Peculiarities of Political Culture in Post-Soviet Transformation States: The Case of Armenia

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The article discusses the possibility of forecasting some political processes through the data obtained from sociological surveys conducted by the reputable organizations in Armenia during the post-Soviet transformation. The analysis of the data shows that during the post-Soviet transformation one can distinguish between three stages of significant changes in political culture, that coincide with the period of office of the first three presidents. The skepticism over the higher authorities in the first and third stages deepened in such an extent that it has led to a change of power by non-constitutional mechanisms (revolution). Though the term of the second president was favorable for "color revolutions", this did not take place in Armenia due to a significant difference of trust between the preceding and following stages. The analysis demonstrates that although the post-Soviet transformation has duration of less than three decades and there could be no talk of political culture in Soviet times, its nature is not static, as is sometimes considered. The results also prove that although public trust has drastically changed in some stages, changes in social consciousness during this period are taking place at a very slow pace.

Introduction

Though post-Soviet transformation has been going on for almost 30 years, a number of phenomena have not yet received a full theoretical justification and interpretation due to the unique and extremely complex nature of that process. This also refers to revolutions (those made by non-constitutional mechanisms are examined in this article). Such events, taken place in 2003-2005, were labeled "color

revolutions"[1]. They shared a number of common features, i.e. external interference from the same source, post-election follow-up, youth movements, internal divisions, etc[2]. Their study focused mainly on seeking answers to the following questions: do they have a general nature and external origin, what changes in domestic and foreign political stance of those countries took place; are they manifestations of geopolitical rivalry in the post-Soviet space; what impact will they have on that competition, and so on. Further developments have come to show that these revolutions are not simply post-election processes, and there are some other differences as compared to "color revolutions". They also bring forth new questions, the most important of which is probably the following: Are there any domestic political preconditions under which the change of power (revolution) takes place?, and if so, what are they?. Among all the other factors, the change of power occurs when there is a split between the power and the active part of society. This obviously depends on two main factors: the results of the activities exercised by state authorities and the public attitude towards the authorities. These two factors are of different nature. The former is objective and measurable, while in case of the latter a decisive role is attached to the component of trust, which is somewhat subjective in that it is dependent not only on measurable values (social and economic indicators) but also on political culture. Therefore, it can be assumed that the break-up of state authorities and the active part of the society, i.e. the revolution, can be characterized by these factors. This article attempts to identify and evaluate the impact of political culture on the revolutionary processes in post-Soviet states. The case of Armenia is under review.

According to experts in the study of political culture and transformation processes, the stability of the political system is possible if people support the functioning institutions by democratic

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[1] **Lincoln A. Mitchell**, The Colour Revolutions, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

[2] **Torosyan T., Vardanyan A.,** "Color Revolutions": antecedents and consequences, *Public Governance,* 2005, 3, pp. 90-101. (in Armenian)

rules[3]. To reveal whether or not such support exists, since the 1990s political culture has been included in the studies on transformation, which were generally limited to changes in political culture in Central and Eastern European post communist states. The former Soviet republics partly (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, the South Caucasus states) or entirely (Kazakhstan and Central Asia) have been excluded from the social surveys conducted by the experienced and trusted companies ("World Values Survey"[4] or "European Value Study"[5]) which academic researches mostly draw upon. One of the specialized regional agencies, the Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia Barometer, provides the data for 2004-2017, which combined with the data of the aforementioned international organizations, allows assessing the impact of political culture in Armenia on the process of post-Soviet transformation.

The Role of Political Culture in Political Studies

According to Almond and Verba, the classical definition of political culture is based on the "specific political orientations of citizens - attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system"[6]. Their joint work was devoted to the study of five cases of Western democracy. One of the main conclusions was that the long-term stability of democratic political system is highly related to its perception by the public. This means that only if citizens accept the basic premises of democracy and

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[3] **Pollack D., Jacobs J., Müller O., Pickel G.,** Introduction, *Pollack et al, Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe. Attitudes in new democracies, Burlington 2003,* p. xiv.
[4] Armenia 1997, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp, social surveys were conducted in Armenia in 1997.
[5] Public Opinion analysis - Central and Eastern Eurobarometer archives, social surveys conducted in Armenia in 1993-1997.
[6] **Almond G., Verba S.,** The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes in Five Western Democracies, Princeton, NJ 1963, p. 12.

its rules could the democracy's long-term survival be assured[7]. Due to this, the idea became narrowly understood and became a target of criticism. Sometimes, the concept of "meaning and nonsense" is being even questioned[8]. The most frequent criticism herein is that the concept of political culture only comprises a purely superficial phenomenon, which can be changed in the short term and is hardly able to explain anything[9]. So the question hereby is, to what extent political attitudes and political behaviour are linked with each other and how political orientations can be empirically recorded according to rules[10]. According to Gabriel, because of the data problem [...] the empirical investigation of the impact of political culture on the stability and performance of political systems is not feasible[11], since political culture is a manifestation of Anglo-American democracy, and is therefore intended for the study of fully-fledged democracies. Almond opposed to this, stating that "Political culture should not be misunderstood either as the sole or deterministic explanatory variable for the emergence and functioning of political structures. Rather, it is the current influences between institutions and orientations"[12].

Of course, social surveys do not always ensure high reliability, and only the data based on highly professional approaches can be used in scientific researches. At the same time, the misunderstanding causes the opinion that political culture can only be used for the study

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[7] **Pickel S., Pickel G.,** Politische Kultur- und Demokratieforschung. Grundbegriffe, Theorien, Methoden. Eine Einführung, Wiesbaden 2006, S. 51.

[8] **Kaase M.**, Sinn oder Unsinn des Konzepts „Politische Kultur" für die vergleichende Politikforschung, oder auch: Der Versuch, einen Pudding an die Wand zu nageln, *Max Kaase, Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Hrsg.), Wahlen und politisches System. Analysen aus Anlaß der Bundestagswahl 1980, Opladen 1983.*

[9] **Westle B.**, Rezeptionsgeschichte des Konzepts der Politischen Kultur, *Bettina Westle, Oscar W. Gabriel (Hrsg.), Politische Kultur. Eine Einführung, Baden-Baden 2009,* S. 29.

[10] **Pickel S., Pickel G.**, Politische Kultur- und Demokratieforschung. Grundbegriffe, Theorien, Methoden. Eine Einführung, Wiesbaden 2006, S. 19.

[11] **Gabriel Oscar W.,** Politische Kultur aus der Sicht der empirischen Sozialforschung, *Oskar Niedermayer, Klaus von Beyme (Hrsg.), Politische Kultur in Ost- und Westdeutschland, Berlin 1994,* S. 24.

[12] **Almond G.,** The Study of Political Culture, *Almond Gabriel, Discipline Divided. Schools and Sects in Political Science, Thousand Oaks 1990,* pp. 138-169.

of Western societies, as it is the birthplace of the Western world characterized by a fully-fledged democracy and a corresponding political culture. Under this approach, one might think that there is no sense in studying political culture with regard to social phenomena, since in a democratic world the perceptions of different societies are quite close to each other; the differences over time are not big and may affect non-key events. But the situation in transforming post-Soviet societies is much more complicated, and the study of political culture in some instances has no alternative. Meanwhile, in this case it is more evident that the word "culture" in the phrase "political culture" does not fully correspond to the traditional meaning of the word, but rather is a tribute to the formulation suggested by the founders of those studies. As for the application of the idea of "political culture" in the studies on transforming societies, its necessity is most evident in the observation of those phenomena in which public attitude toward the authorities are an important factor. In particular, such a phenomenon is the change of power through non-constitutional mechanisms, i.e. the revolution, when the most influential factor is the dissatisfaction of a significant part of the society over the activities of the government. It shows the major difference between traditional democratic societies and transforming societies. The perceptions of the former are closer to the theoretical notions of social phenomena and of different institutions, while in case of the latter even the perceptions of fundamental ideas (democracy, power, the rule of law, etc.) may differ greatly from the theoretically established definitions. Since the attitude of the active part of the society towards the government is formed on the basis of these perceptions, the use of the idea of "political culture" has no alternative when studying the phenomena that the attitude of the society have a significant impact on. The purpose and objectives of a particular study are surely important. Thus, the set of the factors to be examined in each study and the principles and paradigm of their analysis should be clearly stated. Since the 1980s, attempts have been made to clarify the structure and parameters of political culture. In

particular, Almond suggested the classification of political culture into three groups: system, process, and policy cultures. System culture consists of knowledge, feelings, and evaluations vis-a-vis the political authorities, the role incumbents; knowledges, feelings, and evaluations toward the nation. Process culture consists of the knowledge, feelings, and evaluations members of political system have toward the self as political actor, and toward other political actors. Policy culture consists of the knowledge, feelings, and evaluations members of political system have toward the outputs of the system – its internal policies and its external policies[13]. Fuchs and Klingemann have proposed the division of political culture into three, but slightly different (cultural, structural and process) groups or levels, with the aim to compare democratic societies in the West and the East[14]. They observed the problem both at the level of individual countries and that of groups of countries, assuming that the civilizational factor has a significant impact on the formation of political culture.

According to Huntington, the ability to adapt to a western model of politics and economics is greater in those post-communist countries that formerly belonged to the Catholic and Protestant states than to those dominated by Orthodox or Islamic culture[15]. For the Reisinger, the civilizational standard has a slightly different meaning; it is firstly important to clarify to what empire the country formerly belonged, namely the British, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman empires[16]. As far as the post-Soviet countries are concerned, Fuchs[17] and

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[13] **Almond G.**, Politische Kultur-Forschung - Rückblick und Ausblick, *Dirk Bergschlosser, Jakob Schissler (Hrsg.), Politische Kultur in Deutschland, Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung, Opladen 1987*, S. 37.

[14] **Fuchs D., Klingemann H.-D.**, Democratic communities in Europe. A comparison between East and West, *Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Dieter Fuchs, Jan Zielonka (ed.), Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe, New York 2006,* pp. 25-66.

[15] **Huntington S.,** The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, New York 1996.

[16] **Reisinger W.,** Reassessing Theories of Transition Away From Authoritarian Regimes: Regional Patterns among Postcommunist Countries, Chicago 1999.

[17] **Fuchs D.,** The Democratic Culture of Germany, *Pippa Norris (ed.), Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government, Oxford 1999.*

Rohrschneider[18] suggest that this impact varies depending on the length of time during which a country maintained a Leninist regime. One of the essential manifestations of the civilizational factor, especially in post-Soviet countries, is the existence of "informal institutions" that characterize a specific group of widespread societal norms and procedures[19]. Unlike formal institutions (constitution, laws, norms of governance, formal structures of political system), informal institutions are based on traditions, customs, moral values, religious beliefs, relationships, and other non-statutory norms. According to Merkel and Croissant, informal rules of politics exist both inside and outside the formal institutions, and these informal settings offer more effective forms of communication, advocacy, and policy implementation, thereby complementing the role of formal settings and institutions of authoritarian rule[20]. Most Soviet informal networks have continued their existence in the post-Soviet space, although in modified and reconfigured shapes and forms[21].

Another classification of elements of political culture is proposed by Lucian Pye, who distinguishes two levels of it: thick and thin. Thick culture is deeply rooted, and accepted in the institutions and practices of a given society. Thin culture is not firm, it is more changeable and dynamic, based on cognitive perception and can be modified under certain conditions.Thick culture focuses on such fundamental values as family, religion, nationality. Thin culture covers such trade-off values as order and freedom, interpersonal and institutional trust[22]. Mishler and Pollack consider that the concept of

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[18] **Rohrschneider R.,** Learning Democracy: Democratic and Economic Values in Unified Germany, Oxford 1999.
[19] **North D.**, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance, Cambridge 1993.
[20] **Merkel W., Croissant A.,** Formale und informale Institutionen in defekten Demokratien, Politische Vierteljahresschrift 2000, S. 17.
[21] **Babajanian B. V.,** Social Capital and Community Participation in Post-Soviet Armenia: Implications for Policy and Practice, *Europe-Asia Studies,* 2008, p. 1304.
[22] **Lucian Pye W.,** Culture as Destiny, *Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel (ed.), Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe. Attitudes in new democracies, Burlington 2003,* p. 8.

thick and thin culture could help us to explain the transformation processes of the former Communist societies[23].

Methodological Notes

The above observation has shown that in terms of achieving the goals of this article the partial implementation of the model suggested by Fuchs and Klingemann[24] based on the data obtained through the Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia Barometer 2014-2017[25] can be rather effective. Of course, the authors used this model for different purpose, i.e. to assess the level of democracy in different countries. However, since all three levels of political culture - values, regulations, as well as institutions and processes - are considered, and the indicators used fully characterize public attitudes, the set of them is also applied to address the research problem of this article. As mentioned above, this model has two components: the results of three dimensions of political culture for each country under review and the civilizational prerequisite. In case of Armenia, only the former will be used, as the application of the latter will not be effective due to the particularities of the case. Armenia does not completely fit in any civilization distinguished by Huntington, since the core of that classification is the religious affiliation, while the creed of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Christianity is unique, and it is not identified with Protestantism, Catholicism, or Orthodoxy. Problems

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[23] **Mishler W., Pollack D.,** On Culture, Thick and Thin: Toward a Neo-Cultural Synthesis, *Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel (ed.), Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe. Attitudes in new democracies. Burlington. 2003*, p. 252.

[24] **Fuchs D., Klingemann H.-D.,** Democratic communities in Europe. A comparison between East and West, *Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Dieter Fuchs, Jan Zielonka (ed.), Democracy and Political Culture in Eastern Europe, New York 2006,* pp. 25-66; **Klingemann H.-D.**, Dissatisfied Democrats. Democratic Maturation in Old and New Democracies, in: Russel J. Dalton, Christian Welzel, The Civic Culture Transformed: From Allegiant To Assertive Citizens, Cambridge. 2014, pp. 116-157.

[25] Source Questionnaire, Caucasus Research Barometer, https://www.crrc.am/caucasusbarometer/documentation?lang=en [Stand: 2018-11-15]

arise with the classification of empires as well. A part of Armenia was under the Ottoman Empire, while the other part - first under the Russian Empire and further within the Soviet Union. This has had its impact on the distortion of political culture and identity. But only by primitive approach can Armenia's prerequisites be assessed solely by those facts. Unlike some European countries, Armenia has centuries-old history and a long experience in shaping the classical Greek, Roman and European foundations of European civilization, as well as in the spread of Christianity throughout Europe. Therefore, in the studies of post-Soviet countries, the peculiarities of Armenia must be taken into account. Sometimes, in such surveys authors come to inexplicable conclusions[26]. It is also important to note that no link between civilization or imperial past and revolution has been discovered so far.

The survey below, aimed to identify the preconditions for revolutionary processes in Armenia following the collapse of the USSR, is based on the following statements:

- In the sense used in this article, the change of power in 1998 can be considered as a revolution; the president resigned due to the disagreements - between the president of the country on the one hand, and the prime minister and the defense minister on the other hand - over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. This was followed by the resignations of a number of other senior officials, and in the parliamentary elections, that took place a year later, the former ruling party did not enter the parliament.

- In the same sense, the change of power in 2018 can also be labeled a revolution; the prime minister resigned as a result of a mass uprising, a umber of high-ranking officials followed him, and in the parliamentary elections a year later, the former ruling party did not enter the parliament.

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[26] **Delcour L., Wolchuk K.,** The EU's Unexpected 'Ideal Neighbour'? The Perplexing Case of Armenia's Europeanisation, *Journal of European Integration*, 2015, 37 (4), 1-17.

-In 2003-2005, when "color revolutions" were taking place in the former Soviet republics (Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan), Armenia managed to escape it.

-A special table will be drawn up to fill in the missing data for the period of 1998-2003, considering the starting point for that period to be 1997, the concluding - 2004.

- To make the analytical picture more vivid, an integral index of distrust will be used, derived from the data in columns 1-3 "fully distrust" and "rather distrust", and for the integral index of trust "fully trust" and "rather trust" columns.

Analysis of Empirical Data

The first change of power in post-Soviet Armenia. To overcome the moral and psychological complex situation due the mass protests following the presidential elections of 1996 and the suppression of them by force, the government has been dramatically changed twice in a short time. There were some positive developments in 1997, but at the end of the year, the President attempted to restore the political position he had lost during the previous year. First, by a press conference, then by the article "War or Peace"[27] he sought to put forward new approaches to the issue of vital importance for the country, i.e. the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. The basic idea was that "the status quo cannot be maintained for a long time, because neither the international community nor Armenia's economic capabilities will allow it", "the war should be excluded, and the Karabakh issue should be resolved only through peaceful negotiations", "the issue must be settled by compromise or by the defeat of one of the parties, and then who will be the loser?". Not only was it incomprehensible to talk about compromise, when the other side made bellicose statements every single day, there was not even a hint of concession, and it was not publicly stated exactly what Ter-Petrosyan was going to concede,

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[27] **Ter-Petrosyan L.,** War or Peace?. 1 november, 1997.
https://www.aniarc.am/2017/11/01/levon-ter-petrosyan-article-war-or-peace-1997/

but also the fact that the President of the country questions the choice of his citizens with the question "war or peace?".

Today, it is not only obvious that the former President's "predictions" did not come true, but also that he was going to hand over some of the territories adjacent to the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, which were under the control of the NKR Defense Army. Ter-Petrosyan came up with this idea again in the campaign for parliamentary elections of 2012, insisting that after such a concession, the international community will appreciate this noble step and find a solution to the problem. Since there is not at least a single case of self-determination conflict settled through compromise, there was no reason to assume that after the concessions of the Armenian side the international community would resolve the issue. The proposals put forward by Ter-Petrosyan did not receive a positive feedback from the public. It caused the division of power, and the prime minister and the defense minister demanded the president's resignation. The latter had two options, either to resign or to dismiss from the post those who demanded his resignation and to address the people with the expectation of getting their support. However, the picture of Eurobarometer surveys conducted in Armenia in 1993-1997 (Figure 1) shows that the government, even after overcoming the post-election crisis in 1996, did not enjoy the public support to choose the second option.

Figure 1

Direction of country - right or wrong?
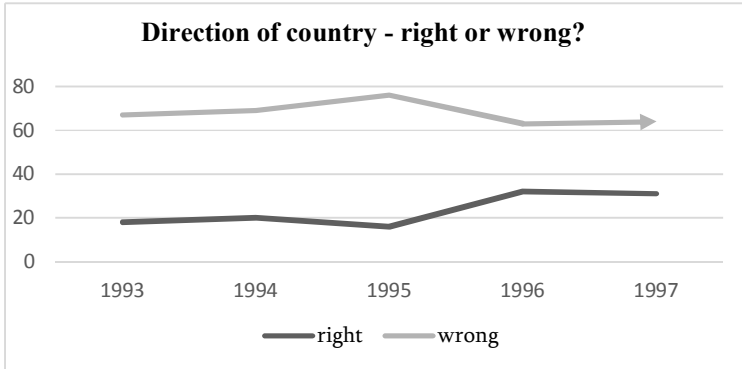
The same is true of the answers to another question presented in Figure 2. The problem is obviously about the development of democracy, but the establishment of democracy was perceived as a way out of a complex socio-economic situation.

Figure 2

Satisfaction with development of democracy
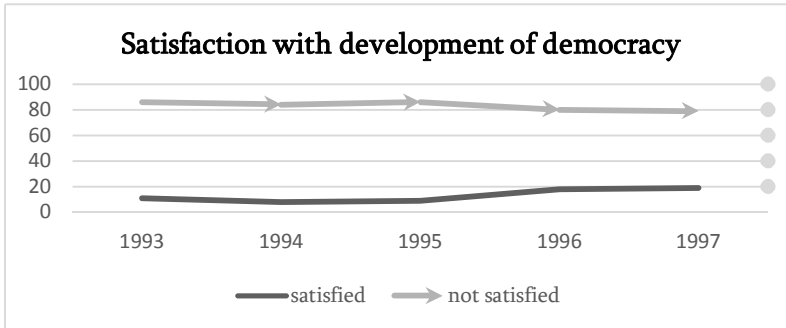
The World Value Survey conducted in Armenia in February 1997 also showed a low level of trust in a number of structures[28], the results of which are presented in Table 1.

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[28] Armenia 1997, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp

Table 1

	Fully trust	Rather trust	Rather distrust	Fully distrust	Don't know
Justice	6,6	23,8	37,6	29,1	2,9
Media	3,0	30,1	42,9	20,9	3,1
Executive government	7,9	33,3	31,0	25,0	2,8
Parties	0,8	14,3	40,4	39,9	4,7
Parliament	2,4	26,9	30,8	36,8	3,2
Police	6,6	24,8	35,6	31,4	1,6

The resignation of the President in the beginning of 1998 was followed by those of other senior officials, by the rearrangements in the National Assembly, presidential elections, and, finally, parliamentary elections in May 1999 thereby completing the first process of non-constitutional change of power in Armenia. This was the result of the split of power which has been typical to the post-Soviet countries during the first 15 years of transformation. The data show that there has been deep dissatisfaction with the government for the past 6-7 years since the re-establishment of independence. However, Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that the level of distrust was high enough in 1993 and that the crisis could not be overcome before the change of government. Meanwhile, during the 1991 referendum of independence and the first presidential elections, the public had unconditionally supported the state authorities. However, Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that the level of distrust was high enough in 1993 and that the crisis could not be overcome before the change of power.

The indicator of political parties is particularly prominent among the trust indicators of different structures listed in Table 1.

In the 1990s, this could be explained as an effect of the memory of the Soviet single-party system, but in reality the problem is much deeper. The lack of knowledge of a genuine multiparty system in the 1990s and the large inertia of the transformation of the public consciousness did not provide the basis on which the multiparty

system was to be established. It is enough to compare the agendas of political parties in Armenia and Poland and the issues discussed in that period[29], and it will become clear that before the collapse of the USSR, the political organizations of the two societies in the communist camp started the processes free from the restrictions imposed by that camp with different degrees of preparedness and different problems.

Since the multi-party system shapes all the political institutions of the state[30], the problem of the consolidation of that system is probably the most serious challenge during the post-Soviet transformation, given also the challenges of the transformation of public consciousness.

Surveys in the second decade of the 2000s show that the problem of the consolidation of multi-party system remains one of the most serious challenge to post-Soviet transformation and a major obstacle to development. In the next section of the article, the data in Table 1 will be analyzed in details as compared to that of 2000s.

The second change of power in Armenia through unconstitutional mechanisms. There are no reliable data on the situation of the country in 1998-2003, and only since 2004 the data for each year (for some indices recorded since 2008 or 2011) can be found at the Caucasus Research Center-Armenia Barometer Database. The data will be analyzed on all three dimensions of political culture. The cultural level will help to determine how well the Armenian society meets democratic standards at the level of fundamental values. Obviously, one can not expect radical changes here; the transformation of social consciousness is the most difficult to carry out[31]. When analyzing the structural level, an attempt will be made to find out the distrust of

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[29] **Biegasievicz P.**, The Gdańsk Liberals – an Exemplification of Polish Pragmatic Liberalism, *Armenian Journal of Political Science*, 2016, 2(5), 55-78; **Hovsepyan N.**, Formation of Armenian Political Parties in the Context of Restoration of Independence, *Armenian Journal of Political Science*, 2017, 2(7), 57-76.

[30] **Torosyan T.** Armenia's transition to the parliamentary system: problems and prospects, *Comparative Constitutional Review*, 2016, 4, 29–40. (In Russian).

[31] **Torosyan T.,** Post-Soviet Transformation of Social System, Yerevan, 2006, pp. 297-300. (in Armenian)

which structures and settings and to which degree may lead to the uprising. The process level can explain the public attitude towards the processes taking place.

Cultural level. Trust is one of the most important elements of social cohesion. In the study of political culture, this phenomenon is related to Robert Putman's social capital, meaning "features of social life-networks, norms, and trust-that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared goals"[32]. As shown in Figure 3, personal trust is quite low in Armenia.

Figure 3
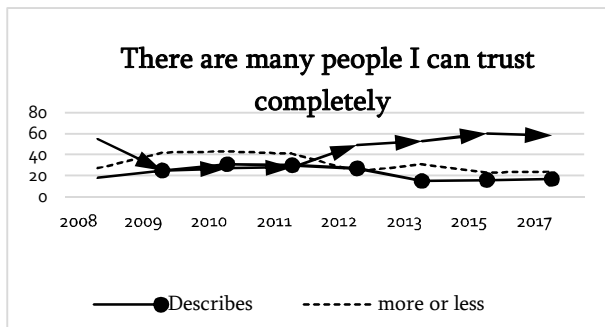
Source of Data: Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia Barometer

It is noteworthy that during the period under review, the indicators have had a sharp downturn. In 2008, the high distrust rate of about 55 percent can be explained by the psychological consequences of the tragic events of March 1, in 2009-2011 the rate of 25-30 percent - by the return to stability, whereas the sharp rise in distrust since 2012, under the absence of a specific event, can be interpreted by the worsening of an overall situation. Of course, interpersonal trust is not equivalent to the trust in government, but it is clear that general distrust significantly affects interpersonal trust.

In 2012, the indicator of lawfulness is also dramatically changed, as shown in Figure 4.

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[32] **Putnam R.,** Tuning In, Tuning out: the Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America, *Political Science and Politics,* 28, 1995.

Figure 4

Important for a good citizen - always obey laws
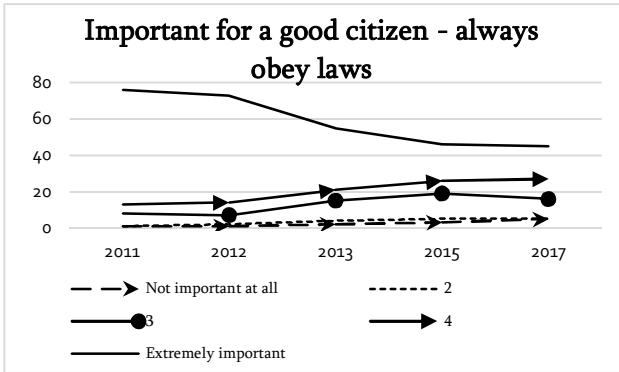
Source of Data: *Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia Barometer*

By 2012, about 75 percent of those surveyed thought it is "very important for a citizen to always obey the laws", whereas after 2012 less than 50 percent of respondents maintained that opinion. This sharp decline shows the serious morale and despair of a large number of people who are ready to solve problems through non-legislative mechanisms.

Given the fact that the politically active part of the society makes up 25-30% of the total, it can be stated that in 2017, the number of those prone to uprising could be decisive for a change of power, on a relevant occasion. Of course, it would be interesting to see the rates for the previous years to understand the reason for the high rate in 2011, since the "Soviet legacy" could not be displayed so late.

Yet another indicator of the role of power proves that some of the ideas and values of the Soviet era are quite "viable" even after a quarter century. As can be seen from Figure 5, even after 26 years, about 70 percent of the population believes that the government should have a parent role.

Figure 5
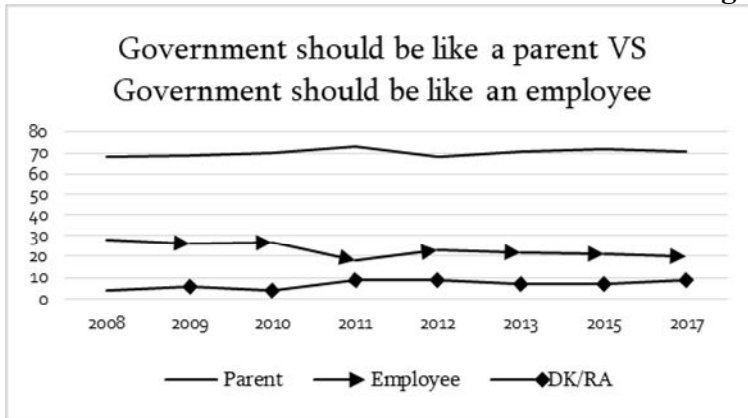
The preservation of perceptions and values specific to the Soviet times in wider society deepens distrust towards the authorities, increasing the likelihood of resolving issues through non-constitutional means. At the same time, of particular importance are the changes in public attitudes, both over time and toward different institutions, which are manifested at the structural level of political culture.

Structural level. The data on institutes, obtained through the Caucasus *Research Resource Center-Armenia Barometer*, can be divided into three groups: public administration, administrative and other institutions. These data are provided in Table 2-4 respectively. One can notice that since 2008 the data has been dramatically changed.

The data recorded at the end of the period under review are comparable to the data presented in Table 1. Therefore, after the revolution of 2018, the general negative statements of various political forces and figures on state government for the last two or three decades have pursued purely political goals, and are far from being substantiated. However, an in-depth analysis of the public opinion polls in Table 1-4 will allow to objectively assess the situation at different periods, to identify the reasons behind the deficiencies and find means to overcome them. To this end, a comparative analysis of

indicators of 1997 and 2015/2017, those of 1997 and 2004/2006, as well as 2017 and 2004/2006 will be presented below.

Table 2. State Institutions

	Year	1	2	3	4	5	6
President	2004/06	11,9	7,3	15,9	29,1	33,2	2,4
	2008/09	18,5	9,5	19,5	31,5	18,5	4
	2010/11	22,5	14,5	26,5	20,5	11	5
	2012/13	34,5	14,5	24	17	6	4
	2015/17	45	19	15,5	12,5	4	4
Parliament	2004/06	21,8	17	30,2	22,3	5,6	3
	2008/09	28,5	17	26,5	20	6	2
	2010/11	28	19,5	27,5	14	5	7
	2012/13	38,5	19,5	23,5	11	2,5	5
	2015/17	43	23	17,5	9	2,5	5
Executive government	2004/06	18,2	17,2	31,7	23	6,3	3,5
	2008/09	20	14,5	24	28,5	10	2,5
	2010/11	25	19	27	17,5	6,5	6
	2012/13	37	18	24,5	13,5	3,5	4,5
	2015/17	40,5	21	17	13	3,5	4,5

1 - Fully distrust, 2 - Somewhat distrust, 3 - Neither trust not distrust, 4 - Somewhat trust, 5 -Fully trust, 6 - DK/RA

According to the data in Table 1 and Table 2, the distrust of parliament was 38.8 percent in 2004/2006, 67.6 percent in 1997 and 66 percent in 2015/2017. The same is the case both with the government - 35.4 percent in 2004/2006, 56 percent in 1997, 61.5 percent in 2015/2017, and with the President - 19.2 percent in 2004/2006, 64 percent in 2015/2017. There are no data of distrust of the President in 1997, but as noted above, the first president had to resign at the beginning of 1998, and he did not attempt to apply for and receive the support of the society, which after the presidential elections of 1996, has consistently demonstrated deep distrust.

The results of the comparison of Table 1 and Table 3 are also interesting. Indicators on the two administrative institutions - the police and the judiciary - are also presented in Table 1. They show that the trends are the same as wit regarde to public authorities. In 2004/2006, 33.4 percent of respondents did not trust the police, in 2015/2017 it raised to 44 percent, in 1997 to 72 percent. In case of the judiciary, the picture is as follows: in 2004/2006 - 35.8 percent, in 2015/2017 - 51 percent, in 1997 - 66.7 percent. The attitude towards the other three state systems is different. The level of mistrust of healthcare and educational systems has not changed much since the 2000s. In the former case - 31.4 percent in 2004/2006, and 33 percent in 2015/2017, in the latter case - 26 percent in 2004/2006, and 27.5 percent in 2015/2017. The third system, to which trust has even grown, is the army - from 74.3 percent in 2004/2006 to 81 percent in 2015/2017. The reason for this change is obviously the dignified response by the Armenian Armed Forces to the Azerbaijani military aggression in April 2016, which further strengthened the already positive attitude towards the army. The trust in the other two institutions, healthcare and educational systems, has not changed much, as though they are state-run institutions, but have no political implications, unlike the police and judiciary, which are perceived as means of solving various domestic political issues for the government.

Table 3. Governmental Institutions

	Year	1	2.	3	4	5	6
Court system	2004/06	18,8	17	32,8	22,6	5,2	3,5
	2008/09	23,5	19	26	20	7	4
	2010/11	24	19	25,5	13,5	6	11,5
	2012/13	30	18	25	12,5	3,5	10,5
	2015/17	31	20	23,5	12,5	3	10
Healthcare system	2004/06	15	16,4	25	30,2	11,5	2,1
	2008/09	11,5	12,5	22,5	37	16,5	1
	2010/11	15,5	13	38	28,5	13,5	1
	2012/13	18,5	14,5	26	31	8	2
	2015/17	17	16	24,5	33	8,5	1
Educational system	2004/06	11	15	25,4	31,4	14,8	2,4
	2008/09	10,5	12	23,5	36,5	15,5	1
	2010/11	9	11,5	31	30,5	15	2
	2012/13	14	13	24,5	35	9	4
	2015/17	13	14,5	23	36,5	9,5	3,5
Police	2004/06	16,7	15,7	25,1	30,8	9,2	2,5
	2008/09	26,5	16,5	24	21	10,5	1,5
	2010/11	24	20	27	16,5	7,5	5
	2012/13	25,5	13,5	27,5	23,5	6,5	4
	2015/17	27	17	23	23	6,5	4
Army	2004/06	3,9	4,9	14,6	35,9	38,4	2,2
	2008/09	5,5	3	8,5	25	58	0,5
	2010/11	12	8	12,5	32,5	32,5	2,5
	2012/13	11	8	14,5	34	30	2
	2015/17	5,5	6,5	8,5	26	51	1

The data in Table 4 are also heterogeneous and need a further interpretation.

	Year	1	2	3	4	5	6
Table 4. Other Institutions							
Political Parties	2004/06	22.3	20	28.9	14.4	3	11.4
	2012/13	35.5	21	27	9	2	6
	2015/17	39.5	23	22	8	1,5	6
Media	2004/06	6,8	10,4	27	41,1	12,4	2,2
	2008/09	13,5	13,5	35	28,5	8,5	1,5
	2010/11	16	14	37,5	24,5	4,5	3,5
	2012/13	16,5	16,5	38	23,5	3	2,5
	2015/17	16,5	20	35,5	21,5	3	3,5
Ombudsman	2004/06	13	10,3	39,1	20,3	8,3	9
	2008/09	12	10,5	26,5	27,5	14,5	8,5
	2010/11	11,5	9	25,5	22,5	11,5	20
	2012/13	15	8,5	29,5	21	9	17,5
	2015/17	14	12	28	22,5	7,5	16,5
Religious institutions	2004/06	8	7,8	27,5	23,8	28,5	3,7
	2008/09	5	3,5	11,5	22,5	55,5	1,5
	2010/11	8	5,5	14,5	28	39	5
	2012/13	5,5	3,5	12,5	34	42	3
	2015/17	5,5	5	10,5	28,5	48	2,5

The data regarding the first two indicators for the year of 1997 are also presented in Table 1, which provides for a more complete conclusion. The first of the observed institutions is of systemic importance for the political system, and it is quite reasonable that public distrust of the political parties is the same as that of the state government institutions. In 1997, it exceeded 80 percent, in 2004/2006 it made up 42.3 percent, in 2015/2017 - 62.5 percent. The attitude towards the media is obviously milder, but as an institution directly related to political life and often serving for political purposes, it has the same trends of trust. In 1997, it was equal to 63.8 percent, in 2004/2006 to17.2 percent, in 2015/2017 to 36.5 percent.

The attitude towards the other two institutions in this group is also noteworthy. In the case of the Ombudsman, distrust was almost

unchanged in the 2000s (23.3 percent in 2004/2006, 26 percent in 2015/2017), while in case of religious institutions, it has been quite low (15.8 percent in 2004/2006), and decreased further (10.5 percent in 2015/2017). It is obvious that the public attitude towards the Armenian Apostolic Church is conditioned by its exceptional role as an important component of the Armenian identity, and the last hope under the increase in the general distrust of citizens. Trust in this important national institution is constantly growing (52,3 percent in 2004/2006, 76,5 percent in 2015/2017).

As mentioned above, no data for 1998-2003 is available. However, it is evident that for that period the attitude of the public to the institutions of the above three groups can be estimated by comparing the data of 1997 in Table 1 with those of 2004/2006 for the respective structures listed in Table 2-4.

Table 5

Institutions	Don't trust 1997—2004
Parliament	67,6—38,8
Government	56—35,4
President	DK —19,2
Justice	66,7—35,8
Police	67—32,4
Political Parties	80,3—42,3
Media	63,8—17,2

The data in table 5 show that after the change of power in 1998 the distrust in the highest state bodies, the media and even political parties has decreased, whereas since 2008 it has started to grow.

Process level: The attitude towards the state policy of Armenia has the same logic as the that towards the highest state bodies. While in 2004 it has a very high level - more than 50 percent of respondents

approved it, in 2008 it started to decline reaching to 30 percent, and in 2009 it was equal to the number of those who disapproved it. In the future, the percentage of the latter among the respondents is constantly increasing, in 2013-2017 it reached to 45-50 percent, whereas the number of those who approved continued to decline and in 2013-2017 reached a minimum of about 8 percent.

Figure 6
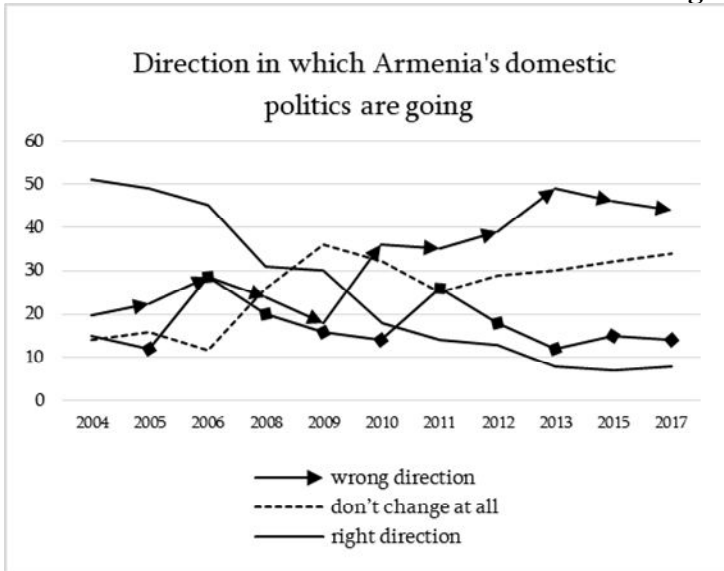
At the process level, the results of the polls in Figure 7 are also interesting. About 80% of respondents claimed that they had participated in the last elections, but according to data of the Central Election Commission, only 60.9 percent of those voting had cast their ballots. This big difference could be the result of one of the two factors, i.e. either more active citizens who were also more active during the elections agreed to participate in the polls or some of the respondents did not want to report that they had not participated in the elections.

Figure 7
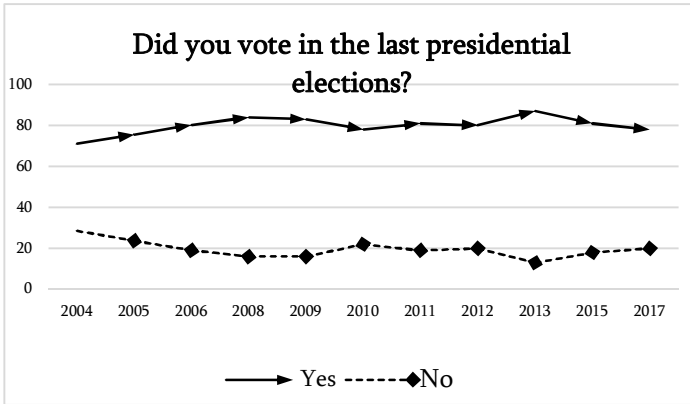
The answers to the next question relating to elections are interesting as well. The data in Figure 8 present the opinion of the respondents on the fairness of the elections.

Figure 8
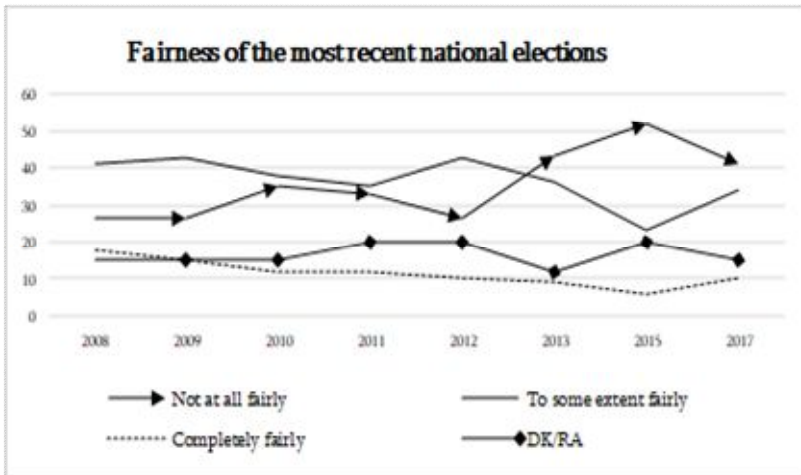
According to these data, more than 55 percent of respondents maintained that the elections were either completely fair or somewhat fair. The same opinion was expressed by about 55 percent of respondents after the parliamentary elections of 2012, slightly less than 50 percent of respondents after the presidential elections of 2013,

and 45 percent of respondents after the parliamentary elections of 2017. Meanwhile, after each election, the media, political forces and observers reported vote-buying, as well as pointed out that some political parties offer or promise money, food, gifts or other services and promises in exchange for their votes[33].

The problem of democratic development in many countries of this region lies in the fact that many of the institutions formally exist but perform poorly[34]. The same is true of political processes, which are clearly manifested in Figure 7 and Figure 8 reflecting the process level characterizing civil culture.

Conclusion

The analysis of sociological surveys conducted in Armenia by several international and regional organizations in 1997-2017 provided an opportunity to identify certain patterns suggesting a possible link between political culture and political processes during the post-Soviet transformation:

1. During the post-Soviet transformation, there were two cases of the change of power/ revolution in Armenia through non-constitutional mechanisms. The first of them took place in 1998, the second - in 2017, and both have been preceded by a deepening distrust in the highest state authorities.
2. According to the results of sociological surveys, the process of post-Soviet transformation in Armenia in 1997-2017, is divided into three stages that overlap with terms of the office of the first three presidents of the country.
3. The absence of data for a certain period of the second phase (1998-2003) has no significant impact on the results of the

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[33] Parlamentswahl in Armenien. 20 Euro für eine Stimme. http://www.taz.de /5391968/ [Stand-2018-12-15].

[34] **Bashkirova Elena,** Political Participation in Central and Eastern Europe.Results of the 1999 European Values Surveys, in: Fuchs Dieter, Roller Edeltraud, Weßels Bernhard (Hrsg.), Bürger und Demokratie in Ost und West. Studien zur politischen Kultur und zum politischen Prozess, Wiesbaden. 2002, p. 322.

analysis, since the data for 1997 and 2004 are such that the integrity and validity of the analysis are fully ensured.

4. The study of political culture during the post-Soviet transformation of Armenia in 1997-2017 shows that when public distrust of higher state institutions exceeds 60 percent, public trust in the ability to improve the situation through constitutional mechanisms significantly diminishes, and the change of power through non-constitutional mechanisms becomes quite possible.

5. The results of the three levels of political culture prove that the structural level reflects the public moods and explains the developments, in particular the causes of the change of power/revolutions, while the results of the cultural and process levels, which are more related to democratic values and principles, demonstrate serious shortcomings of the democratization process.

6. To verify the eligibility of the preceding conclusions for other states of post-Soviet transformation, relevant data and analysis are needed for those states. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the surveys are conducted by organizations with reliable research methodology and experience.

7. The importance of conducting such a study with regard to the post-Soviet states is not only conditioned by the need to reveal the logic of what has happened, but also by the possibility of predicting future developments and halting undesirable developments.