Wolfram Hilz/Shushanik Minasyan (Hg.)

24

Bonner Studien zum globalen Wandel

Armenian Developments

Perspectives of Democratization and the Role of the Civil Society

Tectum

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1 Introduction

Wolfram Hilz / Shushanik Minasyan

The development of societies during and after periods of authoritarian or totalitarian rule is among the most interesting research topics in social sciences. On the one hand, the analysis is directed at why, when and how societies resist tyrannies and what ultimately leads to the downfall of seemingly invincible regimes. On the other hand, once such authoritarian regimes unravel, it is important to comprehend how societal groups organize themselves and how they try to influence political processes.

According to more idealistic views, a quasi-automatic transformation of authoritarian societies and political systems into Western democratic systems seemed inevitable for decades. Yet while the replacement of several Western European military dictatorships in the 1970s and the end of communism in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 confirmed this assumption, many former Soviet republics revealed a much more complex development after the fall of the dual tyranny of communism and Moscow-centralism in 1991: The initial period was defined by an aspiration for economic and political stability of the Soviet Union successor states. But apart from the exception of the Baltic republics, there were no efforts to establish Western style democracies in this region at the beginning of the new century. The Georgian and Ukrainian attempts in 2003 and 2004 to found a new democratic orientation following a delay of nearly fifteen years proves this path remains difficult and largely unpredictable in post-Soviet states. The Georgian and the Ukrainian cases demonstrate that the unique societal constellations of former

Soviet republics lead to very heterogeneous political and social developments due to the specific historical, ethical and current political situations.

When regarding the political and social situation in the Republic of Armenia in this context, it is hardly surprising that the civil society followed an entirely different route over the past three decades than those of other post-Soviet states, which attracted considerable scholarly interest from Western researcher. The Armenian rendition of civil-social structure is particularly interesting because it signifies that social trends *are* able to induce major changes in states which possess limited capacity for action. Due to the territorial situation of Armenia – wedged between the predominantly hostile neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan, in the shadow of hegemonial Russia and Iran – the domestic Armenian development options seemed limited for a time. All the more remarkable was the observed flourishing of environmental activism, especially within Armenian civil society since 2012 – despite the palpable Russian pressure on the South Caucasus – and its influence on shaping the political landscape.

Armenia witnessed multiple transformations of its civil society sector since the early 1990s as its members sought a representative definition of their role. Civil society actors pursued various transition narratives to overcome their Soviet past and prevent 'post-Soviet anomalies' to anchor itself within the new discursive political matrix as a political decision-maker. Over the past years, the Armenian civic landscape continually reached new levels of development, assuming more influence in the social and political processes, which led to its qualitative change.

The aim of this volume is to shed light on the ongoing discussion on civil society in Armenia in the context of democratization and to examine its potential for democratic consolidation. The perspectives recount diverse facets of the Armenian civic landscape, as well as the recent processes of democratization. The contributions from predominantly Armenian experts focus on the necessary structures and important actors for an understanding and characterization of the Armenian civil society. This book does not intend to provide a structured comparative perspective, but rather presents a set of illus-

trative in-depth case studies and multifaceted aspects of the civic landscape in Armenia.

Shushanik Minasyan opens this set of studies with an analysis of the European Union's democracy promotion in Armenia with a special focus on its dialogue with civil society. Following the establishment of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2004 and particularly since the elaboration of the Eastern Partnership in 2009, the European Union has gradually become a more prominent player in the promotion of democracy in its Eastern neighborhood as well as a visible advocate for civil society actors in post-Soviet countries. Looking at the EU's engagement in Armenia, Minasyan focuses specifically on the interplay between the EU's external democracy promotion and its support for civil society. By critically evaluating European concepts, mechanisms and interactions with domestic civil society actors in Armenia, this starting contribution provides a general introduction of the true impact of EU assistance on the Armenian civil society sector, which is applied in following studies. In the second chapter, Yevgenya Jenny Paturyan and Valentina Gevorgyan look at Armenia's current civil society and analyze the trends and patterns of social and political participation among Armenians. The authors observe the overall context by examining the use of social media by the Armenian public and the role of social media in strengthening civil society. In the third chapter, Nina Kankanyan and Yevgenya Jenny Paturyan, critically evaluate the environmental activism in Armenia, which was prominent in the 1990s and started as a movement concerned with environmental as well as security issues of the chemical plant Nayirit. Focusing on individual actors, the authors examine the recent rise of social mobilization by civil society groups around environmental issues in Armenia and highlight the achievements as well as the challenges in this field. The contribution analyzes the lines between environmental groups and the government by focusing on the strategies and factors that define the scope of influence of civic actors in the political decision-making process. The fourth chapter authored by Narek Manukyan focuses on the transition and reform process of Armenia's general education system in the post-independence phase. Manukyan analyzes the key policy-level developments via the methodological perspective of 'policy as a discourse,' drawing on a number of documents related to educational policy-level developments. Manukyan employs a classification of the types and content

of policy borrowing as an analytical framework and examines policy borrowing in a transition society with weak institutional capacity for locally-developed education policy. In the fifth chapter, Arpine Balyan concentrates on the role of the Armenian Civil Service in enhancing governmental transparency and accountability as well as its support of the deliberative elements in the decision-making process. Using these two lenses, Balyan observes the impact of civil service reforms on state legitimacy, how it institutionalized strong public management necessary for good governance and development in Armenia. After a careful analysis of the role of civil society in various political areas, Narek Mkrtchyan offers another perspective in the sixth chapter by analyzing the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church as a mediator between the state and its citizens. This institution was historically an inseparable part of the Armenian reality and national identity and enjoys therefore the confidence of both the government and civil society. The author critically examines the image of the Armenian Church as a society-close actor by illustrating the challenges and limitations it faces in supporting the process of democratization in the country. In the final contribution, Shushanik Minasyan looks at the Velvet Revolution in spring 2018 and analyzes the nature and key aspects of this successful political development in Armenia.

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who provided input in the development of this book. Special thanks go to our experts from Armenia for all their hard work, fruitful cooperation and extensive patience. We are also grateful to our team members Mark Offermann and Julia Trautner for their editorial assistance and for the final preparation of this book.

2 The European Union's External Democracy Promotion in Armenia and the Importance of Civil Society

Shushanik Minasyan

1 Introduction

The term civil society saw a recent resurgence in response to the anticommunist revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe, which produced communities with functions parallel to the state. The accompanying academic conceptualizations of the relationship between civil society and government have become enormously distinct. Civil society is often depicted as a source of legitimacy and resiliency for governments, or as a voice of dissent against authoritarianism. In some explanations, civil society is perceived as an impulse for political development, prior to and independent of government, and in others as dependent on government for legal structures, strong appreciation, or unconditional fiscal support. Civil society is characterized both as a development in partnership with the government and as a substitute in lieu of government's.[1] A vibrant civil society is vital as it enhances the virtues relevant to a democratic system that can enable structures or communication channels between the government and interest groups involved in the policymaking process. As Jamal stipulates, civil society contributes four central functions to a democracy:

[1] See Post, Robert & Rosenblum, Nancy (eds.): Civil Society and Government, New Jersey, 2002, p. 1.

> *"[...] (a) it counters state power, (b) it facilitates political participation by helping in the aggregation and representation of interests, (c) it serves as a political arena that could play an important role in the development of some of the necessary attributes for democratic development, and (d) more broadly, it plays an important role in furthering struggles for citizenship rights."*[2]

In theory, a progressive civil society provides important conditions as it strengthens democracy by producing and facilitating

> *"[...] checks of power, responsibility, societal inclusion, tolerance, fairness, trust, cooperation and often also the efficient implementation of accepted political programs."*[3]

The promotion of civil society is consequently upheld as an essential component of good governance promotion. As an international normative actor, the European Union (EU) stresses the importance of strengthening civil society in its shared values with third countries. Brussels

> *"[...] gives value to a dynamic, pluralistic and competent society and recognizes the importance of constructive relations between states and CSOs.*[4] *Therefore, the emphasis of the EU policy will be on CSO's engagement to build stronger democratic processes and accountability systems and to achieve better development outcomes."*[5]

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2 Jamal, Manal: Democracy Promotion, Civil Society Building and the Primacy of Politics, in: Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2012, pp. 3-31, p. 12.

3 Merkel, Wolfgang: Embedded and Defective Democracies, in: Democratization, Vol. 11, No. 5, 2004, pp. 33-58, p. 47.

4 Civil Society Organization.

5 European Commission: The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM (2012) 492 final, Brussels, 2012, p. 4.

In this context, the EU pays special attention to the civil societies of its neighborhood countries and prioritizes dialogue with them in its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).[6]

This paper considers the nature of EU democracy promotion in the Eastern Neighborhood with a focus on Armenia in particular. Central and Eastern European countries have intensely engaged Armenia's political and economic transition since the early 1990s with important consequences for its civil society members. Prior to the ENP, the EU was neither a prominent external democracy promoter, nor a visible advocate of civil society actors in post-Soviet countries. The ENP, however, introduced a coherent policy towards its new neighbors in 2004, a quality which has only blossomed since the expansion of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009. Considering the EU's democracy promotion in Armenia, this contribution examines the interplay between the EU's external democracy promotion and its support for civil society. The ensuing evaluation of the EU's external democracy promotion will discuss the concepts, mechanisms and interactions with domestic civil society actors in Armenia upon which external support is based. As the evidence will demonstrate, although civil society support and communication constitute a potentially auspicious approach, the actual impact of EU strategies in Armenia remains weak.

2 The EU's External Democracy Promotion and Civil Society

Civil society has become an important issue in democratization policy and a central topic of discourse for scholars, policymakers, and other observers. Civil society theory first appeared in the political and academic landscape of the transitioning Central and Eastern Europe democracies in the late 1980s. The concept has since made its way into the democracy promotion strategies of all Western states and international organizations. In the case of the EU's efforts, civil society has continuously achieved an ever more central position in its foreign policy discourse. The EU's democracy pro-

6 See European Parliament: Resolution on Strengthening Civil Society in the Eastern Partnership Countries, Include the Question of Cooperation between Government and Civil Society, and the Question of the Reforms Aimed at Empowering Civil Society, No. 2012/C 153/04, in: Official Journal of the European Union/ C153, 30 May 2012, p. 16-17.

motion profile has been reinforced since the significant political changes in post-communist Eastern Europe between 1989 and 2001. Given the challenging political and socio-economic circumstances, the EU's external policy activities came to anchor respect, promotion and protection of human rights and democratic principles in the Luxembourg Declaration of 1991. This served as the basis of the first European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which became a prominent feature of EU external policy over the course of the 1990s. Sustaining a culture of democracy and rule of law, building an agile civil society and confidence developing measures to re-establish peace have since become standard clauses in the EU's relationships with third states.[7] In this context, the EU Commission emphasizes the importance of an empowered civil society as

> *"[...] a crucial component of any democratic system [...]. It represents and fosters pluralism and can contribute to more effective policies, equitable and sustainable development and inclusive growth. It is an important player in fostering peace and in conflict resolution."*[8]

In order to understand the EU's external democracy promotion objectives and strategies regarding civil society, as well as the outcome of EU support in Armenia, it is first important to identify its ideas concerning civil society and how it can contribute to democratization. The normative definition of civil society is rooted in a multitude of theoretical and empirical studies. Unfortunately, there is still no single definition of civil society as diverging projections aim to characterize civil society from different perspectives. This paper does not intend to describe the existing concepts of civil society, but will instead highlight the interpretation of Steven Scalet and David Schmidtz. The two maintain:

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7 See Minasyan, Shushanik: Provisionally Unsuccessful? European Democracy Promotion in the South Caucasus, in: Axyonova, Vera (ed.): European Engagement Under Review, Stuttgart, 2016, pp. 41-58, p. 42.

8 European Commission: The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM (2012) 492 final, Brussels, 2012, p. 3.

> *"Civil society retains the right to dismiss those whom it hires to provide it with governance. In this sense, classical liberals typically use the term 'civil society' to refer to anything but government; businesses, schools, clubs, unions, media, churches, charities, libraries, and any other nongovernmental forms of organizations through which a community's members relate to each other. Civil society on this view is a cluster concept. It refers to a cluster of things that bear a family resemblance to each other but share no common essence, apart from being nongovernmental forms of association."*[9]

This understanding is mirrored in European Civil Society terminology which includes a wide range of actors with different roles and mandates in its concept. The European Commission considers civil society

> *"[…] to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non-violent organizations, through which people organize to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic."*[10]

The European Parliament complements this view, stating civil society spans "all types of social actions by individuals or groups that are independent from the state and whose activities help to promote human rights and democracy […]."[11]

The inclusion of civil society as a way to boost democratic legitimacy is also a prominent item on the EU's political agenda in its democracy enhancements: the EU underscores civil society's ability to control state institutions and constitutes a real alternative to state authority. In the short term, it checks and limits state power by levying criticism against decisions that neglect democratic princi-

9 Scalet, Steven & Schmidtz, David: State, Civil society and Classical Liberalism, in: Post, Robert & Rosenblum, Nancy (eds.): Civil Society and Government, New Jersey, 2002, pp. 26-47, p. 27.

10 European Commission: The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM (2012) 492 final, Brussels, 2012, p. 3.

11 European Parliament: Regulation on Establishing a Financing Instrument for Democracy and Human Right Worldwide, No. 235/2014, in: Official Journal of the European Union/ L 77, 15 March 2014, p. 86.

ples and the rule of law. "Civil society plays an important role in giving voice to the concerns of citizens and delivering services that meet people's needs."[12] In other words, the EU sees civil society as a collection of actors who enhance the quality and legitimacy of the substantial inputs through participation. The categorization of roles for civic actors in the democratization processes demonstrates that the EU's support of civil society support is closely associated with key aspects of its external democracy promotion:

> *"[W]hilst democracy and human rights objectives must be increasingly mainstreamed in all instruments for financing external action, Union assistance […] should have a specific complementary and additional role by virtue of its global nature and its independence of action from the consent of the governments and public authorities of the third countries concerned. That role should allow for cooperation and partnership with civil society on sensitive human rights and democracy issues […] providing the flexibility requisite reactivity to respond to changing circumstances, or needs of beneficiaries, or periods of crisis."*[13]

Accordingly, the EU puts forward three priorities for its democracy support to achieve better development outcomes, concentrating on actions to (1) promote a conductive environment for civil societies in partner countries, (2) improve its participation in domestic policies, the EU programming cycle and international agreements and (3) increase local civil society capacity to effectively perform their roles as independent development actors.[14]

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12 European Commission: European Governance – White Paper, COM (2001) 428, Brussels, 2001, p. 13.

13 European Parliament: Regulation on Establishing a Financing Instrument for Democracy and Human Right Worldwide, No. 235/2014, in: Official Journal of the European Union/ L 77, 15 March 2014, p. 86.

14 See European Commission: The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM (2012) 492 final, Brussels, 2012, p. 4.

3 EU instruments for Civil Society Promotion in Armenia - The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)

The EU has developed a package of objectives, instruments and strategies since the early 1990s to strengthen civil society in Armenia's political transformations related to democracy promotion and civil society support. The EIDHR, created in 1994, was the EU's first attempt to assist in the promotion of the rule of law and human rights, together with the recognition of civil society as a key actor in the process. The EIDHR assumes a thematic approach to enhance the condition of human rights and fundamental freedoms in countries where civilians are more vulnerable.

While Armenia cooperated with the EIDHR in the mid-1990s, direct financial aid to its civil society only composed a small part of EU assistance. The aid was then directed to address the most urgent problems in the aftermath of independence, such as political and economic transition as well as humanitarian issues. The EIDHR of the 1990s had the simple task of focusing on election monitoring, which was certainly the case in Armenia. Smith notes that a number of Armenian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) cooperated with EU actors through the EIDHR-instrument on different projects ranging from election-based consultation initiatives and anti-corruption programs to general monitoring tasks.[15] The EU later intensified its activities after 2003 when the framework was heavily criticized by experts due to its independence from bilateral Armenian-EU relations. The EIDHR directly financed Armenian CSOs, inciting critics to argue "that programs and projects [were] often limited in scope, either as a result of self-limitation or unofficial control by the government"[16]. Furthermore, these actions often achieved good results at the project level, but had little sectoral or national policy impact on account of their lack of continuity or coherent long-term planning. In response to the shortcomings of

15 See Smith, Nicholas: Europeanization Through Socialization? The EU's Interaction with Civil Society Organizations in Armenia, in: Demokratizatsiya. The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2011, pp. 385-404, p. 391.

16 Zulueta-Fülscher, Kimana: Elections and the European Neighbourhood Policy in Armenia, FRIDE-Comment, May 2008, available at: http://fride.org/publication/436/elections-and-european-neighbourhood-policy-in-armenia (10 May 2018), p. 4.

EIDHR assistance, the EU reformed its funding instruments in 2007 as a complementary tool to enhance transition through the ENP, particularly for civil society organizations. In the European Neighborhood Policy Strategy Paper (2007-2013) for Armenia, the EIDHR identified dialogue with civil society as a priority to support democratic standards and good governance.[17] From 2007 to 2012, non-state actors and local authorities in Armenia have received a total allocation of EUR 5,5 million in financial assistance.[18] The European Commission later assessed the project implementation and its impact on democratization as "impressive"[19]. However, the amount of EIDHR aid available for civil society is comparably low and there has even been a considerable decline in financial support, from EUR 1,5 million in 2007 to EUR 600.000 in 2012. The general consensus seems to be that there are still problems surrounding EIDHR, with particular criticism reserved for its lack of administrative flexibly. The EU Commission's capacity to flexibly manage, fund, and co-ordinate projects is questionable, since the centralized system of calls for proposals with long project-evaluation periods is especially stifling.[20]

Despite all the EU's commitments and improvements, the EIDHR did not become an effective or focused democracy promotion tool. Most of its objectives remain unfulfilled, especially those referring to democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. According to the 2010 Bertelsmann Transformation Index Report, Armenia's transformation has continued to re-main incomplete:

> *"The development of a more resilient pluralist and participatory democracy in the country [was] challenged by the inherently closed nature of its political system and its institutions, each of which lacks sufficient authority or independence to support and sustain true democracy. On a deeper level, the fulfillment of democracy [was] further hindered by the absence of an*

17 See European Commission: European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument: Armenia, Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013, Brussels, 2007.

18 See European Commission: Thematic Program 'Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development', Annual Action Programs 2007-2012, Brussels, 2012.

19 Ibid., p. 13.

20 See Barbe, Esther & Johansson-Nogues, Elisabeth: The EU as a Modest 'Force for Good': The European Neighbourhood Policy, in: International Affairs, Vol. 84, No. 1, 2008, pp. 81-96.

underlying rule of law, which has only fostered an "arrogance of power" among the government and allowed corruption to flourish unchecked. These broader trends in Armenia's deficit of democracy have been demonstrated by a lack of good governance, which is characterized by the authorities' ruling rather than governing the country [...]."[21]

4 New Approaches

As the EU's attention began to drift from the Eastern to the Southern neighborhood following France's development of the Mediterranean Union in 2008, Sweden and Poland advocated for enhancing the eastern dimension of EU foreign policy by launching the Eastern Partnership Policy in the same year. Security concerns aggravated by the Russia-Georgia War in August 2008 ensured wide support within the EU. By committing to the initiative, the EU signaled a willingness to offer greater support for the reform efforts of partner countries and to engage in an intensive civil society dialogue. The EaP generally built on the existing ENP structures and did not create a new scope of cooperation. The most important innovation, however, has been a greater involvement of non-state actors in EU cooperation. In order to alleviate the shortcomings of the previous top-down approach and to restore the bilateral channels with civil society, the EU introduced a new mode of engagement establishing an EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF). The CSF provides a platform to develop both projects and relationships between EaP and EU CSOs, an initiative wich has received praise from EU institutions and member states alike.

The first annual CSF Assembly was organized in Brussels in 2009 by the EU Commission with 200 participating organizations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and the EU.[22] Since then, the forum was convened in Berlin in 2010, in Poznan in 2011, in Stockholm in 2012 and held the first CSF in an EaP country in Chisinau, Moldova in 2013. The Steering Commit-

21 Bertelsmann Foundation: Transformation Index, Country Report – Armenia, 2010, available at: http://www.bti2010.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/148.0.html (10 May 2018).

22 See Official Page of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, available at: http://eap-csf.eu/ (10 May 2018).

tee is the representative body that ensures the CSF's continued work by representing it in the EU and in EaP countries, developing its strategy and guiding the activities within the Forum. The Forum itself is composed of five working groups on good governance, economic integration, environment and energy security, contacts between people, and social dialogue. The Forum members are allowed to choose the Working Group closest to their field of interest, which convene in meetings to facilitate the substantive work of the CSF. The core of the CSF is comprised of six national platforms, which facilitate dialogue between the CSOs in EaP countries, their respective governments and the EU institutions. The Forum has had a permanent participant status since 2012 in all intergovernmental multilateral EaP platforms.[23]

Following the Arab Spring, the EU and its members established two parallel instruments in 2011. The Neigbourhood Civil Society Facility (NDSF) was the Commission's instrument and provided the Eastern and Southern regions with EUR 34,3 million from 2011-2013[24] to strengthen the civil society capacities of partner countries, promote national reforms, and to contribute to the improvement of public accountability. The Commission saw the Facility as a means "to move beyond simply providing financial support to civil society organizations"[25] and

> *"[…] to encompass and reinforce in a comprehensive way existing initiatives of support to non-state actors in the neighbourhood, complemented with new elements. It also attempts to make non-state actors-oriented efforts in the ENP region more visible and structured, and more beyond simply providing financial support to non-state actors […]."*[26]

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23 See Kostanyan, Hrant: The Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership four years on: Progress, Challenges and Prospects, CEPS Special Report, No. 81, Brussels 2014, available at: https://www.ceps.eu/publications/civil-society-forum-eastern-partnership-four-years-progress-challenges-and-prospects (10 May 2018).

24 See European Commission: Action Fiche for Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2011, Brussels 2011; European Commission: Action Fiche for Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2012 and 2013, Brussels, 2012.

25 Action Fiche for Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2012 and 2013, Brussels, 2012, p. 2.

26 European Commission: Action Fiche for Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2011, Brussels 2011, p. 1.

The Council of the EU established the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) as a second instrument to be "a flexible, demand driven, and independent democracy support organisation"[27] and was introduced by Poland during its EU presidency in 2011.[28] The EED was an initiative aimed at facilitating rapid and flexible democratization funding to political actors as well as to foster and encourage deep and sustainable societal democracy.

Armenian civil society organizations have been involved in consultations with those instruments since 2012. EU experts have used meetings and seminars to enhance the dialogue between the EU and Armenian civil society as well as to create a civil society platform for the exchange of views on a number of issues relevant for the future development of EU-Armenia relations. In December 2012, a non-paper on strengthening the role of the EaP Civil Society National Platform in Armenia (ANP) was initiated and submitted to the Republic of Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The non-paper stressed the importance of the ANP's role in increasing government accountability, engaging citizens in policymaking and giving the EaP more visibility. A regular structured dialogue between civil society representatives and governments authorities was suggested to monitor the implementation of the EaP Roadmap and ENP Action Plan and enable civil society to comment on the national legislative process related of the EaP agenda implementation.[29] Thematic instruments mainly address non-state actors such as NGOs and local authorities on topics including the rule of law and human rights, poverty reduction and sustainable development, among others. Since 2008, the EU has pledged over EUR 5 million to these projects. On average, 20 projects within the aforementioned instruments have been contracted to tackle the issues of labor issues, fundamental rights and freedoms, media freedom, women empowerment/development, judiciary, health and social needs, and

27 European Parliament: European Endowment for Democracy: Report for the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, Brussels, 2014, p. 9.

28 See European Commission: European Endowment for Democracy – Additional Support for Democratic Change, Press Release, IP/13/17, Brussels, 2013.

29 See European Commission: Armenia. EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017, Brussels, 2014, p. 12.

elections.[30] The CSF and NDSF funding to Armenian CSOs has gradually increased from EUR 350.000 in 2011 to EUR 850.000 in 2013.[31]

However, despite the apparent increase in interaction with Armenian CSOs, the nature of EU engagement has slowed considerably. Kostanyan expressed doubt about its effectiveness and stressed that

> *"[...] the funding for the so-called Country Based Support Scheme on a yearly basis has remained fairly limited [...], especially for Armenia. Through supporting civil society actors, the EU tries to conduct advocacy in the areas which 'conventionally' have been reserved for the governments."*[32]

The EU's work with civil society takes place within the framework of cooperation between the EU and the Armenian government. The framework allows for strong state intervention and hinders growth in the political and civic landscape. The ambiguity also damages the normative nature of EU engagement with civil society and the majority of CSO actors argue the EU was committed to democracy or human rights in Armenia. Hence, the EU's normative standards are perceived as purely rhetorical, with little observable concrete action.[33]

The political allegiance of many NGOs who work with the EU is also controversial because the main civil society groups are directly commissioned by the government and the EU does not have an appropriate monitoring mechanism. The further transformation of NGOs into small commercial service businesses following the completion of a project presents an additional problem, a trend

30 See ibid., p. 13-14.

31 See European Commission: Commission Implementing Decision on the Special Measure: Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2012-2013 to be financed of the General Budget of the European Union, COM (2012) 8526 final, Brussels, 2012; European Commission: Action Fiche for Eastern Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility 2012 and 2013, Brussels, 2012.

32 Kostanyan, Hrant: Neither Integrated nor Comprehensive in Substance: Armenia and Georgia, in: Wetzel, Anne & Orbie, Jan (eds.): The Substance of EU Democracy Promotion, London, 2015, pp. 134-148, p. 143.

33 See Smith, Nicholas: Europeanization through Socialization? The EU's Interaction with Civil Society Organizations in Armenia, in: Demokratizatsiya. The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2011, pp. 385-404, p. 397.

which shatters the mutual trust between the EU and Armenian CSOs. As a result, many NGOs are skeptical about the genuine potential of EU engagement due to this damaged trust and repeatedly raised the issue that the EU treated independent CSOs as inferior to the government actors.

> *"The government was seen as an equal partner and subsequently had a far greater role in formulating the [Action Plans]. Although CSOs cooperated with the EU on the [Action Plans], their voice was muzzled comparatively to the government. This contrasted from the pre-ENP interaction perception that CSOs were on an equal plane with government actors."*[34]

Brussels recognizes this assessment and attributes these shortcomings to the lack of professionalized civic activism in Armenia and their inability to ensure a goal-oriented management of funding. The Commission stresses that the activities of CSOs are not always borne locally but are donor driven and as such, strong domestic civic associations are some-times hard to find:

> *"The development of CSOs in Armenia has been mainly determined by the donor's policy and strategic priorities. Donor grants are the main and in most cases the sole source of their income. The areas and type of activities of CSOs has been shaped by local needs but also to a large extent by the policy priorities of international donors. […] Despite the concerns over possible decrease in donor's funding in the future, CSOs tend to continue relying on grants and therefore hardly get involved in different assistance instruments of the Delegation, unless grants are provided."*[35]

The European Commission underlines also:

> *"Armenian CSOs are characterised by deficiencies in organisational capacity, internal governance, and financial sustainability […]. The majority of CSOs work in more than one sphere, mostly to fit to the donors' agendas and priorities in order to get funding. Membership fees and private donations also comprise a small portion of CSO funding. Lack of tax incentives for char-*

34 Ibid., p. 396.

35 European Commission: Armenia. EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017, Brussels, 2014, p. 15.

itable donations and low trust towards CSOs are obstacles to private funding. Paid services are almost nonexistent as an income source, mostly because of legislative limitations. Thus, lack of financial sustainability hinders strategic development of Armenian CSOs, and negatively affects their institutional capacities having a hindering impact on CSOs as participants in policy-making."[36]

5 Conclusion

EU has increased the level of support to civil society actors in democracy promotion and modestly improved the modalities of its funding in recent years. The corresponding instruments for civil society promotion (NDSF, CSF) succeeded in creating a sophisticated and functional institutional structure, becoming a visible cooperation platform for the EU and Armenian CSOs. However, EU support still faces a number of challenges: it must further develop its strategy and needs to balance the cooperation between state and non-state actors in particular.

The civil society initiatives require a clear strategy for Armenia, which can define and implement itself. The cooperation strategy should concentrate on the preparation and delivery of CSO input, making the Eastern Partnership process more transparent, visible and accountable. Civil society actors stress that the application process and receiving of funding is complicated and time consuming, often taking an entire year before a decision is announced, when the project concept may have already become obsolete. The new forms of cooperation should seek to diminish the complicated grant-application procedures, project-based assessment and language barrier. Whereas the simplification of EU funding programs will reduce the administrative burden, the simplification of rules and processes is but one aspect that needs to be examined; to ensure that EU programs remain attractive and suitable for civil society, it is paramount that the practical situation for CSO partners is improved and that the funding model is financially sustainable. Furthermore,

36 European Commission: Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual Action Programme 2015 in favour of the Republic of Armenia. Action Document for the Civil Society Facility, Annex 3, Brussels, 2015, p. 4.

these programs should be more clearly directed towards EU-oriented NGOs.

The EU and Armenia can benefit from independent input from civil society, but several steps must be taken. The EaP-Forum certainly needs to hone its processes and develop relevant input for EaP meetings. Moreover, the EaP-Forum needs to communicate its strategy with state actors, help civil society actors develop, and strengthen the EaP's advocacy role in the democratization process. The inclusion of such actors in the process could lead to a better understanding in Brussels of the needs of Armenian society and increase public awareness about the civil society agenda.

3 A New Channel of Information? The Challenge of Using the Social Media as a Mobilising Tool for the Armenian Civil Society

Yevgenya Jenny Paturyan / Valentina Gevorgyan

1 Introduction

Armenian civil society today is more diverse than it was ten, or even five years ago. At the turn of the 21st century, Armenian civil society was equated with NGOs. Not anymore. Since 2007 a new and increasingly visible actor entered the stage: youth-driven, social media-powered, issue-specific civic activism is a new form of expression in the realm of civil society. The so-called 'civic initiatives' are loosely organised miniature social movements, mostly confined to Yerevan, but gradually gaining visibility. The term is a self-description used by a variety of activist groups united around a common, often very specific cause (blocking a construction in a public park, protesting against a new mine and so on). These new forms of civic participation led a few successful struggles.[1]

Armenian civil society today is a diverse mix of various players: from apolitical clubs to radical movements, from professionally staffed NGOs to spontaneously formed activist groups, from well-established organisations with clearly defined missions to fluid structures with shifting purposes. The civil society develops and functions against the general backdrop of Armenian political cul-

[1] See Ishkanian, Armine et al.: Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Yerevan, 2013, available at: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/54755/ (1 March 2018).

ture, challenging the entrenched post-communist syndrome of disengagement and cynicism towards the public sphere. In order to accurately assess the odds of increased participation in civil society, a more detailed analysis of trends and patterns of Armenian political culture are necessary. This chapter looks at public opinion survey data to examine social and political participation among the Armenian population. The aim of the paper is to place the Armenian civil society in the context of the political culture it operates in.

In examining the overall context, we pay particular attention to the use of social media by the Armenian public and its various subgroups. Social media is extensively used by civil society to organise and to spread.[2] Hence, we want to find out whether civil society actors are using this new channel of communication effectively. The following research question is formulated: to what extent do the social media reach out to potential activists?

2 Literature Review

Civil society is generally defined as a sphere of social activities and organisations outside the state, the market and the private sphere that is based on principles of voluntarism, pluralism, and tolerance.[3] Civil society studies often focus on organisations, but there are other players in the civil society arena. Not all civil society activities are channelled through formal institutions, nor do they all take conventional forms. Social movements are also a component of civil society, although their 'contentious nature' and often unconvention-

2 See Bagiyan, Armine: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civic Activism in Armenia. Master Thesis, Armenia, 2015; Kankanyan, Nina: Environmental Activism in Armenia. Master Thesis, Yerevan, 2015.

3 See Anheier, Helmut: Civil Society: Measurement, Evaluation, Policy, Sterling, 2004; Diamond, Larry: Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation, Baltimore & London, 1999; Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred: Toward Consolidated Democracies, in: Diamond, Larry (ed.): Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives, Baltimore & London, 1997, pp. 14-33; Salamon, Lester & Sokolowski, Wojciech & List, Regina: Global Civil Society: An Overview - The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, 2003, available at: http://www.jhu.edu/cnp/research/index.html (1 March 2018).

al repertoire of action make them a specific object of research in an ad hoc scientific literature.[4]

Although studies of civil society and studies of social movements have generally been advanced through separate schools within social science, there clearly is an overlap. Social movements can be seen as an 'integral component' of civil society, or vice versa, the vibrant associational life of civil society can be seen as a part of 'broader social movement dynamics'.[5]

The two schools of thought can be integrated, using a framework proposed by Edwards.[6] To do justice to the emerging diversity within the Armenian civil society, we conceptualise it as an 'ecosystem', in which two of its many elements, NGOs and nascent social movements function. Just like an ecosystem, the Armenian civil society is influenced by the overall social climate: a mix of stable elements of the political culture, including mistrust and low membership in civil society organisations,[7] and new developments, such as technological advances powering the new social media.

The role of social media in empowering civil society manifested itself in a particularly dramatic way during the Arab Spring,[8] 'draw-

4 See Della Porta, Donatella & Diani, Mario: Social Movements: An Introduction, Oxford, 1999; Kriesi, Hanspeter: The Political Opportunity Structure of New Social Movements: Its Impact on Their Mobilization, in: Jenkins, Craig & Klandermans, Bert (eds.): The Politics of Social Protest: Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements, Minneapolis, 1995, pp. 167-198; Tarrow, Sidney: Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics, 1st edition, Cambridge & New York, 1994; Tilly, Charles & Tarrow, Sidney: Contentious Politics, Boulder, 2007.

5 See Della Porta, Donatella & Diani, Mario: Social Movements, in: Edwards, Michael (ed.): The Oxford Handbook of Civil Society, Oxford, 2011, pp. 68-79, p. 69.

6 See Edwards, Michael: Civil Society, 3rd edition, New York, 2014, p. 32.

7 See Paturyan, Yevgenya & Gevorgyan, Valentina: Armenian Civil Society after Twenty Years of Transition: Still Post-communist? Yerevan, 2014, available at: http://tcpa.aua.am/files/2012/07/Armenian_Civil_Society_after-_Twenty_Years_of_Transition_Manuscript_November_2014-fin.pdf (25 June 2018), p. 55-58.

8 See Breuer, Anita: The Role of Social Media in Mobilizing Political Protest: Evidence from the Tunisian Revolution, German Development Institute Discussion Paper, No. 10, 2012; Tufekci, Zeynep & Wilson, Christopher: Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations from Tahrir Square, in: Journal of Communication, Vol. 62, No. 2, 2012, pp. 363-379; Eltantawy, Nahed & Wiest, Julie: Social Media in the Egyptian Revolu-

ing researchers' attention to social networks as a tool for political change[9] and for empowering public voices of ordinary people.[10]

Some studies demonstrate that the internet has a positive effect on civic engagement; the social media facilitates collective action.[11] Social networking enhances the likelihood of citizen engagement in politics,[12] impacts organisational membership and protest attendance.[13] The importance of the internet has been framed as helping to build 'bridging' social capital,[14] which, in its turn, helps consolidate cooperative mutual engagement and promotes collective action.[15]

There are also counterarguments to the importance of the internet and the social media. Some authors suggest that while usage of communication channels increases, it narrows people's mobilising potential and makes them lose contact with their social environment.[16] Social media is not significant for movements' success because activists owe their achievements mostly to the traditional

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tion: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory, in: International Journal of Communication, Vol. 5, No. 18, 2011, pp. 1207-1224.

9 See Raoof, Jihanet et al.: Using Social Network Systems as a Tool for Political Change, in: International Journal of Physical Sciences, Vol. 8, No. 21, 2013, pp. 1143-1148.

10 See Kirkpatrick, David: Does Facebook Have a Foreign Policy?, in: Foreign Policy, No. 190, 2011, p. 55.

11 See Yang, Guobin: The Co-Evolution of the Internet and Civil Society in China, in: Asian Survey, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2003, pp. 405-422.

12 See La Due Lake, Ronald & Huckfeldt, Robert: Social Capital, Social Networks, and Political Participation, in: Political Psychology, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1998, pp. 567-584.

13 See Schwarz, Elizabeth: The Impact of Social Network Websites on Social Movement Involvement, Working paper, Riverside, 2011, available at: http://cbsmpapers.web.unc.edu/files/2011/08/SchwarzSNSSocialMovements.pdf (20 October 2011).

14 See Kavanaugh, Andrea L. et al.: Weak Ties in Networked Communities, in: The Information Society, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2005, pp. 119-131.

15 See Granovetter, Mark: The Strength of Weak Ties, in: American Journal of Sociology, 1973, pp. 1360-1380; Putnam, Robert: Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, New York, 2000.

16 See Nie, Norman & Erbring, Lutz: Internet and Society, in: Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society, Stanford, 2000, available at: itsy.co.uk/archive/sisn/Pos/silver/IntAndSoc.pdf (1 March 2018); van Laer, Jeroen: Activists Online and Offline: The Internet as an Information Channel for Protest Demonstrations, in: Mobilization: An International Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2010, pp. 347-366.

means of protests; social media is good in framing the protest, not in organising it.[17]

3 Methodology

We look at secondary data on various types of political and civic participation in Armenia and contrast it with data on the use of the internet and social media. The aim is to explore the overall political culture in which new civic initiatives have to operate and to juxtapose typical characteristics of a social media user and a potential activist, estimating the overlap between these two groups. We use data from the following surveys: the World Values Survey (WVS 1997 and 2011); the Caucasus Barometer (2008-2015); Alternative Resources in Media (2011 and 2013) and the CIVICUS Civil Society Index survey 2014. All these surveys were based on nationwide representative samples of adult residents of Armenia.[18] The analysis in this chapter is based on data from the third and the sixth waves of WVS because these are the only two waves that included Armenia. The Caucasus Barometer (CB) is an annual nationwide representative survey conducted in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia by the Caucasus Research Resources Centres (CRRC) since 2008. Two nationwide representative surveys conducted by CRRC-Armenia in 2011 and 2013 titled Alternative Resources in Media (ARMedia) focus specifically on media consumption patterns and media perceptions.[19] The CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) is a participa-

17 See Metwalli, Somaia: Electronic Social Networks and Social Movements' Performance, in: The Case of Egypt: 6th April Movement, Durham, 2010; Theocharis, Yannis: Cuts, Tweets, Solidarity and Mobilisation: How the Internet Shaped the Student Occupations, in: Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 65, No. 1, 2011, available at: http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/11/16/pa.gsr049.short (1 March 2018); Tusa, Felix: How Social Media Can Shape a Protest Movement: The Cases of Egypt in 2011 and Iran in 2009, in: Arab Media and Society, Vol. 17, 2013, available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/184966/20130221104512_Tusa_Felix.pdf (1 March 2018); Valenzuela, Sebastián & Arriagada, Arturo & Scherman, Andrés: The Social Media Basis of Youth Protest Behavior: The Case of Chile, in: Journal of Communication, Vol. 62, No. 2, 2012, pp. 299-314.

18 ARMedia included younger respondents of 15+, WVS has 17+ respondents.

19 Information about CRRC and the CB is available at: http://www.crrccenters.org (1 March 2018). Information about CRRC-Armenia and the ARMedia study is available at: http://www.crrc.am (1 March 2018).

tory action-research project assessing the state of civil society in countries around the world. The CSI is initiated and implemented by local partner organisations, in partnership with the CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation.[20]

4 Armenian Civil Society: NGOs and Protests

Twenty-five years of post-communist development resulted in a fairly well-developed NGO sector in the republic. There are more than 3.000 NGOs formally registered in Armenia; about 800 of those are probably functioning.[21] The NGO sector overall is well organised but suffers from low civic engagement and weak impact.[22] Its heavy dependence on donor funds earned it a label of "genetically modified"[23]. Public trust towards NGOs is low, yet NGOs think they are trusted.[24] Overall, the NGO sector can thus be described as developed but detached from the public.

As already mentioned, Armenian civil society is no longer just NGOs. Less formally structured civic initiatives have become an alternative mode of civic engagement and have grown from small campaigns to rather large and clearly political demonstrations of public disapproval of state policies. The three largest recent campaigns[25] are briefly introduced below.

In 2013-2014 a series of large scale well-organised protests against an unpopular pension reform caught the government and many analysts of Armenian civic activism by surprise. As a result, the implementation of the reform was postponed. The Prime Minister resigned, and the government was reshuffled, although officially the

20 Information is available at: https://civicus.org/index.php (1 March 2018).

21 See Paturyan, Yevgenya & Gevorgyan, Valentina: Civic Activism as a Novel Component of Armenian Civil Society, Yerevan, 2016, available at: http://tcpa.aua.am/files/2012/07/English-3.pdf (1 March 2018).

22 See Hakobyan, Lusine et al.: Armenian Civil Society: From Transition to Consolidation, Analytical Country Report, CIVICUS Civil Society Index, Yerevan, 2010.

23 Ishkanian, Armine: Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia, London & New York, 2008, p. 23.

24 See Paturyan, Yevgenya: Armenian Civil Society: It is not All about NGOs, in: Segert, Dieter (ed.): Civic Education and Democratisation in the Eastern Partnership Countries, Vol. 73, Bonn, 2016, pp. 69-75.

25 In the period of 2013-2016.

resignation of the Prime Minister was caused by other, unexplained reasons. In June 2015 thousands of people took to the streets to protest a proposed electricity price hike. Non-stop two weeks of protests and sit-ins blocked one of the capital's main streets, several hundred meters from the Presidential residence and the National Assembly. The protests spread beyond the capital. Nonetheless the campaign is known as the "Electric Yerevan", after its twitter hashtag. The most recent and controversial wave of protests erupted in summer 2016. A group of armed gunmen known as the "Daredevils of Sasun" took over a police station in Yerevan, killing a police officer in the process, and holding hostages. The group demanded the release of their jailed leader whom they considered to be a political prisoner and a resignation of the President. Thousands of people took to the streets to demonstrate support for the Daredevils and force the government to negotiate. The standoff lasted for two weeks and claimed a life of a second police officer shortly before the gunmen surrendered.

Thus, Armenian civil society includes an institutionalised but detached NGO sector on the one hand and the spontaneous outbursts of civic and political activism on the other hand. Both elements are influenced by gradually changing political culture and rapidly developing new technology. What are the challenges and the opportunities? What options does Armenian civil society have to improve its ability to voice and channel public concerns? We examine some elements of the political culture, and particularly patterns of social media use to deepen our understanding of the overall environment, in which Armenian civil society operates.

5 Are Armenians Willing to Participate?

First, let us consider the overall public attitude towards activism. The WVS survey has data on confidence towards two types of social movements: environmental and women's movement. For both of these there are more negative than positive opinions: in 2011, 31% say they have either 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in women's movements as compared to 41% saying either 'not very much' or 'none at all'. For the environmental movement, the percentage of positive vs. negative answers are 36% and 42%, respectively. Noteworthy however is that environmental movements

emerged since mid-1980s in Armenia and represented the only subject of protest.[26] The lack of environmental education, governmental transparency and mechanisms ensuring public participation in the decision-making of environmental policy triggered the movement, which later served as a basis for gradual emergence of other protest movements advocating political goals and eventually leading to the departure of the Soviet system.

Regarding public confidence towards women's movement WVS data show an increase: the mean, measured on the scale from 1 (a great deal) to 4 (none at all) changed from 3.05 in 1997 to 2.74 in 2011 (higher numbers mean less confidence). For both movements, the percentage of those undecided has increased, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Confidence in social movements (WVS, %)

Membership in various associations in Armenia remains dismally small and has even decreased compared to 1997: 7% of the population was active in at least one organisation in 2011 as compared to 17% in 1997.[27] According to the CIVICUS CSI survey, 2.4% of the population reported being a member of an informal civic group or a movement in 2014. No earlier data on participation in informal civic groups are available. People are not willing to join associations and are ambivalent or distrustful of NGOs. When asked about their trust towards NGOs, most Armenian respondents of the CB 2015

26 See Abrahamian, Levon: Armenian Identity in a Changing World, Costa Mesa, CA, 2006.

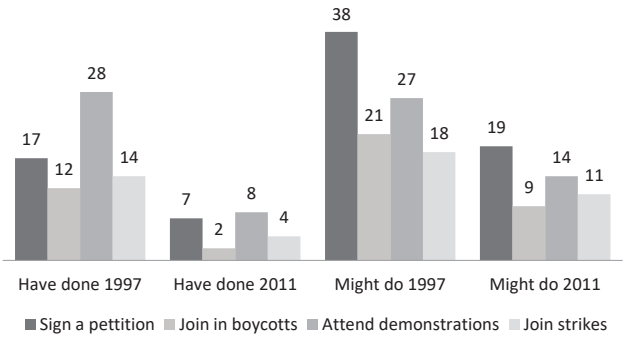
27 See Paturyan, Yevgenya & Gevorgyan, Valentina: Civic Activism as a Novel Component of Armenian Civil Society, Yerevan, 2016, p. 58, available at: http://tcpa.aua.am/files/2012/07/English-3.pdf (1 March 2018).

said ‘neither trust nor distrusts’ (34%) followed by the attitude of distrust expressed by 29%.

Unlike formal membership in associations, some informal types of civic engagement in the community seem to be on the rise in Armenia. Volunteering increased in the recent years: according to CB data, 37% of the Armenian population reported doing voluntary work in 2015 as compared to 22% in 2011.

Non-conventional political participation in Armenia today is lower than in the mid-1990s. For all the four types of non-conventional political actions measured in WVS (signing a petition, joining in boycotts, attending demonstrations and joining strikes) the percentages of both those who reported having done it and those who said they might do it declined from 1997 to 2011, as evident from Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Political activism in Armenia (WVS, %)



Based on survey data, we can infer that the Armenian civil society today finds itself in an environment of very low membership and mistrust of both NGOs and social movements, declining political participation but increasing volunteering. Things are changing, not least thanks to a rapid spread and diversification of alternative information channels. Can civil society use the new opportunities to improve its image and encourage more participation? In the rest of the chapter, we explore patterns of social media use among more and less active segments of the Armenian population.

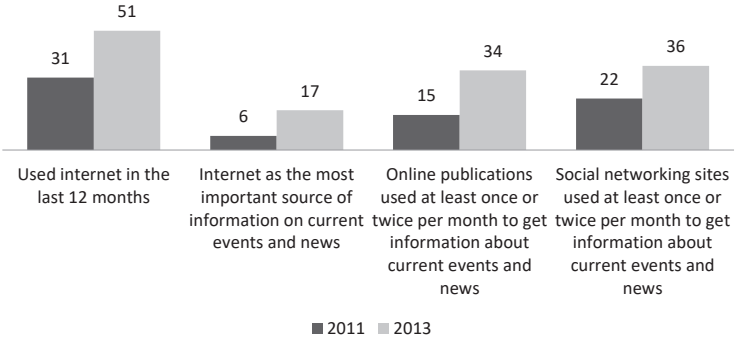
6 Use of Social Media

Since civil society often relies on the internet and particularly on social media to spread information, mobilise support and organise some of its activities, it is important to understand Armenian online media landscape and its recent trends. ARMedia surveys provide a wealth of data in that respect.

The importance of internet as 'the most important source of information on current events and news' grew from 6% in 2011 to 17% in 2013. Online publications are used at least once or twice per month 'to get information about current events and news' by 34% of the population in 2013 as compared to 15% in 2011. Use of social networking sites for the similar purpose increased from 22% to 36% respectively. Additionally, the Caucasus Barometer data 2017 shows that 34% of respondents who use the internet said that they read listen or watch the news including watching online TV (apart from news on social networking sites).

Figure 3 below illustrates, the importance of the internet in general, and social networking sites in particular, has grown. Trust towards these alternative sources of information increased as well. On a four-point scale (where one means no trust at all and four means "trust very much") online media sources received an average score of 2.63 in 2011 and 2.73 in 2013. Trust towards social networking sites increased slightly: from average 2.54 in 2011 to 2.59 in 2013. Among social network users, the percentage of those who use it for sharing political and/or social news increased from 16% in 2011 to 21% in 2013 (3.4% and 7.5% of the general population, respectively).

Figure 3: Increased importance of the internet as an information source (ARMedia, %)



7 Are Online Media Users the Same as Activists?

After exploring the overall attitudinal context and online media usage patterns, we turn to our research question. To what extent do social media reach potential activists? To answer it, we need to understand (a) who is more likely to partake in activism and (b) to what extent potential activists can be reached through social networks. Unfortunately, we have no single database that would contain information on activism and on the use of social media in Armenia; we are unable to directly compare these two elements. WVS has data on activism but not data on the use of social networks while ARMedia has data on the use of social networks but no data on activism. To piece these two bits of information together, we project existing data onto standard variables that can be compared. We use basic socio-demographic variables: age, gender, education and income to depict a 'typical Armenian social network user' and compare that socio-demographic portrait with a 'typical Armenian political activist' to see whether there is a match between these two groups.

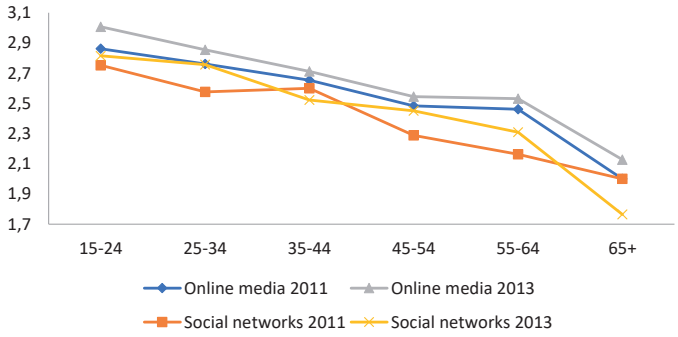
7.1 On the Receiving End of Online Information

As we have demonstrated in the descriptive section of the analysis, internet usage is on the rise in Armenia. This is an opportunity for civil society to spread its information to more people and mobilise

support. But who are the people on the receiving end of this new and increasingly popular channel of communication? To understand that, we ran a number of statistical tests with the standard socio-demographic variables (age, gender, education and income) and four of the variables described above: use of the internet, trust towards online information sources (online publications and social networking sites in particular), and frequency of use of social networking sites to gain information about current events and news. We conducted tests for both years 2011 and 2013. Unless specified otherwise, we report results of statistical tests for the year 2013 only, while discussing a pattern that applies to both years, not to clog the chapter with too many numbers.

Age: Younger people use the internet more. The average age of those who report using the internet in the past 12 months in 2013 is 38 as compared to the average age of 56 for non-users; this difference is statistically significant.[28] Younger people are more trustful of online media[29] and social networks.[30] The pattern is very clear and runs steadily through age cohorts, as depicted in Figure 4. Younger people are also more frequent users of social networking sites as a source to get information about current events.[31]

Figure 4: Average trust towards online information sources by age cohorts (ARMedia, mean on the scale from 1 'don't trust at all' to 4 'trust very much')



28 T-test: t (1397) = -20.997, p < 0.001 for 2013.
29 Pearson's correlation: r = -0.274, N = 677, p < 0.001 for 2013.
30 Pearson's correlation: r = -0.283, N = 647, p < 0.001 for 2013.
31 Pearson's correlation: r = 0.527, N = 1383, p < 0.001 for 2013.

Gender has no influence on the frequency of internet use, neither on trust towards online media and social networks. Interestingly, in 2011 men reported using social networking sites as a source of information for current events more frequently than women.[32] By 2013, however, the discrepancy between genders disappeared: women use social networking sites as a source of information as frequently as men.

Education influences the usage of the internet. Those who reported using the internet in the last 12 months have higher education.[33] Education does not seem to affect levels of trust towards social networks, but it does affect the frequency of using those as a source of information about current events and news: the higher the education, the more frequently the respondent will use social networking sites as a source of information.[34]

Income: Respondents, who perceive themselves to be relatively better off,[35] are more likely to report having used the internet in the last 12 months.[36] They also report higher levels of trust towards online media[37] and social networks,[38] and the use of social networking sites as a source of information about current events and news more frequently.[39]

32 T-test: $t(1375) = -2.106$, $p < 0.05$ for 2011.

33 T-test: $t(1398) = 13.896$, $p < 0.001$ for 2013.

34 Pearson's correlation: $r = -0.272$, $N = 1384$, $p < 0.001$ for 2013.

35 The survey does not include questions on respondent or household income levels. Instead the following question was used to estimate relative well-being of respondents: 'Please look at this card and tell me the answer which best reflects the current financial situation of your family/household? Money is not enough for food, Money is enough for the food, but not for clothes, Money is enough for food and clothes, but it is not enough for buying expensive things such as a TV and washing machine. We can afford some expensive goods (e.g., TV set or washing machine). We can afford expensive goods, to have summer vacation, to buy a car, but we cannot buy an apartment. We can buy even an apartment'.

36 T-test: $t(1373) = 14.289$, $p < 0.001$ for 2013.

37 Pearson's $r = 0.212$, $N = 661$, $p < 0.001$ for 2013.

38 Pearson's $r = 0.163$, $N = 629$, $p < 0.001$ for 2013.

39 Pearson's correlation: $r = -0.364$, $N = 1359$, $p < 0.001$ for 2013.

7.2 Actual and Potential Activists

Civil society needs popular support. If civil society actors want to attract more people to their cause, it is logical to target people that are more inclined towards taking action. We use WVS data on four types of non-conventional political participation, (petitions, boycotts, demonstrations, and strikes) as measurements of activism. To simplify the analysis, we recalculated original data into new dummy variables, grouping 'have done' and 'might do' response categories together, creating a simple dichotomy between people who said they would never engage in the type of activity mentioned and those who are willing or have already done so.

We look at each of the four types of actions, assessing whether age, gender, education and income influence the likelihood of participation. We also note whether the picture in 2011 is different from that in 1997. Table 1 below summarizes the results of T-Test and Chi-square analysis. Only statistically significant results are reported.

It is clear that in 1997 the distinction between those willing and unwilling to participate was more pronounced: except petitions (for which age, gender, and education did not matter) participants were likely to be younger more educated less earning men. In 2011 the differences have all but disappeared, with the exception of education. Age and income do not matter anymore, gender matters only for participation in boycotts.

Thus, education is the most important predictor of activism. In that sense, there is a good match between the 'portrait' of an activist and a 'portrait' of a typical internet and social networks user: more educated use the internet more often and turn to social networks to get information more often. Use of social networks as a tool to spread information and attract potential activist seems to be a good strategy to target those most likely to answer the call. In terms of other socio-demographic variables, there is less of a match.

Table 1: Non-conventional political participation by socio-demographic variables, WVS

	Age	Gender	Education	Income
Petition	-	-	2011: more educated are more likely to participate	1997: worse-off are more likely to participate
Boycott	1997: younger are more likely to participate	1997 and 2011: men are more likely to participate	1997 and 2011: more educated are more likely to participate	1997: worse-off are more likely to participate
Demonstration	1997: younger are more likely to participate	1997: men are more likely to participate	1997 and 2011: more educated are more likely to participate	1997: worse-off are more likely to participate
Strike	1997: younger are more likely to participate	1997: men are more likely to participate	1997 and 2011: more educated are more likely to participate	1997: worse-off are more likely to participate

For instance, we found that younger people use the internet and social networking sites as a source of information more often. But older people are just as likely to participate in demonstrations as younger people. Hence, information spread through social networks misses out some potential joiners of older age. Same can be said about the income: better-off are more likely to be on the receiving end of the internet spread information, but worse-off are just as likely to partake in various types of activism. Our analysis shows that the 'right' people to target in an attempt to mobilise support are

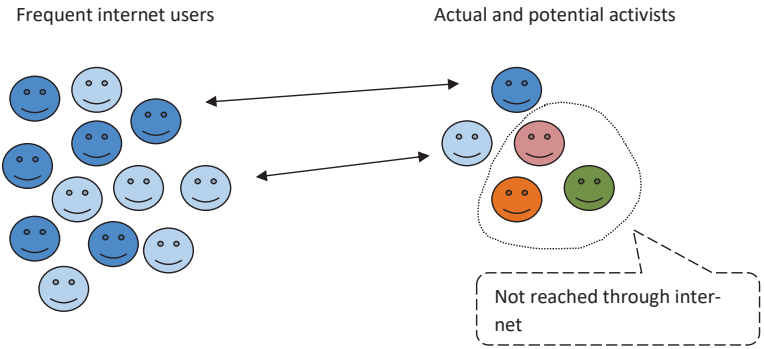
very heterogeneous, while the internet is only targeting a part of those.

8 Conclusion & Discussion

The picture of Armenian political culture, depicted by the survey data we discussed is not very encouraging for civil society, but there are a few silver linings. Potentially negative factors include low public confidence, extremely low membership in associations, and negative public attitude towards participation. Non-conventional political participation in 2011 is less common than in 1997, but there is more heterogeneity in terms of participants: in 1997 young, educated men with lower incomes were more likely to sign petitions and partake in boycotts, demonstrations, and strikes. In 2011 age, gender and income levels lose their predictive power. Education still matters: the higher the education, the higher is the likelihood of participation.

Among findings that can be interpreted as good news for civil society is the fact that confidence in social movements has increased since the mid-1990s. Volunteering is on the rise. The internet is spreading fast. One-third of the population uses social networking sites as sources of information about social and political events, making social networks a good venue for civic mobilisation. Drawing parallels between social media users and potential activists, we can see that social media reaches younger, more educated and financially better-off people, while potential activists come from all walks of life. Figure 5 below is a graphical reflection of the situation: frequent internet users are a relatively larger but more homogenous group of younger, better-off people, while actual and potential activists are a relatively smaller but more heterogeneous group of people of various ages and walks of life. Not all of them are reachable through the internet. Thus, if civil society aims to mobilise larger public support, the organisers need to think how to spread information in addition to social networks, to reach those potential participants who are not users of social networks, or who are distrustful of them.

Figure 5: Partial overlap between internet users and activists



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4 Environmental Activism in Armenia 2008-2014: Strategies and Impact

Nina Kankanyan / Yevgenya Jenny Paturyan

1 The Theoretical Framework: Environmental Activism and its Impact on Policy-Making

This paper analyzes twelve environmental campaigns of 2008-2014 in Armenia, based on media analysis and in-depth interviews with activists. It shows that mining is the predominant concern of the environmentalists: the most frequent type of activities they oppose and the one hardest to influence. Environmental activists use a diverse repertoire of activities, yet the diversity of strategies is a poor predictor of the outcome; types of activities employed are more important than the variety. The only two cases of successful campaigns used a combination of 24/7 presence and physical disruption.

Environmental activism is of particular importance in post-Soviet countries. Many of the former USSR republics witnessed public mobilization around environmental concerns in the 1980s; those were precursors of later political mobilization.[1] Armenia is no exception. Environmental activism was prominent in the late 1980s and had spillover effects on the Arsakh (Karabakh) mass movement

[1] See Khazanov, Anatoly: After the USSR: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States, Cambridge, 1995; Grigor, Ronald: The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union, Stanford, 1993; Geukjian, Ohannes: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in the South Caucasus: Nagorno-Karabakh and the Legacy of Soviet Nationalities Policy, Ashgate, 2013; Ishkanian, Armine: Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia, London, 2008.

which eventually led to the declaration of independence. Having started as a movement concerned with environment – particularly the environmental security of the factory of Nayirit; this movement gradually transformed into a nationalistic movement touching upon the issue of Artsakh; and finally, it transformed into a movement for independence.

The term 'environmental activism' seems to be self-explanatory. Nonetheless, a definition is helpful in signalling a particular understanding. Our work is inspired by the Marquart-Pyatt[2] definition which makes a reference to politics:

> *"Environmental activism may be defined as organized participation in environmental issues, comprising an example of environmentally friendly behaviour rooted in the political realm."*[3]

The definition also highlights the 'organized participation' element, thus excluding other types of environmentalism, such as individual environmentally friendly lifestyle.

A large body of literature investigates the country-specific impact of environmental activism on policy change.[4] The research carried out in Myanmar, for instance, shows that environmental activism is a component in a larger quest for democracy.[5] The research on environmental activism in Russia shows that there is almost no influence at the policy change level.[6] The inability to influence environ-

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2 See Marquart-Pyatt, Sandra: Explaining Environmental Activism Across Countries, in: Society & Natural Resources, Vol. 25, No. 7, 2012, pp. 683-699.

3 Ibid., p. 687.

4 See Feldman, David & Blokov, Ivan: Promoting an Environmental Civil Society: Politics, Policy, and Russia's Post-1991 Experience, in: Review of Policy Research, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2009, pp. 729-759; Simpson, Adam: Challenging Hydropower Development in Myanmar (Burma): Cross-Border Activism under a Regime in Transition, in: The Pacific Review, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2013, pp. 129-152; Rootes, Christopher: Climate Change, Environmental Activism and Community Action in Britain, in: Social Alternatives, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2012, p. 24-28.

5 See Simpson, Adam: Challenging Hydropower Development in Myanmar (Burma): Cross-Border Activism under a Regime in Transition, in: The Pacific Review, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2013, pp. 129-152, p. 130.

6 See Feldman, David & Blokov, Ivan: Promoting an Environmental Civil Society: Politics, Policy, and Russia's Post-1991 Experience, in: Review of Policy Research, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2009, pp. 729-759, p. 746.

mental decisions is explained by the high dependence of the Russian economy on natural resource exploitation.[7] The capacity of environmental activism to exert influence varies from country to country; the success depends on a number of factors, such as regime type[8] or economic structure[9] of a country.

Although recently the scholarly discourse of environmental activism revolves around the debate of 'online' versus 'offline' activism,[10] the focus of this paper is on the traditional types of "offline" activism, such as demonstrations, petitions, court litigations, contacting officials and disruptive tactics.

Radical actions are a common tool in environmental activism. Radical tactics serve both to draw attention to the issue as well as to attract larger groups of supporters, which puts more pressure on policymakers.[11] Thus, sabotage and other radical actions are the most successful tactics for gaining policy-makers' attention.

The focus of our research is the impact of environmental activism (EA) on policy-making, particularly with regard to reacting to decisions seen as detrimental to the environment. We analyze EA strat-

7 See ibid., p. 732.

8 See Simpson, Adam: Challenging Hydropower Development in Myanmar (Burma): Cross-Border Activism under a Regime in Transition, in: The Pacific Review, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2013, pp. 129-152.

9 See Feldman, David & Blokov, Ivan: Promoting an Environmental Civil Society: Politics, Policy, and Russia's Post-1991 Experience, in: Review of Policy Research, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2009, pp. 729-759.

10 See Della Porta, Donatella & Mosca, Lorenzo: Global-Net for Global Movements? A Network of Networks for a Movement of Movements, in: Journal of Public Policy, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2005, pp. 165-190; Batterbury, Simon: Environmental Activism and Social Networks: Campaigning for Bicycles and Alternative Transport in West London, in: The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 590, No. 1, 2003, pp. 150-169; O'Lear, Shannon: Networks of Engagement: Electronic Communication and Grassroots Environmental Activism in Kaliningrad, in: Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography, Vol. 81, No. 3, 1999, pp. 165-178; Liu, Jingfang: Picturing a Green Virtual Public Space for Social Change: A Study of Internet Activism and Web-Based Environmental Collective Actions in China, in: Chinese Journal of Communication, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2011, pp. 137-166; Yang, Guobin: Weaving a Green Web: The Internet and Environmental Activism in China, in: China Environment Series, Vol. 2, 2003, pp. 89-93.

11 See Derville, Tiffany: Radical Activist Tactics: Overturning Public Relations Conceptualizations, in: Public Relations Review, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2005, pp. 527-533, p. 532.

egies and the extent of impact on government decisions in 12 cases of environmental mobilization from 2007 to 2014. All 12 cases are examples of bottom-up spontaneous citizen mobilization, focusing on individual actors.[12]

2 Methodology

The paper discusses the impact of EA on governmental decisions in Armenia. Impact is defined as an ability to influence environmental decision-making. Influence is categorized as:

NONE;
a DELAY in implementation;
a MODIFICATION of a decision or a course action;
a REVERSION of a decision or a course of action.

The four categories are not mutually exclusive: There can be a delay first and then a modification of an environmentally sensitive decision or a modification first, followed by a complete reversion. There can also be an implementation of the original decision after an initial delay. The DELAY, MODIFICATION and REVERSION types of influence represent different levels of impact, with the last category signalling the strongest type of impact. For cases where several types of impact were recorded, we report the strongest type of influence on government's decision-making.

The Research Questions addressed in this paper are:

RQ1. What strategies are employed by EA in an effort to influence governmental decision-making?
RQ2. Which factors contribute to EA impact on governmental decision-making?
RQ3. Which factors hinder EA impact on governmental decision-making?

We do not claim to discuss a comprehensive list of factors facilitating or hindering civic activists' impact. Instead, we point out those

[12] See Johnson, Renee J. & Scicchitano, Michael J.: Willing and Able: Explaining Individuals' Engagement in Environmental Policy Making, in: Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2009, pp. 833-846; Humphreys, David: Environmental and Ecological Citizenship, Civil Society, in: The International Spectator, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2009, pp. 171-183.

factors that can be clearly distilled from the data, using small-N approach, carried out in two steps. A comprehensive list of all more or less significant cases of EA for years 2007-2014 was compiled; key information was recorded for each case, using systematic document analysis, as elaborated below. The timeframe was selected based on Ishkanian's[13] classification of environmental civic activism in Armenia: 2007 marks the rise of organized issue-specific EA campaigns; 2014 was selected as an end point for practical considerations.[14]

Creating the list of noteworthy EA cases, Ecolur NGO's[15] website was selected as the main source of information since the NGO has a constant monitoring and reporting system for raising public awareness on environmental issues; it maintains a regularly updated website with detailed information. All the articles on the website were checked for the following keywords: public concern; SOS; civic initiative; danger. Cases mentioned more than five times were selected. As a result 12 EA cases were identified. Further information on those cases was gathered from official documents; reliable mass media and internet sources. Information coded in each case included a short summary of the case, key actions, key stakeholders, approximate number of people involved in various activities, current status and the level of influence, measured in four categories described above. The case is considered as ongoing if the issue is not resolved and had been addressed in the media or by activists in 2015. The case is also considered ongoing if EA structures are clearly present (the group is active, has meetings, disseminates information through social media). The end date is assigned to a case if there has been a clear successful resolution of the case on a particular date (i.e. a decision to cancel contested construction) or if no news can be obtained on the particular EA. In this case, the year of the last available news or update is coded as the end date of the EA.

13 See Ishkanian, Armine et al.: Civil Society, Development and Environmental Activism in Armenia, Yerevan, 2013.

14 The research project commenced in January 2015. In preparation for the publication we followed up on all the 12 cases to identify developments of the current status: new developments, or end dates were added.

15 "Ecolur" is an informational NGO established in 2004. Its website (www.ecolur.org) continuously and systematically provides information about ecological conditions of Armenia, as well as reports about any type of activism that takes place in this regard.

The analysis of the cases is based on an additional study of all relevant documentation, news reports and ten in-depth interviews with activists, government officials and environmental policy experts.

3 Overall Analysis of Environmental Activism since 2007

3.1 Short Description of the 12 Cases (in Chronological Order)

1. "Save Teghut" (2007 – now). 1491 ha. of territory near the village of Teghut are allocated to a copper-molybdenum mine for 50 years of exploitation; 82% of the territory allocated to mining is covered with pristine forest; 357 ha. of the forest is to be cut down. Activists sounded the alarm and employed a broad repertoire of actions to no success. The factory already operates; a tailing dump is created. Activists continue contacting the relevant government bodies and providing them with evidence of the damage done to the environment and people living in the vicinity of the factory. The latest big event organized by the activists was on April 5, 2014 – the so-called alter-conference "Irresponsible Mining in Armenia." The activists organized this action of protest in front of the venue where the official conference "Responsible Mining" was taking place, which gathered different state and non-state stakeholders. The ultimate purpose of the conference was to show to the public that mining was organized in a responsible way, which the protesters believed not to correspond to reality.

Influence: NONE. The demand of the activists to ban the exploitation of the mine was not met, none of the demands of the activists during the 10 years of struggle was met.

2. "SOS Jermuk": Amulsar Open Gold Mine (2009 – now). In September 2008, the Government of the RA officially designated Jermuk (a resort area during the Soviet Union) as a tourism centre. In 2009 British "Lydian International" was granted permission to develop the Amulsar Gold Mine. Amulsar is 13 km far from the town of Jermuk. In 2014, the Ministry of Nature Protection approved the plan to exploit the mine. The main concerns of ecologists are that Jermuk will become polluted as a result of the exploi-

tation of the mine. Protests and appeals yielded no results. The construction has not yet started.

Influence: NONE. The company's activities proceed as planned; during the Government session on 3rd of December, 2015, the Minister of Economy stated that the exploitation of the mine will start in summer 2016. However, the preparations are still ongoing, and according to official information provided by "Lydian International", the exploitation will start in spring 2018.

3. "SOS Hrazdan" (2009 – 2011). In 2008, the Ministry of Nature Protection approved the project proposed by "Nagin" to exploit the iron mine near the Hrazdan town. A year after getting the permission, the company had not started any building activity. According to the law of the Republic of Armenia on Environmental Impact Assessment (article 11 point 4) the approval lost its power; the process was restarted. A Chinese company "Fortune Oil" bought the right from "Nagin" and got a new approval for the exploitation of the mine, which is only 630-650 meters away from the Hrazdan town. The key concern of the activists is the potential for highly toxic air pollution. Petitions and protests failed to affect the decision. The construction is proceeding as planned; no further activities are organized by the activists.

Influence: NONE. The demand of the activists to ban the exploitation of the mine was not met.

4. "S0S Sevan" 1 (2010 – 2011). In 2009, "Geo-Pro-Mining" Company obtained a license to build a gold-processing factory near the lake Sevan, including the creation of a tailing dump near the lake. The dump is estimated to contain toxic chemicals. Previously the gold was transported to another factory for processing, but the company declared the transportation to be too expensive; arguing for the need to build a processing factory near the mine. However, the law on Sevan, article 10, bans this kind of activity there. EA consisted of signature collection, protests and an open letter to the President of RA.

Influence: MODIFICATION. The demands of the activists were met: the processing factory was not built. A breaking factory was built instead of the processing one. It is much less toxic.

5. "Save the Students' Park" (2010 – 2011). The Yerevan Municipality approved building two cafés in a public park. In order to build these cafés, many trees were to be cut, the public space was to shrink significantly. Despite a petition to the President, physical restriction of construction activities and an appeal to the Constitutional court, the construction went as planned.

Influence: NONE. The demands of the activists were not met.

6. "Qajaran" (2011 – 2012). In 2011, the Government made a decision to recognize 181.7 ha of Qajaran village's territory as 'eminent public benefit'. The territory was given to Zangezur Company for extraction of molybdenum and enlargement of the output of the company. The territory included the graveyard of the village, an ancient church, and neighboured closely with several houses. The decision was made without any prior consultation with the villagers, and they were not notified in a timely manner. The head of the community closed the way with his car and did not let the tractors, sent for digging, onto the territory. This marked the beginning of the struggle. The campaign was led by the municipality head and the villagers. The process is currently frozen by the government; the decision is neither reversed, nor being enforced.

Influence: DELAY. Although the decision (627-N) was to take force from January 1st of 2012, it has not been implemented until now.

7. "Save Trchkan Waterfall" (2011). The Ministry of Nature Protection approved building a hydropower plant near Trchkan waterfall on Chichkhan River. The waterfall is on the list of protected natural areas; any economic activity is banned there. Building a hydropower plant would reduce the amount of water in the river, ultimately resulting in its drying up. Among other actions, activists or-

ganized a 24-hour watch near the waterfall and physically prevented the construction machinery from entering the territory.

Influence: REVERSION. Activists' demand for banning the construction of the power plant was fully met. The Prime Minister issued a decree stopping the building of the power plant and banning any economic activity on the river in the future.

8. "Kanach Kapan" (2011 – 2014). "Dino Gold Mining" company, owned by a Canadian Dundee Precious Metals corporation wants to exploit the Shahumyan metal mine in an open way. The mine is situated just a kilometre away from the town of Kapan. The mine contains deposits of different metals, including gold. The plan foresees an estimated 50.000 trees to be cut. Additionally, there is a high risk of air and water pollution with heavy metals and toxic gasses. Activists and environmental experts demanded that the mine should, at least, be exploited not in an open-pit way. As a result of EA, the company changed its initial strategy adopting an underground exploitation technique.

Influence: MODIFICATION. The initial policy of open-pit exploitation was modified; the demands of the activists were partially met.

9. "Toukhmanuk" (2012 – now). "Mego Gold" company was exploiting the Toukhmanuk gold mine near the village Melik since 2006. During the period between 2006 and 2012 it had built two tailing dumps; in 2012, it appealed to the Ministry of Nature Protection to build and use a third tailing dump. If built, the dump will be very likely to contaminate the nearby river and destroy significant portions of arable land in the nearby village. Amidst continued activists' opposition, the company is currently changing its strategy and planning to open a new mine that would allow for a new dump to be built.

Influence: DELAY. In 2012 the company appealed to the Ministry of Nature Protection for the permit. The activists lobbied against the permit, and the appeal was denied. However, the company reapplied for the permit with changes in the initial project, and it was

tentatively approved though the decision is not finalized and the construction has not started.

10. "Mashtots Park" (2012). The Yerevan Municipality decided to clean one of the capital's main streets (Abovyan Street) from boutiques that were occupying the pedestrian area by moving them to a public park, called the "Mashtots Park". This decision aroused much public resonance because the boutiques would come to replace the public recreational space. Demonstrations in front of the city hall and at the construction site ensued, followed by physical restriction of construction activities and a 24-hour watch of the building site. As a result, the demand of the activists not to build the boutiques and save the park as a public recreational space was fully met.

Influence: REVERSION. The initial plan to build the boutiques in the park was changed: President Serzh Sargsyan and the Mayor of Yerevan Taron Margaryan arrived at the site and the President ordered to demount the boutiques.

11. "Khachaghbyur" (2012 – 2013). Building of a second hydropower plant on the river Paghjur, not far from Lastiver waterfall arouse concerns among ecologists and activists. The inquiries of the activists showed that the construction had no legal base: no public decisions or legal documents allowed the construction. Apart from that, construction equipment had damaged many trees. The construction takes place in an area with high risk of sliding. Despite various activities, the main goal of banning the construction of the power plant was not achieved. The construction got legal approval and was implemented.

Influence: DELAY/NONE. In August 2012, the Ministry of Nature Protection approved the construction of the power plant. After the protests in October 2012, the Ministry cancelled its previous decision. However, the company made some modifications to the plan and in March 2013, got a new approval. The power plant currently operates.

12. "SOS Sevan" 2 (2014). The Government passed two laws about Sevan, which raised concerns among activists. These laws were:

1) Amendment in the law on Sevan – a provision of changing the yearly takeout of water by 40% for the upcoming five years. According to activists, this will result in mooring of the lake.

2) Artificially-grown fish to reach 50.000 tons per year. This will result in water pollution with the chemicals contained in the food given to the fish. This means that the water will no longer be drinkable. The activists voiced their concerns through a number of channels, including meetings with officials.

Influence: MODIFICATION. Although not all demands of the activists were met, some of them were partially fulfilled: the decision to increase the water take-out by 40% for the upcoming five years was changed to one year. The decision of artificial fisheries in the lake is unchanged.

3.2 Analysis of the 12 Cases

The previous section shortly summarized the cases and the respective levels of impact. Of the total 12 cases under analysis, there were five cases of no influence, two cases of delay, three cases of modification and two cases of decisions being completely reversed. Mining is the type of activity EA was most often concerned with: seven out of 12 cases fall into this category. There were also two cases of opposing a hydropower plant construction, two cases of opposing public green places in the capital being handed over to small businesses and a specific case related to the overall environmental health of the largest Armenian lake. Table 1 summarizes key characteristics of the cases and maps the strategies used by the EA in each case.

Table 1: Key Characteristics and Activist Tactics

EA Case	Opposing	Strategies									Outcome
		protest	petition	court case*	contact Arm. Off.	Contact business**	contact diplomats	contact For. Off.	Phys. prevention of activ.	24-hour watch	
Save Teghut	mining	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			None
SOS Jermuk	mining	■	■		■		■	■			None
SOS Hrazdan	mining	■	■		■		■				None
SOS Sevan 1	mining	■	■		■						Modification
Save the Students' Park	small business	■	■	■	■				■		None
Qajaran	mining	■			■				■		Delay
Save Trchkan Waterfall	energy	■			■				■	■	Reversion
Kanach Kapan	mining	■	■		■	■	■	■			Modification
Toukhmanuk	mining				■						Delay
Mashtots Park	small business	■							■	■	Reversion
Khachaghbyur	energy	■		■	■						None
SOS Sevan 2	other		■		■						Modification

*An attempt to file a lawsuit, even if the court refused to consider the case

** In addition to protesting in front of their offices

4 Impact on Government Decisions

4.1 Strategies

As evident from Table 1, EA employs a broad spectrum of strategies, most of the time using at least three to four different types of action. The diversity of strategies, however, is a poor predictor of the outcome. "Save Teghut" has tried almost everything, except physical prevention of construction and a 24-hour watch, yet it generated no impact. "Toukhmanuk" anti-mining EA managed to delay the construction relying solely on appeals to the Government.

In terms of types of strategies, protesting (ten cases) and contacting the Armenian government (11 cases), are the two most commonly used strategies, followed by petitions (seven cases). In addition to the Armenian government officials, EA brought its grievances to the attention of the international community representatives in Armenia (four cases), foreign officials or businesses outside of Armenia (three cases) and the corresponding businesses located in Armenia (two cases). There appears to be no pattern in terms of an outcome.

Three cases attempted court litigation. The infrequency of this strategy can be explained by peculiarities of the Armenian legal system, which, until 2015 had no legal provision allowing NGOs to represent a community in a court. In addition, there is mistrust towards the legal system among the population. In all three cases, the activism led to no result, further undermining the perceived usefulness of such a strategy. It remains to be seen if the change of legal framework will lead to increased use of court litigation as EA strategy.

Physical prevention of activities occurred in four cases, two of which led to success, and one to a delay of the implementation of the undesired project. Although physical prevention failed to have any impact in one case, it does suggest a measure of influence, especially when combined with a 24-hour watch established at the site of the undesirable construction activity. Such 24-hour watches were employed in only two cases, yet those are exactly the two cases of EA success and reversion of decisions, as elaborated in the next section.

4.2 Types of Influence

In terms of outcome, the largest group of cases is that of EA failing to create any impact, despite the range of activities organized.[16] Of five noninfluence cases, three are mining-related, one was opposition to small business, and one was opposition to a hydropower plant construction.

The two cases of delay are strictly speaking cases in progress where it is hardly possible to speak of an outcome yet, except that EA has raised an alarm and created an opportunity for modifying or reversing a decision. It is also plausible that EA has raised costs of those particular environmentally detrimental activities, thus somewhat discouraging these and other similar projects. Although a delay is an indicator of at least some influence, it is not an indicator of successful EA. Our interlocutors also referred to this, stating that delay is not a good result: if after all the policy is carried out as planned, the activism was hardly useful.

Of particular interest is the delay of the decision to allocate 181.7 ha of the territory of Qajaran village to Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine. The government froze the implementation of its decision for an unspecified time. This is one of the rare cases of clear community action, rather than Yerevan-lead activist action. When heavy machinery entered the village territory to start mining, the community head blocked the way with his car. Together with the community head, many villagers closed the way for the construction machinery denying entry to the territory. This case is described by our activist interviewees as a ‘major victory’: although the decision is frozen the activists interviewed believe, that as long as the community head and villagers stand united, the government will not implement its decision. This is a rare case of locally-owned resistance; in all other cases, EA in regions is predominantly driven by Yerevan-based groups and individuals.

Three cases of analysed EA created enough pressure to modify initial decisions. Two of the three cases of modification are related to Sevan lake. One case was a decision to build a gold processing factory very close to Sevan. This decision was modified: a breaking factory was built instead of a processing one. A processing factory

16 In one of the cases there was a temporary impact in the form of a delay, after which the construction of a hydro power plant commenced nonetheless.

uses a number of chemicals to process the minerals extracted and produces toxic waste, whereas the breaking factory only breaks the mineral extracted, preparing it for transportation to another place to be processed. Although the breaking factory causes dust pollution, it does not produce toxic waste.

The next case related to Sevan is a modification of an amendment in the law on Sevan of 2014 and a new law on increasing fisheries. The amendment foresaw a 40% increase in the annual water release taken from the lake for the upcoming five years. This decision was modified: the five-year period was shortened to one year. The law referring to the artificially grown fish remained unchanged. The activists qualify this modification as successful because it provides more opportunities to lobby in the coming years. These two cases of modifications connected to Sevan show that activists are able to use the strategic importance of the lake as leverage for influencing the government.

"Kanach Kapan" is another rare case of modification of a mining project, in addition to the Sevan gold mine described above. The issue was the exploitation of a gold mine. After a big wave of discontent, the initial project was modified; open-pit exploitation was replaced with less-toxic closed-pit exploitation mode.

In two cases the activists managed to change the decisions completely. These two cases happened close in time: "SOS Trchkan" was in August 2011 and "Save Mashtots" was in February 2012. Both cases are characterized by a number of factors which might help explain the success.

The constant presence of activists in the field. In "SOS Trchkan" a 24-hour camp was established and maintained for two weeks. In the case of "Save Mashtots," there was also a 24-hour camp that lasted for ten days. This watch was aimed at preventing any construction activity until a final resolution was made.

Physical prevention of construction activities. In "Save Mashtots" a group of seven people (who called themselves "the demounting brigade") started to demount the fundament constructed for building the boutiques. This brigade started demounting and continued to prevent the construction for one week. In "SOS Trchkan" several activists stopped the heavy machinery that was supposed to start the

construction of the hydropower plant. It has to be mentioned however that physical prevention of construction activities also occurred in two other cases: the "Qajaran" case where the local community essentially blocked a mining project leading to a delay with unclear outcome and "Save the Student Park" case where it failed to have any impact. Therefore physical prevention, helpful as it is, is no guarantee of success.

Direct involvement of the highest representatives of executive power. In both cases, high-ranking officials directly intervened and announced their decisions to the activists. In "SOS Trchkan" it was the Prime Minister and in "Save Mashtots" it was the President. These officials arrived at the spots where the activists were protesting.

5 Conclusion

The study of EA in Armenia, presented in this paper, discusses a range of strategies juxtaposed with various levels of impact. Out of 12 cases, three were delayed, three were modified, and two were fully changed. In four remaining cases there was no influence. In regard to the Research Questions formulated for this study, the results are summarized below.

RQ1: What strategies are employed by EA in an effort to influence governmental decision-making?
There is a broad repertoire of strategies employed; most EAs employ three and more strategies. More strategies do not mean more impact, though. In some cases, modification was achieved with relatively few types of strategies while a whole range of strategies led to no result in other cases. One particularly effective strategy seems to be the 24-hour watch at the site of undesired construction, combined with the physical prevention of construction activities.

RQ2: Which factors contribute to EA impact on governmental decision-making?
It was found that the two most successful cases, when the activists fully achieved a policy change, used the strategy of 24-hour presence at the sites and physical prevention of construction activities. To emphasize the effectiveness of these strategies, it should be mentioned that in the case of Qajaran, the only mining-related case

that was delayed, the villagers also used the strategy of physical prevention of construction activities. Thus, it can be stated that constant presence and physical prevention of undesirable activities facilitate influence on policy-making.

RQ3: Which factors hinder EA impact on governmental decision-making?

From eight cases of influence on policy-making, only two cases are mining-related: delay in Qajaran and modification in Kapan. Moreover, from four cases with no influence three are mining-related (Teghut, Hrazdan, and Amulsar). Neither of the two cases where activists achieved full change and cancelation of the initial decisions is related to mining. It can be concluded that mining is a major obstacle for influencing policy-making. However, it should be noted that further research is likely to reveal more obstacles, for instance, obstacles related to the activists or organization of initiatives.

5 Increasing State Capacity & Legitimacy Through Civil Service Reform

Arpie G. Balian

1 Introduction

Since 2001, the Armenian government has taken steps, albeit small, toward reforming the civil service in order to strengthen its capacity and to increase the legitimacy of the state. Ostensibly, all reforms attempted to date have aimed at building a stronger public administration. Adoption of the Civil Service Law (CSL) in 2001 was a step in the right direction and, along with other laws ratified subsequently, the CSL aimed at professionalizing the bureaucracy to better meet public needs. However, the extent to which the accomplished changes are aligned with democratic governance and intent of the reforms remain arguable. In a 2009 assessment of the joint Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) initiative of the European Union and OECD, the CSL was pronounced to have produced positive change, stating that the changes "seem to have indeed marked a turning point *in the* process of establishing a stable and professional civil service in the Republic of Armenia."[1]

In the past decade, attention to the civil service and support by international organizations has grown and the necessity to further reform the civil service has been intensely articulated by various political factions, foreign aid agencies, as well as local non-

[1] SIGMA: Assessment of the Armenian Civil Service System of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2009, p. 2, available at: https://www.oecd.org/countries/armenia/47600439.pdf (18 July 2018).

governmental and international organizations. The growing and shared concern with the lack of transparency and accountability of government is posited to necessitate building the capacity of public institutions, i.e., transforming the bureaucracy to a body of qualified public managers and technocrats. Drawing a qualified body of professionals into civil service would indisputably also contribute to growing the transparency and accountability of the bureaucracy and, therefore, increase the legitimacy of the state.

The fundamental principles that support transparency and accountability of government decisions and actions stand at the core of the July 2016 press conference by the Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia and the Head of the Civil Service Council of the Republic of Armenia. To a great extent, these officials mapped out the general direction and possible provisions being deliberated for imminent civil service reforms in the Republic of Armenia. Of special interest to the current article is the emphasis embedded in the official statements on how civil service is considered to be the backbone of a competent and effective bureaucracy. This leads to the question on how civil service reforms would increase the capacity and, therefore, the legitimacy of the state. In other words, how would the civil service contribute to institutionalizing strong public management necessary for good governance and the development of the Republic of Armenia?

In the current study, capacity is used within the context of government structures and arrangements that reflect the competences needed for achieving the development and strategic priorities of the state. In addition to the necessity of building a competent government, state capacity also is associated with a bureaucracy that is committed to meeting public needs integral to achieving the state development agenda. In that path, information and rational choice drive decision-making throughout the bureaucracy and civil servants occupy ranks relevant to their individual competencies, perform at the expected levels of expertise and demonstrate high integrity and transparency of actions.[2]

[2] See Weiss, Linda: The Myth of the Powerless State, Ithaca & New York, 1998.

2 Snapshot Diagnosis of the Civil Service

The growing public discontent with government performance and dissatisfaction with the quality of public goods and services, as well as the overall ineffectiveness and inefficiencies prevalent in government agencies require an investigation of the existing system limitations and options for building a high-performing civil service. By and large, the elements considered for capacity building by the state, as well as by international donor organizations have included training and technical assistance to increase the efficacy of the bureaucracy. International donor programs implemented in the recent past have focused on building expertise in a number of programs across government, such as civil society development; fight against corruption; engagement with community; and others.

As an integral part of the Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) project supported by OECD and the European Union, the creation of the RA Civil Service Council (CSC) and adoption of the Civil Service Law (CSL) in January 2002 reflect genuine commitment to transforming the public sector to a professional structure. The CSL promotes establishing a corps of public administrators responsible for exercising political neutrality and professionalism in providing public services to the population and serving the best interests of the citizenry. These speak to commitments that establish the legal framework and procedures for adopting a merit system. Moreover, in line with the official state resolve directed to civil service reform, there is evidence of the growing attention by major donors to providing technical assistance intended to realize a turning point in questionable and often devious recruitment and promotion practices prevalent in the government of the Republic of Armenia. What those aid packages will include is hinted at but not yet fully articulated, hence the reason for the current analysis of what may be considered for inclusion in civil service reform.

The OECD 2014 Report on Anti-Corruption Reforms in Armenia has noted that the 2011 Law on Public Service (LPS) duly establishes “public service principles, rules on ethics and limitations for

public officials, leading to multiple contradictions and inconsistencies between the new rules and old codes of ethics."[3]

However, the LPS does not provide for the institution of a central body authorized to enforce the public service standards established by law. While this and other steps demonstrate developments in the positive direction, there is little evidence of meritocratic recruitment in the civil service and no evidence of competition-based appointments to the most senior positions.

Further, whereas the 2002 Civil Service Law did provide rules of ethics for civil servants moving the RA government forward in adopting sector specific codes of ethics, the 2011 Law on Public Service sets forth new rules of ethics creating contradictions and inconsistencies with the existing codes of ethics. Though the LPS establishes improved rules of ethics, it is difficult to assess impact in the absence of updated codes of ethics or practical guides that aim at promoting compliance across the public sector.[4]

3 Meritocratic Civil Service

The engine that drives the quality of public administration is the civil service. In that context, under-performance of government primarily stems from (a) state officials pursuing their own narrow self-interests rather than the public interest, and (b) the limited qualifications, knowledge, abilities and interests of a large majority of civil servants.[5] These factors often include administrative practices that slow down processes, are too paper-intensive and driven by archaic rules instead of being performance-driven by strategic objectives that render government more responsive to public needs.

Most theories of human resource management applaud the merits of adopting a meritocratic civil service for building the capacity and legitimacy of the bureaucracy. This is often referred to as the merit system – a management system crafted, reformed and fine-tuned throughout the past decades in Western democracies, covering the recruitment, selection, development and promotion of a qualified

3 OECD: Anti-Corruption Reforms in Armenia, Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Paris, 2014, p. 49.

4 See ibid.

5 See Lane, Jan-Erik: New Public Management, London, 2000, p. 56.

workforce in a fair, impartial and competitive manner. Meritocratic human resource management, in general, establishes the ground rules whereby the most qualified civil servants are hired, retained, and promoted and is thereby assuring optimal outcomes for all, i.e., for government, for those working in civil service, and for society. This is summed up in a 2016 UNDP publication, which notes that

> *"[…] the civil service at the national and local levels is a key system on which the state relies to fulfill its obligations towards its citizens. Thus, to function effectively a country must prioritize investments in a professional, merit-based civil service and strengthen local governments responsible for delivering basic social services […]. This fundamental capacity is grounded on the continuous availability of experienced and well-trained staff in key government institutions and central economic agencies."*[6]

Ever since 1958 when Michael Young coined the term 'meritocracy'[7] the understanding or construction of the concept has transformed moving largely parallel to the incremental civil service reforms realized by Western democracies. Scholars argue that in true meritocratic systems civil servants are given equal opportunity and resources to perform, develop and accrue rewards based on knowledge, skills, and abilities demonstrated in performance without regard to race, gender, religion and any other such factor.[8] Across all definitions, the dominant characteristics of the merit system are equality, fair competition and transparency of human resource management processes and practices.[9]

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6 Everest-Philipps, Max: Meritocracy and Public Service Excellence, in: International Journal of Civil Service Reform and Practice, No. 1, 2016, p. 7.

7 See Ansgar Allen: Michael Young's the Rise of the Meritocracy: A Philosophical Critique, in: British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 59. No. 4, 2011, pp. 367-382.

8 See Castilla, Emilio & Benard, Stephen: The Paradox of Meritocracy in Organizations, in: Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 4, 2010, pp. 543-676.

9 See Everest-Philipps, Max: Meritocracy and Public Service Excellence, in: International Journal of Civil Service Reform and Practice, No. 1, 2015; Poocharoen, Oraorn & Brillantes, Alex: Meritocracy in Asia Pacific: Status, issues, and challenges, in: Review of Public Personnel Administration, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2013, pp. 140-163.

4 Embracing Meritocracy

In a broader sense, meritocracy is understood as the practice of recognizing and rewarding individual merit with commensurate rank, position, and pay. Meritocratic recruitment affords people an equal opportunity to compete for positions in the civil service and for achieving success based on individual merit – i.e. qualifications, competences, and professional experience. Thus, the success of a civil servant often depends on individual ability and on-the-job effort.

In a narrower sense, the rule of merit refers to an administrative system that embraces hiring based on merit in order to increase the capacity of government.[10] Thus, in a meritocratic government, positions and responsibilities are assigned to people according to their knowledge, skills and abilities in a fair, competitive and transparent process applied across the civil service.[11] Consequently, meritocratic human resource management practices lead to the curtailment or elimination of nepotism, cronyism and political patronage and promote fair competition and competitiveness in the civil service thereby developing human potential and growing public productivity at the individual and state levels.[12]

However, the academic literature on this topic also points to the undesirable effects or negative aspects of meritocracy speaking about the principle of egalitarianism – that all people are equal or possessing equal fundamental worth and dignity.[13] Some argue that in-

10 See Tan, Kenneth Paul: Meritocracy and Elitism in a Global City: Ideological Shifts in Singapore, in: International Political Science Review, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2008, pp. 7-27; Allen, Ansgar: Michael Young's the Rise of the Meritocracy: A philosophical critique, in: British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2011, pp. 367-382.

11 See McCourt, Willy: The Merit System and Integrity in the Public Service, in: Public Integrity and Anti-corruption in the Public Service Conference, Bucharest, 2007, pp. 29-30; Scully, Maureen: Manage Your Own Employability: Meritocracy and the Legitimation of Inequality in Internal Labor Markets and Beyond, Relational Wealth: The Advantages of Stability in a Changing Economy, Oxford, 2000, pp. 199-214; McNamee, Stephen, & Miller, Robert: The Meritocracy Myth, Lanham, 2009.

12 See Arrow, Kenneth & Bowles, Samuel & Durlauf, Stephen: Meritocracy and Economic Inequality, Princeton, 2000; Dench, Geoff: The Rise and Rise of Meritocracy, Oxford, 2006.

13 See Cavanagh, Matt: Against Equality of Opportunity, Oxford, 2002.

creased focus on productivity of civil servants and unnecessary competition among them may obscure the egalitarian aspect of meritocracy. But, subsequent arguments elucidate that meritocracy is not only a matter of ensuring equality and non-discrimination, but also finding and allocating the right person to the right position and affording everyone equal opportunity to pursue reaching their full potential.

The adoption of meritocracy would combat nepotism, cronyism and patronage tackling major challenges common to developing or transitioning states. In that regard, some scholars claim that reforms directed to adopting meritocratic systems in the civil service have consistently met hostility by political patrons or opposition factions.[14] Consequently, real reforms are difficult to realize and nepotism, cronyism and patronage continue to weaken the quality of civil service most often attracting the unqualified, leaving out the more competent applicants and often promoting the employment of those who can 'pay' to get hired.[15] Thus,

> *"[…] the more such constraints occur excluding high-skilled candidates to compete based on merit, the more costly would be a government of political patrons, and less likely the advancement to merit-based recruitment."*[16]

5 Theoretical and Analytical Framework

In the last fifty years, there has been a revival of academic interest in the notion of meritocracy. Being a phenomenon imported from the private sector into public management, scholars have paid added attention to studying its impact in civil service, placing particular emphasis on its significance to improving the overall performance

14 See Fukuyama, Francis: Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy, London, 2014; Grindle, Merilee: Jobs for the Boys, Harvard, 2012.

15 See Kataeva, Azizakhon: Reforming the Merits: Meritocratic Recruitment and its Effect on Corruption. Case Study of Tajikistan, Master thesis, 2012; Hollyer, James: Patronage or Merit? The Choice of Bureaucratic Appointment Mechanisms, Minnesota, 2010, p. 3.

16 Balian, Arpie & Petrosyan, Maria: Embracing Meritocracy in Civil Service: A Case Study of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2017, p. 2.

of government.[17] Other studies also have looked into meritocracy using the central elements of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, performance capacity and productivity and establishing the indisputable linkage between meritocracy and productivity.[18]

As referred to earlier, one of the principal contributors to the phenomenon of meritocracy was Michael Young (1958), who argued that in the 21st century social systems will be characterized by merit-based principles whereby jobs and power are distributed on the basis of merit. These trends are observed in the more developed countries where institutionalized meritocratic systems have embraced fairness, transparency, and social cohesion significantly reducing corruption in this domain.[19] Grounded in the role of the quality of state institutions in the process of economic growth and development, theories underline the positive impact of merit-based recruitment for augmenting the capacity and performance of the civil service.

The universal attention of scholars and technocrats to the merits of institutionalizing more competitive and transparent processes in human resource management is bound to improve the existing traditional and often archaic systems ubiquitous in many developing

17 See Evans, Peter & Rauch, James: Bureaucracy and Growth: A Cross-national Analysis of the Effects of "Weberian" State Structures on Economic growth, in: American Sociological Review, Vol. 64, No. 5, 1999, pp. 748-765; Dahlström, Carl & Charron, Nicholas, & Lapuente, Victor: Measuring Meritocracy in the Public Sector in Europe: a New National and Sub-National Indicator, in: European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2016, pp. 499-523; Everest-Philipps, Max: Meritocracy and Public Service Excellence, in: International Journal of Civil Service Reform and Practice, No. 1, 2015, pp. 94-98.

18 See Anderson, Christopher & Tverdova, Yuliya: Corruption, Political Allegiances, and Attitudes toward Government in Contemporary Democracies, in: American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2003, pp. 91-109; McCourt, Willy: Public Appointments: From Patronage to Merit, in: Institute for Development Policy and Management, Manchester, 2000, available at: http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/gdi/publications/workingpapers/archive/hr/hr_wp09.pdf (18 July 2018).

19 See Allen, Ansgar: Michael Young's the Rise of the Meritocracy: A Philosophical Critique, in: British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2011, pp. 367-382.

countries.[20] In turn, reforms in this domain are bound to augment government productivity and enhance the quality and efficacy of public services.[21] But, to be efficacious, the principal-agent model establishes that civil service performance improvements require impartial monitoring by an external principal through appropriate strategies and relevant control measures.[22] Moreover, the degree to which meritocracy enhances government productivity largely depends on the specific understanding and application of the term, including the elements considered in relevant procedural reforms.

The current research uses a qualitative methodology that uses the existing policies and procedures as primary data source, followed by triangulation of findings with data collected from five interviews with experts in the field conducted in November 2017. The sequential design used in this study afforded the collection of rich sets of qualitative data in the initial desk-study phase and help devise the subsequent interview questionnaire upon the former to help confirm and/or validate the findings through triangulation.

6 The State of Civil Service in Armenia

After the declaration of independence, Armenia started to establish a new civil service system that was more or less based on the previous laws of the Soviet Union with minimal changes at start. Subse-

20 See Teskey, Graham & Schnell, Sabina & Poole, Alice: Beyond Capacity – Addressing Authority and Legitimacy in Fragile States, Washington D.C., 2012.

21 See Haney, Craig & Hurtado, Aida: The Jurisprudence of Race and Meritocracy: Standardized Testing and "Race-Neutral" Racism in the Workplace, in: Law and Human Behavior, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1994, pp. 223-248; Fischer, Ronald & Smith, Peter: Reward Allocation and Culture: A Meta-Analysis, in: Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2003, pp. 251-268; Jost, John et al.: Social Inequality and the Reduction of Ideological Dissonance on Behalf of the System: Evidence of Enhanced System Justification among the Disadvantaged, in: European Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2003, pp. 13-36; Lawton, Anne: The Meritocracy Myth and the Illusion of Equal Employment Opportunity, in: Minnesota Law Review, Vol. 85, 2000, pp. 587-662; Cavanagh, Matt: Against Equality of Opportunity, Clarendon, 2002.

22 See Kitgaard, Robert: Controlling Corruption, Berkeley, 1988; Milgrom, Paul & Roberts, John: Economics, Organization and Management, New Jersey, 1992; Rose-Ackerman, Susan: Corruption: A Study in Political Economy, New York, 1978.

quently, the Civil Service Law adopted in 2001 and ensuing changes in the rules and regulations, albeit in small increments, have served as cornerstone in shaping public perception and, to a smaller extent, guiding the path of public administration in the Republic of Armenia. Though CSL is based on merit principles, the associated implementing rules do not necessarily institutionalize competitive and transparent recruitment signaling the need for more reforms.[23] Today, nepotism, cronyism and political patronage continue to impact the quality of the civil service and present serious challenges for Armenia.

Being a post-communist country, the Republic of Armenia has inherited a recruitment or appointment tradition, which is rather notorious for being politically induced. The adverse effects of this tradition have reflected negatively on the quality of public service weakening the development potential of the country. While the CSL bans appointments by kinship or friendship, many of the positions filled in the past years have not consistently adhered to those provisions. Positions created or filled for gaining political support also have bloated the government imposing budgetary burdens that could have otherwise been allotted to revising the pay scale to reflect market equivalents. Moreover, the highest positions in the Armenian government are filled by appointees not always selected on the basis of the knowledge, skills, and abilities in respective areas.

Though the CSL has established the basic requirements pertaining to position descriptions, vacancy announcements, qualification designations, selection criteria and civil service exam (albeit needing further reform), the question centers on the degree to which actual practices adhere to current legal and procedural provisions. In most cases, competition and meritocratic recruitment have not been exercised and most positions have been filled on the basis of connections. The Armenian government must "develop clear rules regard-

[23] See OECD & European Union: Assessment of the Civil Service System of the Republic of Armenia, Paris, 2009, available at: https://www.oecd.org/countries/arm-enia/47600439.pdf (1 March 2018); OECD: Anti-corruption Reforms in Armenia, Paris, 2014, available at: http://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/Armenia-Round-3-Monitoring-Report-ENG.pdf (1 March 2018).

ing positions that are to be considered for merit-based appointment and ensure their enforcement in practice."[24]

7 Reform Considerations

As noted by existing reviews of the RA Civil Service, the Civil Service Council must continue to have the ability to make independent and research or evidence-driven recommendations on policy changes and procedural directives related to human resources. The span of administrative reforms considered in this article touch upon topics related to the following:

Developing the right-sized and rationalized structure of government that clearly lays out classes of civil service and respective qualification requirements. By all accounts, the structure should support the mission of respective units of government (ministries and departments and other agencies of government) and facilitate intergovernmental associations necessary for the accomplishment of established strategic goals and objectives. Changes in the state strategic agenda should not necessarily trigger the creation of new positions that unnecessarily inflate the civil service; rather staff rotations should be considered for filling changing needs. Moreover, the organizational structure should be duly supported by appropriate job descriptions and commensurate pay consistently applied across all units of government.

Establishing a transparent recruitment and selection process across government. Transparent recruitment entails assuring that all vacancies reflect the official structure of government (and do not create ghost or whim-spurred positions). Transparency also requires making open positions visible to the public preferably through a portal of government job vacancies[25] (as is spelled out in current law), and clearly delineating application and selection procedures. This is expected to narrow the existing gender disparity, particularly in upper management positions. To further ensure recruitment con-

24 OECD: Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Paris, 2014, p. 51, available at: http://www.oecd.org/daf/anti-bribery/Armenia Round-3-Monitoring-Report-ENG.pdf (18 July 2018).

25 Though the Civil Service Law requires announcing all vacancies in the official website of the Civil Service Council and publishing in print format, it is not adhered to.

formity, entry to the civil service should be conditioned by passing a civil service exam (revised from the current version to measure required qualifications for most positions) and/or attainment of qualifying university degree or professional certification.

Monitoring the adopted rules and regulations for adherence. None of the points delineated earlier would produce sustained improvements absent internal control systems and scrutiny by an independent and politically neutral civil-service commission.[26] Internal control measures are meant to assure that established procedures are consistently followed and deviations, if any, are fully documented in accordance with ratified exception procedures. Aside from those internal procedural safeguards, independent scrutiny by a politically neutral civil-service commission is meant to assure that the changes brought forth are implemented uniformly and correctly and are freeing the civil service from corrupt practices, as well as protecting the rights and responsibilities of civil servants.

Establishing a multi-pronged civil service attestation, training and retraining program. For new entrants, short orientation training at start on general merit rules and procedures should become a required practice; this could also serve as platform for instilling a sense of purpose and commitment to public service. For mid- and upper level public administrators, training and retraining for sustained attestation and upgrading of management practices should be institutionalized. In-service or on-the-job training for tightening performance gaps and building the capacity of government, particularly in those units that are delegated key responsibilities for the accomplishment of strategic development objectives. Finally, offering project-specific training for staff engaged in new projects, including special projects supported by foreign aid.

Managing performance, promotions and performance awards to ensure transparency and fairness. This entails developing rules and procedures for conducting annual staff evaluations that are driven by established performance objectives and targets for each year. Developing elaborate service-oriented and results-driven evaluation

[26] There is a provision in the Law on Civil Service that the Civil Service Council has the authority to investigate deviations from or violations of the rules of ethics, this is not reflected in practice.

criteria and procedure for annually assessing the performance of civil servants will increase dissociation from any form of corrupt behavior or unjustified decision-making influence related to promotions and performance awards. Thus, performance awards or incentives would be directly linked to established performance goals and annual targets. Similarly, promotion decisions would be governed by performance evaluations and service record of respective staff.

These changes do not preclude the appointment of senior advisers and administrators across government units and especially in those considered to be more critical for the accomplishment of the state development agenda. As in many developed countries, these political appointments too ought to subscribe to the principles of merit particularly when there is a large pool of candidates that meet the qualification requirements of respective appointments.

Beyond policy changes, the rules and procedures concerning the definitions and the determination of the scope of application of the Law (in terms of state bodies, positions and position holders, etc.) should be revised to reflect the intent and spirit of the RA Civil Service Law and subsequent amendments. Ideally, such reforms should embrace good governance principles and produce a transparent and accountable civil service. The mechanisms and processes built into the civil service system are bound to reshape human behavior and commitment to the implementation of reforms consistently and sustainably to result in the effective, efficient, equitable and ethical management of public services.

8 Closing Notes

The constitutional amendment of 2015 did not alter the basic structure and mission of the civil service. Thus, the reform considerations proposed in the earlier section would apply equally to the current parliamentary system of government. Moreover, the constitutional restructuring could well serve as impetus for further reforming the mechanics of the RA Civil Service. The Civil Service Reform Strategy that followed the constitutional referendum of December 6, 2015 (Protocol Decision N57 of 29 December 2015) delineates:

> *"The selection and recruitment process must in all its phases refer to the principles of equal access, transparency and merit. The end result of the improved system must be the development of maximum optimal, flexible and improved mechanisms for assessing the knowledge and capacities of the contenders for the purpose of identifying the best candidates."*[27]

If the above were to become common practice on the RA Civil Service, it would bring human resource management to a praiseworthy level of meritocratic government. The lead concepts of equal access, transparency and merit would generate processes and procedures that admonish bribery, nepotism, cronyism and political patronage.

Aside from recruitment and along similar lines of thought, performance appraisal provisions in the Civil Service Reform Strategy (2015) also establish the necessary merit-driven link between performance appraisal and promotion. This is now established in the revised new CSL (January 2018) that reinforces the notion of equal opportunity to all potential applicants to the civil service and selection of the best fit by merit. Slightly reformed from the earlier version, this version decentralizes recruitment to respective human resource departments within each ministry, but the authority of drafting policies, rules and procedures remain within the purview of the Office of the Prime Minister as does the Civil Service Secretariat that replaces the Civil Service Council.

According to the 2018 revised CSL, recruitment is by competition. Also, it is now required to publish the qualifications, including educational and professional experience for each category of civil service. While admission tests have been revised, selection of new civil servants slightly tightened and direct connection established between appraisals of performance, training and promotion, no requirements are yet envisaged for internal appointments, leaving those to the discretion of respective heads of units. Beyond the visible advancement in the wording of policies, the implementing rules, procedures and practices have yet to be brought up to 'merit' standards in practice.

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27 Government of the Republic of Armenia: Civil Service Reform Strategy of the Republic of Armenia, Annex N1, RA Government Session of 29 December 2015, Protocol Decision N57, p. 10.

6 The Reform of the General Education System in Armenia: Education Policy Borrowing in a State of Democratization and Transitional Institutional Capacity

Narek Manukyan

1 Introduction: The Notion of Policy Borrowing

Policy borrowing is usually perceived as one of the most powerful means of driving education reforms globally although comparative education studies often voice concern about the applicability of borrowing and different education systems becoming more and more similar. Nonetheless, via global educational reform agendas and inclination for alignment to international best practice, multiple international organizations spur policy borrowing especially in various developing parts of the globe. While the notion of policy borrowing has been extensively covered in academic literature, there is few research on the rational for and the specific role of policy borrowing in transitional democratizing countries which typically have limited institutional capacity for development of autonomous policies. Armenia, having been extensively engaged in utilization of international consultancy and policy borrowing since its independence in 1991, presents an interesting case for such analysis. This analysis adds to the academic literature of studies of policy borrowing by providing case-based insights into the rational and role of policy borrowing in a transition society with weak institutional capacity for locally-developed policies.

"How far can we learn anything of practical value from the study of foreign systems of education?"[1] In more than a century after the British historian and educationalist Sir Michael Sadler posed this, to some extent, eternal question of comparative education studies, the volume and role of education policy borrowing across the world have largely increased. Various concepts (such as bandwagoning, convergence, diffusion, policy learning, social learning, learning from elsewhere, emulation, lesson drawing, policy traveling) have emerged to define the notion of policy borrowing in a broader scope.[2] The notion itself can be defined, paraphrasing Dolowitz and March, as a process by which knowledge about how policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one setting (past, present or future) is used in either the development or abandonment of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another setting.[3] More than one hundred years after Sadler's question there currently is a huge amount of media content and available international comparative research that calls for adopting or abandoning this or that education policy, there are global rank-

1 Bereday, George: Sir Michael Sadler's "Study of Foreign Systems of Education", in: Comparative Education Review, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1964, p. 307.

2 See Ikenberry, John: The International Spread of Privatization Policies: Inducements, Learning, and Policy Bandwagoning, in: Suleiman, Ezra & Waterbury, John (eds.): The Political Economy of Public Sector Reform and Privatization, Boulder, 1990, pp. 88-110; Bennet, Colin: What is Policy Convergence and What Causes It?, in: British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1991, pp. 215-233; Majone, Giandomenico: Cross-National Sources of Regulatory Policymaking in Europe and the United States, in: Journal of Public Policy, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1991, pp. 79-106; May, Peter: Policy Learning and Failure, in: Journal of Public Policy, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1992, pp. 331-354; Hall, Peter: Policy Paradigms, Social Learning and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain, in: Comparative Politics, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1993, pp. 275-296; Philips, David: Learning from Elsewhere in Education: Some Perennial Problems Revisited with Reference to British Interest in Germany, in: Comparative Education, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2000, pp. 297-307; Howlett, Michael: Beyond Legalism? Policy Ideas, Implementation Styles and Emulation-Based Convergence in Canadian and U.S. Environmental Policy, in: Journal of Public Policy, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2000, pp. 305-329; Rose, Richard: Learning from Comparative Public Policy: A Practical Guide, London, 2004; Silova, Iveta: Traveling Policies: Hijacked in Central Asia, in: European Educational Research Journal, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2005, pp. 50-59.

3 See Dolowitz, David & Marsh, David: Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making, in: An International Journal of Policy and Administration, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000, pp. 5-24.

ings of countries based on the level of education they provide and a certain amount of alignment in between the education systems of various countries.

The rise of Western hegemonic dominance over the rest, as Niall Ferguson calls it, has created an environment of norm-setting where, by means of voluminous large-scale comparative educational research, lavishly funded by international organizations, certain ideologies, practices and policies are identified as international best standards and practices applicable across the world.[4] The World Bank alone, for instance, has produced around 4.000 papers, books and reports in just 7 years in the period of 1998-2005. The review of the Bank's research department, executed by 28 leading development economists from international top universities, showed that some outstanding work has been done, sometimes with huge impact on shaping ideas for development globally.[5] The PISA for Development (OECD), Education for All movement and Education 2030 framework (UNESCO/World Bank), PIRLS and TIMSS (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) are just a few examples of platforms, established by international organizations that spur policy borrowing through formulation and promotion of global education agendas, norms and standard practices across the world. However, it is worth to note that this growth has been witnessed in the context of Sadler and the academic literature questioning the applicability of borrowing and warning against the possibility of adverse effects.

Alignment to international standards through policy borrowing, thus, has quickly turned into both a policy itself and a policy catchphrase commonly used by policy-makers around the globe for various purposes. Policy borrowing has been utilized not only to denote participation in the world society or to signal modernity but also to leverage public support for local policies loosely related to referenced international policies in a manner of a 'self-referential discursive act'.[6] As a policy itself, policy borrowing has played and

4 See Ferguson, Niall: Civilization: The West and the Rest, London, 2012.

5 See Banerjee, Abhijit et al.: An Evaluation of World Bank Research, 1998-2005. Review Report, Washington, D.C., 2006.

6 See Steiner-Khamsi, Gita (ed.): The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending, New York, 2004; Schriewer, Jürgen & Brian Holmes (eds.): Theories and Methods in Comparative Education, Pieterlen, 1988.

continues playing a key role in the context of transitional developing societies which more and more act in the ethos of alignment to the standards and practices of western dominant players in education. Academic literature of the field, however, is not rich with studies of the rational and niche role that policy borrowing plays in these environments.

Policy-making in transition societies which typically have weak institutional capacity posits an interesting case for analysis in terms of the rational and the long-term impact on the system, content and role of education. Armenia is one such state in transition. Having been part of the Soviet Union, the country had little freedom to develop its own education policies and its education professionals could gain only limited experience in education policy-making. Thus upon independence from the Soviet Union Armenia was challenged with limited institutional capacity for education policy-making and has been subject to significant policy-level influences from various international organizations. This environment provides ample opportunity to examine the rational and role of policy borrowing (both short-term and long-term).

2 Background of Policy Borrowing and Rational for Current Analysis

Armenia gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 in a context of euphoria around independence and democratization (a turnout of 95% of voters with 99.5% voting in favor of independence and a turnout of 70% of voters during the first presidential elections)[7] on one side and national emergency on the other.[8] Dissolution of the Soviet Union left Armenia, after almost 70 years of soviet rule, on the threshold of expectations for democratization and transition to market economy with all the impact these would have on reconceptualization of the content, role and system of education in large and general education, as a state prerogative, specifically. National emergency reduced the expenditure on education from

7 See Nohlen, Dieter, Florian Grotz & Christoph Hartmann: Elections in Asia and the Pacific: The Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, Oxford, 2011.

8 See ibid; World Bank: Armenia-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Joint World Bank-IMF Staff Assessment, Strategy Paper, Washington, D.C., 2003.

7.2% of GDP (11.2% of total government expenditure (TGE)) in 1992 to 4.9% (6% of TGE) in 1993, 2.0% (4.5% of TGE) in 1994 keeping a trajectory of 2% until 1999.[9] Decline in public funding of education led to decline of a total 20% enrollment across all levels of education, decline in per-student expenditure for general education (from US$ 600 in 1985 to US$ 30 in 1997), decline in teacher salaries and the number of teachers, and forced parents to meet certain costs of education through informal charges though around 31% of the population, by World Bank poverty estimates, could not survive these expanses (World Bank, 2003).[10] In addition to all the above-mentioned challenges Armenia inherited a large Soviet infrastructural legacy (i.e. large network of school buildings) with more than half of the technical school equipment in use being at least 20 years old.[11]

Following its independence in 1991 Armenia engaged into a process of educational transition from the Soviet totalitarian system in search for a new model. Transition of general education in Armenia started with adoption, by the Ministry Board of National Education, of a policy document titled "About the National Unified Primary-Secondary School" in 1990, still under de jure Soviet rule, which aimed at reforming the system and content of general education.[12] The euphoria around independence and democratization triggered reforms largely related to the content of education. These reforms included depoliticizing the content of education through circulation of transitional programs and textbooks; nationalizing education through institutionalization of the Armenian language as the main language of instruction and closing Russian-language schools; redefining the content and principles especially for teaching Armenian language and literature, Armenian history and geography; redefining the content and scope of humanities education in alienation

9 See World Bank: Armenia-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Joint World Bank-IMF Staff Assessment, Strategy Paper, Washington, D.C., 2003, pp. 73-75.

10 See World Bank: Armenia-Education Financing and Management Reform Project (formerly called Health and Education Development Project), Staff Appraisal Report, Washington, D.C., 1997, p. 2.

11 See Armenian National Commission for UNESCO. Republic of Armenia: Educational Policy Making During a Situation of National Emergency, Evaluation Report, Geneva, 1994, p. 5-7.

12 See ibid, p. 25.

from the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects dubbed as parts of 'technocratic' Soviet education.[13]

From the sociological perspective of structure and agency, the field of general education in Armenia represented a sector probably equipped with lowest level of institutional capacity to meet the new challenges of the larger reform agenda for democratization and transition. The Soviet law on education of 1974 and the Soviet constitution of 1977 largely limited the capacity of member states to develop autonomous education policies. The World Bank funded "Education Financing and Management Reform" project's Staff Appraisal Report of 1997 noted:

> *"Armenian education professionals had limited experience in functions that were formerly carried out in Moscow and have been isolated from international debate and exposure to current practice in their field."*[14]

In addition to weak institutional capacity Armenia also maintained an unstable institutional governance of the field of education during the first five years after independence. The country maintained two separate ministries of education responsible for general and higher education including science; during that time each ministry had three ministers.[15]

The period of transition lasted for around 9 years until the adoption of the Law on Education in 1999 which defined the principles and structure of the new system of education (including general education) and served as a foundation for future policies. Since the year of 1993-94 Armenia started receiving significant international technical and financial assistance to formulate new policies aimed at development of general education. These policies introduced various notions and strategies in the context of the reconceptualization of the system of general education to adjust to the processes of democratization and transition. Adoption of the Law on Education

13 See ibid., p. 16.

14 World Bank: Armenia-Education Financing and Management Reform Project (formerly called Health and Education Development Project), Staff Appraisal Report, Washington, D.C., 1997, p. 6.

15 See Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia: Website of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia, available at: http://www.gov.am/en/structure/9/ (19 April 2018).

(hence Law) in 1999 was preceded by three key policy-level developments in the field of general education that have made significant impact on reconceptualization of the new system of general education introduced by the Law. The key three policy-level developments included: a) introduction of the first comprehensive education policy evaluation report (hence Report) in 1994 by both ministries with significant financial and technical assistance from UNESCO, b) introduction of a government strategy (hence Strategy) for general education reforms in 1997, and c) provision of the first international loan for general education reforms in 1998 by the World Bank.

This article analyses the rational for policy-borrowing and role (both short and long-term) that it has played in reconceptualization of Armenia's general education system in the period of post-independence transition (1991-1999). The study analyzes the above-mentioned key policy-level developments within the methodological perspective of 'policy as a discourse' as conceptualized by Ball drawing on a number of documents related to the highlighted policy-level developments.[16] It uses the classifications of the type and content of policy borrowing suggested by Phillips and Ochs as a framework for analysis.[17] The article adds to the academic literature of studies of education policy borrowing by providing case-based insights into the rational and role of policy borrowing in a transition society with weak institutional capacity for locally-developed policies.

3 The 'six foci' of Attraction: the Role and Rational of Policy Borrowing

Inquiry into the content of policy borrowing from the perspective of the discourse that the borrowed content helps to explore the actual role that policy borrowing has played. Philips & Ochs suggest that the content of policy borrowing or transfer can be categorized using a framework based on six content areas or focus areas (i.e. foci) of

16 See Ball, Stephen: Politics and Policy Making in Education: Explanations in Policy Sociology, London, 1990.

17 See Phillips, David & Ochs, Kimberly: Processes of Policy Borrowing in Education: Some Explanatory and Analytical Devices, in: Comparative Education, Vol. 39, No. 4, 2003, pp. 451-461.

borrowing: 1) guiding philosophy or ideology, 2) ambitions and goals, 3) strategies, 4) enabling structures, 5) processes, 6) techniques.[18] Two core and three complementing documents related to the three key policy level developments of the transition period have been chosen as sources for discourse analysis. The two core documents include the report by the Armenian National Commission for UNESCO in 1994 titled "Armenia-Education Financing and Management Reform Project"[19] and the strategy for general education reforms titled "Strategy for Reform of the General Education System of the Republic of Armenia"[20] in 1997. The complementing three documents relate to the first World Bank loan which, as indicated later, acts as a discursive link between the report and the strategy. These documents include: a) the letter of Development Policy between Armenia and the World Bank of 1994-95 that sets the ground for bank's involvement in Armenia in large, b) the World Bank Country Assistance Strategy of 1997, c) the Staff Appraisal Report of 1997 related to the first loan (Education Financing and Management Reform) in general education. Summary analysis of the above-mentioned documents is presented below.

4 The Influx of Neoliberalism

Being the first comprehensive education policy document developed with extensive financial and intellectual support of an international agency (UNESCO), the Report acts as a first natural choice for discourse analysis within the context of policy borrowing. Preparation of the Report started in 1993 with the establishment of a local working group of six high-level experts/policy-makers. The group consisted of the director of the Research Institute for Pedagogic Sciences and the head of the Scientific Group for Primary-Secondary Education Management both under the Ministry of General Education, the senior officer of the Research Center for Higher Education Problems under the Ministry of Higher Education, secre-

18 See ibid., pp. 453-454.

19 See Armenian National Commission for UNESCO. Republic of Armenia: Educational Policy Making During a Situation of National Emergency, Evaluation Report, Geneva, 1994.

20 See World Bank: Armenia-Education Financing and Management Reform Project (formerly called Health and Education Development Project), Staff Appraisal Report, Washington, D.C., 1997.

taries of the Armenian National Commission for UNESCO and the deputy minister of general education. The process of report drafting included gathering of opinions from local expert community, utilization of public opinion polls regarding the more problematic issues and involvement of significant consultancy provided by UNESCO in developing the analysis of the state of education and relevant recommendations for its improvement.

The Report consists of three sections a) description of the state of education and peculiarities of the reform context, b) main principles of the new education system and reform directions, c) immediate reform policies already in preparation at the time of writing the Report. On a discourse level these three sections outline the general perceptions of the authors about the state of education (its positive and negative aspects) and about the means of policy-making to make improvements. Being a comprehensive and inclusive document, the Report largely reflects the general thinking prevalent at the time at least among the key policy-makers. Analysis of the Report reveals that perceptions about the state of education and means for improvement largely hinge on two broad contextual notions which are often utilized to either justify or present an argument. These are the notions of democratization and transition to market economy later found intertwined in all other documents analyzed. These notions function as axes that policy borrowing evolves around and creates a discourse of novel reform-thinking.

The notion of democratization evolves from vagueness to specificity in a spectrum of almost immediate change. The use of democratization, in the first paragraphs of the Report related to the description of the context, fulfills two roles. Democratization first acts as an undefined post-independence euphoric ambition to be reached. Labeled simply as a new reality, the Report posits that democratization requires policy-makers to redefine and restructure the system of general education providing no indication as of what that restructuring should imply. Secondly, democratization is treated as a means for national progress which gives the nation a chance for freedom and ownership of the state which, prior to independence, belonged to multiple nations with very limited rights for each. Within this context, general education is specifically viewed as a means for establishment of a national statehood via upbringing of

patriots largely in a nation-state perspective with no indication of the civic aspect.

The vagueness of the notion, however, quickly disappears in subsequent sections of the Report that outline the principles and means for policy-making to improve the state of education in the country. Democratization becomes first specified surprisingly within the context of analysis of the Soviet system of education. Evaluation of the Soviet system acts as a point of departure to build the discourse of what the new system should look like taken into account the need for democratization and transition-oriented restructuring. Several paragraphs are first devoted to the positive educational achievements of the Soviet system with one paragraph (p. 11, the Report) specifically highlighting its effectiveness in serving the country's social, cultural and economic development. However, subsequent paragraphs breach from the positive account by introducing new notions into the discourse. A statement of broad generalization is made that the Soviet education system did not meet the country's development needs in full and three paragraphs are devoted to the causes of the problem without sufficient justification or proof of statements. Among the deficiencies of the Soviet state of education, the Report primarily emphasizes centralization of the system of education management, lack of autonomy of educational institutions, lack of flexibility in structure and contents, existence of a state monopoly over education and lack of alternatives. Thus, the authors make use of largely manipulative arguments to introduce new notions into the discourse of restructuration of the system of education and future reform-thinking.

Building upon the above-mentioned notions and the point of departure on one side and on the ambition of post-independence democratization on the other, the Report then re-introduces democratization in a new connotation. The notion turns into a 'state guarantee' for a new education system defined as a set of core principles any future policy-making aimed at restructuring of education should hinge on. These principles include democratic administration of education; guarantee of multiple levels and forms of education; flexibility of structure and contents of education; redefinition of the role of the ministry; governance and norm-setting; standardization and performance monitoring; delegation of responsibilities to regional, local and institutional levels. The Report specifies the notion of

democratization further as "development of new forms of public administration" required as the "previous education management […] is inadequate […] during the transition period and later years."[21]

While the notion of democratization evolves through the discourse, the notion of transition is presented in its very economic context right from the beginning. Multiple references are made to the transitional period in terms of a national emergency stating that "the unusual characteristics of the current transition period were sharply marked" and that

> *"[…] the current budget deficit and the lack of resources for the implementation of social development programmes have all had a negative impact on education and science."*[22]

Referencing to above-mentioned statements and actual decline in state funding of education, the Report articulates a discourse of policy-making that views education largely within the ethos of transition to market economy. Stylistic analysis of the sections that outline the principles of future education policy-making in relation to transition develop a discourse that makes extensive use of market language with introduction of complementary notions of competition, free choice, market-fit, supply and demand, as well as individual responsibility.

Education is presented as a state burden void of competition and requiring increasing levels of public spending without relevant incentives on the demand side. The latter is further exemplified by the suggestion to decrease the number of years of free compulsory education from 10 to 8 years (the Report notes that around 63% of teachers favored the shift to compulsory schooling of 8 years) and provide additional 2 years of free upper secondary education only to those who win the competition of testing upon completion of basic education.[23] The role of the state in education is viewed as a monopoly which limits the rights of people for private education. The notion of free choice of schools is articulated within this context. The

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21 Armenian National Commission for UNESCO. Republic of Armenia: Educational Policy Making During a Situation of National Emergency, Evaluation Report, Geneva, 1994, p. 22.

22 Ibid., p. 13.

23 See ibid., p. 14.

notion of market-fit is presented in the context of both the system-level flexibility to meet the needs of the market as well as content-level alignment of supply to employee demands. Lastly, individual responsibility is introduced by arguing that schools should be able to fundraise for themselves beyond relying on the state funding, that parental fees (parents incurred high costs of tutoring as a result of the quality decline in education presented above) should be formalized to fill in the school budgets, that schools should gain autonomy to decide on their budgets and salary levels of personnel as well as to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

The notion of transition thus adds new notions to those added by democratization creating an entirely new discourse of system restructuration that can meet the larger agenda of democratization and transition reforms in the country. This inclination is vividly exemplified by the Report stating that 'progressive development' of the system of education comparable to that of economy (meaning reforms aimed at transition into a market economy) needs to be secured.[24] It is worth to note, however, that democratization of the content of education in the context of transition still remains a largely unchartered territory within the Report. Furthermore, a connotation of indoctrination can be observed probably stemming from the nation-state patriot-driven perception of democratization. The Report states that the

> *"[…] content should be upgraded to match the scientific and technical development, national and cultural demands in the process of teaching and learning should be met and a comparatively firm body of knowledge should be given to students."*[25]

Thus, the utilization of the contextual factors of democratization and transition, as outlined earlier, leads towards development of a system restructuration discourse that follows a subtle logic of problem and solution. The underlying logic of problems that urge to utilize specific principles stated in the Report for system restructuration matches almost ideally with the logic of challenges expressed in the "Report on Governability of Democracies to the

24 See ibid., p. 16.
25 Ibid., p. 17.

Trilateral Commission" about the crisis of democracy.[26] The challenges of democracies becoming ungovernable because of the inability to handle the growing complexity of demands from large number of partcipants and growing dissatisfaction of citizens from the scrutiny of policy-making that results in alientation civic apathy often dubbed as civic irresponsibility by the same policy-makers thus echoes perfectly to the scarce arguments in the Report about the need to change the system of education to increase individual responsibility. Similar to the trilateral report which created a discourse for classical liberal theories to reinvigorate in the 1980s, the scarce arguments in the Report help create a largely neoliberal discourse of principles and strategies as potential solutions. The notions of decentralization, privatization, standardization, performance monitoring, competition, free choice, individual responsibility and school engagement in entrepreneurial activites are presented as key priciples for effective reforms in the field of education in large and general education specifically. These notions resonate deeply in the doctrine of neoliberalism and its application in education reforms.[27]

Phillips and Ochs describe five types of policy transfer from the perspective of the relationship between the borrower and the lender: (1) imposed policy transfer (in autocratic environments), (2) policy transfer required under constraint (in defeated/occupied countries or under hegemonic influence), (3) policy transfer negotiated under constraint (required by bilateral/multilateral agreements), (4) purposeful transfer or borrowing (international copying of poli-

26 See Crozier, Michel, Samuel Huntington & Joji Watanuki: The Crisis of Democracy – Report on Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission, Commission Report, New York, 1975, pp. 1-9.

27 For further reference see: Ball, Stephen: Neoliberal Education? Confronting the Slouching Beast, in: Policy Futures in Education, Vol. 14, No. 8, 2016, pp. 1046-1059; Bronwyn, Davies & Peter Bansel: Neoliberalism and Education, in: International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2007, pp. 247-259; Klees, Stephen: Neoliberalism and Education Revisited, in: Globalisation, Societies and Education, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 409-414; Lakes, Richard & Carter, Patricia: Neoliberalism and Education: An Introduction, in: Education Studies – A Journal of the American Educational Studies Association, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2011, pp. 107-110; Ross, Ebyew: Neoliberalism and Education Reform, New York, 2007.

cy/practice observed elsewhere), or (5) voluntary policy transfer (introduced through general influence).[28]

Being developed in the context of the global rise of neoliberalism in education, the Report plays the key role of introducing neoliberalism and its strategies as core principles for future reforms aimed at restructuration of the system of education in large and general education specifically. Analysed against the framework of relational categorization of policy borrowing indicated above it is safe to note that an implicit introduction of a new ideology into the policy-making discourse is witnessed. The thinking of authors implicitly turns, from the vagueness of the ambition of democratization (from a nation-state context) and transition to market economy, into a neoliberal mindset utilizing the very notions of democratization and transition. Policy borrowing in this case occurs quite implicitly by building a new discourse upon the lack of knowledge, vagueness of perceptions and urgent needs that seem unaddressable by the current system.

The publication of the Report in 1994 marks not only the implicit introduction of neoliberalism as core ideology for reconceptualization of the system of education. It is also the first case of explicit statement of the need for policy borrowing. The argument for the latter is implicitly developed referencing to democratization and transition to market economy treated as new realities that require qualitative structural adjustments in line with international practices. The Report makes several claims about the former education system not meeting the ongoing changes in the country, about qualitatvely new approach in education being required to enable development of modern sectors of industry and insurance of adaption of population to new processes. Building the contextual background the Report then links the need for structural adjustment to the notion of acquiring information or "learning from elsewhere"[29].

The Report, more than once, states the fact of Armenian policy-makers and expert community being in a certain information vacuum referring to the lack of information about structural

28 See Ochs, Kimberly & David Phillips.: Towards a Structural Typology of Cross-national Attraction in Education, Lisbon, 2002.

29 Ibid., p. 297.

changes, successses and failures in other countries of the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, the necessity to acquire such information is regarded as a top-level priority and international assistance is welcomed specifically within this context. Referring to the preparation work done to draft the Report, the authors state that

> *"[…] time was needed to re-evaluate our experiences of the past 70 years to think of ways and possibilities to adopt suitable methods and patterns from them (other countries)."*[30]

Thus, while it seems that the rational for policy borrowing is the necessity or goal for structural adjustmenents, this does not function as the core rational for actual policy borrowing. The need for adjustment although falls into a branch of academic studies of policy borrowing that view adjustment as a means for policy-makers to denote participation in the world society or to signal modernity.[31] Nonetheless, the numerous statements about the lack of information, acclamation of UNESCO's technical assistance, labeled as significant intellectual support in drafting recommendations and anticipation of international comment to improve the decisions indirectly point to the gaps in knowledge and institutional capacity.

The Report also institutionalises policy borrowing as a means of compensating for the institutional capacity on the longer term. Effective utilisation of international experience is defined as one of the four core objectives of educational reforms while no reference is made to development of local policy-making capacity.[32] A vivid example of treatment of policy borrowing as a compensation for institutional capacity was the statement of anticipation by the Report for UNESCO to help develop in full detail the 10-year strategic program titled "State Composite Program for Development of the Pri-

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30 Armenian National Commission for UNESCO. Republic of Armenia: Educational Policy Making During a Situation of National Emergency, Evaluation Report, Geneva, 1994, p. 15.

31 See Spreen, Carol Anne: Appropriating Borrowed Policies: Outcomes-based Education in South Africa, in: Steiner-Khamsi, Gita (ed.): The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending, New York, 2004, pp.101-114, p. 105.

32 See Armenian National Commission for UNESCO. Republic of Armenia: Educational Policy Making During a Situation of National Emergency, Evaluation Report, Geneva, 1994.

mary-Secondary Education System" envisioned by the Ministry. Developed with significant technical assistance and strong willingness to borrow policy, the Report turned into the first sector-wide case of voluntary borrowing as specified by Phillips and Ochs in the rational of compensating for institutional capacity.[33]

5 The Institutionalization of Neoliberalism

While the Report implicitly establishes the neoliberal ground of policies aimed at reconceptualization of the system of general education by introducing ambitions, notions and strategies, the Strategy of 1997 advances and institutionalizes the neoliberal discourse of democratization and transition to a governmental level. To fully explore the content-specific nature of policy borrowing inquiry into the context and discourse analysis of related documents is required. The Strategy was introduced in 1997 and circulated officially with the World Bank in advance of signing the first contract on credit financing education reforms in 1998. Starting in 1994 Armenia and the World Bank engaged in a dialogue which culminated in a set of three core documents: a) Letter on Development Policy (hence LDP) in 1994, b) Staff Appraisal Report regarding the first loan in education management and finance in 1997, c) Country Assistance Strategy in 1997.[34]

LDP presents the agreed agenda for reforms as a conditionality for the Bank's further involvement. It articulates a highly neoliberal discourse of reforms utilizing the notions and strategies of privatization, liberalization, public spending efficiency and "radical restructuring of the state's role."[35] In line with the terminology and ethos of the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1990) the LDP introduces the notion of development of human capital for increase

33 See Ochs, Kimberly & Phillips, David: Towards a Structural Typology of Cross-national Attraction in Education, Lisbon, 2002.

34 See World Bank: Report and Recommendation of the President of the International Development Association to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Second Structural Adjustment Credit in an Amount Equivalent to SDR 43.1 Million to Republic of Armenia, Washington, D.C., 1997.

35 Ibid., Annex 2.

of productive capacity.[36] On a discourse level the LDP and the Report are fully compatible both implicitly viewing neoliberalism as a core ideology for reforms. In contrast to the Report, the LDP advances the notion of efficiency which the Report bypasses by introducing the notions and strategies of privatization, exclusion of state monopoly, expansion of entrepreneurial rights of schools and budget autonomy. The LDP, however, highlights that efficiency should be achieved in key fiscal areas such as the sector of education by a mechanism of revenue generation and budget constraints should be employed. In relation to budget constraint it further states that

> *"[…] enterprise budget constraints will need to be hardened in order to generate a supply response to new market conditions and to mitigate the risk that loss-making enterprises will undermine fiscal adjustment through pressure for subsidies."*[37]

Thus the LDP not only introduces the notion and strategy of efficiency but also emphasizes the need for relevant policies the background of which is fully prepared by the notions and strategies articulated in the Report.

In addition to the LDP, the World Bank carried out a Staff Appraisal Report in 1997 based on findings acquired over a 2-year period in advance of finalizing the first loan. The Appraisal Report continues enhancing the neoliberal discourse of formalizing the costs incurred by parents as a result of state incapability in the face of contributions to schools and formal charges for textbooks; pre-school education; consolidation of schools and rationalization of staffing for matters of efficiency; budget autonomy; decentralization and reform of system management. In contrast to the LDP the report also touches the issue of education quality teaching. It treats both within the market-fit perspective noting:

> *"Armenian system needs to move from what still is predominantly a knowledge-based methodology to one that will encour-*

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36 See Williamson, John: What Washington Means by Policy Reform, in: Williamson, John (ed.): American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?, Washington, D.C., 1990, pp. 7-20.

37 World Bank: Report on a Proposed Second Structural Adjustment Credit to Armenia, Annex 2, Washington, D.C., 1997.

age the development of adaptive skills, practical problem solving and individual initiative."[38]

The report also emphasizes the substantially low level of teacher salaries and decline in number of teachers as a result, still, being driven by the notion of competition and efficiency it does not provide any system-level solutions other than indicating that "substantially improved salaries and incentives will be essential to retain and attract high quality teachers."[39]

The Staff Appraisal Report also makes references to the Country Assistance Strategy (hence CAS) indicating that the rational for the Bank's involvement stems from the CAS advocated goal of education for human capital and decrease of poverty. To conclude, the three documents preceding (the LDP) or concurrent (Staff Appraisal Report, Country Assistance Strategy) to development of the Strategy create a highly neoliberal discourse significantly advancing the notions and strategies presented by the Report to a level of a commonly shared understanding in between Armenia and the future significant lender of education reforms in the country, the World Bank. It is also worth to note, that prior to development of the government strategy the World Bank provided Armenia with a grant to develop a loanable project. Within the scope of the grant a working group had been established to draft the policy reforms that would be required for successful implementation of the loan-funded policies.

Comparative discourse analysis of the LDP, the Staff Appraisal Report and the Strategy presents striking similarities both in terms of stylistics and the actual discourse. Diversification of education financing through formalization of private charges, privatization of educational institutions, decentralization of financial management and governance, increase of autonomy of educational institutions, standardization and performance monitoring constitute core notions, goals and strategies of the discourse. In neoliberal ethos and style resembling the mentioned documents, the Strategy states that

"[…] the state is not the only performer responsible for education. Citizens also have their own responsibility for education and its expenses. Development of private financing will improve

38 World Bank: Armenia-Education Financing and Management Reform Project, Washington, D.C., 2003, p. 5.

39 Ibid., p. 4.

the situation, remove some of the burden from government shoulders, create competitiveness in the sphere."[40]

This sentence alone echoes the discourse of education as a burden and state as a monopolist created by the Report.

In addition to largely copying the notions and strategies presented by earlier documents, the Strategy introduces, in broad terms, certain enabling structures. Transformation of schools from budgetary to legal entities with the right to engage in entrepreneurial activities and manage budgets as well as financing per number of students, are suggested as structural adjustments that will ensure decentralization of education governance. If the Report highlights the need for transition of the role of the ministry, the Strategy advances the notion through structural adjustments for standardization and performance monitoring. The Strategy points out that the ministry will standardize the curriculum and teaching/learning methodologies also stating that decentralization will enable schools to innovate in teaching and the non-core curriculum thus improving the quality of education measured through student achievement.

The Strategy, thus, consolidates and institutionalizes, through a government decree, the doctrine of neoliberalism as a core reform ideology with its complementary principles of deregulation, decentralization, liberalization, public spending efficiency, competition and transition of the role of the state in education. In comparison to the implicit influx of neoliberalism into the Report in the context of voluntary policy borrowing, the Strategy presents a case of explicit and government-initiated policy borrowing in anticipation of financial and non-financial gains.

National emergency, frequent turnover of ministers and respectively their policies created an environment where the state of education would continue remaining in poor conditions, a large number of challenges required to be met and dissatisfaction with the authorities would continuously grow. World Bank concluded a social assessment which revealed that 50% of respondents placed education as the number one problem facing the country and 80% placed it in the top three.[41] The core issue of discontent was the leasing of text-

40 Ibid., Annex 3.
41 See ibid., p. 8.

books which incurred high costs for parents for genuinely poor-quality material. The government of Armenia, approached the World Bank for assistance in the context of a 'highly charged political environment' and received a grant for technical assistance to develop a loanable project.[42] The project development included around two years of discussions in the period of 1995-1997. On the one hand Armenia had many issues to solve in the field of general education with the issue of textbooks being the most urgent one politically, and on the other hand it had signed an LDP which would prioritize structural adjustments. In 1996 World Bank conducted a poverty assessment study and recommended the importance of efficiency of public expenditure in education as a prerequisite for good quality education that could facilitate development of the human capital. After around two years of negotiations Armenia and the World Bank signed the first credit agreement of education reform in 1998 worth US$ 14,6 million in the face of "Education Financing and Management Reform" project. The credit provided a win-win situation for both parties as it enabled Armenia to solve the issue of textbooks at publically acceptable manner for around 4 years, as well as executed the conditionality of LDP in the face of structural adjustments guaranteed by the strategy. Furthermore, the Appraisal Report stated that the rational beyond involvement of the Bank was not only to assist in the immediate issues but also to

> *"[...] establish the necessary institutional framework for the management of education reform and for future large-scale investment in the sector [...]".*[43]

While Phillips and Ochs point that policy transfer under constraint takes place in the context of bilateral agreements which function more as negative constraints, the Strategy presents a case of mutually beneficial positive constraint. It exemplifies how the lack of institutional capacity for a policy to establish a functioning textbook development mechanism, domestic political pressure resulting from government incapability, governmental aim of power preservation match with the reform agenda of a strong global player resulting in

42 See World Bank: Armenia-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Joint World Bank-IMF Staff Assessment. Strategy Paper, Washington, D.C., 2003.

43 World Bank: Armenia-Education Financing and Management Reform Project, Washington, D.C., 2003, p. 9.

a mutually beneficial environment of policy and finance borrowing for reforms.

6 Concluding Remarks: The Long-term Impact of Policy Borrowing

Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe state that

> *"[…] policy borrowers probably should not be viewed as helpless victims but active agents in what they selectively borrow and how they modify what they have borrowed […]".*[44]

While this may generally hold true, the analysis of educational policy borrowing in Armenia, a transitional democratizing country with limited institutional capacity, suggests a few important observations.

Policy borrowing did not start as a result of a local vision for reforms and an institutional needs assessment of what and where to borrow. It started as a result of a vague policy-level inclination to meet hegemonic western expectations and readjust the system of education in line with the democratization and transition reform agenda. The notion of adjustment spurred a voluntary search for knowledge about reforms in foreign systems of education with the purpose of identification and alignment to the successful international experience. Policy borrowing started implicitly through building of a new discourse under foreign consultancy and upon the lack of institutional capacity, vagueness of perceptions and urgent needs that seemed unaddressable by the current system.

Policy borrowing acted as a compensation for limited institutional capacity to address the ambitious reforms agenda. Armenia made extensive voluntary (even if it later signed agreements with the World Bank) use of foreign consultancy introducing neoliberal notions and strategies into the general discourse of education reforms almost without any obstacles. Analysis of the locally developed documents is quite indicative of a largely passive discourse where new notions are presented as principles and strategies for effective reform without relevant argumentation. The lack of capacity, never

44 Stolpe, Ines & Steiner-Khamsi, Gita: Educational Import: Local Encounters with Global Forces in Mongolia, New York, 2006.

directly stated by Armenian policy-makers, was often confused with lack of information about the experience of foreign systems. Never being an issue of fundamental importance, limited institutional capacity created an environment where policy borrowing, as exemplified later, would remain as an efficient tool for education reforms.

Policy borrowing progressed in the context of limited institutional capacity and government incentives to avoid domestic political pressure and preserve power. The lack of institutional capacity did not enable a democratizing transitional state to fully meet the challenges of restructuration and created growing public discontent with the state of education and policy-making. To deal with the highly volatile political environment Armenia opted for support from international organizations ending up with policy borrowing under constraint of conditionality. Nonetheless, having already adopted the discourse of neoliberalism earlier, policy borrowing turned to be mutually beneficial both for the borrower who managed to address the issues of public discontent without the need for long-term resource-intensive capacity building and to the lender who managed to implement its conditionality.

Thus, whether victims or not, policy borrowing quickly turned into a beneficial policy arm of future governments involving external funds, supporting the structural reforms in the short-to-medium term horizon, relatively sustaining public discontent and compensating for long-term investment on institutional capacity-building. Institutionalization of the practice of policy borrowing in the second half of the post-independence decade led to a final act of borrowing in the face of almost totally copying the most fundamental document of the field of education – the Law on Education. Comparative discourse analysis, even on the surface level, of the Law against the Law on Education of the Russian federation of 1992 reveals striking similarities in both content and structure.

The Armenian Law on Education lifted the level of institutionalisation of neoliberalism to its highest level within the state governance system. It rested the functions of ‘establishing the ruling for development of state standards for education’, ‘performance monitoring of state standards’, ‘defining criteria for assessment of outcomes’, ‘licensing of education institutions and

establishing of the ruling for qualification of school leaders and teachers', 'providing consent to the decisions of regional bodies regarding the staffing issues of educational institutions' with the Ministry of Education and its inspection unit. In line with further decentralisation on regional, community and school level, the law provided for establishment of boards of trustees, transformation of schools from budgetary to legal entities with their charters and rights. Decentralisation was matched with standardization of the content of education through introduction of state standards as normative acts and performance management through mechanisms of licensing, attestation, qualification management and inspection. It is worth to note, that the Russian law was itself developed in the environment of neoliberal influences and state policy for modernization.[45]

While the country started stabilizing in late 1990s the practice of policy borrowing in a mutually beneficial agreement with international organizations deepened turning specifically the World Bank into the chief driver and sponsor of education reforms. From a total portfolio of US$ 2.3 billion all-sector credit assistance provided by the World Bank to Armenia since 1994, the field of education received three large credits for the period of 1998-2015 in total a sum of US$ 59 million.[46] By the year of 2015 core of the reforms specifically in general education were implemented directly by the World Bank funding. These reforms included revision of textbooks and establishment of a textbook revolving fund with concurrent technical assistance, development and introduction of a national curriculum framework and state standards for general education, establishing the national assessment and testing center, provision of teacher trainings to implement the new standards, introduction of education management reforms and rationalization of the system, implementation of the 12-year general education system and the high-school reform, organization of teacher in service training and

45 See Bray, Mark & Borevskaya, Nina: Financing Education in Transitional Societies: Lessons from Russia and China, in: Comparative Education, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2001, pp. 345-365; Collier, Stephen J.: Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics, Princeton, 2011.

46 See World Bank: Projects and Operations. Armenia, available at: http://projects.worldbank.org/search?lang=en&searchTerm=&countrycode_exact=AM (19 April 2018).

professional development, all these accompanied with various types of technical assistance.[47]

To conclude, policy borrowing played a niche role within the context of a democratizing transitional state by compensating for institutional capacity, turning into a government-led beneficial policy arm that would and does continuously generate external funds, provide structural adjustments and ensure a maintainable level of public discontent. The lack of capacity enabled a voluntary introduction of neoliberalism, a highly contested ideology for education reforms. It is worth to note, that in the course of hearings in the Parliament in 2009 the Minister of Education, presenting the achievements under the first phase of funding from the World Bank noted that the first phase enabled Armenia to "… implement large-scale reforms, institutionalize a new system of education and make another big move towards the European and international common area."[48]

47 See ibid.

48 National Assembly: Extraordinary Session of the Fourth Convocation of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia (No. N134), 10 July 2009.

7 The Armenian Apostolic Church Between the State and Civil Society: Challenges and Opportunities

Narek Mkrtchyan

1 Introduction

The Armenian Apostolic Church has historically been an inseparable part of the Armenian national history and identity. The hierarchical structure of the Armenian Apostolic Church has served as the pillar securing its continuance as the only traditional institution of the Armenian reality. The demise of the Soviet order brought new opportunities for the re-engagement of the church in the social, cultural and even political spheres of the Armenian Republic. This engagement primarily counted on the traditional belief in religion and public trust in the the long-standing Armenian Apostolic Church.[1] The paper presents the engagement of the Armenian Apostolic Church in different public spheres by focusing on its official cooperation with the state. This granted the church a number of privileges, which, on the one hand, are justified by the "identity savior" mission of the church throughout critical periods in history and, on the other hand, are embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

Thanks to the endeavors of the Church, the Armenian national identity fits in with the traditional characteristics of European nations,

[1] See Caucasus Research Resource Centers: Caucasus Barometer 2015 Armenia dataset "Caucasus Barometer" TRURELI, available at: http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2015-am/TRURELI/ (5 March 2017).

e.g., common history, shared language, sense of peace and common religion.[2] The institutionalization of the common religion allowed the Armenian Apostolic Church to get involved in various public processes, which would have been hardly possible without the official approval or cooperation of the ruling elite. The level of engagement by the Church and formal cooperation with the state are among the most important indicators when explaining the impact of the Church on the political and public decision-making processes in Armenia. Next, the paper calls attention to the challenges and limitations of the Church in supporting the process of democratization of the country. In that respect, the relationships between the Church, civil society and political actors are going to be examined. Considering that one of the most significant features of Armenia's democratization concerns the development of a strong civil society, this study aims to understand whether the church supports dialogue between civil and political segments of society. And it finally wants to answer the research questions whether or not the Apostolic Church wants to be a mediator between civil and political segments of society and whether or not civil society would consider the Church as mediator.

The political puzzle of describing the role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in supporting dialogue between civil society and government contains questions concerning both international and domestic legal frameworks. Since most of the debate will revolve only around the Armenian Apostolic Church, it is important to understand the legal framework in which the church can support the political process. In this context, a brief examination of the legal status of the Armenian Apostolic Church is enough to contend that the latter is the only religious institution in Armenia with few opportunities to participate in public and political processes.

To address those research questions and to achieve the objectives semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted either online or face-to-face. The interviews were conducted with key informants from civil society and academia. The most important limitation of the research concerns the interview process. For a more comprehensive picture it would have been better to solicit the opinions of vari-

[2] See Rutland, Peter: Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia, in: Europe-Asia Studies, Vol. 46, No. 5, 1994, pp.839-861, p. 840.

ous representatives of the Armenian Apostolic Church. However, the absence of independent opinion among the clergy prevented the inclusion of such representation and should not be viewed as flawed design or methodology, but as the expression and proof of the unwillingness of clergy to speak out on the above-mentioned issues. During the interview process more than 15 bishops, archbishops and primates of various dioceses of the Armenian Church were contacted to provide answers to different questions concerning the relationship between the Church, civil society and political actors, which were repeatedly ignored or declined.

2 The State and the Apostolic Church: Mutual Institutions

The independence of Armenia marked a new era in the relationship between church and state. When the independent Republic of Armenia (RA) became a member of different international organizations (e.g., Council of Europe, UN etc.), it imposed to omit certain obligations and commitments towards religious freedoms, etc. on Armenia. Moreover, the RA drafted its constitution in accordance with universal standards, which are instrumental in understanding the relationships between church and state. Subsequently, Article 8.1 of the RA Constitution guarantees "Freedom of activities for all religious organizations"[3], which has enabled the registration of many religious institutions in Armenia. Nonetheless, the Armenian Apostolic Church is the only religious institution whose relationship with the state is established by the 2007 Law "On the Relations between the State of Armenia and The Holy Apostolic Church of Armenia". This law has its roots in Article 8.1 of the Constitution of the RA, which affirms:

> *"The Republic of Armenia recognizes the exclusive historical mission of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church as the national church, in the spiritual life, development of the national culture*

[3] National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia: The Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations, 17 June 1991, available at: http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=2041&lang=arm (3 March 2017).

and preservation of the national identity of the people of Armenia."[4]

Hence, the special role of the Armenian Apostolic Church in preserving the national identity and culture of Armenians[5] is formally recognized. The Armenian Apostolic Church with its large number of followers (approximately 92 percent of the population of Armenia identifies with the Armenian Apostolic Church[6]) can have the dual function of supporting the hegemony of the ruling regime or forging a totally new hegemony.[7] The cooperation of the Armenian Apostolic Church with the state can be conceptualized as cooperation with the political society. However, the engagement of the Church in the democratization processes could have, at least, involved collaboration with civil society. Consequently, the exclusive representation of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the media, education, culture, security and correctional institutions, prevents the latter from openly criticizing corruption, unjust rules of justice or government policies that limit civic activism in Armenia. Moreover, engagement of the Church in the educational processes restricts the inclusion of propriety in citizen-making processes.

3 Education and Church: Challenges to Propriety-based Citizenship

One of the important 'laboratories' through which individuals are transformed into active citizens is the educational system. Educational institutions, e.g., public schools and universities, have immense potential to forge citizens. The formation and development

4 The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (with the Amendments of 27 November 2005), available at: http://www.parliament.am/parliament.php?-id=constitution&lang=eng&vie-w=print (25 February 2017).

5 A similar pattern emerged for the Georgian Orthodox Church too, when the state by the Constitutional Agreement simultaneously recognized the special role of the Orthodox Church in Georgia and freedom of belief and religions.

6 See U.S. Embassy in Armenia: US's International Freedom Report 2016, Armenia, available at: https://am.usembassy.gov/religious-freedom-2016/ (20 June 2018)

7 In this context, the idea of hegemony is understood through the prism of Antonio Gramsci's theoretical concepts. See Mkrtchyan, Narek: Gramsci in Armenia: State-Church Relations in the Post-Soviet Armenia, in: Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2015, pp. 163-176, p. 166.

of civil society cannot be accomplished without civic education geared to develop civil-society thinking. However, for the successful functioning of such educational mechanisms it is extremely important to grow a society-centered vision of education. The most vivid obstacle and challenge to society-centered education is the existence of state-centered educational institutions, where secularity might be subordinated.

In this regard, it is important to consider the official cooperation between state and church. On September 22nd 2002 the government of Armenia and the Armenian Catholicos Garegin II, the chief bishop, signed an agreement on adding a new mandatory subject "Armenian Church History" in the countries' public school educational curriculum.[8] Besides other provisions, this agreement allows the clergy to hold regular meetings with pupils and teachers. In response to criticisms by international and local organizations and NGOs, the church and government representatives invoked the justification that this is a part of the Armenian 'national education' because the Church has historically been an inseparable part of Armenian society. In contrast, the justification of national education had already been criticized and rejected in many European countries since the 19th century. This quote by W. Humboldt is an excellent case in point:

> *"In fine, if education is only to develop a man's faculties, without regard to giving human nature any special civic character, there is no need for the State's interference. Among men who are really free, every form of industry becomes more rapidly improved – all the arts flourish more gracefully – all the sciences extend their range."*[9]

In the case of Armenia, the idea of national education is overemphasized, with the consequence that it prevails in the History of the Armenian Church textbook. The latter propagates not only the doctrine of the Armenian Church and ideologies of Christianity, but also supports state and national ideologies. For example, the textbook puts forward the idea that national sovereignty requires na-

8 See Etchmiadzin Monthly: Agreement between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Government of the Republic of Armenia, Echmiadzin, 2002, p. 37 [in Armenian].

9 Humboldt, Wilhelm von: The Limits of State Action, Indianapolis, 1972, p. 53.

tional values and norms including the values of the Armenian Apostolic Church.[10] Thus, the Church, by way of school interference, is afforded the exclusive opportunity to be a part of the early socialization process that an individual undergoes in childhood.[11] In fact, this is about a disciplinary production, through which the moral judgment of Armenian children vis-à-vis towards truth and wrong beliefs can be intermediated by the official ideologies of the Church and religion, which, in turn, contains the risks of transforming future generations into subjects.[12] For the continuation of the hegemony of a ruling regime, it is necessary to take control of citizen-making processes and to educate future generations in accordance with the principles of state reproduction, in which the Armenian Church defines its unique mission. For example, in the textbook of the Armenian Church History for 9th graders, one comes across a text presenting the Apostolic Church as an important component of the Armenian political society from the 19th century to modern times.[13] To this end, the textbook focuses on the 'heroic and diplomatic' mission of the clergy leading to it being active in various national liberation movements, i.e., as for example participation of the church in national liberation movements in the time period extending from 1890s to 1910s or during the Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) liberation movement and war in 1988-1994.[14]

The above-mentioned developments represent a challenge for free and rational thinking. To the question "Do you think that the engagement of the church in education processes can prevent schoolchildren from being active citizens?" one school teacher interviewed responded as follows:

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10 See Mkrtchyan, Narek: Gramsci in Armenia: State-Church Relations in the Post-Soviet Armenia, in: Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2015, PP. 163-176, p. 169.

11 See Berger, Peter Ludwig & Luckmann, Thomas: The Social Construction of Reality, Harmondsworth, 1967, p. 150.

12 See Mkrtchyan, Narek: Gramsci in Armenia: State-Church Relations in the Post-Soviet Armenia, in: Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2015, pp. 163-176, p. 170.

13 See ibid., p. 169.

14 See Ghukasyan, Armen et al.: History of Armenian Church, in: Hovahnnisyan, Petros et al. (eds.), Public School 9th Grade Text Book, Yerevan, 2013, pp. 6-11, 95-98.

> *"The textbook is dangerous for the future generation, because it creates barriers to critical thinking; it cannot support the development of civic ideas and cannot teach schoolchildren the mechanisms of being active citizens, but we, teachers, have no choice but to use the textbook and teach the subject established by the state."*[15]

So, the cooperation of the church and state in the educational sector challenges the vital function of education, which, in the Durkheimian sense, is the transformation of the young people from a socially unformed child into a social being capable of functioning in society.[16] Of course, for regimes with tendencies to hold on to power, it is unacceptable to have free-thinking citizens and civility-based values. Nevertheless, a government with democratic tendencies should guarantee civility and civic education, on the one hand, and keep schools free from political and religious influence, on the other.[17]

4 The Apostolic Church as Legitimizer of Political Processes

Before examining the opportunities of the church to support the democratization process of the RA, it is important to first discuss the obstacles and challenges that democratization faces when seeking the support of the Church. Again, the most vivid obstacles stem from the official hegemonic cooperation between the ruling elite and the Armenian Apostolic Church, which seriously limits the engagement of the Church in democratization processes.

One of the key components of democracy is the functioning of the representative political system through free and fair elections. Elections should be an inseparable part of contemporary democratization processes. In this regard, it is integral to grasp the position of the Armenian Apostolic Church in those processes. It is obvious

15 Personal Interview, Yerevan, 20 February 2017.

16 See Meyer, Heinz-Dieter: Civil Society and Education: The Return of an Idea, in: Meyer, Heinz-Dieter & Lowe Boyd, William (eds.): Education between States, Markets and Civil Society: Comparative Perspectives, London, 2001, pp. 13-34, p. 14.

17 See Meyer, Heinz-Dieter: Educational Autonomy in a Civil Society: A Model of Checks and Balances, in: Meyer, Heinz-Dieter & Lowe Boyd, William (eds.): Education between States, Markets and Civil Society: Comparative Perspectives, London, 2001, pp. 119-136, p. 115.

that behind the obstacles of democratization in post-Soviet areas are the unfair presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections. Hence, the question arises here, whether the leading Church, which has millions of followers, is in a position to condemn unfair elections in favor of democratization. To provide more or less comprehensive responses to this question, one could take a glance at the historical experiences of other countries. For example, the Catholic Church in communist Poland played a crucial role in forging the opposition against the regime and fostering civil society in support of democracy.[18] So, we can argue that the Polish church was a part of civil society.

The picture is different in the case of Armenia. Since the independence of Armenia the Apostolic Church has been engaged, directly or indirectly, in the political processes of the country. To put it more precisely, the power of the Church has functioned in the sphere of legitimization of certain political processes or the tenure of certain leaders and regimes. This practice derives from the Armenian royal tradition when the Catholics of all Armenians recognized the power of kings and took part in the coronation ceremony of kings. Similarly, after presidential or parliamentary elections, independent of the fact if they were fair or not, the leaders of the Armenian Apostolic Church conferred the official statement of the Holy See. Arguably, the role of the Church is not restricted by its ritualistic and symbolic activity, because the blessing of the President by the Catholics has a decisive significance on the legitimacy of elections.[19]

Though the constitution defines that the church shall be separate from the state in the Republic of Armenia some top representatives of the Armenian Apostolic church try to influence certain political processes. One of the most recent cases concerns Vanadzor's municipal elections held on October 2nd 2016, when three opposition parties, having gained 18 of the 31 seats in the Council of Elders

18 See Górski, Eugeniusz: Civil Society, Pluralism and Universalism, Polish Philosophical Studies, VIII, Washington D.C., 2007, p. 25.

19 See Mkrtchyan, Narek: Gramsci in Armenia: State-Church Relations in the Post-Soviet Armenia, in: Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2015, pp. 163-176, p. 167.

left the leading Republican Party only with 13 council seats.[20] However, despite the insufficient number of votes the ruling Republican candidate for mayor gained the highest number of votes in a secret ballot. In response, three opposition parties decided to boycott the Vanadzor municipal council sessions in order to prevent it from ratifying different policies. To get out of this complicated situation the ruling party 'petitioned the church for help'. The Church was swift to respond. During Christmas Holy Mass the leader of the Diocese of Gugark, Archbishop Seboug Chouldjian, publicly called upon Vanadzor city council opposition members to cooperate and join forces in support of the Republican Mayor.[21] The announcement by the archbishop was highly criticized by the opposition parties, which tried to remind the clergy of the separation of church and state.

5 The Church and Regime-Backed Oligarchs

Another challenge to the church's engagement in democratization processes deals with the cooperation between regime-backed oligarchs and church leaders. The church-building activity seems to enhence the reputation of certain oligarchs during election campaigns. For example, during the re-branding of his discredited reputation in the wake of the 2017 parliamentary elections, the ruling regime-backed oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan has created a film dedicated to his life in an attempt to win voters for the "Tsarukyan alliance" party. The film begins with a scene of a church built by him followed by scenes depicting his religiosity and glorification of his church-building mission by several top leaders of the Armenian Apostolic Church.[22] Thus, aside from religiosity, oligarchs have po-

20 See "Bright Armenia" Party to Initiate Dissolution of Vanadzor Council of Elders, in: Panorama, 13 December 2016, available at: http://www.panorama.am/en/ne-ws/2016/12/13/"Bright-Armenia"party-to-initiate-dissolution-of-Vanadzor-Council-of-Elders/1693713 (1 March 2017).

21 See Stepanyan, Nare: The Spiritual Leaders Should not Interven Political Processes, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 7 January 2017, available at: http://www.azatutyun.am/a/28218918.html (10 March 2017), [In Armenian].

22 See The man who constructs; Gagik Tsarukyan, Part 1 [Mard. Wory karucume: Gagik Tsarukyan. Mas 1], available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8ii19eopyE (10 March 2017).

litical aspirations, i.e., for most oligarchs who want to play a key political role, religiosity is an important value.[23]

Another noteworthy example concerns the most scandalous corruption incident of 2013 with the participation of former Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan (now the Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission) and the archbishop of the Ararat Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Navasard Kchoyan, who with the help of businessman Ashot Sukiasyan (currently imprisoned) had registered an offshore company in Cyprus worth around 10 million US dollars.[24] This case was interpreted as the most scandalous corruption allegation of the year and as one of the key challenges to Armenia's economic development and democratization by Freedom House's Nation in Transit 2014 annual report.[25]

6 Media and Church

Another important privilege bestowed upon to the Armenian Apostolic Church concerns the mass media. The Apostolic church is the only religious institution in Armenia to have a public TV channel called "Shoghakat" aimed at propagating Christian values, ethics and morality and pursuing the aim to cover Armenian and world cultures.[26] Indeed, it is a very powerful tool to have influence on the consciousness of the people. The media serves as a great source of power in order to shape or influence public opinion or even to create new public opinion. Various TV programs dedicated to the Armenian Apostolic Church's doctrine and history tend to give consent to approve and find common sense in the ideologies of the church. At first glance, such communication with the public is nec-

23 See Antonyan, Yulia: Being an "Oligarch" in the Armenian Way, in: Antonian, Yulia (ed.): Eites and "Elites". Transformation of Social Structures in Pots-Soviet Armenia and Georgia, Yerevan, 2016, pp. 110-174, p. 159.

24 See Davtyan, Ararat & Baghdasaryan, Edik & Aghalaryan, Kristine: Cyprus Troika. Who 'Stripped' Businessman Paylak Hayrapetyan of His Assets?, in Hetq, 29 May 2013, available at: http://hetq.am/eng/news/26891/ovqer-en-paylak-hayrapetyani-unezrkman-hexinaknery-ofshorayineryaky.html (8 April 2017).

25 See Freedom House: Nation in Transition, Armenia, 2014, available at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/armenia (4 April 2017).

26 See Website of "Shoghakat" TV Company, available at: https://shoghakat.am/en/site/about (10 April 2017).

essary for attracting public participation in various democratic processes. However, the church-owned media do not make effort in order to provide space for nurturing rational and critical thinking, which could go against the ruling regime. Shoghakat TV programs are mostly religious, cultural and social in content mostly echoing the interests and demands of political rather than civil society. Speaking further on the topic of Shoghakat TV, one interviewee from Yerevan State University takes the position that,

> *"[…] if Shoghakat is a cultural TV station, then why does it not prepare any TV program on the newly developing 'culture of civic activism' in Armenia? The answer is that because this would be regarded by government as a step against the ruling elite, which in turn would get their license revoked."*[27]

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the pavilion program series called 'Third Millenium' is the only Shoghakat undertaking with a liberal format, which allows for more or less open public debate on different social, educational, cultural and even political issues. Despite the fact that the company places emphasis on cultural content as part of its mission and activities, it is obvious that religious TV program series (25) dominate public (10) and cultural (15) programs.[28]

7 Church vs. Civic Activism

The policies shaped jointly by the Armenian Apostolic Church and the state would hardly allow the church to publicly criticize the government for corruption, monopolistic behavior or injustice. Taking into consideration the institutional and cultural legacy and the legal standing of the church, the indifference of the Armenian Apostolic Church can be defined as nothing else than a harmful, damaging inactivity. It would be wrong to say that the Armenian Apostolic Church is fully isolated from civil society. During many civic protests − especially before or after police brutality against activists − the church surprisingly sent clergy to those locations. A case in point is the "Electric Yerevan" civic protest in 2015, when clergy

27 Personal Interview, Yerevan, 20 March 2017.

28 See Website of "Shoghakat" TV Company, available at: https://shoghakat.am/en/site/about (10 April 2017).

came together with intellectuals to form a human wall between the two conflicting sides. However, this is similar to 'working visits' that aim to ease tension between the ruling elite and civil society – or in Gramscian terminology to form a 'historic bloc' between the oppressors and the oppressed. The church's involvement in civic protests is restricted to a symbolic meaning, because there is no precedent that the church has utilized its resources to support the interests and rights of civil society. Vahram Toqmajian, a historian, school teacher and opposition politician, responding to the question "According to you to what extent has the mediation or the mission of the Armenian Apostolic Church supported the interests of civil society during social and political protests?" states:

> *"If during Electric Yerevan civic protest the ruling authorities could manage to create the impression about the impartiality of clergy, then during the Sasna Tsrer protest they faced absolute indifference. Before that, in March 2008, the church had received a similar slap on the face. If you recall, the Church leader had tried to meet with the first President of the Republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, but his request was rejected. This is logical. The church is where its presence will not harm the ruling elite. In other situations, it is similar to American thriller movies when the police is always late, when all the persons involved are shot to death. If the Church wanted to mediate, then it would have prevented the bloodshed on the square, rather than arranging for meetings afterwards."*[29]

Moreover, this fact is well perceived by the citizens. It was not by accident that during the Khorenatsi civil rallies in support of 'Sasna Tsrer', who had stormed and occupied one of the headquarters of Yerevan Police garrisons, the public refused the mediation of the Armenian Apostolic Church. According to the Human Rights Watch Report of July 29, 2016 Armenian police used excessive force against peaceful protesters on Khorenatsi Street[30] during which one could hardly find any clergy alongside ordinary citizens. Moreover, when Armen Melkonyan, a priest from the diocese in Maastricht, Netherlands, participated in a protest in support of Sasna

29 Personal interview with Vahram Toqmajyan, Yerevan, 8 February 2017.

30 See Human Rights Watch: Armenia: Excessive Police Force at Protest, available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/01/armenia-excessive-police-force-protest (9 April 2017).

Tsrer in front of the RA Embassy to the Netherlands, the leaders of the Armenian Apostolic church recalled him.[31]

After the death of Artur Sargsyan or 'the bread bearer' as he was nicknamed (Hac Berogh), who had been charged with breaking the police cordon to take food to the members of Sasna Tsrer, dozens of citizens asked the bishop of Yeghvard to hold a requiem mass in his memory. The 'bread bearer' lost his life on March 16, 2017 consequent to a hunger strike against the ruling regime during the most active period of the pre-election campaign. However, the bishop of Yeghvard refused that request. Ironically, this action by a representative of the Armenian Apostolic Church is understandable considering that Sasun Mikayelyan – the leader of a leading opposition party of Armenia, Civil Contract – was among the organizers. This case is not an exception, because Armenian civil society has already witnessed the unwillingness of the Church to support civic activism.

Yet another example is the "Save Teghut" Civic Initiative, launched in 2008 to pressure the government, e.g., the Ministry of Nature Protection and the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, to revoke the approval of mining activities for the extraction of copper-molybdenum in Teghut (flora and fauna rich forest in Lori marz).[32] While the public heavily criticized the concession by the government of a 25-year exploitation license to the Armenian Copper Project (81% of ACP shares belong to the Liechtenstein-registered Vallex Group), the leader of the Diocese of Gugark, Archbishop Seboug Chouldjian, in a public debate on that topic, bluntly supported the Group's right to exploit Teghut.[33]

All mentioned have profound roots. To prepare the grounds for the reproduction of its apparatus, regimes usually use the most trusted institutions of society. To put in other words, it is about the creation

31 See Sahakyan, Armine: Priest's Complaint about Armenian Government Strikes a Chord with the Faithful, in: Huffington Post, 9 January 2017, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/armine-sahakyan/a-priests-complaint-about_b_11810286.html (9 April 2017).

32 For more details see Paturyan, Yevgenya Jenny & Gevorgyan, Valentina: Civic Activism as a Novel Component of Armenian Civil Society, Yerevan, 2016, p. 34.

33 The speech of the leader of the Diocese of Gugark [Gugaratc temi aragnordi khosqy], 17 January 2012, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly9vxJHxb64 (10 April 2017).

of hegemony, which requires building consensus in society. Hence, to create common sense, the government uses the potential of the Armenian Apostolic church. The process of hegemony formation in Armenia imposes itself upon key social and state institutions, e.g., schools, army and prisons. As already mentioned, starting from 2003 a new subject, called "History of the Armenian Church", has been integrated in the curriculum of Armenian public schools. The analysis of textbook contents show that it is meant to propagate both the Christian doctrine of the Apostolic Church and the principles of state ideologies.[34] Moreover, the Apostolic Church of Armenia participates not only in the public socialization processes but also supports national security. The latter mission of the church was set up by the 2000 charter signed between the Church and the state, according to which clergy are allowed to regularly meet with soldiers to provide them with Christian-patriotic education. Next, the Armenian Apostolic Church is the only religious institution in Armenia to have the right of holding regular meetings with prisoners in correctional institutions. This is another important process in support of regime hegemony through the formation by men of the conclusion of a pact between the oppressors and the oppressed. As a recompenzation for the services of the church, in 2011 the RA Parliament approved the statutory amendments, which exempted the apostolic church – one of the largest landowners of the country – from property and land taxes. This example is by far more than sufficient in order to understand the Church's favorable attitude towards the political regime.

8 Can the Armenian Apostolic Church be Considered as a Mediator Between the Political and Civil Society?

The relationship between state and church discussed above supports the argument that the engagement of the church as mediator between political players and civil society is very restricted. However, considering the social and cultural potential of the Church and public trust, one can claim that there is still room for cooperation. The whole question relies upon the mechanisms of engagement. One

[34] See Mkrtchyan, Narek: Gramsci in Armenia: State-Church Relations in the Post-Soviet Armenia, in: Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2015, pp. 163-176, p. 169.

civil society expert in Armenia, AUA professor Jenny Paturyan responded to the question of how to engage the potential of the Armenian Apostolic Church in opening new channels for dialogue between civil society and political players as follows:

> *"Trust is a precious resource, which is not very common in the Armenian society. The Church has it. It can use it for a good cause. For example, a person who is trusted can play a role of mediator in a conflict. The same can be said about an institution. Of course, it is important that the mediator remains neutral and makes an honest effort to help conflicting parties to reconcile, search for a compromise, etc. and not just take the side of one or the other. So, if the Church remains strictly neutral, it can use the trust it has to help civil society and political players discuss whatever issues they might want to discuss. If civil society actors suspect that the Church is too close to the political players, they will not trust the Church as mediator."*[35]

The last sentence of this response relates to one of the questions examined in the present paper whether civil society wants the Armenian Apostolic Church to become a mediator or not. The privileges of the church officially bestowed by the state hinder civil society to believe in the mediating mission of the church. It is more than obvious from the responses given by civil society representatives that they want to rely on the support of the Armenian Apostolic church in launching a dialogue with political actors. Moreover, all the interviewees from civil society did not express any penchant to consider the Armenian Apostolic Church as a mediator. For example, one of civic activists provided the following answer to the question on the possibility of engaging the church in civil-political society dialogue:

> *"No, the absence of dialogue is not due to the absence of a mediator. We, as civil society, do need the help of the church. Armenia is a secular state and the church should have no space in politics. Secondly, we cannot let the Armenian Apostolic Church, which has its place in the Armenia oligarchic system, be a mediator between us and the government."*[36]

Another respondent from civil society argued:

35 E-mail Interview with Jenny Paturyan, Yerevan, 16 February 2017.
36 E-mail Interview, Yerevan, 18 February 2017.

"The Armenian Church serves only the interests of the ruling party, hence all attempts by the church to intervene in civic movements pursue the concrete aim to destroy civic initiatives, which at some point could prove a serious threat to the ruling regime."[37]

Obviously, the church does not enjoy the trust of civil society. There are quite a few explanations for that. The first explanation lies in the official cooperation with political actors while the second has much more profound roots. The establishment of successful cooperation between the church and the active segments of society requires experienced practices. The Armenian Apostolic Church in contrast, for example, to Poland has not been a driving force in nationalistic movements and despite its huge potential could not become a strong advocate of an independent Armenian nation state.[38] However, according to J. Paturyan, it is still possible to rebuild the relationships between the church, civil society and politicians on a micro level, with small tangible steps, which she explains as follows:

"Another important element of the Armenian Apostolic Church is that it has a dense network that reaches most corners of Armenia, most settlements, many families that are otherwise disconnected both from politics and from civil society. I think the Church is in a unique position to know what some of the most disadvantaged, detached and disillusioned people think, know, fear, worry about, want, etc. The Church can open many doors that are closed to both politicians and civil society. I think the cooperation of church, civil society, and political actors can be particularly fruitful on the local level, targeting specific communities with specific issues. For example, environmental activists are worried about a garbage pit in a particular village, the local priest gets the community mobilized and organizes a cleanup day, the local government provides the trucks needed to remove the garbage."[39]

37 E-mail Interview, Yerevan, 18 February 2017.

38 See Rutland, Peter: Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia, in: Europe-Asia Studies, Vol. 46, No. 5, 1994, p. 840.

39 E-mail Interview with Jenny Paturyan, Yerevan, 16 February 2017.

Indeed, micro level or local cooperation can pave the ground for further cooperation, but business links between leaders of the church and Armenian oligarchs and their shared interests constitute the major obstacles to such cooperation. Of all the interviews, only one interviewee, the journalist and environmental activist T. Yenoqyan, criticized the Armenian Apostolic Church for not supporting environmentalists who struggled for saving the public good – the pristine environment of Armenia – from exploitation:

> *"The Armenian Apostolic Church sent its 'spiritual descents' not only to where civic movements and protests were taking place, but also encouraged them to publicly support mining companies. Let's remember the primate of the Diocese of Gugark, who supported the interests of Vallex Group, during the protests against the right of the latter to exploit Teghut."*[40]

9 Conclusion

To conclude, the Armenian Apostolic Church has the full potential to serve as an open channel for dialogue between political actors and civil society. However, this can be achieved only by overcoming the abovementioned challenges. Practically, the church can support democratic decision-making processes, which cannot occure without the willingness of the church. It requires well-developed mechanisms that would concurrently support both the interests of the church and civil society and do of course not harm official cooperation with the government. The rewarding cooperation with the political segment of society prevents the Armenian Apostolic church from being a supporter of dialogue between the ruling regime and civil society. Another dimension concerns the willingness of civil society to consider the church as mediator and supporter. In fact, the shortage of civility and civil society thinking among Armenians has its roots in the hegemonic relationship between state and church. To this end it is necessary to improve the reputation of the church, by preventing the ruling regime from perceiving the church as a 'voter-mobilizer', 'policy-legitimizer' and 'hegemony-maker'.

40 E-mail Interview with Tehmine Yenoqyan, Yerevan, 9 February 2017.

8 The Velvet Revolution – A New Path for Armenia

Shushanik Minasyan

Armenia has long struggled to consolidate its democracy since proclaiming independence from Soviet rule in 1991. The civic action "My Step"[1] organized in April 2018 by Nikol Pashinyan, an opposition figure and long-standing critic of the monopolized political scene in Armenia, transformed into a national movement uniting Armenians at home and abroad in their rejection of the existing neopatrimonial system. The world is now witnessing a peaceful revolution in a post-socialist country which constitutes more than a mere political transition. This is a revolution about values, about the values of Armenian society, its political awareness and maturity after 27 years of self-governance.

The referendum held on a constitutional reform on 6 December 2015 declared Armenia a parliamentary republic and concentrated power in the hands of the prime minister.[2] The switch from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary system converted the presidency to a ceremonial position and concurrently increased the powers of the prime minister. Critics argued that the ruling Republican Party of

1 See Gabrielyan, Sisak & Kaghzvantsian, Satenik: Armenian Opposition Group Wtarts Walking Tour in Regime Change Bid, in: Radio Free Armenia, 2 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29140104.html (27 August 2018).

2 See The Guardian: Armenia votes to curb presidential powers in disputed referendum, in: The Guardian, 7 December 2015, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/wo-rld/2015/dec/07/armenia-vote-disputed-referendum-president-powers (14 October 2018).

Armenia (RPA) laid the basis for its future domestic policy and subverted the center of power from the presidential palace to the parliament.[3] There were fears that the RPA leader, Serge Sargsyan, then president of Armenia, who had already served twice as prime minister, would maintain his hold of the country by reclaiming the post of prime minister after his second presidential term expired in 2018. Sargsyan repeatedly denied that the proposed constitutional changes were intended to allow him to retain influence. He pledged that he would not become prime minister if the constitution successfully was amended.[4] At the same time the referendum process did not run smoothly. Key opposition leaders witnessed widespread ballot stuffing, voter intimidation and even vote buying in the RPA's pursuit of the requisite 25 percent of all registered voters for the amendment's passing. In its report on the election process, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) emphasized:

> *"The conduct of the referendum reflected the absence of meaningful actions over the previous three years to address prior OSCE/ODIHR recommendations to improve confidence and public trust in the electoral process, including by improving accuracy of voter lists, preventing misuse of public resources in campaigns, and strengthening safeguards against voting day irregularities as well as the effectiveness of complaint mechanisms and accountability for electoral offences."*[5]

Sargsyan's two previous victories were heavily disputed by the public as well.[6] On both occasions, a majority seems to have been

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3 See Avedissian, Karena: No, Thanks. Armenia's Opposition Rallies Against Referendum, in: The Guardian, 5 December 2015, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/05/armenian-constitution-opposition-electric-yerevan (14 October 2018).

4 See Fuller, Liz: Can Armenian President Count on Russia's Support for his plan to Become Prime Minister?, in: Radio Free Europe, 30 January 2017, available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/caucasus-report-armenia-sarkisian-russia-support-prime-minister/28268041.html (14 October 2018).

5 OSCE: Republic of Armenia. Constitutional Referendum 6 December 2015. Final Report, Warsaw 2016, p. 1.

6 See Tavernise, Sabrina: Thousands in Armenia Protests Results of Presidential Election, in: The New York Times, 21 Februar 2008, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/21/world/europe/21armenia.html (27 August 2018); Lorusso, Marilisa: Presidential Elections in Armenia and the Op-

reached through voter intimidation, corruption and the inappropriate use of administrative resources. Public discontent with the 2008 results culminated in mass protests on 1 March, which the authorities subdued by crushing the participants and using fire. At least ten people were killed, with more than a hundred hospitalized.[7] Over the past decade, no one has been held accountable for the disproportionate use of force. The RPA-governement did not show willingness to allow transparent legal investigation.[8]

After winning a majority in the parliamentary elections of April 2017,[9] Serge Sargsyan did not address the question of who will lead the next government. In spring 2018, the RPA party council nominated Sargsyan for the post of prime minister. The announcement of Serge Sargsyan's intention to run for a third term as prime minister generated widespread anger, and led to street protests. On 31 March 2018, Nikol Pashinyan and his supporters initiated a political response in the second largest Armenian city, Gyumri. Taking a break from his parliamentary duties, the former political prisoner walked from town to town, reaching out to people, spending the night in tents, blogging about his experiences and encouraging Armenians to join the democratic upswing of their country. On 13 April Pash-

possition's Long March, in: IAI-Working Papers, No. 13-14, 2013, available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/163368/iaiwp1314.pdf (27 August 2018).

7 See Human Rights Watch: Democracy on Rocky Ground. Armenia's Disputed 2008 Presidential Election, Post-Election Violence, and the One-Sided Pursuit of Accountability, in: Human Rights Watch, 25 February 2009, available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/02/25/democracy-rocky-ground/armenias-disputed-2008-presidential-election-post-election (27 August 2018).

8 See Tert: Today Marks 10 Years Since March 1 Tragic Events, in: Tert, 1 March 2018, available at: https://www.tert.am/en/news/2018/03/01/march-1/2626806 (14 October 2018).

9 According to the election results, 58 from the overall number of 105 mandates were won by the Republican Party of Armenia. The partners of the governing party and members of the coalition government, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Tsarukyan Alliance held 38 mandates. The opposition "Way Out Alliance", held just 9 mandates, which was not enough to exert significant influence on key issues in the parliament.

inyan finally returned to the Armenian capital for a march[10] that some compared to Gandhi's in 1930.[11]

After returning to Yerevan, Pashinyan headed straight to his alma mater, Yerevan State University, encouraging students to engage in acts of peaceful civil disobedience and to 'take a step, reject Serge'. Students turned out in large numbers and with the enthusiasm that has been witnessed often in recent years in Armenia.[12] Anti-government protests have not been uncommon in the country over the past ten years: Since 2008, there has been a palpable civic energy of expression and participation in response to unfair elections, corruption and the kleptocratic, oligarchic RPA regime. The main protagonists of the "Save Teghut" environmental movement in 2009-2010, Mashtots park protests in 2012, Electric Yerevan in 2015 were comprised of students and young people.[13]

By the Velvet Revolution the young people became the driving force of the movement. Pashinyan was able to mobilize a large

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10 See Aslanyan, Karlen: Thousands Rally against Armenian Leader, in: Radio Free Armenia, 13 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29166311.html (27 August 2018).

11 See MacFarquhar, Neil: He Was a Protestor a Month Ago. Now, Nikol Pashinyan leads Armenia, in: The New York Times, 8 May 2018, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/europe/armenia-nikol-pashinyan-prime-minister.html (27 August 2018); Roth, Andrew: He's Not a Populist, He's Popular: Nikol Pashinyan Becomes Armenian PM, in: The Guardian, 8 May 2018, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/08/hes-not-a-populist-hes-popular-nikol-pashinyan-becomes-armenian-pm (27 August 2018).

12 See Sanamyan, Emil: Saint Nick of Armenia: How Protests Leader Nikol Pashinyan "Rescued" Armenia and Made it Merry, in: Open Democracy, 05 May 2018, available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/emil-sanamyan/saint-nick-of-armenia-how-nikol-pashinyan-rescued-armenia-and-made-it-merry (30 September 2018).

13 See Paturyan, Yevgenya Jenny: Armenian Civil Society. Consolidated but Detached from the Broader Public, CIVICUS Civil Society Index, Policy Action Brief, Yerevan 2014, available at: https://www.civicus.org/images/Civicus-Armenia-Policy-Brief.pdf (27 August 2018); Matosian, Maro: The Development of Grassroots Activism in Yerevan and the Role of Political Parties, in: Hetq, 29 March 2012, available at: http://hetq.am/eng/news/12533/the-development-of-grassroots-activism-in-yerevan-and-the-role-of-political-parties.html (30 September 2018); Avedissian, Karena: The Power of Electric Yerevan, in: Open Democracy, 6 July 2015, available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/karena-avedissian/electrified-yerevan (30 September 2018).

number of Armenian students within a few hours. As most of the universities ceased functioning, laborers and community members joined the protest to challenge the ruling political elite. Pashinyan also tried to contact those groups, whom he could not reach on social networks when he broke into the Public Radio of Armenia building, demanding an opportunity to speak live on air.[14] Although his request was turned down, Pashinyan nevertheless spoke in front of the other media outlets that did provide live coverage of his speech and the events inside the building.[15] Pashinyan called on Armenians to come onto the streets of Yerevan and join the demonstration at Freedom Square in the city center. He asked people to occupy the city's streets, bridges, squares, ministries and schools and go on strike to paralyze the country. At the same time, he called on people to remain calm, committed to the principles of nonviolent disobedience and respectful of the police. The protest wave intensified on 17 April after Parliament ignored the movement's demands and elected Serge Sargsyan as prime minister,[16] which provided a catalyst for a new wave of demonstrations.

Activists blocked the entrances to government agencies, streets, highways, and underground stations. As both tensions and excitement about the movement grew, the police tried to suppress the upheaval using heavy-handed measures. The movement's leaders, including Pashinyan, were detained to weaken coordination within the movement.[17] However, these actions implied that the bond between

14 See Movsisyan, Hovhannes: Opposition Protesters Seize Armenian Radio Building, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 14 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29167494.html (28 August 2018).

15 See CivilNet: Nikol Pashinyan and His Adherents in the Public Radio, in: CivilNet, 14 April 2018, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpMsNSwZJ-VY&t=496s (28 August 2018).

16 See Danielyan, Emil & Aslanyan, Karlen: Serzh Sarkisian Becomes Armenian PM Amid Protests, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 17 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29172834.html (28 August 2018); Aslanyan, Karlen & Lazaryan, Tatevik: Pashinian Vows to Keep up Protests, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 17 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/2917-3294.html (28 August 2018).

17 See Aslanyan, Karlen & Muradian, Anush: Police Thwart Opposition 'Blockade' of Government Building in Yerevan, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 19 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29176387.html (28 August 2018); Aslanyan, Karlen: Armenian Protest Leader Detained, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 22 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/2918-4904.html (28 August 2018).

the Armenian citizens and their political representatives had become strained since 1 March 2008, when ten protestors were killed. The regime was oblivious to the civic emancipation and Armenia's internal transformation. When the police arrested Pashinyan and other opposition members for a day, the acts of civil disobedience turned into massive, unprecedented protests.[18] Armenians marched to Yerevan's Republic Square without any formal leadership. The detention of Pashinyan rattled the small country's towns and villages, bringing citizens onto the streets.[19] Thousands of Pashinyan's supporters marched through the capital chanting his name. On 23 April, under the growing prospect of massive civil unrest, the police released Pashinyan and Serge Sargsyan tendered his resignation.[20] Sargsyan's unexpected resignation prompted scenes of jubilation across Armenia. Tens of thousands of people flocked to Republic Square to dance, cheer, and celebrate their triumph over the regime until the late hours of the night.[21]

Indeed, the RPA attempted to maintain its influence by denying Pashinyan's nomination after the first parliamentary election on 1 May,[22] arguing their responsibility to the citizens had been satisfied with the resignation of Serge Sargsyan. It was clear, however, that Sargsyan could operate in the shadows, and that neither he nor his

18 See The Washington Times: 40.000 Gather in Armenia to Demand Leader's Resignation, in: The Washington Times, 20 April 2018, available at: https://www.washington-times.com/news/2018/apr/20/40000-gather-in-armenia-to-demand-leaders-resignat/ (28 August 2018); Aslanyan, Karen: Huge Crowds Keep up Pressure on Armenian PM, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 22 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29185545.html (28 August 2018).

19 See Vestnik Kavkaza: Velvet Revolution Reaches Armenian villages, in: Vestnik Kavkaza, 5 May 2018, available at: http://vestnikkavkaza.net/news/Velvet-revolution-reaches-Armenian-villages.html (30 September 2018).

20 See Sargsyan, Serzh: Armenian PM Resigns after Days of Protests, in: BBC News, 23 April 2018, available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43868433 (28 August 2018).

21 See Radio Free Yerevan: Serzh Sarkisian Resigns as Armenian PM, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 23 April 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29187178.html (28 August 2018).

22 See MacFarguhar, Neil: Denied Power, Armenian Opposition Leader Urges Nationwide Strikes, in: The New York Times, 1 May 2018, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/01/world/europe/armenia-primeminister.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer (28 August 2018).

party were willing to relinquish the reins of power. Protestors responded with a total lockdown of Armenia. The main transportation arteries in Yerevan were shut off one by one: Checkpoints sprouted on every road to the airport, airport workers went on strike, the metro was shut down as well as railways, the roads leading to the Iranian border were blocked in addition to those to Georgia.[23] The struggle for the survival of a ruling regime ended in defeat and the RPA declared its support for Pashinyan, who was elected prime minister on 8 May.[24]

Armenia's intensive street mobilization during Spring 2018 took many by surprise. The chain of events in April was so rapid and profound that many Armenians have come to believe that the long-standing fight against corruption, nepotism, subservience, violence and intolerance which began in 2008 can effect change. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians felt themselves empowered with a voice, as history makers and owners of their country. All eyes were set on the new government that now had to meet the demands and expectations of citizens who wanted to build a real democracy. Although the revolutionary euphoria has since waned, a revolution continues. Armenia is still undergoing a risky transformation phase. The old guard is still present in the new political apparatus. Pashinyan has pushed for early parliamentary elections. Under the Armenian Constitution, snap elections can be called only if the prime minister resigns and the parliament fails to replace him or her with someone else within two weeks. Following its second failed attempt to elect a new prime minister Armenian parliament was dissolved on 2 November.[25] This new 'non election' was the second step in the process of triggering snap parliamentary elections which has been the main item on Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's agenda

23 See Grono, Magdalena: Unprecedented Uncertainty ahead for Armenia, International Crisis Group, 3 May 2018.

24 See Stepanyan, Ruzanna; Aslanyan, Karlen & Danielyan, Emil: Armenian Parliament Majority Signals Support for Pashinyan's Bid to be PM, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 2 May 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29-204756.html (28 August 2018).

25 See Radio Free Europe: Armenia Parliament Dissolved, Early Elections Set for December, in: Radio Free Europe, 2 November 2018, available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/armenian-parliament-forces-new-elections/295770-63..html (11 November 2018).

since gaining the post following the Velvet Revolution.[26] Pashinyan hopes to form a National Assembly that is more in line with Armenia's new political reality. His political team is tipped to win the upcoming snap elections by a landslide which will take place on 9 December 2018. The move is a major victory for Nikol Pashinian, however there is a lot of risk for the political stability. As political columnist Patrik Azadian stated, it would

> *"[…] be naïve and utopic to think that this single event in Armenia's history has forever uprooted and erased all insecurities and fears from the Armenian psyche. Just about three decades of imposed servitude combined with almost a century of centralized Soviet rule and centuries of Ottoman colonization cannot be erased with a magic wand. And this is exactly what the forces of the counter-revolution are counting on."*[27]

A sustainable political transformation needs time, but one thing is unquestionable: the Velvet revolution transformed the lives of Armenians and the remarkable aspects of this movement that led to its perceived success deserve particular attention.

The movement was characterized by a high degree of organization and professionalism, exemplified by the broad coalition Nikol Pashinyan and his team, consisting of numerous civil actors. The cooperation was initiated in 2013 with the Dem.em civil movement, the Civil Contract Party, the Pre-Parliament Civic Initiative as well as student civic groups[28] and ensured a unique partnership network of different social groups. Protests were directly controlled by Pashinyan and his team through regular access to activists and citizens via Facebook[29] as well as in person. Thus increasing the transparen-

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26 See Mejlumyan, Ani: Pashinyan Sets Date for Parliamentary Snap Elections, in: Eurasianet, 11 October 2018, available at: https://eurasianet.org/pashinyan-sets-date-for-parliamentary-snap-elections (11 November 2018).

27 See Stepanyan, Ruzanna; Aslanyan, Karlen & Danielyan, Emil: Armenian Parliament Majority Signals Support for Pashinyan's Bid to be PM, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 2 May 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29204756.html (28 August 2018).

28 See Aslanyan, Karlen: The Pre-Parliament Civic Intitiave Will Base Open Council [Nakhakhorhyrdarany Himnadir Khorhrdaran kstexci], in: Radio Free Yerevan, 13 December 2013, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/25199749.html (28 August 2018).

29 See The Official Page of Nikol Pashinyan in Facebook, available at: https://de-de.facebook.com/nikol.pashinyan/ (12 August 2018).

cy and accountability of their action, Pashinyan frequently discussed their plans with activists on the eve of a protest.[30] The general inclusiveness of these mechanisms was previously unseen in the Armenian reality and enabled people to participate in political processes. The underpinning of deliberative democracy elements was one of the movement's primary achievements. The protests were also marked by a degree of "organized" decentralization. Harutyun Voskanyan, an Armenian analyst, states:

> *"The well-organised road map of the protests with apparent decentralised forms of civil disobedience in Yerevan expressed the national features of the young, new generation of Armenia. The hiking demonstrations, midnight car signals, beating of metal dishes from apartment balconies, high-spirited dance, music performances and open-air barbeque parties combined Armenia's distinct national tradition of hospitability with people's wish to act rationally in the scope of existing legal barriers."*[31]

Pashinyan and his cohort acted as initiators and coordinators of the protests, but unlike in previous iterations in Armenia, he avoided a hierarchical structure of civil disobedience. This strategy offered a layer of complexity to the already sporadic, networked nature of the protest. The virtual communication and joint participation in the urban space conjointly forged a collective identity, manifesting itself in a new rule of managing social space, democracy and politics.

As previously mentioned, all segments of Armenian society actively supported the protests.[32] People from all socio-economic classes,

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30 See Arka News Agency: Nikol Pashinyan about Likely Scenario of Velvet Revolution Development in Armenia, Arka News Agency, 20 April 2018, available at: about_likely_scenario_of_velvet_revolution_development_in_armenia_/ (30 September 2018).

31 Voskanyan, Harutyun: "Velvet Revolution" in Armenia: The Next Phase of Democratic Evolution, IfA, 23 April 2018, available at: https://www.ifa.de/de/themen/dialog-der-zivilgesellschaften/velvet-revolution-in-armenia-the-next-phase-of-democratic-evolution.html (30 September 2018).

32 See MacFarquhar, Neil: Behind Armenia's Revolt, Young Shock Troops from the Teach Sector, in: The New York Times, 19 May 2018, available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/19/world/europe/armenia-revolt-tech-sector.html (28 August 2018); CivilNet: Civil Disobedience Paralyzes the Armenian Capital, in: CivilNet, 16 April 2018, available at: https://www.civilnet.am/news/2018/04/16/April-16-in-Yerevan-Civil-disobedience-

walks of life, and political or ideological persuasions were united in their rejection of the Sargsyan regime in what was the most gender-balanced protest in Armenian history. Women were at the forefront of the Velvet Revolution. While past protests in the country had been dominated by young men, and the gender component largely undocumented, the Velvet Revolution was different: almost as many women flocked to the streets as men and even outnumbered them in certain areas[33] (especially given that men were more likely to be detained or beaten by the police). Armine Iskhanyan, an associate professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science, explained that inclusion and tolerance were the movement's values in opposition to a regime in which not only disabled people, but also homosexuals faced discrimination, marginalization and violence.[34] Indeed, RPA adherents used the involvement of feminists and gay-activists to attack Pashinyan for fostering 'western values'.[35] Armenian protestors, however, held banners embracing 'love and tolerance', rather than of 'hate and revenge'. During the protests, doctors and lawyers in suits rallied alongside young tattooed hipsters, bearded old men and young vocal feminists to promote an atmosphere of peace, joy and tolerance.[36]

The newfound solidarity was accompanied by the building of a civic consciousness. The key slogans of the Velvet Revolution, alongside 'Reject Serge' and 'With courage', was 'We are the owners of

paralyzes-the-Armenian-capital/333854 (28 August 2018); Ferris-Rotman, Amie: Armenia's Charismatic Opposition Leader Whips up Pressure after Talks Break of, in: The Washington Post, 25 April 2018, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/armenias-charismatic-opposition-leader-whips-up-pressure-after-talks-break-off/2018/04/25/e1-58f47a-488d-11e8-8082-105a446d19b8_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0d694b803cd7 (28 August 2018).

33 See Roach, Anna Bianca: Heard but Not Seen: How Women Became the Unrecognised Architects of the Velvet Revolution, in: OC Media, 23 May 2018, available at: http://oc-media.org/analysis-heard-but-not-seen-how-women-became-the-unrecognised-architects-of-the-velvet-revolution/ (29 August 2018).

34 See Iskhanyan, Armine: A Revolution of Values: Freedom, Responsibility, and Courage in the Armenian Velvet Revolution, LSE-Analyses, 3 May 2018, available at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/05/03/a-revolution-of-values-freedom-responsibility-and-courage-in-the-armenian-velvet-revolution/ (29 August 2018).

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

our country'. Unlike the two former mantras, the latter slogan has been used in Armenia for nearly a decade by different civic movements ranging from the youth-led Occupy Mashtots Park protest in 2012[37] to the Sasna Tsrer armed veterans' group, which captured and held a police station in Yerevan in 2016.[38] Yet the Velvet Revolution propagated the image of Armenians as active citizens rather than silent bystanders. Civic consciousness referred to an individual perception of civic rights and obligations. Pashinyan's role in this process of raising consciousness was enormously important because he "gave the political reality a name"[39] and encouraged the people to fearlessly express their dissatisfaction.[40] The slogan 'We are the owners of our country' reestablished the right of citizens to govern themselves. It helped promote an active and responsible citizenry by reducing the sense of estrangement from the power-center or political apathy. In the midst of the Velvet Revolution, people grew aware of their own power and agency. This was apparent not only in the concrete acts of civil disobedience, but in the aftermath of the protests as people turned up on the following day with brooms and bin bags to clean the debris from the previous night.[41] People not only felt responsible for their own actions and assumed responsibility for their fellow citizens and Amenia's future.[42] Armenian citizens also demonstrated a high degree of political maturity when Nikol Pashinyan and other leaders were arrested on 22 April, but the civic movement remained dynamic and disciplined. Leaderless citi-

37 See Tert: Environmentalists Continue Struggle for Mashtotc Park, in: Tert, 5 March 2012, available at: http://www.tert.am/en/news/2012/03/05/environmentalist-statement/452775 (28 August 2018).

38 See Harutyunyan, Sargis: Armenian Government Still Committed to Peaceful end to Hostage Crisis, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 21 July 2016, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/27871712.html (29 August 2018).

39 Voskanyan, Harutyun: "Velvet Revolution" in Armenia: The Next Phase of Democratic Evolution, IfA, 23 April 2018, available at: https://www.ifa.de/de/themen/dialog-der-zivilgesellschaften/velvet-revolution-in-armenia-the-next-phase-of-democratic-evolution.html (30 September 2018).

40 See ibid.

41 See Iskhanyan, Armine: A Revolution of Values: Freedom, Responsibility, and Courage in the Armenian Velvet Revolution, LSE-Analyses, 3 May 2018, available at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/05/03/a-revolution-of-values-freedom-responsibility-and-courage-in-the-armenian-velvet-revolution/ (29 August 2018).

42 See ibid.

zens marched on the streets to demonstrate a strong collective organizational consciousness and a new political culture.[43]

Armenia's democratization has made positive strides, especially in the light of the recent events. New steps and mechanisms combatting corruption, bolstering the rule of law, and promoting democratic development are currently being introduced. In the past four months, a number of prominent officials have been arrested. The case of Manvel Grigoryan, retired general and hero of the Karabakh War, was the object of public attention in Armenia and the Diaspora in July. Grigoryan was suspected of illegal arms possession and embezzlement of army supplies.[44] Former president Robert Kocharyan was also arrested in August and charged with overthrowing the constitutional order during demonstrations that followed the 2008 presidential election.[45] In addition, the National Security Service of Armenia has initiated investigations regarding cases of higher mismanagement and corruption.[46]

Democratic consolidation is of course a long and complex process. One factor is very promising though. Opposition political elites may have served as catalysts for the Velvet Revolution, but self-aware citizens were instrumental in framing its norms, values und ideologies. United Nations Secretary General António Guterres called the Velvet Revolution in Armenia "a fantastic example" of a peaceful transformation:

> *"It is true, we see authoritarianism being on the rise. And it is important to transfer into civil society. It's important to have*

43 See Kucera, Joshua: Armenien Opposition Leader Arrested, but Protesters Rally, in: EurasiaNet, 22 April 2018, available at: https://eurasianet.org/s/armenian-opposition-leader-arrested-but-protesters-rally (29 August 2018).

44 See Papazian, Taline: Manvel Grigoryan, from War Hero to Prison, in: CivilNet, 5 July 2018, available at: https://www.civilnet.am/news/2018/07-/10/Manvel-Grigoryan-From-War-Hero-to-Prison/341181 (29 September 2018).

45 See Sanamyan, Emil: With Ex-President's Arrest, Armenia Sets Post-Sovjet Precedent, in: CivilNet, 28 July 2018, available at: https://www.civilnet.am/news/2018/07/28/With-Ex-President%E2%80%99s-Arrest-Armenia-Sets-Post-Soviet-Precedent/342283 (29 September 2018).

46 See Lragir: Supplies at 10 Billion: New Scandal Revealed by National Security Service, in: Lragir, 9 August 2018, available at: https://www.lragir.am/en/2018/08/09/68875 (29 September 2018).

people and namely young people that are able to come together and to show that democracy, freedom, human rights are extremely important for our societies. We just had, recently, a fantastic example of a peaceful transition that was led by youth, Armenia. There was a peaceful governmental transition led by a youth movement and these are fantastic examples to show that there are reasons to hope that the youth generation would be able to do better than my own generation."[47]

In the end, civil awareness is the quintessential force to promote a high degree of civility and advance Armenian democracy and equality within society. During the City Council elections on 23 September 2018, Yerevanians once again demonstrated their will to preserve the new democratic political wave in Armenia. The "My Step" alliance led by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan won an overwhelming majority, receiving 81% of the total vote.[48] This election has become an important milestone for Nikol Pashinyan's team, as it represents a clear mandate for the new government. The new prime minister needs this support also for the early parliamentary election, which is expected to take place in 2019. Pashinyan highlights, "that the main goal of these elections must be the return of the mechanism of holding free, fair and transparent elections to people and to make sure that the return is irreversible."[49]

He also relies on Armenians' support to reshape its foreign policy: prioritising the restoration of Armenia's full sovereignty in its relations with both the East and the West by maintaining a security alliance with Russia and securing aid for democratic reform from the West. Yet this task is daunting considering Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space.

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47 CivilNet: UN Secretary General Calls Armenian Revolution "A Fantastic Example", in: CivilNet, 24 September 2018, video available at: https://www.civilnet.am/news/2018/09/24/UN-Secretary-General-Calls-Armenian-Revolution-%E2%80%9CA-Fantastic-Example%E2%80%-9D/345445 (30 September 2018).

48 See Hakobian, Arus & Stepanian, Ruzanna: Yerevan Vote Hailed as Democratic by Dashnaktsutyun, in: Radio Free Yerevan, 24 September 2018, available at: https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29507224.html (30 September 2018).

49 Lragir: Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan Explained Why Early Elections Must be Held within a Year, in: Lragir, 7 June 2018, available at: https://www.lragir.am/en/20-18/06/07/38589 (30 September 2018).

"Pashinyan is an entirely new type of a leader, one that Russia has never dealt with before. No matter how often he reiterates the importance of the Russian-Armenian friendship, he is likely to remain suspicious to many in Russia's elites. At the same time, members of his team have qualities that are raising the eyebrows of those within the Russian elites: some went to Western universities, some belong to Western countries' diaspora communities, and some previously worked in NGOs, including international organisations that are viewed in Russia with extreme suspicion. Considering also that many Russian elites have connections to either the former Armenian government or – more dangerously for Pashinyan – the Azerbaijani government, it becomes clear that Pashinyan's team faces major challenges in building relations with Moscow."[50]

50 Zolyan, Mikayel: Can 'New Armenia' Disentangle Democratic Change from Geopolitics?, in: OC Media, 25 July 2018, available at: http://ocmedia.org/analysis-can-new-armenia-disentangle-democratic-change-from-geopolitics/ (30 September 2018).

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