

## The Peculiarities of the Political Life of the Republic of Armenia from 1991 to 2013

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### ABSTRACT

*As a result of the political developments occurred after the independence of the Republic of Armenia the democracy is not maintained in the country. Since independence till today the Republic of Armenia receives financial and other contribution to be provided by European and international organizations aimed to established democracy and reforms leading to economy development. Yet, so far a democratic political system is not established in the Republic of Armenia and the country is facing with difficult economic situation. To understand the current situation, it is important to examine and to analyze the political processes taking place since the independence in Armenia.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, election, reformation, legacy system, government, economic police

### INTRODUCTION

A number of pivotal circumstances have had a considerable influence on the formation and development of the social and political life in the country after Armenia's independence in 1991. Among those circumstances we can mention human resources, circumstances which depend on the geographical position, the situation in the world and so on. In this article we will try to introduce and analyze those circumstances which have had a great role in the social-political life of Armenia.

As it was mentioned above one of those circumstances is the human resources of Armenia, as each state's success, development and social political system are mainly conditioned by the population quality. After the independence the soviet elite was the head of authorities in Armenia<sup>1</sup>. The new authorities adopted the policy of building a capitalistic country according to the western model. So, for that purpose the new government started to lead a policy of establishing free market relationship in the country. With that aim they undertook some measures, for example former collective farms were abolished and the earth was divided among rural individual households. The economy's main problem must have been not only economic development, but also human development. The government led an economic policy and it was based on the philosophy of building a more developed future through denying the past. But that was not the general way of thinking. The efforts of Armenia did not have good results as Armenia did not have the experience of development in a democratic way being in the soviet authoritarian system for 70 years<sup>2</sup>. The identification of the national

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<sup>1</sup> A. Искандарян, Армения между автократией и полиархией, Pro et Contra, 2011, ст. 23, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ProetContra\\_52\\_19-28.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ProetContra_52_19-28.pdf), 01.10.2014.

<sup>2</sup> M. Freire and L. Simao, Th The Armenian Road to Democracy, Dimensions of a Tortuous Proces, No. 267/May2007, p. 2, Retrieved September 29, 2014, from [http://www.ces.uc.pt/myces/UserFiles/livros/1097\\_The\\_Armenian\\_road\\_to\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.ces.uc.pt/myces/UserFiles/livros/1097_The_Armenian_road_to_democracy.pdf)

with the soviet and the unconditional acceptance of Russian priority prevented the modernization not only in the economy, but also in the other fields of the social political life<sup>3</sup>. The population of the country had carried out activities in the socialistic system for many years and they could not go into a capitalistic system at once. The communication system, which existed throughout all USSR, became distorted with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Armenia was in the blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan from west and east<sup>4</sup>. There was a powerful industry in the country which mainly required imported goods and convenience foods. The sectoral system of the industry with marketing orientation could not have prospects and its maintenance and development required much state interference which at that time was not easy to carryout<sup>5</sup>. In order that the country developed according to the western model there was a necessity of modernization in all the spheres—in industry, agriculture, and political system. Such modernization should have been accompanied by changes in the population and human qualities. It means that the main problem of the economy must have been achieving development not only in the economy but also in the population qualities<sup>6</sup>. In this situation individuals who could orientate themselves more quickly, and also were closely connected with the state machinery, started to accumulate in their hands the country's main wealth (mines, factories and so on). As a result, the country's economic potential was in the hands of individuals dealing with the authorities.

Therefore, everything that came from the past was partly denied, mainly in the economy, however, instead of it, they could not achieve such a development which would lead to free market relationships in the country. A market system, which had the philosophy of wild competition, was formed and its business entities were free if they were connected with the state machinery.

Since the independence Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is on the agenda of the Armenian authorities. Perhaps, that is the only issue that all the Armenians have a united viewpoint on. Armenia won during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, but 1994 armistice did not provide eventual peace in the region. In Nagorno-Karabakh movement's first stage the leaders of the movement connected the solution to the problem with the authorities of the USSR, but the further march of events changed that approach. As a result of the policy adopted by the central authorities of the USSR and as a result of the fact the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict became internationally known, the leaders of the movement accepted that the independence of Armenia was the only solution to the problem<sup>7</sup>. In Armenia the process of independence was accompanied by the Nagorno-Karabakh war, hence the individuals, who fought for independence, and the political elite, who became members of the authority after the independence, have taken an active part in Nagorno-Karabakh war and many of them have taken an active part in field fights. Therefore, the political elite of newly independent Armenia consisted of the commanders that had their great contribution in Karabakh war and of statesmen who took the authority from the communist public figures. A lot of members of Artsakh war became a part of the newly formed national army taking high positions. They would be a strong prop and guarantor to maintain the authority for the former military

<sup>3</sup> Ա. Թադևոսյան, Անցումային հիմնախնդիրներ. հետխորհրդային սոցիալականության առանձնահատկությունները և արդիականացման հեռանկարը. Retrieved October 10, 2014, from <http://www.arteria.am/hy/1313936207>

<sup>4</sup> H. Grigoryan, Democracy in Armenia. EU's Eastern Partnership as a Supportive Tool towards Democracy, Yerevan 2013, p. 7. Retrieved September 20, 2014, from <http://www.acgrc.am/paper.%20democracy%20in%20Armenia.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Զ. Մանուկյան, Հայաստանի քաղաքական համակարգի զարգացման առանձնահատկությունները, Երևան 2012, էջ. 22:

<sup>6</sup> Ա. Թադևոսյան, նշվ. աշխ.:

<sup>7</sup> А. Искандарян, указ. соч, ст. 21.

officers who would find a seat in the state machinery in the future. So, we can mention a number of pivotal facts, by means of which we can describe the political life and the economic situation of Armenia during the first years of independence:

- i. The leaders of Pan-Armenian National Movement and veterans of Artsakh war became a member of the authority.
- ii. The authorities adopted anti-Soviet policy: the single-party system was collapsed, the collective farms decomposed and so on<sup>8</sup>.
- iii. Armenia appeared in a two-sided blockade having more dependency from the partner states in the region<sup>9</sup>. Because of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict the railway which connected Armenia with Russia did not work, and from 1992 to 1994 Armenia could provide only 20% of the necessary electrical energy being in an energy crisis<sup>10</sup>.
- iv. The country's industrial system collapsed; there was a massive army of unemployed people<sup>11</sup>.

For the newly independent Armenia's authorities the arrangement of elections was a serious hardship on the way of building a democratic country. But the authority's policy was obvious. In spite of the many complaints in the country Levon Ter-Petrosyan's team, represented by Pan-Armenian National Movement, was not going to leave authorities under the circumstances of fair competition. In 1994, according to Levon Ter-Petrosyan's order The Armenian Revolutionary Federation's activity was banned in Armenia<sup>12</sup>. Then, in 1995, the first parliamentary elections took place, which were organized rather badly. Before the elections the voters were given little information about the voting system, the form of the ballot papers and the process of elections. It was also proved by the fact that according to the election results 411743 ballots were void and it was 34.7% of the voters that took part in the election. If we also add to this number the votes of the failed powers of the National Assembly, that is 96338 votes or 8.13%, then we can mention that 42.83% of the votes in the election has been effective<sup>13</sup>. In the same year the Constitution was adopted in Armenia which, as in many countries of former Soviet Union, mainly reworded the Constitution of France. But in Armenia's political life 1996 presidential elections would evoke a greater shock. Mainly 2 candidates were competing- the incumbent president Levon Ter-Petrosyan and former Minister of Defence Vazgen Manukyan. According to official declared results, Levon Ter-Petrosyan won. But Vazgen Manukyan's team did not agree with those results. In the capital city massive complaint began. As a result, the demonstrators headed by Vazgen Manukyan broke into the National Assembly and took it. The authorities raised the power structures and due to that they could pacify the demonstrators and keep the authority. As a result of the political system in the country, which had been settled and strengthened by 1996, the change of government through elections became impossible and applying force towards the demonstrators, the arrestments and political persecutions of many political figures made

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<sup>8</sup> Զ. Օ՛Ս՛Յ, նշվ. աշխ., էջ 26:

<sup>9</sup> M. Freire and L. Simao, op. cit., p.3.

<sup>10</sup> H. Grigoryan, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Զ. Օ՛Ս՛Յ, նշվ. աշխ., էջ 22:

<sup>12</sup> H. Grigoryan, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Վ. Մաթևոսյան, Ընտրությունների դերը Հայաստանում բազմակուսակցականության կայացման գործընթացում, Լրաբեր Հասարակական Գիտությունների, № 3, 2010, էջ 92. Retrieved October 10, 2014, from <http://lraber.asj-oa.am/692/>

the change of government through revolution impossible or rather unrealizable<sup>14</sup>. The international organizations and the embassies in Armenia received a lot of complaints from Armenia about post-election events.

In fact, in these elections the unofficial defeat of Levon Ter-Petrosyan played a vital role in further political developments. It increased his dependency from the heads of power structures as well as from USA and Europe<sup>15</sup>. Levon Ter-Petrosyan was gradually losing his support inside the country. Not so many state resources and the state influence started to be divided in Armenia and as a result of it the businessmen also had a great role in the country's political life<sup>16</sup>. The authoritative pyramid no longer had one top. The authority was divided between Levon Ter-Petrosyan's and Vano Siradeghyan's team and also between Vazgen Sargsyan who enjoyed a great reputation among the veterans of war and power structures. And the opposition headed by Vazgen Manukyan was in the margin. In such situations Levon Ter-Petrosyan's foreign policy of compromise contributed to his failure. He was in favor of the normalization of the relationships with Turkey, but Armenia's nationalist powers and Diaspora were against its preconditions.<sup>17</sup> His compromising approaches on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were unacceptable for the heads of power structures and for the influential veterans of Karabakh war that had their strong role in the political elite. In such circumstances Vazgen Sargsyan managed to defeat the team of Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Vano Siradeghyan in the struggle for authority and as a result of it in 1998 the president of the Republic of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan resigned. In the same year Robert Kocharyan was elected as the president of the Republic of Armenia and after the elections, his main opponent Karen Demirchyan, preferred not to oppose to the incumbent political system through demonstrations, and due to it he got a quite high position in the authoritative elite.<sup>18</sup> In Armenia 1999 October 27 event was a turning point – a number of armed people broke into the National Assembly and killed a number of political figures including the Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and the National Assembly chairman Karen Demirchyan. After negotiating with President Robert Kocharyan the terrorists surrendered. The people, who organized and ordered the assassination of the very influential public figures of the country, are not known to the public up to these days. It is considered that both the foreign and internal powers could order the assassination. But taking into consideration the control under the authoritarian system in the country and the absence of serious contradictions in the authoritative elite, we should mention that for the internal powers it would be rather difficult to organize such an action. Besides, after October 27 the change of government did not take place in the country, so, it can be supposed that the assassination of Vazgen Sargsyan and others did not pursue the goal of the change of government in all probability. As far as foreign powers are concerned, then in this case we deal with quite different circumstances. Vazgen Sargsyan and Karen Demirchyan very often mentioned that the pro-Russian policy was not right and that it was necessary to strengthen the relationships with the west.<sup>19</sup> Before October 27 Vazgen Sargsyan had visited Washington where a number of important suggestions were introduced to him. Some specialists found generality between “The Gobl

<sup>14</sup> ՄԱԿ-ի ԳԼԽԱՎՈՐ ՔԱՐՏՈՒՂԱՐԻՆ ԱՇԽԱՐՀԻ ԵՐԿՐՆԵՐԻ ԿԱՌԱՎԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻՆ ՄԻԶԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ԿԱԶՄԱԿԵՐՊՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ՂԵԿԱՎԱՐՆԵՐԻՆ ՄԻԶԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ՀԱՆՐՈՒԹՅԱՆԸ ԲԱՅ ՆԱՄԱԿ Retrieved September 10, 2014, from <http://vazgenmanukyan.am/index.php?menu1=93&menu2=125>

<sup>15</sup> Զ. Մանուկյան, հղվ. աշխ., էջ 30:

<sup>16</sup> А.Искандарян, указ. соч., ст. 25.

<sup>17</sup> M. Freire and L. Simao, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Զ. Մանուկյան, հղվ. աշխ., էջ 33:

<sup>19</sup> V. Stupishin, Resolution of the Karabakh conflict without karabakh people. . Retrieved November 10, 2014, from <http://www.armenianhouse.org/stupishin/articles-en/karabakh-res.html>

Plan” and the events of October 27. According to “The Gobl Plan” Armenia must have abandoned its border with Iran and give Azerbaijan a corridor with 10 km width across Meghri in order that Azerbaijan had a common border with Naxijevan. And Armenia must have abandoned the adjacent areas of Nagorno-Karabakh in favor of Azerbaijan. In return for it Azerbaijan must have acknowledge the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh and it must have been connected with Armenia by the Lachin corridor.

### THE TERRITORIAL REDISTRIBUTIONS ACCORDING TO “THE GOBL PLAN”



The purpose for all these things was to have new routes to export the energy resources of Central Asia and to keep Russia away from those resources<sup>20</sup>. The Armenian authorities were ready to take that action. According to Alexander Litvinenko, a retired colonel of Russian Federal Security Service, who has been granted asylum in the UK, the events of October 27 were organized by the Main Intelligence Directorate of General Staff of the Russian armed forces in order to prevent the realization of the “Gobl Plan”<sup>21</sup>. Hence, it can be considered, that the events of October 27 aimed at the withdrawal of anti-Russian members of the authoritative elite and it was a precaution for those who were not attacked by terrorists.

<sup>20</sup> Some Thoughts on the October 27 Killings in Armenia - October, 2010. Retrieved November 20, 2014, from <http://theriseofrussia.blogspot.com/2010/11/eleven-years-ago-today-gunmen-burst.html>

<sup>21</sup> FSB Colonel Claims, Shooting of the Armenian parliament was organized by Russian special services. Retrieved November 16, 2014, from [http://www.azg.am/wap/?nl=EN&id=2005050307&Base\\_PUB=0](http://www.azg.am/wap/?nl=EN&id=2005050307&Base_PUB=0)

After October 27, when the outstanding representatives of the political elite had been killed, Robert Kocharyan became the most influential person on the top of the political pyramid. During his election campaign Robert Kocharyan often touched upon the necessity of carrying out constitutional amendments.<sup>22</sup> And in 2001, becoming an associate member of the Council of Europe, Armenia undertook a number of responsibilities and according to them constitutional amendments must have been carried out, too.<sup>23</sup> However, despite the fact that according to the new constitution the president's powers were limited on account of the Parliament, in March 2003 the first attempt to carry out constitutional amendments failed just in the Parliament.<sup>24</sup> After 2 months, being reelected as the president, Robert Kocharyan took up the process of adopting a new constitution. The authorities closely negotiated with Venice Commission on the new constitution and in November 2005 the new version of the constitution was put to referendum. According to the official results the 95% of the participants voted in favor of the new constitution. But the referendum took place under weak control: because of the problems with documents the observers of OSCE member states were not allowed to control the procedure.<sup>25</sup> Despite all those things the new constitution came to life. According to this constitution the president's powers were limited, the president's influence on the judicial system declined.<sup>26</sup> But the further events will show that in this sphere significant changes did not occur. As a matter of fact, the main problem in Armenia is not that the laws are incomplete but they mainly stay on the paper. In Armenia since the independence a lot of measures have been undertaken in order to improve the judicial system up to these days. But the experience shows that those measures have not produced an essential effect. In Armenia there is a practice of affecting the judicial decisions through a phone call. The judges often pay dearly for the <<wrong >> but lawful judicial decisions.<sup>27</sup> There is imperfect applicability of the law nearly in all the fields of organizing the social life. It is not a secret that the mass media also have a great influence on the formation of democracy. In Armenia the independence of the media has a low level. A lot of cases are known when the activities of the companies carrying out media services have been banned by the authorities. In 2002 the activity of <<A1+>>, an Armenian television channel, was banned and it was one of those cases mentioned above. Although <<A1+>> television channel's claim against the Armenian government was upheld in the European Court of Human Rights, up to these days it does not have a complete activity.<sup>28</sup> In the Republic of Armenia the media became more independent along with the spread of internet media in contrast to the traditional media (TV, press).<sup>29</sup> But the authorities often ban the activities of some media websites. There were such cases on March the 1<sup>st</sup> in 2008.<sup>30</sup> The presidential elections of 2008 and the post-election events were unprecedented in the political life of Armenia. Mainly 2 candidates were competing- the incumbent Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan and the former president Levon Ter-Petrosyan. According to the official election

<sup>22</sup> А. Маркаров, Институциональная трансформация в Армении в 1990-2012 гг, Вестник Ереванского государственного университета, № 135.6, Ереван 2011, ст. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Н. Григорян, *Democracy op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> А. Маркаров, указ. соч., ст. 39.

<sup>25</sup> V.D. Shkolnikov, European assistance to human rights, democracy and rule of law in Armenia: Incremental results, no breakthroughs, Foreign Policy Centre, 2011, p. 51. Retrieved November 18, 2014, from <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1331.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Н. Григорян, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> А. Hug, Shining the spotlight on Armenia, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2011, p. 11. Retrieved November 15, 2014, from <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1331.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> E. Robson, Media freedom in Armenia: One step forward, two steps back, Foreign Policy Centre 2011, p. 23. Retrieved November 01, 2014, from <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1331.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> A. Iskandaryan, Armenia. Retrieved October 24, 2014, from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-ansit/2012/armenia#.VEETPtrsqc8>

<sup>30</sup> E. Robson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

results Serzh Sargsyan won. This time the elections were followed by demonstrations, too. They lasted for more than 10 days. As a result, on March the 1<sup>st</sup> the authorities took measures to move away the demonstrators from the Liberty Square. During the fighting between the demonstrators and the police, who lasted nearly for 1 day, 10 people were killed-8 demonstrators and 2 policemen.<sup>31</sup> Despite the bloody events that followed the presidential elections, nearly nothing was changed in the country's political system. The same powers were on the top of the authoritative pyramid. The only chance of being a part of the pyramid was the negotiation with the authorities. Hence, Armenian opposition parties started to act in favor of the centripetal force and it was followed by the negotiation with the authorities. Being a part of the authoritative pyramid, the representatives of the opposition powers gave up their claim on the change of government. The authorities continued the practice of creating fake opposition powers. Today some politicians consider that one of the Armenian influential political parties, Prosperous Armenia, is a fake opposition.<sup>32</sup> Before the presidential elections of 2013, the impossibility of the change of government through elections in Armenia was an absolute truth for many political figures. Perhaps, that was the reason, that a number of pivotal political powers did not take part in the elections. As a result of the elections, the incumbent president Serzh Sargsyan was reelected.

Thus, as a result of the events, that took place in Armenia since independence, a semi-authoritarian regime was established in the country. The country's main wealth is in the hands of individuals, who are connected with the government. According to the specialists of International Monetary Fund the economy of Armenia is controlled by monopolies and oligopoly institutions. Few businessmen have managed to achieve success in a fair way without the favorable attitude of the authoritative elite. The main challenges to the economic development are still the low standard of property protection and corruption.<sup>33</sup> In the 2010 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Armenia scored 2.6 out of 10.<sup>34</sup> In 2014, International Monetary Fund declared information on the corruption level. According to that survey Armenia is placed 94<sup>th</sup> out of 174 countries. The other countries of the region, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey rank 50<sup>th</sup>, 126<sup>th</sup>, 136<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, respectively.<sup>35</sup> Although the authorities often organize anticorruption projects, they do not lead to essential results. The procedures of the economic development in Armenia and the country's democratization are closely connected with each other. More decisive, radical and long-term reforms are necessary in order to achieve the desired results.

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<sup>31</sup> A. Hug, *Shining op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> А.Искандарян, указ. соч., ст. 23.

<sup>33</sup> World bank, economic freedom score, Armenia. Retrieved September 25, 2014, from <http://www.heritage.org/index/pdf/2014/countries/armenia.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> A. Walker, p. 26. Retrieved September 25, 2014, from <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1331.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Corruption perception index 2014. Retrieved December 12, 2014, from <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results>

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