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INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY:
DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESSES IN ARMENIA

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Abstract

The essay focuses on intra-party democracy of Armenian political parties. Intra-party democracy is essential as it promotes a culture of democratic debate and deliberation of important issues within the party, ensures collective ownership of decisions, and reduces opportunistic and arbitrary use of delegated authority.

This research is designed to profile the extent of centralization of decision-making in six Armenian Political Parties belonging to traditional, independence and post-independence establishment periods. Centralization of decision-making is studied for six spheres: candidate selection, leadership election, setting party policies, consultations for coalition formation, allocation of financial resources and conflict resolution procedures.

The results support the hypothesis that traditional parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence parties; and partially support the hypothesis that small parties are more internally democratic than large ones. The study also shows none of the Armenian political parties has a high degree of intra-party democracy - i.e. practices decentralized decision-making. Among possible explanations of such situation are political culture and historical legacy of Armenia, existing institutional arrangements and improper regulations in party charters.

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INTRODUCTION

Political parties are vital for the functioning of a healthy democratic political order. This affirmation is generally accepted both by contemporary scholars and policy-makers charged with fostering the development of newly emerging democracies or with improving the quality of democracy in established democratic polities. Therefore, the consolidation of a functional party system is crucial to Armenia's continued transition to democracy.

Across the political spectrum and within academic circles it is agreed that the political party system is weak in Armenia today. The organizational aspects of party life in Armenia are adaptations of the Soviet model. By and large, they are top-down, hierarchical organizations that tend to be run like military organizations. The tone of some parties is very democratic, but their actions are autocratic. Personal disagreements between leaders often result in party splits and a proliferation of small parties. Individuals use the parties as tools to gain power and do little with them to aggregate public interest. For most parties, the selection of candidates for party lists and single constituency seats is largely an internal leadership exercise and lacks transparency or internal debate (ARD 2005).

To sum it up, many challenges face the development of a pluralistic, democratic, and competitive political party system in Armenia. Although Armenia has been independent for seventeen years, the existence of traditional perceptions, the dominant experience and practices of the autocratic system, as well as the absence of democratic-civic resources in the paradigm of national values are all remain deeply rooted in the country. Moreover, there seems to be little by way of such democratic principles like trust, tolerance, or compromise. "In the prevailing atmosphere of mutual demonization, there appears to be a total absence in Armenia's political class of trust or willingness to give the other side the benefit of the doubt on any issue of policy or politics" (OSCE 1995, p. 17).

Thus, the given study will focus on issue of party internal democracy in Armenia, and will try to find out the underneath causes of such situation and propose some policy recommendations for strengthening the development of a democratic and accountable party system in Armenia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Party Institutionalization and Democracy Consolidation

According to famous statement made by E. E. Schattschneider, “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties” (1942, p.1). As an empirical generalization, this statement is largely true. In the modern world, fairly well-functioning democratic systems without political parties can indeed be found – in a number of island states. But these are exceptions, and a result of extremely small scale. In all states of any significant size, democracy is associated with the existence of parties. There is a simple reason for this - democracy needs to take the form of representative democracy, wherein elected representatives make decisions on behalf of the citizenry. Other forms of decision-making, such as referenda, can be applied as well - but these can only function as a complement to the representative-electoral process (Kitschelt et al. 1999, p. 5).

In modern literature on political parties, it is often held that well-developed parties are prerequisite to the maintenance of democratic government. “Party institutionalization” is seen as a condition for democratic consolidation (Mainwaring 1998, Diamond 1999). The concept of “party institutionalization” is duly elaborated by Samuel Huntington. In his influential book *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) Huntington points to the institutionalization of political parties as a core condition for political stability in complex societies. What then is institutionalization? According to Huntington, it “is a process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability” (p. 12.). Huntington

proposes to measure the level of institutionalization for a particular organization "by its adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence" (p. 16). Further, he argues that order is the most important characteristic of states. Order is threatened when the level of mobilization exceeds the level of institutionalization within a society. Huntington is concerned that, as a result of economic development, political mobilization will increase faster than the appropriate institutions can arise, thus leading to instability. As a solution he advocates a stronger emphasis on institution building in development, most importantly the establishment of stable party systems.

In the words of another political theorist Angelo Panebianco (1988) institutionalization is a process of "the consolidation of the organization, the passage from an initial, structurally fluid, phase when new-born organization is still forming, to a phase in which the organization stabilizes" (p. 53). He talks about institutionalization in two ways. On the one hand, he says, it involves certain values associated with an organization. In an institutionalized party, attachment to the party is more than just a matter of applying a means to an end. The party and what it symbolizes has become a value in itself among its members and followers. In effect, the party builds up a reservoir of support based on affection and loyalty. On the other hand, Panebianco considers party institutionalization an indicator of endurance: it denotes "the way the organization solidifies" (p. 49). This aspect of institutionalization, then, bears on the question of party stability.

This way of connecting the stability of a party organization and the evolution of certain values can be traced back to Philip Selznick (1957) who claims institutionalization signifies a kind of organizational development which infuses the unit in question with value. This means that the organization has acquired meaning as a way of life for its members and supporters.

To sum up the above – mentioned institutionalists’ view, one can infer that institutionalized party is one that is reified in the supporters mind so that the party exists as a social organization apart from its momentary leaders, and this organization demonstrates recurring patterns of behavior valued by those who identify with it. It also can be inferred that institutionalization of political parties can be seen as good for a country’s political stability and democracy consolidation because parties’ internal rules can help to minimize factional conflicts, or at least channel such conflicts in predictable ways, and often promote smooth leadership turnovers.

The issue of intra- party democracy

Behind the apparent consensus concerning the centrality of political parties to the actual functioning of contemporary democratic states, however, there lies considerable disagreement. Most immediately, there is disagreement concerning the performance of existing parties.

Political parties are crucial actors in representative democracies. Parties can help to articulate group aims, nurture political leadership, develop and promote policy alternatives, and present voters with coherent electoral alternatives. Party cohesiveness in legislatures contributes to efficient government, and politicians within the same party tend to be more responsible to one another than they otherwise would be, because of the shared electoral fate of those voted on the strength of a shared party label. In short, parties ensure that voters have significant electoral choices, and they help ensure that choices made in elections will translate into decisions in the public realm. This view of the utility of parties in modern electoral democracies is a widely shared one. More disputed is the question of whether and to what extent it matters how parties arrive at the choices they present to voters, and specifically, whether and to what extent parties need to be internally democratic in order to promote democracy within the wider society (Scarow 2005).

Schattschneider is famous for claiming that ‘democracy is not to be found in the parties but between the parties’ (1942, p. 60), but an alternative view – which we are more inclined to share – is that: “a democratic program cannot be advanced by an undemocratic party” (Seyd & Whiteley 2002, p.185). Similarly, Michels (1999) starts from the assumption that if democracy is to be achieved in the modern state it must be through the efforts of a real democratic party.

Internal democracy is valuable from the participatory aspects of democracy where parties are seen not primarily as intermediaries, but rather as incubators that nurture citizens’ political competence. To fulfill this role, parties’ decision making structures and processes should provide opportunities for individual citizens to influence the choices that parties offer to voters. These opportunities will help citizens expand their civic skills, and inclusive processes can boost the legitimacy of the alternatives they produce. In this way, party institutions can perform useful educative functions while also transferring power to a broader sector of society (Scarrow 2005).

Another argument for imposing internal democratic structures on political parties is based on works of such political sociologists like Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michels. According to these authors, there is always, behind the democratic facade, an oligarchy, even though its members take turns at playing the key governing roles. Now obviously, in every organization leaders initiate action and followers concur, but the power relations between leaders and led are not on that account always the same. Precisely because democracy is a form of political organization, it must also be a pattern of leadership; nevertheless, the way leaders gain and retain their authority; the extent to which their initiatives respond to the interests of those they lead; their need to listen to and answer criticism -- these things distinguish a democracy in important ways from what is usually meant by an oligarchy (Etzioni-Halevy 1997).

Robert Michels's *Iron Law of Oligarchy* (1999 (originally published in 1962)) – is about the fear of the excessive power of the party leadership. Political parties tend to concentrate power and influence. The party leadership gathers more and more power to itself, while that of the individual member weakens, the former becoming more suspicious of change as it concentrates on preserving its dominion. This tendency might yield political parties that oppress and control not only their own members but also the general public. In Michels' own celebrated formulation of the "iron law of oligarchy": "It is organization which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization says oligarchy" (Michels 1999, p.15).

In other words, in any large organization leadership will inexorably become a necessity. The nature of any organization is such that leadership activities are free from control and can never be fully held accountable by those who hold subsidiary positions within the organization. While organization is inevitable in complex societies and mass democracies, any organization that reaches a certain size and attains a certain degree of complexity also inevitably produces a situation of domination of leaders over their followers, with oligarchization as a consequence. Of the two broader aspects of causal mechanisms which produce oligarchization – i.e. technical and psychological – the former (division of labor, specialization, the "technical indispensability of leadership") are considerably more important. Michels made his case by analyzing the socialist parties and trade unions, and the German Socialist party in particular, which *prima facie* seemed to constitute the counterexample to the iron law. In other words, through critical case study he demonstrated that even party organizations which are formally organized according to a model of internal democracy ultimately cannot avoid being dominated and controlled by unaccountable elite. As a result "the iron law" can be applied to all parties. Moreover, and more broadly, the law

is meant to be valid not only for political parties but also for all large and complex organizations (Michels 1999).

Following Michels, Weber (1918) in his *Politics as a Vocation* observes that the early forms of party were little more than cliques of notables and that the introduction of mass democracy had produced a new type of party with a strong and permanent organization. Facilitated by the psychology of the followers and the charismatic authority of the party leader, these “machines” had taken a plebiscitarian form and were being dominated by a political elite or a single leader.

In his famous essay, *The Future of Democracy*, Roberto Bobbio (1984) argues that the real challenge for modern democracy lies in its expansion in the social dimension. Hence, the more the individual can experience democracy, notwithstanding the exercise of traditional governmental power, the more democratic the state will be. The important question, according to Bobbio, is no longer who can vote, but where the right to vote can be exercised.

In sum, this brief overview of some of the most influential reflections on the political parties generally demonstrates concern with their internal workings and with the lack of internal democracy and accountability in particular, although interpretations vary as to the implications this has for democracy.

Historical Development of Political Parties in Armenia

Political parties in Armenia began to emerge before independence, but today it is virtually impossible to speak about Armenian political party system formation without understanding the political situation of late 1980s. Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of “glasnost” in the late 1980s opened the way for emerging protests. Among the first protest of this period was the Ecology movement initiated by Soviet Armenian intelligentsia in 1987, led by journalists, writers, painters. But, as in many of the former Soviet Republics, protest in

Armenia was mainly oriented around national issues. The tragic events which took place in Nagorno-Karabakh region, namely three days of ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population by Azeris in the industrial town of Sumgait, Azerbaijan, at the end of February and beginning of March in 1988 resulted in the aggravation of public opinion about Karabakh issue and increased tensions in relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. As a result, a few number of new political parties and organizations emerged at this time, many previously having being banned, persecuted, and driven underground. These included the groups Struggle for the Existence, Mashtots, Hay Dat, Gtutyun, The Federation of Armenian Students, the most important being Karabakh Committee - led Armenian National Movement, and others. Among the first new political parties to be registered in this period was the Union of Self-Determination under the leadership of Soviet-era dissident Paruyr Hairikian, demanding immediate referenda for Armenian independence and secession from the Soviet Union. Thus, in 1991, when Armenia declared its independence, there was already a multi-party system.

Today, Armenian political party system can boast of having 74 parties. According to ARD assessment (2005) those numerous Armenian political parties can be divided into three types: traditional parties, post-independence parties and new parties or alliances.

Traditional/historic parties have a history that goes back several decades and, in some cases, more than a century. These parties are characterized by having some core ideology, some form of a national presence and a sustainable organizational structure. These are Liberal Democratic “Ramkavar Azatakan” Party of Armenia (Hayastani Ramkavar Azatakan Kusaktsutiun) (1885), Social Democratic “Hnchakian” Party (Sotsial Demokratakan Hnchakian Kusaktutiun) (1887), Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hay Heghaphokhakan Dahsnaktsutuin) (1890), Communist Party of Armenia (Hayastani Komunistakan Kusaktsutyun) (1920).

Unlike the Ramkavar Azatakan Party, whose ideas were somewhat less radical, the goal of the Social Democratic “Hinchakian” Party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was the creation of an independent Armenian state. In addition to political means, the latter was also willing to resort to armed struggle to achieve their ends. Another difference between the Ramkavar Azatakan Party, and the Social Democratic Party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, was the embrace of socialism, as opposed to liberal democracy, by the latter two. Like the Ramkavar Azatakan Party, both parties were, and continue to be, active in the Diaspora.

The Armenian Communist Party is the anomaly in this group of traditional/historic parties. Founded in 1920, unlike the other three parties in this group, the party did not share the goal of Armenian independence, but rather was internationalist in its orientation. More specifically, it was amenable to the incorporation of independent Armenian Republic into the Soviet Union.

The appearance of *independence parties* can be considered to be the period from 1988 till 1991. The parties in this group were all created prior to or around the period of those elections which framed independence and the formation of the new Armenian Republic on September 21, 1991. This period of party formation and activity was characterized by the emergence of several political parties, many of which are still significant in Armenian politics. Many, like the Armenian National Movement, started as political movements, others from outset called themselves parties or unions, and include the Union of Constitutional Rights, founded by Hrant Khachatryan (1989), Union of Self-Determination (1989) founded by Paruyr Hairikyan , the Republican Party of Armenia, founded by Ashot Navasardyan (1990), the National Democratic Union and the Democratic Party of Armenia (1991), as well as others. As in the earlier period party formation centered largely on independence and nationalism, simultaneously adhering to democracy as opposed to Communism.

Post-independence parties started to emerge in the mid-1990s. The essential characteristic of these parties is the relative ease with which they formed which is a characteristic shared with other post-communist states after they got rid of the Soviet rule. Some of these parties would attain some significance and are still present in Armenian political life, while others, formed immediately for a particular election, would be easily forgotten shortly afterwards. Among them there were: National State (Azgain Petutian), Intelligent Armenia (Mtavorakan Hayastan), Union of Intelligentsia (Mtavorakanneri Miutian), Women of the Armenian Land (Kanayk Hayots Ashkhari), Shamiram, Rule of Law (Orinants Erkir), United Progressive Communist Party of Armenia (Hayastani Arajadimakan Miatsial Komunistakan Kusaktsutian), People's (Popular) Party of Armenia (Hayastani Zhoghovrdakan Kusaktsutyun), Democratic Homeland (Zhoghovrdavarakan Hayreniq), Motherland-Diaspora Union (Hayreniq-Spiurq Miutian), Powerful Motherland (Hzor Hayrenik), Dignified Future (Arzhanapative Apaga), etc. Among this new generation of political parties were those centered almost exclusively on their leader—sometimes called “pocket parties.” Many of the post-independence parties are splinter groups from the independence-era parties. Very few of the post-independence parties have developed a broad base of popular support.

Across the political spectrum and within academic circles it is agreed that the political party system today is weak in Armenia. This weakness is demonstrated across several spheres in several interrelated ways. Armenian system has traits of a “loose multiparty” or dominant party system in which, while multiple parties are visible on the scene, only one can appropriately be characterized as strong. Characterization as a strong party is a result of electoral success – the winner takes all, quite literally, and captures the state apparatus. Another important facet has been the obvious personality-centeredness of politics in general and of parties in particular. Armenian political parties are identified and, in some cases, even

equated with their leaders. The predominance of persons over policies has undermined the need for clear political platforms. Parties are neither socially demanded, nor expected to present coherent programs. Voting behavior is hardly traceable to party programs. Thus voter choice is based on leader credibility rather than on program credibility and feasibility.

This list of problems is by no means exhaustive. The political landscape is also characterized by the damaging effects of the organizational design of parties. According to ARD assessment (2005), most developed political parties with a sizable number of members have a pyramid structure, with power concentrated at the top and decisions handed down to the lower party levels. Within parties, conformity is enforced through silent, overt and illegal informal sanctions including ostracism, and hostile remarks. This has entrenched the culture of silence and secrecy. According to the assessment, organizational structures are somewhat more developed only among traditional parties and less developed among the parties that emerged later in the independence period.

The purpose of this research study is to address the basic issue of intra-party democracy. Thus, it aims at pattern profiling of intra-party democracy of six Armenian political parties. Due to the limitations in the design of this research imposed by the time and lack of resources, first, there is no attempt to find any relationship between internal and external dimensions of democracy and second, no aim of description of the whole political party universe of Armenia.

Drawing from the literature review on Armenian political parties, particularly from *Armenia – Country Report based on Research and Dialogue with Political Parties* (IDEA, 2005) and *Armenian Political Party Assessment* (ARD, 2005), it is expected that independence and post-independence party members would practice more autonomy for leadership, whereas party members from historical/ traditional party would practice more exercise of internal democracy. In the light of all above-mentioned, the study poses the

following hypothesis: *Traditional/ historic parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence parties.*

For the purpose of profiling the degree of intra-party democracy it is also appropriate to include another dimension, particularly organizational size. Following Michels' conclusion about large organizations, it is expected also that the degree of intra-party democracy will be higher in small parties than in large ones, where the organization is complex and the distance between the individual member and the leadership is relatively large. We therefore hypothesize: *Small parties are more internally democratic than large ones.*

To find support for above-formulated two broad hypotheses they have been split into five sub-hypotheses as follows:

H1: *Traditional/historical large parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence large parties.*

H2: *Traditional/historical small parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence small parties.*

H3: *Traditional/historical small parties are more internally democratic than traditional/historical large ones.*

H4: *Independence small parties are more internally democratic than independence large ones.*

H5: *Post-independence small parties are more internally democratic than post-independence large ones.*

CONCEPTUALIZATION

What makes a party internally democratic? Intra-party democracy broadly refers to the party organization whose functioning is regulated by prescribed rules of procedure that restrain arbitrary control of “internal elections” and other party issues by powerful elites.

Internal party democracy means that all party components and functionaries follow due process and are accountable to the rank-and-file and to the lawful organs established in the statutes. How “membership” is defined here is crucial for checks and balances to exist. In a democratic political party it is the members who have the ability to elect the party leadership or recall it, including their ability to elect the party candidates to leadership positions, the ability to influence the party platform and agenda, the ability to participate in conflict resolution procedures; i.e. the ability to participate in decision-making of party life (Scarrow 2005, Mersel 2006). Thus, arguing from participatory aspects of democracy, intra-party democracy is conceptualized in this study as how centralized are the decision-making processes in the following spheres:

- Candidate selection
- Leadership election
- Leadership recalling
- Setting party policies
- Consultations for coalition formation.
- Allocation of resources
- Conflict resolution mechanisms

It is assumed that above-chosen spheres contribute by an equal weight to the concept of intra- party democracy. Centralization in decision-making processes for above-mentioned spheres describes the extent to which decisions are held by party leader or founder (high degree), by functionaries (medium degree) or by party assembly (low degree). Three degrees of centralization in decision-making processes are scored as: high = 2; medium = 1; and low = 0. More specifically, it will be upheld that traditional/historical parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence if the overall score for centralization in decision-making for traditional/historical parties will be lower than for independence and

post-independence parties. Similarly, the hypothesis that small parties are more internally democratic than large ones will be supported if the overall score for centralization in decision-making for small parties will be lower than for large parties.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To obtain data for supporting hypotheses case study methodology is implemented. The units of analysis are Armenian political parties. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collection was implemented through in-depth interviews with selected leaders and members of six political parties whereas secondary data is collected from party charters and available protocols. Responses given during interviews were checked for compliance with party charter's regulations. The study sample is selected purposefully, according to our hypotheses it is based on chronological emergence and their organizational size to make meaningful comparisons with regard to the degree of intra-party democracy. Due to small number of cases, hypotheses are not tested with statistical rigor. Research is rather aimed at uncovering the internal democratic profile of the identified types of political parties in Armenia. For the purpose of showing the tendency an aggregate scoring instrument is developed. Following is the list of political parties as the sample for this study: From Tradistional parties - Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, from independence parties - Republican Party of Armenia, Democratic Party of Armenia, and from post-independence - National Unity and "Hanrapetutyun" parties.

FINDINGS

Candidate selection processes

Recruiting and selecting candidates is a crucial task for parties, because parties' profiles during elections, and while in office, are largely determined by which candidates are

chosen and where their loyalties lie. Contrary to the assertion that democratization of candidate selection process weakens the power of party elites, as Scarrow (2005) mentions, it actually has at least two key merits. First, by allowing for unrestricted participation of members to vote in closed and open elections, parties act as intermediaries in the selection of representatives, and monitor who is selected. Second, the approach ensures that the controlling role of an exclusive selectorate diminishes in favor of a more inclusive process of determining representatives. Finally, in order to observe the distribution of power within the party, candidate selection becomes the focal point at which the party's democratic virtues are exhibited or compromised. Failure to balance interests of the party and those of its members may result in the collapse of party cohesion.

Regarding the degree of centralization of decision-making in the selection of candidates for leadership positions part, only respondents from Social Democratic Hnchakian Party indicated that candidates are selected and nominated in membership meetings. Respondents from Armenian Revolutionary Federation and "Hanrapetutyun" Party indicated that the selection device is meeting of functionaries. Respondents from Republican Party, Democratic Party of Armenia and National Unity Party indicated that the selection of candidates is often decided more by charismatic leaders than by internal decision-making processes.

Interestingly enough, that speaking about consequences, members from Armenian Revolutionary Federation noted that centralized candidate selection and imposition of candidates can have damaging costs to the party organization, including factionalism, increased independent candidates, reduced party support and consequent electoral losses.

In regard the issue whether there are regulations in party charters concerning the processes, it has been revealed that all party charters are silent. The absence of written formal regulations leaves us without a chance to check for compliance of regulations with actual

process. Hence, on account of findings from interviews it may be stated that the candidate selection process is the most centralized in Republican Party and National Unity Party, and is the least centralized in Social Democratic Hnchakian Party.

Leadership election processes

In both parliamentary and presidential systems, election of a party leader may be equivalent to the election of the party's leading candidate for presidential or parliamentary elections of a country. Besides, the choice of party leader is important for defining the party's course and image.

In response to the degree of centralization in decision-making for the party leadership election process, the most decentralized in terms of decision-making for leadership election is Republican Party, that is to say that leadership elected during party assemblies, whereas the most centralized is National Unity Party, where the leadership election is never challenged, and the rest parties indicated medium level of centralization in decision-making for leadership election, by practicing functionary meetings and voting.

Concerning existing procedures in party charters regulating the process, even all political party charters provide regulations for leadership election process, drawing from responses of party members, it may be stated that regulation is not appropriately implemented in some parties. That is to say there is non-compliance of regulations with actual processes. For example, according to respondents' from Democratic Party of Armenia and "Hanrapetutyun" Party, party conventions are held with less number of participants than it is provided by party regulation. The reason of such limitation as indicated by respondents is scarce resources for renting a big hall. Another shortcoming which is true for all parties is that the regulation is too brief without stating consequences for non-compliance. Besides, no party charters have cursory reference to whether and how the party will conduct the elections.

Leadership recalling

Findings from in-depth interviews reveal the following: the most centralized parties are National Unity Party and “Hanrapetutyun” Party where the decisions on leadership recalling is decided solely by party leader and is accepted by party members as normal way of party functioning. Respondents from National Unity Party are sure that all party leader’s decisions are true and cannot be discussed or rejected because their leader is uniquely talented personality. As about the rest four parties (Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, Republican Party of Armenia, Democratic Party of Armenia) they practice medium degree of centralization in decision-making letting the issue to be decided by functionaries.

Findings from party charters reveal that the process is not regulated in any party. All this means that political parties are practicing unwritten regulations which are established during party development. Concerning the third aim, again, there is no way to check the actual process with regulation. Anyway, all above-mentioned findings show that the decision-making for leadership recalling is not decentralized and regulated in any party.

Setting party policies

One of the ways to assess the degree of internal democracy in a party is to ask who determines the content of the party’s policies. In the most inclusive parties, individual party members may be asked to vote on specific policy issues. More usually, parties may chose the less inclusive option of asking party assembly delegates to endorse a set of commitments prepared by a functionaries. Often, the deliberation process may be more open than the actual vote. Party functionaries may take pains to show that they are listening to different viewpoints, for instance by holding consultation meetings around the country. Similarly,

party leaders may permit an airing of viewpoints during debates at party assembly. The point of such open consultation is to demonstrate that the party's policies have been developed in cooperation with the party's members, who are presumed to be representative of the party's most devoted supporters.

The examination of party charters reveals, no one member is excluded from policy - making processes in any party, and at least formal efforts are made to implement the bottom-up principle in decision-making. On the other hand, findings from in-depth interviews reveal that the actual process of setting policies is done solely by functionaries and leaders. Particularly, the most centralized in terms of setting party policies are National Unity Party and Democratic Party of Armenia and there is medium degree of centralization for Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Republican Party, and "Hanrapetutyun" Party. Speaking about consequences of centralization in setting party policies respondents from Social Democratic Hnchakian Party and Armenian Revolutionary Federation, are sure that it leads to reduced party unity and popularity, fragmentation and independent candidates, and ultimately considerable electoral losses.

Coalition formation processes

In response to the first part, to the degree of centralization of decision-making in the coalition formation processes, the study reveals there is medium level of centralization of decision-making in coalition formation procedures for Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Democratic Party of Armenia and "Hanrapetutyun" Party, and high level of centralization for Republican Party of Armenia, and National Unity Party. On account of these findings it can be concluded that considering the complexity and privacy which surrounds coalition negotiations, it is evident that decision-making is not decentralized in any party of this study.

In response to the existing regulations in party charters concerning the coalition formation processes, respondents indicated that their party constitutions either implicitly or explicitly oblige their party leaders to seek the consent of members before entering into a coalition. However, an examination of the party charters reveals they are silent for this issue.

This contradiction from research findings begs two questions which are beyond the scope of this research. First, how participatory is the process of formulating party charters, and how regularly are they reviewed in order to capture the changing political preferences of members. Second, how do parties ensure that their members understand party charters regulations? On the other hand, such optimistic responses as given above can only be interpreted on the assumption that democratic delegation of leadership authority does implicitly or explicitly oblige leaders to consult party members on all important issues.

Allocation of financial resources

The common saying, “He who pays the piper calls the tunes” is as pertinent to the affairs of the political party as it is to the affairs of the rest of society. It seems logical, the persons or body that controls the allocation of funds are in a powerful position to make decisions for the attainment of party goals. Thus, the greater the member’s role in allocating funds, the greater the democratization of internal decision-making power. This responsibility should not be in the hands of just one or a few individuals in the party, as is often the case, but in the hands of many.

In response to the degree of centralization of decision-making in allocation of financial resources findings from in-depth interviews reveals there is medium degree of centralization for Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation and for “Hanrapetutyun” Party and there is high degree of centralization for Republican Party, National Unity Party, and Democratic Party of Armenia.

In response to existing regulations in party charters findings from party charters reveal there are no clear rules governing by which body's decision parties must allocate their financial properties. Party charters provide very general regulations about financial revision committee which members are selected by party leader and whose function is to oversee the process. However, party charters are silent for the cases of misconduct and non-compliance to financial revision committee decisions. So, again it may be stated that the process is almost not regulated and leaves room to consider that financial resources are allocated by arbitrary decisions and are free from any sanctions. The absence of written formal regulations again leaves us without a chance to check for compliance of regulations with actual process. Hence, on account of findings from interviews it may be stated that the allocation of financial resources in political parties is not decentralized and regulated in any party.

Conflict resolution procedures

One of the important indicators of party democratic government is the existence of internal mechanisms and procedures to address inevitable internal tensions and disputes. If not, it may be difficult for parties to find an internal party body considered neutral enough that it can adjudicate disputes. Here it becomes significant that the appropriate application of party regulations and by-laws have been democratically adopted.

In response to the degree of centralization in conflict resolution procedures, the study reveals there is medium level of centralization for Social Democratic Hinchakian Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Democratic Party of Armenia and "Hanrapetutyun" Party, and high level of centralization for Republican Party of Armenia, and National Unity Party.

In response to existing regulations in party charters, findings from party charters show that there is no regulation in any party charter. However, party members indicated that

sometimes ad hoc committees are appointed by functionaries to deal with situation. As might be logically to think when parties do not have their own mechanisms for resolving conflicts, this may encourage disappointed members to appeal to national courts for help. However, as practice shows in Armenia judges are reluctant to get involved in parties' internal affairs, viewing parties as private associations or even worse their decisions may be influenced by political power of upper standings. Unfortunately, the absence of written formal regulations again leaves us without a chance to check for compliance of regulations with actual process. Hence, on account of findings from interviews it may be stated that the process of conflict resolution is not decentralized and regulated in any party.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1: Traditional/historical large parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence large parties. To show the tendency the aggregate scoring instrument is applied in the spheres of candidate selection, leadership election, leadership recalling, setting policy proposal, consultations for coalition formation, allocation of financial resources and conflict resolutions procedures. According to findings from in-depth interviews it may be stated the overall score for centralization in decision-making for Armenian Revolutionary Federation is lower than for Republican Party of Armenia and National Unity party, which supports our hypothesis that traditional/historical large parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence large parties.

Table1: Degree of centralization in decision-making of traditional/historical, independence, and post- independence large parties.

	Candidate Selection	Leadership Election	Leadership Recalling	Party Policy	Consultations for coalition formation	Allocation of Financial Resources	Conflict Resolution	Total score
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	7
Republican Party	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	10
National Unity Party	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	14

(Degree of centralization: low= 0, medium = 1, high=2)

Hypothesis 2: Traditional/historical small parties are more internally democratic than independence and post-independence small parties. To find support for this hypothesis the study uses the same approach of aggregating scores in the spheres of candidate selection, leadership election, leadership recalling, setting policy proposal, consultations for coalition formation, allocation of financial resources and conflict resolutions procedures. The parties that correspond for this hypothesis are Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, Democratic Party of Armenia and “Hanrapetutyun” Party.

Thus, on account of findings, the least centralized party in decision-making for above-mentioned spheres is Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, the most centralized Democratic Party of Armenia and in the middle “Hanrapetutyun” Party. Therefore, it may be stated that Social Democratic Hnchakian Party is more internally democratic than “Hanrapetutyun” Party and Democratic Party of Armenia, which supports our hypothesis.

Table 2: Degree of centralization in decision-making of traditional/historical, independence, and post- independence small parties.

	Candidate Selection	Leadership Election	Leadership Recalling	Party Policy	Consultations for coalition formation	Allocation of Financial Resources	Conflict Resolution	Total score
Social Democratic “Hnchakian” party	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	6
Democratic Party of Armenia	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium	10
“Hanrapetutyun” Party	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	8

(Degree of centralization: low= 0, medium = 1, high=2)

Hypothesis 3: Traditional /historical parties small parties are more internally democratic than traditional/historical large parties.

According to findings in the sphere of candidate selection Social Democratic Hnchakian Party is less centralized in decision-making than Armenian Revolutionary Federation. In the spheres of leadership election, leadership recalling, setting policy proposal, consultations for coalition formation, allocation of financial resources and conflict resolution procedures both party members indicated that the parties practice medium degree of centralization. Thus, by aggregating scores for above-mentioned spheres it may be stated that the hypothesis is supported.

Table 3: Degree of centralization in decision-making of traditional/historical large and small parties.

	Candidate Selection	Leadership Election	Leadership Recalling	Party Policy	Consultations for coalition formation	Allocation of Financial Resources	Conflict Resolution	Total score
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	7
Social Democratic “Hnchakian” party	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	6

(Degree of centralization: low= 0; medium = 1; high=2)

Hypothesis 4: Independence small parties are more internally democratic than independence large parties. Parties chosen from sample of this study are Republican Party of Armenia and Democratic Party of Armenia. Again, by aggregating scores for each sphere Republican Party of Armenia is equally centralized in decision-making as Democratic Party of Armenia. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported.

Table 4: Degree of centralization in decision-making of independence large and small parties.

	Candidate Selection	Leadership Election	Leadership Recalling	Party Policy	Consultations for coalition formation	Allocation of Financial Resources	Conflict Resolution	Total score
Republican Party	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	10
Democratic Party of Armenia	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium	10

(Degree of centralization: low= 0; medium = 1; high=2)

Hypothesis 5: Post-independence small political parties are more internally democratic than post-independence large parties. According to findings in the spheres of candidate selection, leadership election, leadership recalling, setting policy proposal, consultations for

coalition formation, allocation of financial resources and conflict resolution procedures National Unity practices high degree of centralization in decision-making and “Hanrapetutyun” Party practices medium degree of centralization. By aggregating scores for all spheres, it can be stated that hypothesis finds support.

Table 5: Degree of centralization in decision-making of post-independence large and small parties.

	Candidate Selection	Leadership Election	Leadership Recalling	Party Policy	Consultations for coalition formation	Allocation of Financial Resources	Conflict Resolution	Total score
National Unity Party	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	14
“Hanrapetutyun” Party	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	8

(Degree of centralization: low= 0; medium = 1; high=2)

External and internal dimensions of democracy

Article 7 of the Armenian Constitution states: “The ideological pluralism and multiparty system are recognized in the Republic of Armenia. Parties are formed freely and promote the formulation and expression of the political will of the people. Their activities may not contravene the Constitution and the laws, nor may their practice contravene the principles of democracy.” But is it enough?

To the question whether parties must be internally democratic to reach external democracy, all party leaders and members indicated that it is a necessary condition, whereas findings from responses show that none of them has high degree of intra-party democracy, even the most democratic party of this study - Social Democratic Hnchakian Party has only one low degree of centralization in candidate selection sphere.

Hence, in Armenia a political party could be democratically inclined externally but undemocratic internally. Externally, it could profess legitimate goals and pursue them in a

legal manner, yet, at the same time, it might function—internally—as a “dictatorship.” The very interdependence between political parties and democracies should promote the parties’ adherence not only to democratic goals and activities but also to democratic internal structures. The main argument will be that we must recognize the importance of both applications of democracy. Political parties should not only profess to espouse the rules of the game but also apply these rules indoors because there is a greater likelihood of the pursuit of nondemocratic goals in parties that have an undemocratic structure. Indeed, the injection of internal democracy into political parties should be seen as an essential move—a next step—in democratic theory and political practice. A meaningful party system depends on democracy, but democracy as Armenian political party members state moreover depends on democratic parties and internal democracy within parties.

DISCUSSION

Building effective party structures is an endless process. Organizations can and will adapt to changing circumstances, so some degree of change is always inevitable. But we can possibly distinguish certain factors that shape parties’ organizational decisions and certain circumstances under which parties are most likely to experiment with different approaches, including internal democratization.

In many countries, parties’ organizational practices of political parties must conform to legal statutes that spell out ground rules on such matters as candidate selection, leadership election, conflict resolution procedures, party finance etc. The existence of such regulations controls the arbitrary and impersonal use of power by party leadership and creates an equal opportunity of participation and decision-making for members. Moreover, when party charters regulations are adopted through a participatory and deliberative debate, it ensures collective authorship, consensus and high probability of compliance by those it is intended to

serve. Unfortunately, analysis of Armenian political party charters reveals that there are no precise and effective regulations within parties for the processes of candidate selection, leadership recalling, conflict resolution, and allocation of financial resources. Thus, one can infer the absence of such regulations is a symptom which can be either because of political culture and historical legacy of a country or its institutional environment.

Political culture and Historical legacy

It is essential to discern that country's political culture and historical legacy can be the reason that characterizes party's organizational decisions. Country's political culture as defined by Aberbach and Rockman (as cited in Heady 1995, p. 96) are "the values, attitudes, orientations, myths, and beliefs that people have about politics and government." As such, it is imperative to be cautious of both the negative as well as positive implications that informal values and norms may have on intra-party democracy. Some informal norms may enhance a culture of debate and consultations within the party thereby promoting intra-party democracy, while others have the tendency to impede intra-party democracy. It is therefore important to identify and encourage those informal, unwritten socio-cultural values, ideals and orientations that are decisive in, and critical to the enhancement of intra-party democracy. Conversely, those informal norms that inhibit intra-party democracy need to be guarded against as a deterrent to the promotion of intra-party democracy. As such, "respect for the party leaders" being a very fundamental norm in Armenian political parties is exploited to ensure uncritical acceptance of decisions of the elite. Unfortunately, this translates into a scenario where informal norms can dominantly override the formal rules to the extent of inhibiting the full realization of democratic values. As long as they work in favor of the patronage power relations, there is a tendency not to resolve this confusion between formal and informal norms and human behavior tends to adapt to status quo. Trying to predict Armenia's future

developments in political culture, one can mark out two possible scenarios. The pessimistic view is that the creation of the necessary experience will still take a long time – probably a generation change. The optimistic scenario is that the “genuine” democratic values will be achieved in a few years.

Institutional environment

Party organizations and procedures are likely to reflect the institutional environments within which parties compete. Parties cannot be better than the system itself. According to Scarrow (2005), organizational “contagion” has long been seen as a powerful force promoting at least temporary convergence in parties’ structures.

According to ARD assessment (2005), the current institutional environment is not conducive to the development of a pluralistic, competitive, democratic, or accountable political party system in Armenia. Autocratic systems and mentalities are firmly entrenched within the government as well as within the parties. Most of the major constraints are related to the lack of political will for clean elections and accountable governance. Unfortunately, such institutional environment may have impact on political party internal organizational decisions.

CONCLUSION

Today, there is a wide agreement about political parties as both the hallmarks and guardians of representative government. However, there has been much less agreement about whether it is necessary for parties to organize themselves in internally democratic ways in order to promote the democratic functioning of the political systems in which they compete. But even if views still differ on the absolute necessity of intra-party democracy, most agree that there are often sound and even self-interested reasons for parties to adopt more

decentralized decision-making processes. Such procedures may help parties win elections, recruit and select good candidates, and retain popular support. On the other hand, in some instances, internally democratic procedures may undermine parties' competitive standing, at least in the short term. In this way, organizational questions are often more practical than moral, which is probably one reason why it is difficult to advocate legislation to impose democracy on parties: *There is no one-size-fits-all model for how to run a party*. However, in a country where there is widespread popular disillusionment with politicians and parties like Armenia, and where there is growing interest in democratic self-determination, responsive parties may rightly decide that they would be well advised to adopt more decentralized and inclusive internal procedures. In such cases, the changes the parties make to benefit themselves may prove beneficial for the wider society—and for the stability and legitimacy of democratic institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Democracy has still a long road to go in Armenia. As experience in reality has proven, democracy- building was not a sequence of some steps and it did not have a direct impact, automatic self-evolution, as it was presented during the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many of the problems facing Armenian political parties are shared with other post-communist countries. There are both democratic and autocratic characteristics, a poor quality of governance, and a lack of transparent and democratic political leadership. Armenia, along with those countries in similar circumstances, is at a cross-road. It can either continue its autocratic consolidation under the mantle of democratic discourse or it can move towards real reform and democratization. Thus, from the considerations of building “real” democratic political party system and based on the findings from current research and previous assessments on the parties' situation in Armenia, it is possible to identify the following

problems and impediments to the further development of the party democratization in Armenia. For sowing the seeds creation of a democratic party system in Armenia, parties can, for example, make the first step of making revisions in party charters by ensuring such democratic values as pluralism, tolerance, inclusiveness, decentralization of power and accountability. Party charters should also provide mechanisms for the democratic resolution of conflicts. Party leaders need to move beyond their personality centeredness and organize frequent and fair elections for leadership position and for candidates for public office based on merits as opposed to patronage. They should provide a fair number of party assemblies and ensure members inclusiveness in decision-making processes. Parties should ensure transparency through open access to information and publications of all records. Besides making necessary changes political party leaders need to demonstrate congruence between rules and practices. Only in this way can parties develop and function as the linkage democratic institutions they are ideally supposed to be in a democratic political order.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is necessary to say, however, that results of the present study have to be treated with caution. As any research study, this one also may has its limitations.

First of all, the concept of intra-party democracy is rather wide concept, probably as wide as the word democracy itself, and the definition differs from author to author. The present study has concentrated only on some indicators of the concept, so future studies should involve as many indicators as possible.

Second limitation concerns sample size. As the study has been based on small sample size, it creates difficulties to make generalizations. To describe the whole political party universe of Armenia future studies should increase the number of parties and party members.

The other limitation concerns internal and external dimension. As it was mentioned, the study does not make attempt to find any relationship between internal and external dimensions of democracy, but as political party members indicated, without internal party democracy it is impossible to have external democracy. Thus, future studies should analyze possible relationships.

Finally, there are wide-spread perceptions among Armenian political scientists and politicians concerning Diaspora parties' (particularly ARF) secretive decision-making mechanisms. This issue should be explored further through deeper qualitative analysis

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APPENDIX A (Research Instrument)

Interview date _____

Political party name _____

Hello. My name is Liana. I am from American University of Armenia. I am conducting a study about intra-party democracy. Your answers to my questions will greatly help me in the study. May I begin? Thank you.

Candidate nomination

1. Trying to remember last candidates' selections can you tell me how many candidates did the party have?

2. How the candidates have been selected?

___ by party leader/founder'(s) decision

___ by functionaries' decision

___ by all members' decision

___ other

3. Does party charter regulate the candidate selection process?

___ Yes

___ No

___ other

Leadership election

4. Trying to remember last leadership election can you tell me how many candidates did the party have?

5. How the leader was elected?

___ by party leader/founder'(s) decision

___ by functionaries' decision

☐ by all members' decision

☐ Other

6. Does the party charter regulate the leadership election process?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

Leadership recalling

7. Have the party ever have the leadership recalling case?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

8. If yes, who did participate in decision-making?

☐ party leader/founder(s)

☐ limited number of members (functionaries)

☐ all members

☐ other

9. If no, who may potentially participate in decision-making?

☐ party leader/ founder(s)

☐ limited number of members (functionaries)

☐ all members

☐ other

10. How the decision is accepted?

- ☐ by party leader/founder's decision
- ☐ by functionaries' decision
- ☐ by all members' decision
- ☐ other

11. Does party charter regulate the leadership election process?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ other

Policy Proposal

12. Did the party have introduced policy changes in last years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ other

15. If yes, who did introduce them?

- ☐ party leader/ founder(s)
- ☐ limited number of members (functionaries)
- ☐ all members
- ☐ other

16. If no, who may introduce them?

- ☐ party leader/ founder(s)
- ☐ limited number of members (functionaries)
- ☐ all members
- ☐ other

17. How new policies are accepted or rejected?

- ☐ by party leader/founder's decision
- ☐ by functionaries' decision
- ☐ by members decision
- ☐ other

18. Does party charter regulate the process?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ other

Consultations for Coalition formation

19. Does the party have discussion concerning making coalition with other party?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ other

20. How the decision is accepted or rejected?

- ☐ by party leader/founder's decision
- ☐ by functionaries' decision
- ☐ by all members' decision
- ☐ other

21. Does party charter regulate the process?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ other

Transparency in allocation of financial resources

21. Do the party held discussions about allocations of its financial resources?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

21. If yes, who decides?

☐ party leader/ founder(s)

☐ limited number of members (functionaries)

☐ all members

☐ other

22. If no, why?

23. Does party charter regulate the process?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

Conflict resolution procedures

23. Did the party have conflicts within party members?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

24. If yes, who resolves the conflict?

☐ party leader/founder

☐ functionaries

☐ all members

☐ other

25. Does the party have special committee on party conflicts?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

26. Does party charter regulate the process?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

27. What do you think, is it possible to have external democracy in the system without internal democracy in the party?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ other

28. Membership base_____

Thank you.

APPENDIX B: List of Sampled Parties

1. Armenian Revolutionary Federation
2. Social Democratic Hnchakian Party
3. Republican Party of Armenia
4. Democratic Party of Armenia
5. National Unity
6. “Hanrapetutyun” Party

APPENDIX C: The Formation of Political Parties in Armenia

Traditional/Historic Parties	Year
Liberal Democratic “Ramkavar Azatakan” Party of Armenia (Hayastani Ramkavar Azatakan Kusaktsutun)	1885
Social Democratic “Hnchakian” Party (Sotsial Demokratakan Hnchakian Kusaktutun)	1887
Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hay Heghaphokhakan Dahsnaktsutun)	1890
Communist Party of Armenia (Hayastani Komunistakan Kusaktsutyun)	1920
Independence and Founding Elections Parties	
Union of Self-determination (Inqnoroshum Miavorum)	1987
Armenian National (Pan-National) Movement (Haiots Hamazgain Sharzhum)	1989
Union of Constitutional Rights (Sahmanadrakan Iravunqi Miutun)	1989
Republican Party of Armenia (Hayastani Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun)	1990
Mission (Araqelutun)	1990
Free Armenia “Hayk” Mission (Azat Hayq Arakelutyun)	1990
Democratic Party of Armenia (Haiastani Demokratakan Kusaktutun)	1991
National Democratic Union (Azgayin Zhoghovrdavarakan Miutyun)	1991
Third Generation Parties	
National State (Azgain Petutun)	1993
Intellectual Armenia (Mtavorakan Hayastan)	1994
Union of Intellectuals (Mtavorakanneri Miutsiun)*	1994
Women of the Armenian Land (Anayk Hayots Ashkhari)	1994
Shamiram	1995
Rule of Law (Country of Law) (Orinants Erkir)	1998
United Progressive Communist Party of Armenia (Hayastani Arajadimakan Miatsial Komunistakan Kusaktsutun)	1998
People’s (Popular) Party of Armenia (Hayastani Zhoghovrdakan Kusaktsutyun)	1998
Democratic Homeland (Motherland) (Zhoghovrdavarakan Hayreniq)	1998
Motherland-Diaspora Union (Hayreniq- Spiurq Miutun)	1999
Powerful Motherland (Fatherland) (Hzor Hayrenik)	1999
Dignified (Worthy) Future (Arzhanapative Apaga)	1999