from country to country, as a political and social phenomenon following the collapse of the communism in those countries. One cannot overlook the numerous parallels and similarities across the European course of the Central and South Eastern European states. Along with the fall of the

¹ Aliona Balan - MA in European Economic Integration and Business College of Europe, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Promotion 2011-2012, e-mail: aliona.balan@coleurope.eu

communism and the beginning of socio-political and legal framework changes, the realities that started emerging in the former satellite states of the Eastern Bloc, as compared to the former Soviet states, were clearly different. These new realities were created and promoted by the political elites of the Central European countries' emerging democracies. As it was the case of the majority post-Soviet states in Europe, the European integration process during the transition period was delayed. The belated start of the European integration process in these countries could be, most likely, explained by the continuously exercised influence of the political and economic elite belonging to the epicentre of the former Soviet empire - Moscow.

We find that, while the narrative of the Central and South Eastern European countries was guided by the "the return to Europe" ideology, that in fact became a desideratum of the political elites of that period, some of the post-Soviet countries, that were forcefully transformed during the totalitarian regime into multi-ethnic countries, are still struggling to determine their national identity. A worthy hypothesis for discussions is that the unequivocal factor of national identities has played a key role in accurately setting up the foreign policy directions that would have been later on coherently promoted by the ruling elites of those states. Perhaps this could partially explain the time gap between the accession of the Central and South-Eastern European countries to the European Union as opposed to the three Eastern European state that managed to sign only 10 years later Association Agreements with the European Union, yet without any clear perspective of joining the EU club.

This paper aims to address and outline the historical role of elites in the Central and Eastern European states during the times known as the transition to a market economy. The structure of the paper comprises 5 sections, including the introduction. The second section illustrates the characteristics of the *nomenklatura* and those of the elites of the transition to a market economy period of the CEE region. Section three examines how the governing elites of the CEE states have shaped the relations with the EU and argues that the policies adopted by the elites had a positive impact on the economic development of the new capitalist states. The fourth section of the paper states the role of the elites in the post-Soviet Eastern states in the period of transition to a market economy, while dwelling on the impact of the geopolitical struggle upon the European integration process of those countries. Section five sums up the conclusions based on the ideas and arguments laid out in the preceding sections.

2. FROM NOMENKLATURA TO ELITES OF THE TRANSITION TO A MARKET ECONOMY

In the view of providing a comprehensive explanation of the "elite" concept and of the categories into which the elites are split, we will present definitions and explanations of the notion as found in the literature review. According to C. Sigmirean, in theory, a general custom of the "elite" concept involves reporting the majority of individuals, i.e. the mass of the population, to the status of superiority held by a particular individual or group of individuals.² The scholarly literature identifies three notorious personalities, in particular Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Roberto Michels (1876-1936) as "true theorists of elites", who using the notions of elites, or leaders, reached the idea that "a society without social classes cannot exist". In general terms, those theorists have concluded, similar ideas according to which elites, or a small group of leaders, position themselves above society and rule the world.³

Therefore, this paper uses the definitions of the new theories of elites proposed by J. Higley, M. Burton and G. L. Field, by contrasting the classification of political regimes according to the

² Sigmirean, Cornel, „Istoria elitelor. Perspective istoriografice”, în vol. Statutul istoriei și al istoricilor în contemporaneitate, coordonatori: Gabriel Moişa, Sorin Şipoş, Igor Şarov, Oradea, Editura Universităţii din Oradea, 2014, pp.111-126.

³ Sigmirean, C., *op.cit.*, p. 2

approach proposed by Higley and Burton, and the distinctive elements and characteristics referred to by the authors.

In theory, there are a number of categories of political elites that, according to G. Tibil, include “all those who hold positions of political power in society”. Likewise, among the expressions that convey the same or very close meaning are considered to be those of “political class” or “governmental elites”. We note that, in the absence of a political class with party-based historical background and without relevant governing traditions of an autonomous state administration, the ruling elite that were formed right after the collapse of the totalitarian communist regime in Romania can be integrated into the category of political elites in the sense used by G. Tibil (1995). Similarly, “political class” or “governmental elites” concepts that the author refers to are used interchangeably in this paper.⁴

An argument that supports the thesis regarding the decisive role played by political elites during the transformation processes of the 1990s is the stability of the ruling elites and the authenticity of the desideratum and policies adopted in order to carry out the reforms required while pursuing societal changes and supporting successful transitions to market economies. In these specific times, the quality of the political elites, as well as their intentions towards the governing process and reforms of the administrative systems and of the economies, proves to be critical. In the first years following the collapse of the communist regime, the elites that managed to assert themselves and ascend to the governments of the Central and Eastern European states were to decision-makers that have instituted the priorities and directions to be followed in the course of the transition period. Likewise, under the leadership of those same elites, the distribution of resources and goods in society was performed and the rules of the free market were set. The adoption and implementation of the rules and regulations proved to be a difficult process, in which the economic principles and practices had to be reset and adapted, domestic markets had to be opened to foreign investments; the processes of privatization of state-owned enterprises and the distribution of resources among citizens had to be undertaken, public domains and properties, private domains and private properties were to be defined.

A major factor in understanding the evolution of the situation in the Central and Eastern European region lies in comprehending the national peculiarity and characteristics that have played an important role by contributing to the socioeconomic and political transformations along with the change of state leadership after the fall of totalitarian regimes. The answers to a series of questions that are addressed in this article are aimed at revealing the extent to which the transformation of the elites contributed to the societal change in the former communist states and whether, in fact, the replacement of the old governmental elites with the new elites was the key factor that led to development and to a swifter transition to a market economy in certain Central and Eastern European states, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, as opposed to Romania or Bulgaria.

The leadership structure in the communist regime is an important factor of analysis. According to D. Lane and C. Ross, the development, consolidation and complexity of government bureaucracy were characterized by the autonomy of elites who were not subject of the autocratic control of the party. Authors such as Higley argue, “Democratic transitions and the breakdown can best be understood through changes in the internal relations of national elites.” However, the phenomenon of the transformation of political elites as an agent of the transition to state socialism is briefly studied and limited in the literature.⁵

⁴ Tibil, George, „Conflictul elitelor și instabilitatea politică în evoluția modernă și contemporană a României”, în *Revista Polis*, 4/1995, p. 6.

⁵ Lane, David and Ross, Cameron, *The Transition from Communism to Capitalism, Ruling Elites from Gorbachev to Yeltsin*, St.Martin's Press, New York, 1st ed., 1999, p. 6

It is important to identify and delimit the defining characteristics and parameters of the category of individuals who formed the *Soviet political elite*. We take the definition of the authors D. Lane and C. Ross (1999) according to which the Soviet political elite was formed by people “who had the opportunity to constantly exercise political power over national decisions.” The Soviet political elite consisted of members of the leading political bodies of the Communist Party of the USSR - Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee, the Council of Ministers of the USSR, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Congress of Deputies.⁶

Regarding the power structure of the Soviet political elite before 1989, only two of the political constituencies can be considered major components: the Council of Ministers and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Until the “culmination year”, the Soviet Union was governed by “authorities” that were incapable of aggregating the multitude of interests. As it was the case of the basic constituent of the Western civil society, the voluntary organizations, were mainly lacking autonomous authority and were subject to constant supervision and control by party and government agencies. The structure of the Soviet elite proved to a “closed” one, given that autonomous groups outside the state were either not allowed to establish their rights, or were denied access to political power.⁷

K. H. Goetz and H. Wollmann argue that the characteristics of the central apparatus during the communist regime in the Eastern Bloc states strictly limited its political-governmental role and were against effective political coordination within the executive.⁸

As in the case of the Soviet states, state administrative officials had an obligation to demonstrate political loyalty and devotion to the Communist Party, which was essentially the communist political elite. In practice, the Communist Party implemented the requirements through the *nomenklatura* system, which ensured the party’s control over appointments to state positions.⁹

The characteristics of the communist governmental elite did not completely dissolve with the fall of the communist regime. Although the political elite had been replaced in some post-communist states partly by elections, in other countries through a radical move, as in the case in Romania, bureaucratic practices and communist-type institutional thinking were preserved in the mentality of civil servants left in the system, thereby it had perpetuated in the mindset of the emerging post-communist elite.

Perkin in his work explains how the contemporary professional elite that governs modern societies, influences the evolution of humanity, attributing to this modern elite the harmful consequences at a global level. According to the author, “all power is power for exploitation and destruction as well as for creation and distributive justice”. The author argues that “the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe,” is rather due to “shortsighted selfishness of their respective professional elites” than because of ideological beliefs.¹⁰ Moreover, the author states that unlike the mass of people who lived at “Spartan levels of consumption”, the *nomenklatura* indulged themselves “into an orgy of corruption”. The phenomenon of corruption practiced by the communist *nomenklatura* resulted in a deep crisis of political legitimacy that could no longer be fixed by Gorbachev. Despite the reforms, the leaders who succeeded Gorbachev were unable to fight corruption. Succinctly, Perkin concludes that the greed shown by the elites proves to be “self-destructive” and leads to the overthrow of those who practice it.¹¹

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Lane, David and Ross, Cameron, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-8.

⁸ Goetz, Klaus H., & Wollmann, Hellmut, “A four-country comparison”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 8:6 December, 2001, pp. 864-887, p. 867.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Perkin, Harold, *The Third Revolution: Professional elites in the modern world*, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 2.

¹¹ Perkin, Harold, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

The 1989 revolution marked the end of the nomenklatura, but not necessarily the end of the further enrichment and even the ruling, in one form or another, of the former Soviet and communist political elites.

Towards the end of the Soviet era, asset control had become a veritable space of conflict between government elites, administrative incumbents, and new classes of trained entrepreneurs made up of people coming from middle and lower leadership positions, alternative economies and professionals who were succeeding the old elites. The first category aimed at maintaining power by using administrative controls or by appropriating ownership of state property.¹²

In the times of *perestroika*, it would have been unimaginable for Gorbachev that the nomenklatura would be fiercely devoted to the “struggle” for enrichment by privatizing as many assets as possible and taking control of important state property. It was probably obvious that influential and authoritarian representatives of this social category had access to the necessary information and had knowledge about state assets and the processes of obtaining control over the respective assets, as opposed to the population mass.

It is well known that the Soviet period manifested itself internationally through the isolation of elites in socio-political values characteristic of authoritarianism, the effects being imprinted in the political culture of emerging elites in practice during the transition period of former Soviet countries. Because within the Communist Party of the USSR an internal culture of party democracy that would promote constructive debates and transparent political competition was not practiced, this specificity was reflected in the process of recruiting and forming government elites in the years following the collapse of communism in post-Soviet states.¹³

A tangent idea regarding the isolation of elites, also due to limited mobility, is revealed by C. Sigmirean. The author states that in the communist regime, elites originated from groups that were “frustrated, marginalized, renegaded on national grounds, or by reconversion of old elites, especially at the sectoral level” as the mobility of top communist elites was more restricted compared to the level of elites’ mobility in democratic states.

Likewise, in the Central and Eastern Europe states that were part of the former Eastern Bloc, the Communist Party during those four decades of governance managed to penetrate all the institutions of these countries. The specific legacy from the times of the communist regime, which remained deeply imbued in the system of governance of the Central and Eastern European states, was the main cause of the challenges they faced in the process of the separation of institutional spheres in the state. K. Engelbrekt argues that the Communist Party was present practically everywhere in society, apart from small social cells such as “families and circles of close friends, dissident groups and certain religious congregations such as senior civil servants in the economic sector, in the judiciary, in academia, and even in the arts, were usually members of the Communist Party, or at least tolerated by it.”¹⁴

Similarly, Higley and Dogan argue that the totalitarian regime paved the way for a rapid “movement” of public office holders despite the fact that replacement of the elites is usually an incremental process, and an example of this is shown by the changes that occurred in the regimes of the post-communist Central and Eastern European states. Analysing the events from the perspective of democratization and of the shaping of the new elites in post-communist countries, it is certain that throughout the regional context, the logic of politics has undergone essential transformations. As a result of the fall of the communist regimes, political power ceased to be monopolized by the central

¹² Lane, David and Ross, Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹³ Gherasimov, Cristina, “Political Elite Renewal in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine,” Research Paper Russia and Eurasia Programme, London, Chatham House, May 2019, p. 3.

¹⁴ Engelbrekt, Kjell, “The Impact of Enlargement on Institutional Integrity in Central and Eastern Europe”, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 10:2, 2009, p. 174.

committees, thus giving green light to political competition, in fact an inconceivable phenomenon in times of the past regime. Elections allowed for the parliamentary seats to be divided “more or less free”, a fact disputed by many political parties and electoral lists.¹⁵

3. THE ELITES OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION TO A MARKET ECONOMY

The beginning of the transition from totalitarianism to a market economy, democratic governance and the rule of law in the former communist states of Central and Eastern Europe, for the European Union represented the start of structural reforms and the gradual guidance of these neighbouring states towards convergence with its policies, norms and rules and recommendations. European integration involves going through these complex processes of governmental elites to reform vertically and horizontally, according to certain models recommended by the EU to the Central and Eastern European states and to the CIS states.

The scholarly literature on Europeanization answers a series of questions and hypotheses related to how and why European integration affects the governance of the Central and Eastern Europe states. In Western Europe, European integration has led to limited convergence of the existing models. In the case of these EU member states, the organizing models of the political systems are quite diverse. Some authors state that the EU encourages candidate states in the accession process to converge with certain institutional models to a greater extent than the current member states had converged.¹⁶ The convergence of the administrative structures begins with the accession negotiations and is sought to be part of the Europeanization process.

The changes taking place in post-communist states through Europeanization are analysed in the scholarly literature mainly from the point of view of the EU's impact on the member states. Research in the field of Europeanization of post-communist states involves their institutionalization through the development of formal and informal rules, procedures, rules and practices, but also various ways of interaction established in the member state and the EU.¹⁷ The impact and influence of the EU on the candidate countries is exercised by support for the principle of conditionality under the Treaty on European Union, Article 49, which provides that “Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union.” The principles stated in Article 2 are “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights”.¹⁸

However, at the beginning of the transition period, the European Union's cooperation mechanisms with its member states was, on a case-by-case basis, relatively limited. Therefore, in the absence of implementation mechanisms at the desired level, politicians and business leaders sometimes develop symbiotic relationships to the detriment of markets and public finances.¹⁹

As in the case of the former Soviet states, the privatization process played a major role in the economic transformation of the CEE post-communist countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Since the distribution of state resources and the need to ensure the conditions of fair competition are a pillar

¹⁵ Semenova, E., Edinger, M., and Best, H., *Parliamentary Elites in Central and Eastern Europe Recruitment and representation*, Routledge, Oxon, 2014, p. 2.

¹⁶ Grabbe, Heather, “How does Europeanization affect CEE governance? Conditionality, diffusion and diversity”, 8/6, 2001, p. 1014.

¹⁷ Elbasani, Arolda, “EU Administrative Conditionality and Domestic Downloading”, KFG Working Paper 2, 2009, p. 6.

¹⁸ Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, Article 49 (ex Article 49 TEU), Official Journal of the European Union, C 202/43.

¹⁹ Engelbrekt, K., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

of the development of the rule of law. The process of privatization in the first years of the transition to a market economy provided opportunities for abuse, the process itself lacking in transparency.

This argument is also analysed by authors who claim that “privatization has reduced over time opportunities for massive abuses of power through illicit transfer of state property to private property, a common practice in the early 1990s, at the same time privatization has been very important in wasting these possibilities.”²⁰

Through a comparison between Central and Eastern European states after the fall of the regime, we distinguish several factors that influenced the course of economic transformation: (1) non-transparent privatization of state assets by the *nomenklatura* and their duration; (2) the separation of the former communist party from state structures. After the fall of the regime in Hungary and Poland, the former communist party was separated from access to state structures much earlier than in Bulgaria and Romania. However, in Hungary acts of privatization by the *nomenklatura* have manifested themselves widely, unlike in Poland where the councils of the Solidarity trade union have exercised the power of blocking arbitrarily privatization attempts in most of the cases.²¹ At the same time, in Bulgaria as opposed to Romania, the separation of the former communist party from the state institutions did not materialize immediately. The main difference lies in the fact that the representatives of the reformed former Communist Party managed to lead the central government until the beginning of 1992, including the Bulgarian municipalities for another five years. Having long access to power, strategically positioned the emerging elites of the nomenclature to exercise selective privatization of state assets and equally to appropriate the important documentation in the possession of the Communist Party and of the state.²²

An essential factor was the separation of the legal framework from politics. In particular, the differentiation was caused by the real level of separation of powers in the state, especially of the executive and of the judiciary. For example, experience shows that in Bulgaria and Romania, countries where the communist party gradually disintegrated, the establishment of subsequent judicial autonomy turned into a struggle.²³ The process of EU enlargement for Bulgaria and Romania via the transposition of the *acquis* into the national legislation during the pre-accession period had a limited impact on justice, while major transformations of this system were part of the preconditions for accession.

We believe that the differences in the distribution of the public goods, subsequently provided a differentiated basis for the governing elites that was crucial for ensuring economic development during and after the transition to a market economy. This led to the catalyzation of the social progress and to a comparatively enhanced social welfare. Therefore, the discrepancies in the level of economic development can be observed after almost 30 years, given that all these states are now members of the EU and have access to European Structural and Investment Funds. Despite this, the chances of reducing the economic and social disparities and gaps between the levels of regional development in countries like Bulgaria and Romania compared to Poland, the Czech Republic or Slovakia are still limited, although not without potential. Undoubtedly, the implementation by the ruling elites of the right strategies for the development of critical infrastructure and economic growth through consistent enforcement of the EU competition policy rules and ensuring optimal conditions for the absorption of EU structural funds would greatly facilitate economic and social convergence between the Central and Eastern European states.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Engelbrekt, K., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Chonkov, B. Y. & Schmitz, F. N. (2002) Public private partnerships in Bulgarien, *Osteuropa Recht*, 48(3), pp. 229–230.

4. THE ELITES OF THE POST-SOVIET STATES IN THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION TO A MARKET ECONOMY

The tumultuous times full of insecurities, as well as the lack of stability of the geopolitical direction that characterized Georgia, R. Moldova and Ukraine, created the needed conditions to maintain the reminiscence of local Soviet era elites in power, be it as part of the political and legislative elite through democratic mechanisms, or among the economic elite that would be in fact leading from shadows a part of the political elite during perestroika and immediately after the fall of communism through the privatization of state owed assets. As the Old Guard elites were part of the former local nomenklatura, the likelihood and chances that they might have succeeded in transferring state owed economic assets into their own property way below the market prices, meanwhile preserving their places in the new administrative structures, or acceding to leadership positions in the public and economic spheres, was undoubtedly higher to the chances of the emerging national elites who were not part of the same social class during the Soviet period.

The European aspirations of the transforming societies in the Eastern European states, in particular R. Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, have been declared and demonstrated by the political elite through concrete actions over the past 15 years, to the detriment of the continuation of the communist-type government policies of the political and legislative elite that has perished since the beginning of the transition period and that was responsible for delaying the process of European integration.

The societies of the three states went through transformations as a result of the revolutions that replaced the political elite and reoriented the external direction. Among the most relevant social movements that have triggered important changes are the Ukrainian Revolution in Ukraine (2004), the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Revolution of April 7, 2009 in the Republic of Moldova and the Euromaidan (2013-2014) in Ukraine. These historic events have brought in power new pro-European political parties, dethroning pro-Russian or quasi-communist parties. The citizens massively supported political elites represented by these generations. The societies of these countries and their Western partners were convinced that the new political elites would accelerate democratization and Europeanization and would adopt European core values and principles.²⁴ In the case of Euromaidan, the name itself suggests that the key reason of the outbreak of the revolution was determined by geopolitical factors. The culmination of street protests in the Ukrainian capital in November 2013 was due to the sudden refusal of the Kiev governmental elite to initial the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement at the Eastern Partnership Summit taking place in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The riots and mass demonstrations that took place in Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, some peaceful and others with human casualties, were based on the frustrations accumulated over more than a decade by different social classes of those societies. The low living standard of life in these states, the perpetual financial insecurity caused by fragile economies often lacking competition rules and regulations, low quality or even non-existent social systems, corrupt public services, and growing distrust towards the political elite that came to power during the transition period of 1990-2000, were the major factors that contributed to the accumulation of frustrations. Declaratively, the political elite was geopolitically oriented towards the East, while in practice, it seemed to be more interested in maintaining power and achieving its own economic interests than honouring electoral promises.

One aspect brought to the study of transitions in the former Soviet states of Central and Eastern Europe is democratic legitimacy. Gligorov and Landesmann argue that the main feature of successful transitions in Central and Eastern European countries was their legitimacy, which was ensured by

²⁴ Gherasimov, C., *op. cit.*, p. 3.

reliance on democratic procedures, according to the principle of “democracy first, transition later”. By comparison with less successful transitions, the elites avoided democratic decision-making and opted for authoritarian solutions.²⁵ The “Maidan revolution” and the elections that followed, as a whole, were a first step towards the democratization of Ukraine by delegitimizing the oligarchic system. Thus, the legitimacy of the strategic decisions initially taken by the new elite implied redirecting state’s foreign policy towards strengthening the relations with the EU and for starting major administrative reforms. The authors argue that Ukraine launched “the beginning of the process that has been followed by other more successful countries in transition.”²⁶ Certainly, these transformations of Ukrainian society would influence and encourage future new generations of elites in the neighbouring states, such as the Republic of Moldova, to dare launching real transformational processes aimed at reforming the system, including through popular uprisings, in their own societies.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the comparative analysis of the situation in the Eastern European states that were part of the Soviet Union, with the Central and Eastern European countries that were once USSR’s satellite states, we find that the European path of the first group of states began relatively late. In the light of the proposed hypotheses and of the arguments presented, we find that a successful transition from communism to capitalism in a democratic system is reliable and possible only if the imminent processes resulting from the change of the form of government, namely when the transformation of institutional, administrative and judicial systems are designed and governed by a “healthy”, stable and consequent political elite. Therefore, the decisions of the governmental elite should be consistent and should correspond to the authentic principles and values of democracy and rule of law, while pursuing the national interest without managing and promoting hidden political or personal agenda through governance.

The societies of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have practically expressed the will of reorienting themselves towards European democratic values through several historical revolutions that have radically changed the geopolitical direction and led to the replacement, repeatedly in the case of Ukraine, of the governmental elite.

The long delay in the process of Europeanization and European integration of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, unlike Romania and Bulgaria is explained by the fact that in the case of the first group of countries, the leadership of the political elites was formed of the representatives of the former communist party, while the second group of countries went through swift, or even radical regime changes.

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²⁵ Gligorov, Vladimir, & Landesmann, Michael, *The Ukrainian Crisis: Security Issues and Political-Economic Challenges*, The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, 01 June 2015, <https://wiiw.ac.at/the-ukrainiancrisis-security-issues-a>, accessed on 22/04/2020.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

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