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TYPOLOGIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN ARMENIA

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The essay explores the ideological or programmatic commitments of Armenian political parties. Party programs are important as they provide guidelines for citizens to understand and identify the party policies on given issues. Simultaneously, programs are also a “soft contract” or moral commitment between parties and voters. Moreover, the permanent availability of programs, through the electoral mandate, serves to check the adherence to the electoral promises and to further promote accountability.

This study aims to explore the interrelation between party organization and programmatic commitments and pragmatism of parties which currently constitute the overwhelming majority in the National Assembly of Armenia. Party organization, including the degrees of decentralization and institutionalization of parties, is profiled through four main criteria, namely party size, activity of members, organizational complexity, and autonomy of the party. And the programmatic commitments or pragmatism of parties is measured by comparing the theoretical and actual votes on three issues which are related to different spheres of policy, specifically, economy, environment, and education.

The results mostly support the hypothesis that mass parties have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments whereas cadre parties are pragmatic. In addition, according to the findings, none of the Armenian political parties has a high degree of decentralization. Armenian political parties share many of the problems that they face with other post-communist states. Many of these problems may require political will for genuine change. Although there are other vital conditions that should be met – such as, fair and free regular national, regional and local elections, a credible and vibrant political opposition, politically engaged and publicly energized civil society and so forth – institutionally strong, decentralized and ideologically differentiated political parties with mass as well as elite followings can be evidently essential and conducive to democratization of Armenia.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction.....	8
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Cadre and Mass Parties .....	12
Cadre Party .....	15
Mass Party .....	17
Organizational Structure and System of Political Parties in Armenia .....	19
Overview of Political Parties .....	22
Elections .....	26
Research Design .....	29
Conceptualization .....	30
Internal Dimension of Democracy .....	31
External Dimension of Democracy .....	34
Republican Party of Armenia.....	36
Opinions of RPA Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax .....	36
Prosperous Armenia .....	38
Armenian Revolutionary Federation.....	41
Opinions of ARF Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax .....	41
Rule of Law.....	43
Heritage Party.....	44
Opinions of the Heritage Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax .....	45
Opinions of the Heritage Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Administrative Infringement .....	46

Findings .....	48
Summary of Findings .....	58
Discussion and Conclusion.....	60
Limitations and Future Research .....	64
APPENDIX (Research Instrument).....	68

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: “Republican Party of Armenia” Faction.....	38
Table 2: “Prosperous Armenia” Faction.....	40
Table 3: “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” Faction.....	43
Table 4: “Rule of Law” Faction.....	44
Table 5: “Heritage” Faction.....	47
Table 6: Degree of Decentralization in Election of Congress Delegates and in Determining the Number of Congress Delegates.....	52
Table 7: Degree of Activity of Party Members.....	54
Table 8: Degree of Decentralization of Conflict Resolution.....	55
Table 9: Degree of Regional Outreach of Parties.....	56
Table 10: Degree of Autonomy of Parties.....	57
Table 11: Degree of Decentralization of Parties.....	58
Table 12: Relation between Internal and External Dimensions of Parties.....	60

## **Introduction**

Representative political parties are significantly conducive to modern liberal democracy. The development of strong and representative political parties is important for anchoring public participation in the evolving system of political pluralism (Bugajski 2002, 973). Theoretically, the extent of ideological consolidation also affects party system consolidation (Horowitz et al. 2005, 690). Therefore, for democracy to function, a range of political parties mandated by a broad spectrum of constituencies, ideologies, and policy prescriptions need to be represented in state institutions (Bugajski 2002, 973). Thus, the extent of political party consolidation in Armenia theoretically should have a strong impact on the democratization of Armenia.

Armenia's constitution allows for a multi-party democratic system. And the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Parties, adopted in 2002, further regulates the relations of exercising of the right of citizens to join into parties, to establish parties, their legal status, activity and so forth. As of 1 January 2008, there were approximately 76 parties in Armenia (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, 2008). Despite the proliferation of parties, no party fulfills the fundamental roles of aggregating the public's interest, offering policy alternatives, or organizing meaningful debate over public concerns (ARD 2005).

From the perspective of the organization structure, nearly all parties have a pyramid structure, with power concentrated at the top and decisions handed down to the lower party levels. That is, they are top-down, hierarchical organizations and their organizational culture places great emphasis on the leader. Regarding ideology, most of the parties lack a coherent ideology, platform, and policy program, and they place themselves on a vaguely-defined ideological spectrum. However, historical parties tend to possess some core ideology and maintain some form of a national presence and a sustainable organizational structure, even if



their overall support within Armenia has declined in recent years. This lack of strong ideology and policy development is a function of how and why most political parties are constructed in Armenia—“to advance the individual interests and parochial concerns of the party leadership and their small circle of supporters.” Consequently, “ideology and policy is developed by a top-down, leadership-centric approach” (ARD 2005).

In sum, the development of a democratic political party system in Armenia faces a multitude of challenges. Many of these are systemic problems that may require political will for genuine change. Others are related to the autocratic political culture, that is, autocratic leaders and party institutions, and Soviet legacy. In addition, there are some conventional constraints to political party development which are found in all democratic systems (ARD 2005).

So this study will focus on the interrelation of internal and external dimensions of party democracy in Armenia, the organization structure and the ideological commitments or pragmatism respectively.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Political parties are an indispensable element of modern liberal democracy. They are “durable and permanent institutions in democratic political systems” (Biezen 2003, 175). Political parties aim to participate in political life of the country and ultimately attain “a position of decision making power in the public sector” (Venice Commission 2009). Simultaneously, political parties “perform essential institutional and social functions for representative democracy” (Venice Commission 2009). In the system of political pluralism, a consolidated party system, that is, strong and representative political parties, is of great significance for promoting public participation in the decision-making process (Bugajski 2002, 973). The degree of ideological consolidation, including “ideological characteristics”

implying the positions of parties on the most salient policy issues, strongly impacts party system development and consolidation (Horowitz et al. 2005, 690). Accordingly, “ideological concentration of electorates,” that is, the “extent to which the electorate is more strongly unified or divided over the most politically salient ideological and policy cleavages,” is also the “most consistent and powerful determinant of party system consolidation” (Horowitz et al. 2005).

“Therefore, for democracy to function, a range of political parties mandated by a broad spectrum of constituencies, ideologies, and policy prescriptions need to be represented in state institutions” (Bugajski 2002, 973). Thus, despite other vital conditions that should be met (such as, fair and free regular national, regional and local elections, a credible and vibrant political opposition, politically engaged and publicly energized civil society and so forth (Bugajski 2002, 973)), “strong, ideologically differentiated political parties with mass as well as elite followings are clearly essential to continued democracy” (Miller et al. 2000, 488).

Today political parties, one of the key institutions of democracy, frequently fail to perform many of the functions that are essential to “a healthy performance of democracy” (Biezen 2003, 174). Specifically, political parties “have evolved over the past century from ideologically distinctive and compelling mass-membership organizations that touched and even enveloped a large proportion of the citizenry toward more generic “catch-all” parties.” “Insofar, as party supporters and activists remain committed to traditional ideological and programmatic stands, this shift may contribute to disillusionment and distance” (Diamond 2001). Moreover, there are deep flaws in systems of party finance in many old and new democracies “permitting the raw (and often secret) purchase of power and influence by privileged interests.”

Consequently, political parties are “held in great disrepute.” Furthermore both individual political efficacy and system efficacy are declining, and trust or confidence in parties is “almost everywhere low.” However, the implications for disaffection are much graver in countries where democracy is not consolidated. Especially, “where the legitimacy of democracy is not deeply rooted at all levels of society, dissatisfaction and disaffection with democracy are much more likely over the long term to give rise to preferences for, or diminished resistance to, the return of some form of authoritarian rule” (Diamond 2001).

In *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, Robert Michels (1968) states that from the perspective of technical aspect of organization, leadership is indispensable. And oligarchy in democratic political parties is due to “technical indispensability of leadership” (Michels 1968, 364). Accordingly, “every party organization represents an oligarchical power grounded upon a democratic basis.” And the elected leaders have almost unlimited power over the electors as “the oligarchical structure of the building,” which is the “outcome of organic necessity,” “suffocates the basic democratic principle” (Michels 1968, 365). “However, democratic politics does not resolve solely around the activities and ambitions of political leaders and parties, but needs to be aimed at maximizing public input into the decision- and policy- making processes at local, regional, and national levels” (Bugajski 2002, 975). Public participation in political and decision-making processes, especially in the media, in local and regional governments, and civic organizations, greatly enriches the emerging democracies by enabling public input into decision-making and by cultivating a new generation of politicians (Bugajski 2002, 975).

Moreover, to Sartori (1987), “a democratic decision making process blurs the dividing line between the governors and the governed;” that is, a boundary is diffuse. “Ultimately, the opinion of the governed is the real foundation of all government,” and “government of

opinion, that is, a government responsive to, and responsible toward, public opinion” is the ultimate aim of democracy (Sartori 1987, 87).

In sum, representation of constituencies, ideological consolidation, promotion and facilitation of public participation in the decision- and policy- making processes are three essential functions that should be performed by political parties in liberal democracy. The degree of performance of these functions by political parties may vary depending on the type of a political party. Below two broad types of political parties – cadre and mass parties – are analyzed from the perspective of organizational structure and the degree of performance of these vital functions for democracy.

### ***Cadre and Mass Parties***

Duverger (1954) distinguishes the terms of cadre and mass parties. “Cadre parties are loosely structured, elite-centered, parties with minimal organization outside of the legislature, while mass parties have highly developed organizations which aspire to enlist a large percentage of their voters as party members” (Wolinetz 2002, 140). However, at present the term cadre party implies both loosely organized parties and parties without large memberships. That is, it is the expected degree of participation, not the size of membership, which distinguishes the cadre party from other types of parties.

In addition, Ware (1987) has tried to refine Duverger's distinction, and distinguished between “elite-centered” and “mass membership” parties (Wolinetz 2002, 143). Moreover, Panebianco re-specifies cadre and mass parties into “electoral-professional” and “mass-bureaucratic” parties respectively (Wolinetz 2002, 146). A mass party is characterized as a bureaucratic and durable party (Sartori 2005, 13). On the other hand, mass party is “not necessarily related to a sizeable and permanent bureaucratic staffing,” and the party organization can be “skeletal” (Sartori 2005, 13), that is, it may be termed as a thin mass

party. In short, mass party can have various types of organizational structure, and only the “organizationless party” can be excluded (Sartori 2005, 15).

The electoral-professional party or cadre parties are closely related to a catch-all party. The catch-all party, which emerged with consolidation of the welfare states, is different from the mass party in several aspects. Specifically, it has considerably reduced its “ideological baggage;” strengthened top leadership; downgraded the role of the individual party member; recruited voters in the whole population de-emphasizing the “*classe gardée*,” and secured access to a variety of interest groups for financial and electoral reasons (Kirchheimer as quoted in Costa Lobo 2008, 284).

The catch-all parties, to a possible extent, aggregate various social interests and govern with less regard to program concerns. So their policy orientations are unstable and they may change with the public mood, since they constantly attempt to attract various social interests and ultimately constituencies. For instance, in societies where the public opinion is “unimodal and centrist,” catch-all parties, trying to maximize votes, place themselves in the centre of ideological spectrum and try to appear moderate in terms of policy inclinations and behavior. Besides, as catch-all parties do not have an explicit ideology, they usually emphasize the attractive personal attributes of their candidates, and nominations are mostly determined by the “electoral resources of the candidates rather than by such organizational criteria as years of experience in, or service to, the party, or position within key factions within the party” (Gunther et al. 2003).

Furthermore, both the cadre and mass parties (in particular thin mass-based parties) as general types of parties can incorporate cartel parties as subtypes as well which is a new type, defined by its relation to the state (Wolinetz 2002, 148). This party model is more separated from society, “as party leaders use public financing and expanded state functions to restrain competition and perpetuate themselves in power for power’s sake” (Diamond et al. 2001).

That is, the cartel party is characterized by the “interpenetration of party and state and by a pattern of inter-party collusion” (Koole 1996, 507). In contrast to catch-all parties, “cartel parties appeal to an even broader or more diffuse electorate, engage primarily in capital-intensive campaigns, emphasize their managerial skills and efficiency, are loosely organized, and remote from their members, who are barely distinct from non-members.” The level of use of state resources by the cartel party is high (Perkins 1998). Cartel parties are vulnerable because they are responsible for the successes of state policy, and for many shortcomings and failures in a period of shrinking resources as well (Wolinetz 2002).

Finally, parties can be classified according to the following dimensions (orientations): policy-seeking, vote-seeking, and office-seeking parties. These dimensions are not either mutually exclusive or completely independent of each other. Orientations are durable characteristics of political parties and they can be changed only through “consistent and durable efforts by an individual or group to re-make or re-orient the party.” The vote-seeking party corresponds to a catch-all or electoral-professional party (and accordingly, to a cadre party), and the policy-seeking party corresponds to the mass-based parties while the cartel party is one variant of an office-seeking party (Wolinetz 2002).

Office-seeking parties (some cadre and thin mass parties accordingly) basically focus on maximizing votes and securing government office, even at the expense of policy goals. Office-seeking parties either hold power alone or share it with others for the purposes of survival, and for gaining access to patronage. An office-seeking party avoids policy commitments and electoral strategies (such as criticizing prospective partners too sharply), otherwise it would hinder to form or join coalitions. As a rule, officeholders or office-seekers constitute the major part of these parties as these parties do not attract or retain political activists who are mainly concerned with policy (Wolinetz 2002, 152). Below the elite-based and mass-based parties are described in detail.

## **Cadre Party**

The cadre party is characterized both by a skeletal organization, intermittently active, that is, a thin cadre party, or by a loose organization, having large mass-membership, that is, thick cadre party (Wolinetz 2002). The principal organizational structures of thin cadre parties are “minimal and based upon established elites within a specific geographic area” (Diamond et al. 2001, 12). From the perspective of program, these parties are not ideological. The principal electoral commitment rests upon the “distribution of particularistic benefits to residents of a geographically defined constituency or to ‘clients’ at the bottom of a patron–client hierarchy.” Such parties, as a rule, are not hegemonic, and are tolerant and collaborative towards one another (Gunther et al. 2003).

Thick cadre party has constituency associations throughout the country, but the party outside of Parliament is scarcely active. That is, the core characteristic of both a thick and thin cadre parties is domination by a relatively small group at the center (Ware as quoted in Wolinetz 2002, 143). Additionally, according to Panebianco’s re-specification, the electoral-professional party, that is the cadre party, is characterized by the centrality of professionals, its electoral orientation and weak vertical ties to its membership, the prominent role of elected representatives, financing through organized interests or government subsidies, and its stress on issues and interests rather than ideology. However, the level of use of state resources of cadre party is low, and the derivation of party resources is basically private (Perkins 1998).

The electoral-professional party corresponds to the vote-seeking party whose primary goal is winning elections. In a heterogeneous society, and/or under “a winner-take-all system of elections,” a vote-seeking party usually has a coalitional structure, and focuses on different social groups to win a majority and to win office at almost all levels of governance (local, regional, national). A vote-seeking party usually has only the minimum structure of

organization that is required to recruit and select candidates and get them elected. Party members might sometimes influence the selection of candidates, but not party policy (Wolinetz 2002).

Ultimately, catch-all parties which are closely linked to cadre or electoral-professional party, in regard to some of the functions of political parties, are characterized as follows (Diamond et al. 2001, 27):

First, nomination is basically based on the personal electoral appeal of the candidate (perceived by a party nominating committee or determined by the actual support received by a candidate in an election), rather than on such considerations as length of service to the party or formal institutional position within the party.

Second, electoral mobilization is based on direct, unmediated appeals by the candidate to voters through the mass media, especially television.

Third, campaign appeals tend to focus on relatively transient issues (including the personal abilities of the candidate and the weaknesses of his or her opponent), and are not explicitly linked to established programmatic or ideological commitments.

Fourth, in order to gain electoral appeal, the candidates of catch-all party avoid defending the interests of specific social groups during election campaigns and avoid establishing institutionalized links with specific social groups.

Fifth, the party and its candidates, not being committed to specific interests, have considerable discretion in aggregating interests or programmatic commitments.

Sixth, the party, lacking ideological or programmatic commitments, freely forms or joins governing coalitions.

And finally, their potential for social integration is limited due to low levels of citizen involvement and identification with such parties.



## **Mass Party**

The mass-based party is present at almost all levels – national, regional and local levels which hold regular meetings. In mass parties, specifically, thick mass parties, “members are more than a workforce and have some voice or ownership in the party” (Ware 1987). Additionally, the party program is drafted by the central office and parliamentary caucus staff, debated actively by party members and adopted by a party congress. Accordingly, the mass party is a policy-seeking party which prioritizes its policies (Wolinetz 2002, 136).

Further, the mass party is characterized by “a large base of dues-paying members who remain active in party affairs even during periods between elections” (Diamond et al. 2001, 16). According to Panebianco’s re-specification, mass-bureaucratic party is characterized by financing through interest groups (Wolinetz 2002, 146). In addition to Perkins (1998), mass party has a low level of use of state resources, and the derivation of party resources are mainly private. The party tries to enter a number of social spheres in order to disseminate the party’s ideology and establish an active membership base. “Affiliated trade union, religious and other social organizations serve not only as political allies (helping to mobilize supporters at election time), but for the projection of the programmatic objectives of the party from the electoral-parliamentary arena into a variety of spheres of social life” (Gunther et al. 2003, 177).

With regard to the basic functions performed by parties, some features of the “ideal-type mass party” are described below.

First, candidate nomination is controlled by the party’s leadership or professional bureaucracy. Allegiance to party and its ideology, and previous service to party are important criteria that are considered in nomination.

Second, the most salient issues on the party’s agenda are rooted in programmatic commitments and are not easily alterable.

Third, the interests promoted by the party are inclusive and highly aggregated rather than narrow.

Fourth, the party may not be regarded as an acceptable coalition partner by parties of a centrist or sharply opposed ideological orientation, as the party has ideological and programmatic commitments.

Fifth, even if the party is not represented in the national level, its parliamentary representation can be of great significance for social aggregation, particularly if the party is present in local or regional levels of government (Diamond et al. 2001).

By contrast, there are thin mass-based parties, the organizational form of which is that of a mass party but the level of activity is reminiscent of a cadre party (Wolinetz 2002, 136). In other words, such mass parties have “an extensive but not necessarily intensive organizational structure” (Sartori 2005, 15). As Sartori holds, there are two types of mass parties from the perspective of organization, namely ‘electoral mass party’ and the ‘apparatus mass party,’ that is, the thin mass party. The thin mass party outside Parliament is active both during election campaigns and in between. However, the party comprises only a small percentage of its voters as members, and most of the members rarely attend meetings. Election campaigns are usually organized by a small team, “in and around the leader and the central office,” and most members are seldom active by rarely attending an occasional rally or displaying a party poster in their front windows (Wolinetz 2002).

So in the course of time, both cadre and mass parties have evolved acquiring the features of electoral-professional, catch-all parties and ‘electoral mass parties’ and the ‘apparatus mass parties,’ respectively. Furthermore, both cadre and mass parties may be thick and thin, that is to say, they may have different degrees of decentralization. Lastly, cadre and mass parties, with their subtypes characterized by thin and thick parties, having different organizational structures, functions and tendencies, may have varying degrees of programmatic or

ideological commitments which imply certain implications for the external dimensions of democracy. These implications may also affect the democratization process in a certain country.

Thus, drawing from the literature review on cadre and mass parties, it can be inferred that cadre parties (both thin and thick) are more likely to be pragmatic and not have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments, whereas mass parties (both thin and thick) are likely to have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

### ***Organizational Structure and System of Political Parties in Armenia***

Armenia's constitution allows for a multi-party democratic system (ARD 2005). The fundamentals are in Article 7:

The multiparty system is 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 structure and practice contravene the principles of democracy. Parties shall ensure the openness of their financial activities.

However, the emergence of a party system does not mean that the consolidation of democracy is a foregone conclusion (Miller et al. 2000, 488). As of 1 January 2008, there were approximately 76 parties in Armenia (National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, 2008). Despite the proliferation of parties, no party fulfills the fundamental roles of aggregating the public's interest, offering policy alternatives, or organizing meaningful debate over public concerns (ARD 2005).

Most party structures are adaptations of the Soviet model. Nearly all parties have a pyramid structure, with power concentrated at the top and decisions handed down to the lower party levels. That is, they are top-down, hierarchical organizations and their organizational culture places great emphasis on the leader. The party chairperson is usually the single most important figure. Most parties are managed by a board and led by the

chairman and policy is adopted by a party congress which meets every one to two years. Although structures exist within most to connect the grassroots with party leaders, there are few signs that policy changes are the result of any bottom-up processes. Leadership and organizational structures are somewhat more developed among the historical parties and among some of the independence-era parties (ARD 2005).

In regard to ideology, most of the parties lack a coherent ideology, platform, and policy program, and they place themselves on a vaguely-defined ideological spectrum. However, historical parties tend to possess some core ideology and maintain some form of a national presence and a sustainable organizational structure, even if their overall support within Armenia has declined in recent years. This lack of strong ideology and policy development is a function of how and why most political parties are constructed in Armenia, that is, to advance the individual interests and parochial concerns of the party leadership and their small circle of supporters. Consequently, ideology and policy is developed by a top-down, leadership-centric approach (ARD 2005).

Furthermore, there is a detachment between the public and political parties in general. With a few rare exceptions, most political parties and party leaders do not regularly consult with the general public. Town hall meetings and public forums are sporadically organized, often at the prompting of donor-funded democracy promotion organizations and public interest groups rather than at the initiative of the parties themselves. Such meetings are important since “through local deliberation, citizens become aware of other interests and construct a more realistic conception of what is politically feasible than they would in the isolation of a ballot box” (Diamond 1999, 8). Few political parties conduct any form of public opinion research or any other active, organized program of listening to the public. Unlike in developed democracies, most parties in Armenia do not have close ties to key civil

society groups such as issue-based advocacy groups or groups that provide social services (ARD 2005).

This study focuses on some typologies of political parties in Armenia from the perspective of the organization structure and ideology. Specifically, the research is aimed at the Republican Party of Armenia (Hayastani Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun), the Prosperous Armenia (Bargavach Hayastan), the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hayeghapokhakan Dashnaktsutyun), the Rule of Law (Orinats Yerkir), and the Heritage Party (Zharangutiun). Today these political parties may be deemed to play a crucial role in the democratization of Armenia as they constitute an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly of Armenia. According to the election results of Armenian National Assembly on May 12, 2007, the Republican Party of Armenia gained 64 seats, that is, 33.91 percent of the seats, the Prosperous Armenia – 18 seats, 15.13 percent of the seats, Armenian Revolutionary Federation – 16 seats, 13.16 percent of the seats, the Country of Law – 9 seats, 7.05 percent of the seats, and the Heritage Party – 7 seats (Central Electoral Commission 2007). Furthermore, the “Republican Party of Armenia” Faction comprises 62 deputies, the “Prosperous Armenia” Faction – 25 deputies, the “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” – 16 deputies, the Rule of Law” Faction – 8 deputies, and the “Heritage Faction” – 7 deputies.

Currently, the governing coalition of Armenia comprises the Republican Party of Armenia, the Prosperous Party, and the Rule of Law Party. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation used to be in the ruling coalition. But on April 27 the Armenian Revolutionary Federation announced its decision to pull out of Armenia’s governing coalition as they had “insurmountable fundamental disagreements” with President Sargsyan over his “conciliatory policy” toward Turkey. Specifically, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation “strongly condemned” the roadmap agreement after it was announced by the Armenian and Turkish foreign ministries on the night from April 22-23, since according to Dashnaks, “Yerevan

made major concessions to Ankara while failing to secure the lifting of the Turkish economic blockade of Armenia.” Thus, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Heritage are the opposition parties represented in the Parliament. Below an overview of these five political parties is represented.

### **Overview of Political Parties**

The Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) was founded in 1990, by Ashot Navasardian. The RPA is a national conservative party. The current chairman of the RPA is Serge Sargsyan, the incumbent president of Armenia. The objectives and activity of the RPA come from the ideas of the eternity of the Nation and Fatherland. The RPA has taken as its ideological base National-Religion teaching of Garegin Nzhdeh. That is, the RPA sees itself as a follower of the ideas of the Armenian national hero Gareghin Nzhdeh, whose theory has its substantial place in the Armenian national ideology. The national Armenian ideology is built on the basis of combination of Armenian value system and historical-cultural experience in conjunction with the national values and the ones common to all humanity.

In regard to the Party organization, the RPA is a mass party with extensive membership and practically no restrictions to enrollment. As of March 2007, the RPA claimed over 55,000 members (Foundation for Civil and Social Development). In addition, in 2002, the party had 68 offices in all of the regions of Armenia and Yerevan, and it was represented in regional and local governance as well (Baumgartner 2002, 24).

The activity of Prosperous Armenia Party (PAP) was initiated on April 30, 2004 when the constituent congress of the party first took place. PAP is a centrist political force. It is formed around the prominent businessman Gagik Tsarukyan and involves a number of other business leaders. Although established in 2004, Mr. Tsarukyan assumed leadership of the party in

2006, which since has claimed a very large membership base (Norwegian Center for Human Rights 2007).

According to the program of the PAP, the Party denies any extremism, political adventurism and dogmatism, and it strives for palpable and fundamental solution of the social problems. The Party believes that the most important prerequisite of the social development is the presence of a true moral and spiritual value system. Along with the trust in democracy and liberalism, and striving for the establishment of new value system PAP advocates for the preservation of the national and traditional values, distinguishing among them the values of family, church and statehood. Members of PAP are unified under the slogans of liberty, justice, solidarity and patriotism. As of March 2007, the PAP claimed to have 370,000 members (Foundation for Civil and Social Development).

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), founded in 1890 in Tbilisi, is essentially a nationalist, socialist, democratic, and revolutionary party. The principal founders of the ARF were Socialists, and Marxist elements are clearly present in the introductory section of the Party's first Program written by Rosdom and entitled "General Theory." The introductory paragraph of the "General Theory" of the Program was published in 1894. It stated that the ARF did not enter the arena as the follower of one or another utopian "dogma" with its attendant doctrines. But their aspiration was for their program to be viable; their attention, on the whole, was concentrated on the present situation of the country.

The first Program of the ARF endowed the Party with an essentially democratic worldview enriched by a socialist perspective. Realistically based on the objective conditions of Western Armenians, the Program stressed the historical necessity of changing those conditions through armed struggle. Without using the terms "Independence," "Democracy," and "Socialism," the Program expressed the entire, multifaceted make-up of the Armenian

revolutionary movement, including its national-liberation, political, and social-economic aspects.

Today the ARF strives to “defend the aggregate political, economic, and socio-cultural interests of the Armenian nation.” The Party’s goals are the “creation of a free, independent, and United Armenia, the borders of which “shall include all territories designated as Armenia by the Treaty of Sevres as well as the regions of Artzakh, Javakhk, and Nakhichevan;” “international condemnation of the as yet unpunished Genocide committed by Turkey against the Armenians, return of the occupied lands, and just reparations to the Armenian nation;” “the gathering of worldwide expatriate Armenians on the lands of United Armenia;” “strengthening Armenia's statehood, institutionalization of democracy and the rule of law, securing the people's economic well being, and establishment of social justice.” In short, the ARF, through its ideology, advocates “individual freedom, national self-determination, independent statehood, social harmony, and economic well being to secure unobstructed, multifaceted, and sustainable development of both the individual Armenian and Armenian nation.”

As of March 2007, the party’s membership base was approximately 7000 (Foundation for Civil and Social Development). And in 2002, the party had organizations and overall seventy-four offices in all ten regions of Armenia and Yerevan (Baumgartner 2002, 9). It is internationally recognized as a major political force both in Armenia, Karabagh and in Armenian communities worldwide. The party has a well-organized “network of cells” in practically all countries where there is a significant Armenian population. In addition, it is a member of the Socialist International, and so has various ties with other international organizations.

The Rule of Law is a left-centrist party founded in 1998 by Arthur Baghdasarian. The party grew out of an existing political organization, the Union of Lawyers and Political



Scientists, which specialized in legal affairs. In 2002, the scope of the party's organization and activities was wide; the party had 160 regional organizations in Yerevan and each of the ten regions, many of which provided legal, financial, and medical assistance to the population free of charge (Baumgartner 2002, 19).

The ideological fundamentals of the Party are: (1) loyalty to the national identity and the significance of national values; (2) discovery of national stamina and growth of competition; (3) national unity and goals; (4) advocacy of being a legitimate state; (5) assistance to the harmonized development of international and domestic legal systems; (6) formulation of effective legislative system providing for public development.

The Heritage Party was founded in 2002. The party was formed and is led by former minister of foreign affairs and diaspora-Armenian Raffi Hovhannisyan. The Heritage Party is a "national liberal" party, that is to say it is "national by its roots, liberal in its economic principle, and an advocate of the democratic system of governance and due process for its citizens." The Party adherents are proponents of a modern market economy with a strong social sector and a minimal but efficient regulatory role for the state. The party's objective is the development of Armenia as a democratic, lawful, and rights-based country that anchors its domestic and foreign policies in the nation's sovereign interest.

According to the ideology of the Heritage Party, "liberty and democracy, the rule of rights and the equality of opportunities, lawfulness and accountability, justice and solidarity have no alternative in Armenia." The Heritage Party advocates a "strong state and a strong government that faithfully serves its citizens, a state whose supreme value is the individual," his/her rights and dignity. Concisely, the Party aims to achieve a "society of inclusive security" (encouraging initiative and creation of new jobs, increasing the minimum wage and pensions up to the threshold for physical sustenance, expanding the citizen's access to quality

education and health care), “social harmony” (improving qualitatively state funding for education, health care, arts and culture, creating effective mechanisms of social and health insurance, increasing the cost-efficacy of social allocations, securing the citizen’s right of benefit from quality communal services, supporting mothers, children, and young families), “social market” (ensuring favorable conditions, first of all legislative, for a qualitative growth of investments and exports, bringing economic entities enjoying illegal privileges out from under the shadow and into the fold of lawful taxation, undertaking tougher antitrust measures, improving the accessibility of middle and long-term loans and so forth), “safety for citizens,” and “true democracy.”

To date the Party has opened 46 regional divisions and 28 offices across Armenia. In 2007, the membership base of the Party was 5340 (Foundation for Civil and Social Development).

In order to get the full picture of ideologies and parties in Armenia, it is important to address the issues of elections. So a brief overview of elections is represented below.

### **Elections**

“Disputed elections and the resulting lack of confidence in the democratic mechanisms for rotation of power among key political actors has been the principal source of political instability in Armenia ever since independence” (Civilitas Foundation 2008). Specifically, the Parliamentary Elections 2007 and Presidential Election 2008 are concisely analyzed and represented here.

The Parliamentary Elections were held on 12 May 2007. Although before and during the last stages of the election process, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) observed “certain inconsistencies with established regulations and departures from best electoral practice which

do not contribute to strengthening public confidence in the election process” (such as extensive coverage of government activities, and a minimum criticism directed at election contestants, protracting vote count and tabulation (but completed within legal deadlines), delay by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) in posting tabulated results from the Yerevan constituencies on its website compromising transparency measures for elections, ordering of corrections to Precinct Election Commission (PEC) protocols, including adjustments to initial data contrary to Election Code), the OSCE and the European Council considered the parliamentary elections held in May 2007 to have shown progress in comparison to previous elections (FRIDE 2008). Thus, the Parliamentary Elections 2007, broadly speaking, corresponded to international standards.

The presidential election in the Republic of Armenia was held on 19 February 2008. Although OSCE/ODIHR’s preliminary report on 20 February said that the election had been conducted “mostly in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections,” OSCE/ODIHR did not qualify the election as “free and fair” due to numerous irregularities.

The irregularities included “control over the election administration by one political interest; blurring of the separation between state and party functions; inequitable media coverage; a tense pre-election environment, including attacks on opposition campaign offices and activists; pressure and intimidation of public-sector employees and the military; election bribes and vote-buying; ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ vote count, including deliberate falsification of official results and derogation from protocol” (OSCE/ODIHR as quoted in Policy Forum Armenia 2008). Further, according to the reports of international observers, journalists, and candidate proxies, there were “significant irregularities and instances of fraud on election day and during vote counting which included the barring of registered vote observers, who were

in many cases not allowed to witness voting or vote tabulations, ballot box stuffing and organized multiple voting” (OSCE/ODIHR as quoted in International Crisis Group 2008).

After the Armenian presidential elections on 19 February 2008, the opposition, comprising of Levon Ter-Petrosyan and his adherents, organized mass demonstrations against the government, accusing it of rigging the vote. On March 1, clashes between police and demonstrators led to ten deaths and a massive wave of arrests of opposition supporters and representatives of Levon Ter-Petrosian, and even the suspension of many foreign service diplomats from their posts in other countries. On 1 March, in the wake of this eruption of violence, a national state of emergency was declared by the outgoing President Robert Kocharyan, which lasted until the 21 March and the country was subject to an information blackout (FRIDE 2008).

Some of the reasons of the March 1 events were because “the National Assembly, the political parties as institutions, the media, the judicial system and law enforcement agencies did not provide effective and reliable outlets for disagreement and dissatisfaction, or dialogue and cooperation.” The “continuing instability and the prevailing unease and distrust is also because institutions are still more form than content, not predictable and stable;” shortly, “not reliable” (Civilitas Foundation 2008).

Political and societal instability also resulted from Armenia’s immature political and social institutions. In particular, “viable political party” has not yet developed in Armenia. “Instead of nurturing, or at least allowing, a healthy flow of ideas and resources, those in political power at every level, from national to local, and at every election except the first, in September 1991, have sought to limit and control the three levers of popular influence: ideology, money, and media” (Civilitas Foundation 2008). The “personalized political parties,” “lacking a solid ideological base and human and financial resources,” have been unable to resist this kind of control.

The aim of this research is to study the interrelation between internal (the organization structure of party, including the degrees of institutionalization and decentralization) and external dimensions of democracy (ideological or programmatic commitments and pragmatism of political parties). Since we assume that there is a close interrelation between these internal and external dimensions of democracy, the existing models of political parties in Armenia, namely, the RPA, the PAP, the ARF, the Rule of Law, and the Heritage Party, which are an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly, may be deemed to play a crucial role in the democratization of Armenia.

Drawing from the literature review on cadre and mass parties described above, it is expected that in Armenia mass parties have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments, whereas cadre parties are pragmatic and have no well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments. In order to find support for this hypothesis, it has been split into four sub-hypotheses as follows:

H1: Thin and cadre parties are pragmatic and do not have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

H2: Thick and mass parties have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

H3: Thin and mass parties have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

H4: Thick and cadre parties are pragmatic and do not have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

## **Research Design**

To obtain data for determining the internal dimension of democracy, that is, organizational structure of parties (including the degrees of institutionalization and

decentralization), exploratory study methodology is used. The units of analysis are Armenian political parties. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data collection was realized through in-depth interviews with selected leaders, experts and members of five political parties whereas secondary data is mainly collected from party charters. Some responses given at interviews, related to party charters, were checked in terms of their correspondence with the charters. The sample of the study is selected purposefully: it is based on the parties which have factions in the current National Assembly since the hypotheses can only be tested by votes. Due to time limitations and small size of sample, the obtained data is not tested with statistical rigor. The purpose of the research is to disclose the organizational structure including the degrees of institutionalization and decentralization of parties. In order to show the tendency, an aggregate scoring instrument is developed. The sample for this study comprises the following parties: the Republican Party of Armenia, the Prosperous Armenia,<sup>1</sup> the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the Rule of Law, and the Heritage Party.

And in order to gauge the external dimensions of democracy, that is ideological or programmatic commitments and pragmatism of parties, the interrelation of the programmatic or ideological stance of parties reflected in party platforms and/or programs to the actual vote are taken into account.

## **Conceptualization**

Internal and external dimensions of party democracy are closely interrelated, so that external dimensions of democracy considerably hinge upon internal dimensions. Therefore, “apart from political parties’ speech and action *ad extra* which must formally endorse the democratic principles and rule of law contained in constitutional and legal provisions of the

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<sup>1</sup> The primary data about Prosperous Armenia are obtained from a party expert unofficially

country, political parties' internal organisation and functioning must also substantially abide by the principles of democracy and legality" (Venice Commission 2009). In this study, ideological or programmatic commitments and pragmatism of political parties are deemed as external dimension of democracy, and the organizational structure of party is the internal dimension.

### **Internal Dimension of Democracy**

The internal dimension is the organizational structure of party, including the degrees of its decentralization and institutionalization. The concept of party institutionalization is designed to capture the idea that a political party should be more than simply an extension of the individual who founds it (Baumgartner 2002, 7). This is important simply because political parties' contribution to the functioning of democracy assumes that parties have a certain independence, consistency, and continuity, both of which are less likely if the party is simply a vehicle for a charismatic leader (Baumgartner 2002, 7).

Thus, political party organization plays "a pivotal role in democratic consolidation and stability" (Perkins 1998, 1). Principles of representativeness, receptiveness, responsibility and accountability should apply to the organization of political party. That is to say, the structure of the party and its procedures should represent the opinion of the members and they should be receptive towards these. And organs (both collective and individual) "should be held accountable and responsible to party members, that is, procedures should secure internal (and external) responsibility and rendering account of actions and policies" (Venice Commission 2009). As a result, institutionally strong and decentralized political parties can consolidate democracy or maintain its vitality.

Since number of members is, at best, a rough measure of the extent of party institutionalization (Baumgartner 2002, 7), other criteria should also be taken into consideration. Specifically, four main criteria for profiling the principal dimensions of the

organizational structure of parties are used in this study. These criteria include (1) party size, (2) activity (activeness) of members, (3) organizational complexity, and (4) autonomy of the party (Enyedi et al. 2008). These dimensions are specified below.

- (1) First, we examine the size of parties, the number of members and the structure of parties.
- (2) Second, when analyzing the activity of party members, we focus mainly on membership requirements, and frequency of meetings with members (Enyedi et al. 2008, 460). The activity of party members also relates to integrating party members in the deliberation process of a policy, voting of party members on specific policy positions, asking party conference delegates to endorse a set of commitments prepared by a platform committee, and holding consultation meetings around the country (Venice Commission 2009).
- (3) The third criterion is the degree of complexity within and external activities of party organization. The degree of complexity within the organization is looked upon from the perspective of formalization of rules and formality of relationships, specifically in this study, it is the presence and application of conflict resolution mechanisms (Enyedi et al. 2008, 460). In regard to the complexity of external activities of party organization, the regional outreach, that is territorial penetration and scope of party organization is considered. The regional outreach is measured by the number of offices the party maintains, and the number of regions the party has a presence in (Baumgartner 2002, 8).
- (4) The fourth criterion is the autonomy of a political party, as organizationally strong parties are expected to be independent. It is mainly measured from the perspective of finance, that is, the more secure its sources of income are, more autonomous it is. More specifically, sources of income can be ranked according to their impact on the financial autonomy of the parties. From this point of view, membership fees and income coming from real estate or from other businesses run by the party are the most 'independent' type of income. State subsidies have an ambiguous character. On the one hand, they lower the



parties' autonomy vis-à-vis the state, but they also provide parties with the financial freedom to pursue their specific policy agendas. As far as donations are concerned, the more concentrated they are the less likely it is that the party will be able to disregard the sponsors' priorities (Enyedi et al. 2008, 460).

Although the above list is not exhaustive, it basically comprises a set of core internal functions implemented by political parties. The character of electoral democracy may be substantially affected by the differential performance of these functions as one party type comes to prevail over the others (Diamond et al. 2001, 9).

According to Wildavsky (1959) cadre parties generally have a weak degree of centralization and a small number of members, mass parties – a strong degree of centralization and a very large number of members (and devotee parties – a very strong degree of centralization and a large number of members). So it is conceptualized that cadre parties have a medium degree of decentralization and a small number of members, while mass parties have a low degree of decentralization and a large number of members. In addition, parties that have a low degree of decentralization are considered thick, and parties that have high or medium degrees of decentralization are thin (Gunther et al. 2003).

Thus, after aggregating all these data it can be conceptualized that the parties that have a large membership base and a low degree of decentralization are *thick mass parties*, while the parties that have a small membership base and a low degree of decentralization are *thick cadre parties*. In addition, the parties which have large membership base and medium degree of decentralization are *thin mass parties*, whilst the parties that have a small membership base and a medium degree of decentralization are *thin cadre parties*.

Generally, it may be inferred that the degree of decentralization of a political party as an internal dimension and ideological commitments and pragmatism as external dimensions are

related to each other. Specifically, the more decentralized is the political party organizationally, the less it will be ideologically committed, that is to say, it will be deemed pragmatic. Conversely, the less decentralized is the political party, the more it is expected to be programmatic or ideologically committed.

### **External Dimension of Democracy**

Ideological parties (that is, parties that have programmatic commitments) are those which are “loyal to peculiarly action-oriented sets of beliefs, rather than speculative theoretical systems” (Eagleton 1991, 47). “The ideas in question must be translatable by the ideological discourse into a ‘practical’ state, capable of furnishing their adherents with goals, motivations, prescriptions, imperatives and so on” (Eagleton 1991, 47). Thus, a successful ideology must work both practically and theoretically, and discover some way of linking these levels. Martin Seliger, in his *Ideology and Politics*, argues that ideologies are typically mixtures of analytic and descriptive statements on the one hand, and moral and technical prescriptions on the other. They combine in a “coherent system factual content and moral commitment, and this is what lends them their action-guiding power” (Eagleton 1991, 48).

Furthermore, programs are closely related to ideologies since they mirror the ideological principles adopted by political parties. Programs lead party action when the party is in power. And the program provides guidelines for citizens to understand and identify the party policies on given issues. Simultaneously, programs “also reflect a sort of “soft contract” or moral commitment between parties and voters.” Moreover, the permanent availability of program, “through the electoral mandate serves to check the adherence to the electoral promises” and to further promote accountability (Venice Commission 2009).

Thus, with respect to external dimension, political parties should provide most citizens “with a stable and distinctive set of ideas and goals that anchor their expectations about

democracy, orient them in a general way toward policy options, and make them feel part of the process of collective choice” (Diamond 2001). So “one of the most important functions of political parties is the elaboration of a programme which in best practice results from the internal debate of party members and its approval according to established procedures.” In contrast, the parties which have no well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments are considered pragmatic (Gunther et al. 2003, 171).

In order to gauge the external dimensions of democracy, that is ideological or programmatic commitments and pragmatism of parties, three issues have been selected which are related to different spheres of policy, namely, economy, environment, and education. In 2009, four bills (concerning these spheres) initiated by the Government of Armenia, namely, Amendments and Additions made in the Law of the Republic of Armenia (RA) on Excise Tax (voted twice in the National Assembly (NA), on 15 September 2009, and on 29 October 2009), Amendments and Additions made in the Law of the RA on Administrative Infringement, and an Addition made in the Law of the RA on Higher and Postgraduate Education, are analyzed from the perspective of the relation of the theoretical vote, that is, considering the programmatic or ideological stance of parties reflected in party platforms and/or programs, to the actual vote, that is, the percent of the faction which voted for the bill. And if at least one vote is pragmatic, that is to say, if there is a discrepancy between theoretical and actual votes, the party is considered pragmatic.

As already mentioned, the Amendments and Addition in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax was voted twice in the NA, on 15 September, 2009, and on 29 October 2009. Broadly speaking, this bill addresses the issue of strengthening the supervision mechanisms implemented by the tax authorities on alcohol and tobacco produced in the RA and imported to the RA subject to excise tax. Generally, the second bill, Amendments and Additions made in the Law of the RA on Administrative Infringement, refers to the environmental self-

supervision of entrepreneurs. The bill, which proposes an Addition in the Law of the RA on Higher and Postgraduate Education, stipulates to give opportunity to everybody to continue education (eliminating the deadline of ten years after the termination of education), only if the difference of the subjects taught does not exceed eight.

### ***Republican Party of Armenia***

The provisions of RPA program, which are related to economy, are stipulated as follows:

The economic policy of the Armenian state must be based on the global experience, taking into account the national peculiarities. The state must ensure favourable conditions for the efficient activity of the public and private sectors, acting as a guarantor of the development of liberal economic relations and enhancement of the diversity of ownership patterns.

As there is no specific reference to administration and collection of taxes in the provisions of the program of RPA, it can be inferred that RPA's theoretical vote of this bill should be neutral or negative (see in the Table 1). The RPA Faction voted for the bill in the following way: on September 15, the 66.1 percent of the Faction voted for the bill, and on October 29, the 75.8 percent of the Faction voted for the bill. Taking into account that the theoretical vote, which should be neutral or negative, there is a deviation in terms of voting on the bill of excise tax (See in the Table 1).

### **Opinions of RPA Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax**

At the NA session, on May 21, 2009 the following opinions were mainly expressed by the RPA Faction members on the bill of Amendments and Additions made in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax. Areg Ghukasyan expressed doubts about the types of specific duties the tax officer was to implement in the office of manufacturer or the importer, that is to say, to him, those duties were not specified. Secondly, he was concerned whether there were any guarantees in the presented bill that the same types of organizations would be treated equally.

Further, Hermineh Naghdalyan wondered how the bill would influence the reduction of the shadow economy, that is to say, the approximate amount of reduction. Additionally, she said that one of the policies of the Government was the establishment of electronic mail and electronic transfer of accounts in order to decrease the frequency of contacts between the taxpayers and tax officers. So she wondered why the Government wanted to make close contacts with taxpayers. In addition, Hovik Abrahamyan expressed reservations on relying on tax officers to carry out their duties.

Areg Ghukasyan stressed the attempts of the Government to fight shadow economy in the field of big business and to supervise the circulation of documents, prices, and volumes. However, he expressed his doubts about the capacity of the tax officer to supervise all the three fields, namely the circulation of documents, prices, and volumes. And he proposed to implement the supervision at the guardroom to check the documents where the amount of the product to be distributed (or exported), the price, and the place of distribution would be fixed, otherwise it would be impossible to supervise at the site of production because of the technological secret, and the duration of production as some processes of production lasted twenty-four hours. He also said that it was not clear to whom the responsibility would be shifted if the tax officer omitted some errors in his report.

Finally, at the NA briefing session on May 22, Galust Sahakyan, the head of the RPA Faction, said that the proposed changes in the Law of RA on Excise Tax were aimed to exercise supervision on big business. And he held that after the suggestions of deputies were accepted, the Bill would possibly pass.

In relation to the environment, there are no provisions in the Program of the RPA. The actual vote should be neutral or positive. 56.5 percent of the RPA Faction voted for the bill (See Table 1). So there is no deviation.

With respect to education, the Program of RPA says that “education must provide a person with deep and versatile knowledge and at the same time must bring to the notion that all the knowledge must serve not only the personal welfare, but also to the strengthening of the Nation and Fatherland.” Further it goes on saying that “the state must ensure free secondary education for all who wish to obtain it, and sponsor the higher education of the most gifted ones.” However, there is no reference to increasing the number of people with higher or post-graduate education (which is the ultimate aim of the Bill), therefore the theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. 70.9 percent of the RPA faction voted for the bill. So there is no deviation in the vote.

**Table 1: “Republican Party of Armenia” Faction**

Issues	Theoretical Vote	Actual Vote (percent)	Comments
1 (a) Excise Tax (September 15) *	Neutral or negative	66.1	Deviation
1 (b) Excise Tax (October 29) **	Neutral or negative	75.8	Deviation
2. Environment ***	Neutral or positive	56.5	No deviation
3. Education ****	Neutral or positive	70.9	No deviation

\*1 voted against; 2 did not vote; 18 were absent.

\*\*1 voted against the bill; 5 didn’t vote; 9 were absent.

\*\*\*14 did not vote; 13 were absent.

\*\*\*\*3 did not vote for the bill; 15 absentees.

### ***Prosperous Armenia***

The PAP program comprises some provisions that are related to taxation. Basically, the program states that the PAP, in its struggle to reduce shadow economy, pursues the aims of “elaboration and adoption of a complex program of struggle against the shadow economy, fulfillment and improvement of the according legal field (improvement of the tax legislation),” “combination of administrative and economic methods of fighting giving

priority to the removal of the factors stimulating the shadow economy,” “reduction of the interested motives of the businessmen to deal in the shadow due to according legislative, administrative and organizational measures,” “elaboration and adoption of a program aimed at the simplification of the fiscal and customs administration.” The program also stresses efficacy of the tax administration and the level of professional qualification of the tax agencies’ personnel in the raising of the efficiency of tax policy. The program also emphasizes prevention and reduction of corruption by “raising the efficacy of the regulatory mechanisms and stimulation of the levers used in taxation system.”

So it can be concluded from the above mentioned provisions of the PAP program that the theoretical vote of this bill should be positive. There is no discrepancy of actual vote as the 80 percent and 76 percent of the PAP Faction voted for the bill on September 15 and October 29 respectively (See in the Table 2).

The PAP, in relation to the environment, has a provision which focuses on the issues of environmental protection. It says that “for solving the problems of the environment protection, preservation and reasonable use of natural resources it is necessary to create ecologically safe conditions of the worthy life of the people, to elaborate a new ecologic policy, including the doctrine of the ecological safety, develop of complex government long-term ecological programs, and to improve the legislation governing the ecology and nature management.” In respect to the “reasonable management of the natural resources,” an active policy should be adopted which will clearly define the “field of the nature management including the problems of the reasonable management, use and protection of the land, water, timber and other natural resources, raising to a target level the issues of the protection and quality of the industrial environment.”

There is no specific reference to the adoption of self-supervision mechanisms for the entrepreneurs, so the theoretical vote of the PAP Faction should be neutral or positive. 60 percent of the PAP Faction voted for the bill, so there is no deviation.

With regard to education, the PAP, under the provision of “creation grounds for information society,” stipulates implementation of the programs for “maximum application of the scientific, educational and professional capacities.” Further, it briefly describes the “Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Policy.” It states:

Any citizen with a first-rate education and comprehensive development is a strategic intellectual potential of the country. Prosperous Armenia believes that the strategic goal of the state policy in this field should be the establishment of such an educational system, which might enable each citizen to get the first rate knowledge being in public demand and guarantee to such educated people the social standing, which they actually deserve.

Although education is one of the priorities of the PAP, there is no specific reference to increasing the number of people with higher and post-graduate education. Thus, the theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. The actual vote is 88 percent, so there is no deviation (See Table 2).

**Table 2: “Prosperous Armenia” Faction**

Issues	Theoretical Vote	Actual Vote (percent)	Comments
1 (a) Excise Tax (September 15) *	Positive	80	No deviation
1 (b) Excise Tax (October 29) **	Positive	76	No deviation
2. Environment ***	Neutral or positive	60	No deviation
3. Education ****	Neutral or positive	88	No deviation

\*2 absentees; 3 did not vote.

\*\*2 absentees; 4 did not vote.

\*\*\*7 absentees; 3 did not vote.

\*\*\*\*3 absentees.



## *Armenian Revolutionary Federation*

According to the ARF program, the ARF is a socialist party, and it plans to implement a socio-economic policy fully oriented toward social justice (including the right to employment for all individuals and just distribution of income, bearing in mind the need for economic development of the entire society) and toward a strong and growing economy in Armenia. This policy partially hinges on the following principles: a productive, competitive, government-regulated, and socially just economic system formed on the professional, cultural, and intellectual characteristics of the country, fair economic system preventing socio-economic polarization of society, government sponsorship and oversight to promote strategically important fields of production, participation. As the ARF is a socialist party and in its program it stresses the government-regulated (and socially just) economic system, it can be inferred that Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax which strengthen supervision of tax collection are acceptable as judged from the provisions of their program. Thus, their theoretical vote should be positive.

Taking into account that the theoretical vote should be positive, it can be concluded that there is a discrepancy in the actual vote, since both on September 15 and on October 29, zero percent of the ARF Faction voted for the bill (See in the Table 3). In order to understand the reasons for this discrepancy, the opinions and arguments of the ARF Faction members expressed at the NA sitting on May 21 and at the NA Briefing on May 22 are represented below.

### **Opinions of ARF Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax**

The opinions of some of the members of the ARF Faction, expressed at the NA sitting on May 21 basically stressed the same reservations concerning the bill. To Ara Nranjan, the Bill

contradicted all the “elementary principles of liberalism” and “liberal laws.” To Vahan Hovhannesian, the head of the Faction of the ARF, the strengthening of supervision mechanisms established direct association between the tax authority (here a tax officer) and the entrepreneur. This direct association bred the risk of corruption, and therefore it was not desirable.

Artsvik Minasyan also stressed the risk of corruption. To him, the bill was one of the “subsequent, unstipulated” steps of the Government which was “directed to further weaken the sphere of business.” The small and medium businesses were put under pressure by the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax. And so the Government should review the bill, and in accordance with the Constitution, the Government should guarantee the social welfare of the state.

And according to Ara Nranyan, first of all socialism was assistance, mediation, and protection in the economy, but “the proposed bill actually interfered with the entrepreneur” and hindered its business. And in addition, the adoption of the bill would hinder the trade secret which could be used by the competitors.

And finally, at the NA briefing session on May 22, Artsvik Minasyan, said that the Government, in proposing the bill, was taking steps which were not conducive to alleviating the burden of small and medium businesses.

In relation to the environment, it is stated in the Program of the ARF that “national culture, land, environment, and resources are national assets and have strategic significance.” And “government sponsorship and oversight are encouraged to promote strategically important fields of production, protect nature and the ecosystem, assure employment and provide the current amenities of life to the populace.” So it can be inferred from these provisions, that the theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. 50 percent of the ARF Faction voted for the bill (and 50 percent were absent), so there is no deviation.

As to education, the Program of the ARF states that “the educational system, as well as the cultural and spiritual-moral development of the people is fundamentally government responsibilities.” Although the Program does not dwell on the sphere of education, it is clear that the theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. 62.5 percent of the Faction voted for the Bill, so there is no deviation in the vote.

**Table 3: “Armenian Revolutionary Federation” Faction**

Issues	Theoretical Vote	Actual Vote (percent)	Comments
1 (a) Excise Tax (September 15) *	Positive	0	Deviation
1 (b) Excise Tax (October 29) **	Positive	0	Deviation
2. Environment ***	Neutral or positive	50	No deviation
3. Education ****	Neutral or positive	62.5	No deviation

\* 10 abstained; 1 did not vote; 5 absentees.

\*\* 13 against; 3 absentees.

\*\*\* 8 were absent.

\*\*\*\*2 didn't vote; 4 absentees.

### ***Rule of Law***

In regard to economy, the Rule of Law Party in its program focuses on the principles of free market economy, protection of property, protection of the interests of taxpayers, and provision of equal conditions for entrepreneurs. The Rule of Law generally addresses the issues of taxation, however, there is no specific reference to the issue of strengthening of supervision mechanisms of tax collection. Judging from its program, the theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. There is no deviation since 87.5 percent of the Faction and 62.5 percent of the Faction voted for the bill on September 15 and October 29 respectively (See in the Table 4).

In relation to the environment, there are no provisions in the program of the Rule of Law. The theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. The actual vote is 50 (See the Table 4). So there is no deviation.

With regard to education, the Program of the Rule of Law states that the state should provide patronage to the sphere of education. Further, there are no provisions related to this sphere. So the theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. 75 percent voted for the bill, so there is no deviation.

**Table 4: “Rule of Law” Faction**

Issues	Theoretical Vote	Actual Vote (percent)	Comments
1 (a) Excise Tax (September 15) *	Neutral or positive	87.5	No deviation
1 (b) Excise Tax (October 29) **	Neutral or positive	62.5	No deviation
2. Environment ***	Neutral or positive	50	No deviation
3. Education ****	Neutral or positive	75	No deviation

\*1 did not vote.

\*\*1 did not vote; 2 were absent.

\*\*\*2 did not vote; 2 were absent.

\*\*\*\*1 did not vote; 1 absentee.

### ***Heritage Party***

In the program of the Heritage Party, it is stated that they are “proponents of a modern market economy with a strong social sector and a minimal but efficient regulatory role for the state.” The Party, in its program, advocates transition from “a criminal to a social market” economy. Furthermore, it states that “the expansive reach of the shadow economy, the monopolistic standing of circles in authority’s service, and the state’s unnecessary interference in the affairs of business result in social polarization, increase of distrust in the state, and an uncontrollable rise in prices—all of which impede the legitimate development of

entrepreneurship and spur criminality and corruption.” According to the program, it aims to “bring economic entities enjoying illegal privileges out from under the shadow and into the field of lawful taxation; cease the fraud in tax collection.”

Thus, it can be inferred from these provisions, that the theoretical vote of the bill should be positive. Zero percent of the Heritage Faction voted for the bill both on September 15 and October 29 (See Table 5). Thus, there is a deviation in the actual vote. In order to comprehend the reasons of this discrepancy, the opinions of the members of the Heritage Faction are represented below.

### **Opinions of the Heritage Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Excise Tax**

The main arguments and reservations expressed concerning the Bill were the following. Larisa Alaverdyan, the secretary of the Heritage Faction, said that there was no connection between strengthening the supervision mechanisms of tax collection and reducing the shadow economy, as reduction of shadow economy should be implemented by “another methodological approach.” Anahit Bakhshyan said that by proposing the Bill the Government showed that the existing instruments were not sufficient to supervise the taxation of big business. She said that first of all the shortcomings in the current mechanisms of supervision of taxation were to be corrected. So she expressed her disagreement with the Bill, and additionally she said that the future businesses that were to be supervised under the Bill were not specified.

Finally, Armen Martirosyan mentioned about the existence of 2000 corrupt tax officers and wondered whether those tax officers were going to supervise the taxation. He also said that there was already an instrument to implement supervision on taxation, namely, the “Law

on Operative Investigation.” And further, he added that there was a risk that the tax officer would become aware of the business secret.

In relation to the environment, there are no provisions in the program of the Heritage Party. The theoretical vote should be neutral or positive. The actual vote was zero percent (Table 5). So there is a deviation. The opinions of the Heritage Faction are represented below, in order to understand this discrepancy between the theoretical and actual votes.

### **Opinions of the Heritage Faction Members in Regard to the Amendments and Additions in the Law of the RA on Administrative Infringement**

The arguments of the Heritage Faction against the Bill were mainly expressed by Styopa Safaryan (the Head of the Heritage Faction), Anahit Bakhshyan and Larisa Alaverdyan. Styopa Safaryan said that the weakening of supervision and adoption of self-supervision mechanisms would entail evasion from responsibility. Anahit Bakhshyan raised doubts on the implementation of self-supervision as to her, there were many organizations and enterprises which did not even provide expensive devices for cleaning air and water which resulted in the extreme pollution of environment.

Further, Larisa Alaverdyan wondered why the self-regulation should be imposed on entrepreneurs through law. To her, such laws would be effective only in developed countries where many issues related to the law had already been resolved, whereas in Armenia, such a law would hardly be observed due to “global crisis, absence of mechanisms for supervision by civil society and weak labor unions.”

With regard to education, the program of Heritage states that they intend to “make Armenia a state where the supreme value for its citizens and their society is freedom—freedom based on personal initiative, dignity, education, material independence, and a sense

of high responsibility for the future of the nation.” Further, in “transition from a society of mass poverty to one of inclusive security,” the Heritage Party proposes to “expand the citizen’s access to quality education.” In transition “from social inequality to social harmony,” the Heritage proposes to “improve qualitatively state funding for education.” And finally, in transition “from a criminal to a social market,” the Heritage proposes to “establish a sound banking system capable of financing science and education.” It can be observed that the Heritage Party, in its program, prioritizes education and targets the spheres of education from several perspectives. Therefore, the theoretical vote should be positive or neutral. 40 percent of the Heritage Faction voted for the bill, 40 percent is not a majority. However, as 60 percent of the Faction was absent at the NA sitting, it cannot be decided whether there is a discrepancy in the actual vote or not. As all who were present unanimously voted for the bill, it can be assumed that there is no deviation in the actual vote.

**Table 5: “Heritage” Faction**

Issues	Theoretical Vote	Actual Vote (percent)	Comments
1. Excise Tax (September 15) *	Positive	0	Deviation
2. Excise Tax (October 29) **	Positive	0	Deviation
2. Environment ***	Neutral or positive	0	Deviation
3. Education ****	Neutral or positive	40	No deviation

\*5 voted against the bill; 1 was absent; 1 did not vote.

\*\*5 absentees, 2 against; 1 abstained.

\*\*\* 6 abstained; 1 was against.

\*\*\*\*5 absentees.

In conclusion, it seems from the above analysis, the PAP and the Rule of Law have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments, whereas the RPA, the ARF and the Heritage Party are pragmatic, that is, they do not have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments. In addition, it can be inferred that the RPA and the Rule of Law

do not have strong standing on issues (as they have neutral or positive standing on all the issues); this tendency is more characteristic of catch-all parties.

However, examining and analyzing three issues (including four bills) may not be sufficient for determining the parties' external dimensions. On the other hand, the programs of parties which have appeared to be programmatic (the PAP and the Rule of Law) are of quite a general nature since they seem to broadly but at the same time superficially cover different policy issues. So this tendency, if scrupulously examined and deeply analyzed, may distort the image of a political party as a programmatic one.

## **Findings**

### ***Party Size***

“To ensure inclusiveness and promote participation in the current context of drastically declining membership in political parties,” “not only national legislation but party statutes as well should expressly prohibit any restrictions on membership on the grounds of race, skin, colour, language, sex, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, property or place of residence, introducing open conditions for membership instead.” Best practices are those that clearly establish in party statutes the procedures and requirements for joining and which clearly state the criteria to be fulfilled to be members. However, parties may withhold membership from any applicant who rejects the values they uphold or whose conduct goes against the values and ideals of the party. “Besides large membership rosters confer legitimacy to political parties, enhance their linkage to supporters and, ultimately, to the wider community, among other benefits” (Venice Commission 2009).

According to Duverger (1954), a party belongs to the ‘mass’ type depending on its structure, not on the number of members. However, the number of members is typically treated as a good indicator of the values attributed to membership within the party.



In regard to the party size, most parties claimed to have large membership bases, ranging from 35,000 up to 200,000. As to membership requirements, there is no discrimination on membership as far as the applicants accept the program or ideology of the party. According to unofficial data obtained at interviews, the RPA has 137,000 members, the PAP – 200,000 members, the ARF – 7000 members, the Rule of Law – 35,000 members, and the Heritage – 3,500 members. In comparing the membership bases of parties, we can approximately say that the RPA, the PAP, the Rule of Law are large parties, while the ARF and the Heritage are small parties.

### **Structure of the Party**

In respect of the internal organization of political parties, in the Code of Good Practice in the Field of Political Parties, it is stated, the “supreme decision-making body should be the party congress or conference, composed of an assembly of delegates as a general rule, although it can also assemble all the party members.” The executive committee is the administrative authority that decides on current issues between congresses, although it can coexist with reduced delegates’ assemblies. In addition, different boards and the leadership run the party on a day-to-day basis. Alongside these functional units, a wide range of thematic or interest sections (of youth, seniors, women, minorities, with their own functional units in some cases) can be found at the different geographic levels of the organisation (Venice Commission 2009). Although all the five parties generally comply with the given structure, the composition of congresses and the election process of delegates vary from party to party.

As it is mentioned in the Code of Good Practice in the Field of Political Parties, and as it has been observed in the charters of the five political parties, the congress is the “supreme-decision making body” (Venice Commission 2009). So the composition of congresses, the election process of delegates and the number of delegates to be elected in particular, may be

considered essential for the decentralization and democratic decision making within parties. Therefore, the election of delegates for the congresses (taken from the party charters) will be concisely analyzed below.

In regard to the RPA, the Executive Body of the RPA determines the number of Congress delegates (depending on the overall number of party members), and the delegates are put up in the assemblies of “Principal Organizations.” And the candidates for the Executive Body are put up by the delegates of the Congress which also decides the number of members to be included in the Executive Committee. The Congress then elects the members of the Executive Committee. And those candidates who receive more votes (the number of votes is not specified), become the members of the Executive Committee.

The PAP charter states that “the general number of the Congress delegates and their proportion, as well as the list of the Party members entitled *ex officio* to participate in the Congress shall be determined by the Political Council.” “The delegates of the local cells shall be nominated and elected at the Meetings of such cells at least 40 days prior the date of the regular congress, and at least 10 days prior the date of the Special Congress.” The Political Council of the Party is the “permanently acting executive body of the Party, formed by the Party Congress.” “The number of members of the Political Council of the Party shall be fixed by the Congress.” And “members of the Political Council of the Party shall be elected by the majority vote of the Congress delegates for the term of two years.”

The ARF charter states that the deputies of Supreme Assembly are elected out of every 100 “friends” of Regional Committees (Marzayin komiteutyun) and Student Unions, and plus one deputy is elected if 51 and/or more friends are left. The following participants in the Supreme Assembly have “decisive voice”: deputies elected by the Regional assemblies and the Student Union, one representative from each Regional Committee, one representative from the Department (Varchutyun) of Student Union, one representative of the Central

Department (Varchutyun) of the Armenian Youth Union of the ARF, and one representative of the Supreme Body. There are also participants that have “consultative” function (khorhrdaksakan dsayn) in the Supreme Assembly, and these participants are also specified in the charter of the ARF.

According to the charter of the Rule of Law, the delegates of the Congress are elected by the general assemblies of the regional and territorial organizations through the “representative norm of delegates” formulated by the Department (varchutyun) of the Party. The number of Congress delegates is determined by the Executive Body of Party. The Department is elected by the simple majority of the delegates who are present at the Congress.

The charter of the Heritage Party says that the Congress can be convened by the Party members or by the delegates who are elected by the Party members. In addition, the party charters of the RPA, the PAP, the Rule of Law and the Heritage Party state that the quorum shall make up 2/3 of the members of the congresses. And according to all party charters, congresses are generally held once within two years, and extraordinary congresses may also be convened within two years.

In sum, although the party charters address the election process of delegates or participants in the congresses, no specific criteria of election (or selection) process of delegates for the congresses can be found in the party charters. This is problematic, as it can leave room for discretion by the party leadership. And with regard to the number of delegates to be elected for the congress, the specification of ARF is more detailed than that of the others. Taking into consideration these two criteria, namely the election process of delegates and the number of delegates to be elected, the parties have the following degree of decentralization: the RPA has a medium degree of decentralization, the PAP – low, the ARF – medium, the Rule of Law – low, and the Heritage Party – low (See in the Table 6).

**Table 6: Degree of Decentralization in Election of Congress Delegates and in Determining the Number of Congress Delegates**

Parties	Degree of Decentralization	Average Score
Republican Party of Armenia	Medium	1
Prosperous Armenia	Low	0.5
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	Medium	1.5
Rule of Law	Low	0
Heritage	Low	0.5

(Degree of decentralization in election of congress delegates and in determining the number of congress delegates: low=0, medium=1, high=2)

### *Activity of Members*

Intra-party democracy is manifested by the “inclusion of party members in deliberation and decision-making processes, extending the involvement of the party rank-and-file in certain key tasks of party governance, like the selection of party leaders and electoral candidates as well as the definition of the party’s policy positions.” Internal party democracy fulfils the citizens' legitimate expectation that parties, which receive public funding and effectively determine who will be elected to public office, “practice what they preach,” conforming to democratic principles within their own organisations. Therefore, “good practices in the area of democratic functioning within political parties, is essential to enhance the credibility of the entire democratic system and generally strengthen democratic culture” (Venice Commission 2009).

According to the charters of RPA, PAP, ARF, and Rule of Law, the frequency of meetings with members are regulated in the following way: the RPA members meet at least once per month, the PAP members – at least once every six months, the ARF members – at least once per month, and the Rule of Law members – at least twice per year. The charter of the Heritage Party does not regulate the frequency of meetings with its members. In all the parties, extraordinary meetings can also be organized upon request with party members.

Further, the integration of all members into the deliberation process of a policy is not regulated by the charters of parties. In regard to this, although the charter of RPA states that its members can make decisions during the assemblies of the “Principal Organizations”, RPA does not specify the types of decisions that its members shall make. As to PAP charter, there is no reference to the decision-making and deliberation process of a policy by the members of “local cells.” The ARF does not integrate its members in the policy formulation process, but they can form and represent “formulated viewpoints” on the agendas of the upper bodies. The charter of Rule of Law stipulates that “in the principal organizations” decisions are made by two thirds of members who are present, but there is no reference to integration of the members into policy deliberation process. And finally, there are no specific provisions of integration of members of the Heritage Party in the deliberation process of a policy.

Although no charter regulates the integration process of party members into the deliberation process of a policy, one hundred percent of respondents said that party members participated in the deliberation process of a policy; eighty percent said that party members voted on specific policy positions; sixty percent said that the charter regulated the voting procedure. Moreover, eighty percent of the respondents said that voting result was included in the final policy decision process or influenced on the policy making of the party. These results may imply that there is a need of institutionalization of the integration of party members into policy deliberation process. The institutionalization of this aspect will increase first of all the party responsiveness and accountability to public in general, and secondly the commitment to the organization.

Because of the small sample size, in determining the activity of party members, only the frequency of meetings with members specified in the party charters and the presence of provisions in party charters for integration of members into decision-making process are used. So the degree of activity of members of the RPA is medium, the degree of activity of

members of the PAP – medium, the degree of activity of members of the ARF – medium, the degree of activity of members of the Rule of Law – medium, and the degree of activity of members of the Heritage – low (See in the Table 7).

**Table 7: Degree of Activity of Party Members**

Parties	Degree of Activity of Party Members	Average Score
Republican Party of Armenia	Medium	1
Prosperous Armenia	Low	0.5
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	Medium	1
Rule of Law	Low	0.5
Heritage Party	Low	0

(Degree of activity of party members: low=0, medium=1, high=2)

***Degree of Complexity within and External Activities of Party Organization***

**Degree of Complexity within Organization**

As it is mentioned, the degree of complexity within organization is looked upon from the perspective of conflict resolution. Democratically adopted regulations in regard to mechanisms of conflict resolution that lead to formalization of rules and formality of relationships, ensure decentralization within the organization. Furthermore, the neutral adjudication of conflicts will ultimately decrease tensions within the organization.

The research showed that there is no special committee on party conflicts in any of the parties. However, some respondents mentioned that an ad hoc committee can sometimes be formed for the resolution of conflicts. In addition, the conflict resolution process is not regulated in most of party charters. Only it is regulated in the charter of the Prosperous Armenia.

The study revealed that decentralization of conflict resolution in the ARF, the Heritage Party, and the Rule of Law is medium, whereas the decentralization of the RPA and the PAP

is low (See Table 8). However, if we take into account the absence of regulations of conflict resolution in most party charters, all the parties will have low degree of decentralization of resolution of conflicts.

In conclusion, the absence of provisions in party charters for regulation of party conflicts can entail subjective assessment of conflicts which will result in deterioration of relations within the party, loss of trust, and recurring conflicts.

**Table 8: Degree of Decentralization of Conflict Resolution**

Parties	Decentralization of Conflict Resolution	Average Score
Republican Party of Armenia	Low	0.5
Prosperous Armenia	Low	0.5
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	Medium	0.5
Rule of Law	Medium	0.5
Heritage	Medium	0.5

(Degree of decentralization of conflict resolution: low=0, medium=1, high=2)

## **Degree of Complexity of External Activities of Party Organization**

### **Regional Outreach**

The scope of regional outreach of party is essential for better territorial representation. Theoretically it also maximizes public input into the decision- and policy- making processes at local and regional levels. Further, representation at local and regional levels can be of great significance for social aggregation (Diamond et al. 2001). According to the Law of the RA on Political Parties (2002), “the party shall have separated divisions in at least one-third of the regions (Marzes) of the Republic of Armenia, including Yerevan.”

According to unofficial data gathered at interviews, the RPA overall maintains 60 offices, the PAP – 52 offices (out of which 51 are located in the regions), the ARF – 50 offices, the Rule of Law – 25 offices, and the Heritage Party – 3 offices. Additionally, it has also been mentioned that the number of regional offices depends on elections, that is to say, during election campaigns the number of party offices of some parties considerably increase. These tendencies are characteristic of vote-seeking party “whose primary goal is winning elections” (Wolinetz 2002).

Taking into consideration the unofficial data received at interviews, the degree of regional outreach of parties is the following: the RPA has a high degree of outreach, the PAP – a high degree of outreach, the ARF – a high degree of outreach, the Rule of Law – a medium degree of outreach, and the Heritage Party – a low degree of outreach (See the Table 9).

**Table 9: Degree of Regional Outreach of Parties**

Parties	Degree of Regional Outreach	Average Score
Republican Party of Armenia	High	2
Prosperous Armenia	High	2
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	High	2
Rule of Law	Medium	1
Heritage	Low	0

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

### ***Autonomy of a Political Party***

“Political parties need appropriate funding to perform their core activities, both during and between election campaigns, when they need to maintain their organisational structures.”  
 “Yet, the cost of politics is nowadays spiralling out of control and political parties are



increasingly being criticised and distrusted, often regarded as corrupt and as not serving the interests of the public at large because of the citizens’ perception of their gradual loss of independence and their being improperly influenced through financial means.” Therefore, the regulation of political parties’ funding is essential to guarantee their independence from financial sources and opportunity to compete on an equal footing” (Venice Commission 2009).

According to the Law of the RA on Political Parties, a party can be financed through the membership fees, donations, budgetary financing made in conformity with the procedure envisaged by the Law, civil-legal transactions and other entries not prohibited by the legislation. According to the unofficial data, the following sources of funding of party activities were emphasized as most essential sources: the RPA stressed the membership fees, the PAP – private donations, the ARF – membership fees, the Rule of Law – donations, and the Heritage Party – membership fees.

Donations if not diversified may decrease the autonomy of a political party (Enyedi et al. 2008). In the international practice, as concerns donations, two basic approaches are used: one quantitative that is, restricting the amount of donations, and another qualitative, regulating the qualification of donors or donations (Venice Commission 2009). In Armenia, only the qualitative approach is basically used.

According to the unofficial data, the degree of autonomy of political parties is the following: the RPA has a medium degree of autonomy, the PAP – low degree of autonomy, the ARF – medium degree of autonomy, the Rule of Law – low degree of autonomy, and the Heritage – medium degree of autonomy (See in the Table 10).

**Table 10: Degree of Autonomy of Parties**

Parties	Degree of Autonomy	Average Score
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Republican Party of Armenia	Medium	1
Prosperous Armenia	Low	0
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	Medium	1
Rule of Law	Low	0
Heritage	Medium	1

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

### ***Summary of Findings***

Finally, the overall degree of decentralization of parties is the following: the RPA has a medium degree of decentralization, the PAP – low degree of decentralization, the ARF – medium degree of decentralization, the Rule of Law – low degree of decentralization, and the Heritage – low degree of decentralization (See in the Table 11).

Thus, it is found that the RPA is a thin mass party, as the party size is large and it has a medium degree of decentralization; the ARF is a thin cadre party since it has a small membership base and a medium degree of decentralization; the PAP, the Rule of Law are thick mass parties, as the party size is large and the degree of decentralization is low; and the Heritage Party is a thick cadre party, as the party size is large and the degree of decentralization is low (See in the Table 11).

**Table 11: Degree of Decentralization of Parties**

Parties	Party Size	Degree of Decentralization	Average score	Party Type
Republican Party of Armenia	Large	Medium	1.1	Thin mass party
Prosperous Armenia	Large	Low	0.7	Thick mass party
Armenian Revolutionary	Small	Medium	1.2	Thin cadre party

Federation				
Rule of Law	Large	Low	0.4	Thick mass party
Heritage Party	Small	Low	0.4	Thick cadre party

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

Thus, the results mostly support the hypothesis that mass parties have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments, whereas cadre parties are pragmatic, that is, they do not have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments. In addition, according to the findings, none of the Armenian political parties has a high degree of decentralization. So the relation between the findings and sub-hypotheses is represented below (See Table 12).

*Hypothesis 1:* Thin and cadre parties are pragmatic and do not have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

According to the findings, the first hypothesis is supported, as it can be observed that the ARF, a thin cadre party is pragmatic.

*Hypothesis 2:* Thick and mass parties have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

The second hypothesis is supported as it has been found out that the PAP and the Rule of Law, thick mass parties, have well-defined ideological and programmatic commitments.

*Hypothesis 3:* Thin and mass parties have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

The third hypothesis is not supported as the Republican Party of Armenia, a thin mass party, is pragmatic.

Hypothesis 4: Thick and cadre parties are pragmatic and do not have well-defined ideological or programmatic commitments.

The fourth hypothesis is supported as the Heritage Party, a thick cadre party, is pragmatic.

**Table 12: Relation between Internal and External Dimensions of Parties**

Parties	Internal Dimension	External Dimension
Republican Party of Armenia	Thin mass party	Pragmatic
Prosperous Armenia	Thick mass party	Programmatic
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	Thin cadre party	Pragmatic
Rule of Law	Thick mass party	Programmatic
Heritage Party	Thick cadre party	Pragmatic

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Political parties are an indispensable and integral component of liberal democracy. The ultimate aim of democracy is “a government responsive to, and responsible toward, public opinion” (Sartori 1987, 87). Therefore, in the system of political pluralism, a consolidated party system, that is, strong and representative political parties, is of great significance for promoting public participation in the decision-making process. Additionally, “for democracy to function, a range of political parties mandated by a broad spectrum of constituencies, ideologies, and policy prescriptions need to be represented in state institutions” (Bugajski

2002, 973). In other words, “strong, ideologically differentiated political parties with mass as well as elite followings are clearly essential to democracy” (Miller et al. 2000, 488).

Nowadays there is “a substantial and growing disaffection” with many of institutions of democracy, and especially political parties. Perceptions of self-serving, unresponsive, and unaccountable governance possibly come from the change in the nature of political parties in many democracies. “It has been widely argued that parties have evolved over the past century from ideologically distinctive and compelling mass-membership organizations that touched and even enveloped a large proportion of the citizenry toward more generic “catch-all” parties” (Diamond et al. 2001, 24). That is, “many parties substantially soften their ideological commitments and loosen their ties to specific clienteles in pursuit of votes, thereby evolving into catch-all parties.” The distinguishing features of these parties are their “shallow organization, superficial and vague ideology, and overwhelmingly electoral orientation” (Diamond et al. 2001).

The catch-all parties, to a possible extent, aggregate various social interests and govern with less regard to program concerns. So their policy orientations are unstable and they may change with the public mood, since they constantly attempt to attract various social interests and ultimately constituencies. Insofar, as party supporters and activists remain committed to traditional ideological and programmatic stands, this shift may contribute to disillusionment and distance (Diamond et al. 2001).

So changes in the organizational forms, programmatic objectives, and ideological orientations of parties are due to numerous causal processes – some of them related to the “less predictable innovative behavior of political elites” (Diamond et al. 2001). In addition, the structures and resources leaders exploit to develop political parties determine the form of party organization and the party’s relationship to the electorate (Perkins 1998, 5).

However, the implications of disaffection are much graver in countries where democracy is not consolidated, and especially in the post-communist world. “Where the legitimacy of democracy is not deeply rooted at all levels of society, dissatisfaction and disaffection with democracy are much more likely over the long term to give rise to preferences for, or diminished resistance to, the return of some form of authoritarian rule” (Diamond et al. 2001). In other words, “weak political institutions, poor political performance, and the consequent cynicism about parties and politicians” hinder the consolidation and undermine the viability of democracy (Diamond et al. 2001).

Many of the problems facing Armenian political parties, including, both democratic and autocratic characteristics, a poor quality of governance, lack of transparent and democratic political leadership, corruption, the rise of powerful oligarchs, are shared with other post-communist states. Furthermore, other salient problems of the democratization of Armenia are organizationally weak and centralized institutions and the “fractured nature of the ideological space,” resulting in the “fractured nature of the electorate with vague ideological basis.” This is conditioned by the “competition among various groups of the political elite exclusively by group interests” (Margarian 2007, 351). This leads to further disillusionment and political disengagement of the public (ARD 2005).

Many of these problems may require political will for genuine change. This change should focus on two dimensions of democracy internal and external, that is to say, the organizational structure of party and ideological or programmatic commitments respectively. Political party organization plays “a pivotal role in democratic consolidation and stability” (Perkins 1998, 1). Principles of representativeness, receptiveness, responsibility and accountability should apply to the organization of political party. That is to say, the structure of the party and its procedures should represent the opinion of the members and they should be receptive towards these. And organs (both collective and individual) “should be held

accountable and responsible to party members, that is, procedures should secure internal (and external) responsibility and rendering account of actions and policies” (Venice Commission 2009). As a result, institutionally strong and decentralized political parties can consolidate democracy or maintain its vitality.

Programs lead party action when the party is in power. And the program provides guidelines for citizens to understand and identify the party policies on given issues. Simultaneously, programs “also reflect a sort of “soft contract” or moral commitment between parties and voters.” Moreover, the permanent availability of program, “through the electoral mandate serves to check the adherence to the electoral promises” and to further promote accountability (Venice Commission 2009).

Thus, with respect to external dimension, political parties should provide most citizens “with a stable and distinctive set of ideas and goals that anchor their expectations about democracy, orient them in a general way toward policy options, and make them feel part of the process of collective choice” (Diamond 2001). So “one of the most important functions of political parties is the elaboration of a programme which in best practice results from the internal debate of party members and its approval according to established procedures.”

The internal and external dimensions of democracy conceptualized here are not exhaustive since the concept of external and internal dimensions of democracy incorporates multiple aspects of democracy. So although there are other vital conditions that should be met – such as, fair and free regular national, regional and local elections, a credible and vibrant political opposition, politically engaged and publicly energized civil society and so forth – institutionally strong and decentralized and ideologically differentiated political parties with mass as well as elite followings are evidently essential and conducive to democracy.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

This study has limitations concerning the findings of both the internal and external dimensions of democracy, and there are some issues which require further inquiry. For instance, the ARF, despite being known for its tough discipline, is by Armenian standards, a “thin,” or more decentralized party. On the other hand, the PAP has an image of quite a pragmatic party, but has emerged as a programmatic party. However, the programs of parties which have appeared to be programmatic (especially those of the PAP and the Rule of Law) are of quite a general nature since they seem to broadly but at the same time superficially cover various policy issues. So this tendency, if scrupulously examined and deeply analyzed, may distort the image of a political party as programmatic.

So future research can be carried out through case study methodology in order to better analyze the interrelation between internal and external dimensions of democracy. The future study can also be conducted by better measuring instruments from the perspectives of both quantity and quality. For instance, it may comprise more indicators measuring internal dimensions of democracy of parties, namely the internal structure of parties, including the degrees of decentralization and institutionalization. Or, for example, if a party emerges programmatic because it has a program that quite superficially covers everything in the world or if a party appears more decentralized than it actually is; a critical analysis of the party charter can be employed. And finally the analysis can be realized through wider study of voting patterns as the current study comprised three issues, which may not be very representative.



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APPENDIX (Research Instrument)

Interview Date \_\_\_\_\_

Political Party Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Hello. My name is Ani. 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.*

*Party Size*

1. What is the membership base of the party?
2. What are the general requirements for acquiring membership status in the party?
3. What is the party structure established by the charter?

*Activity of Members*

4. Do you hold consultations/meetings with party members?

Yes

No

other

5. How often do you hold consultations/meetings with party members?

6. Is the frequency of consultations/meetings with members regulated by the party charter?

Yes

No

other

7. Do you integrate party members in the deliberation process of a policy?

Yes

No

other

**8. Is the integration of party members in the deliberation process of a policy regulated by the charter?**

Yes

No

other

**9. Do the party members vote on specific policy positions?**

Yes

No

other

**10. Is the voting procedure regulated by the charter?**

Yes

No

other

**11. How their voting result is included in the final policy decision process? Or will it influence on the policy making of the party?**

Yes

No

other

**12. Under what circumstances can this happen?**

**13. Would you, please, bring an example?**

*Degree of Complexity within Organization*

**Conflict Resolution Procedures**

**14. Did the party have conflicts within party members that required third party intervention?**

Yes

No

other

**15. Who resolves the conflict?**

**16. Does the party have special committee on party conflicts?**

Yes

No

other

**17. Does the party charter regulate the process?**

Yes

No

other

***Degree of Complexity of External Activities of Party Organization***

**Regional Outreach**

**18. How many offices does the party maintain?**

**19. Specifically, in how many regions does the party have offices?**

***Autonomy of a Political Party***

**20. According to the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Political Parties, a party can be financed through the membership fees, donations, budgetary financing made in conformity with the procedure envisaged by this Law, civil-legal transactions and other entries not prohibited by the legislation. Please, estimate the following financial resources for the party on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 means more resources from the source, and 4 less resources from the source?**

Membership fees

Donations

\_ State budgetary financing

\_ Civil legal transactions

\_ other

Thank you.