

THE DEBATE ON PRESIDENTIAL VERSUS PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS

SHOULD ARMENIA OPT FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM?

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THE DEBATE ON PRESIDENTIAL VERSUS PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS

CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION

Two types of democratic governmental systems: presidential and parliamentary, have been a subject of study for political scholars for many years. They analyzed them as to their effectiveness and the ability of each system to uphold democratic principles. This essay will analyze the strength and weaknesses of both systems, and will argue whether or not there are advantages for the Republic of Armenia to move to a parliamentary system as a more effective and desirable government system.

In order to argue whether or not the parliamentary system is more effective than the current semi-presidential system in Armenia, this essay will depict the key differences between the two systems in an effort to show if a parliamentary system would allow for a more stable, accountable, and effective government. The essay begins with a theoretical analysis that explains the views of several political scholars who have tackled those questions. The paper then tackles issues related to the structure of the bureaucracy in the two systems explaining how the current system creates an ineffective system, compared to the parliamentary form of government that has fewer restrictions, and allows for effective policy making.

As stated earlier, there is an ongoing debate among political researchers on the institutional consequences of presidential and parliamentary systems. Several researchers, including Eulau Heinz,¹ Bastin John,² Juan Linz,^{3, 4} Arend Lijphart,⁵ Stephan Haggard and

¹ Eulau, Heinz. February 1942. "Early Theories of Parliamentarism." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 33-55.

Matthew McCubbins,⁶ have argued that parliamentary systems are more effective, and that they lead to a more stable democracy. But there are other scholars, including Massari Oreste,⁷ Posquino Gianfranco,⁸ Duverger Maurice,⁹ Sartori Giovanni,¹⁰ Elgie Robert,¹¹ Mcmenamin Iain,¹² Barrington Lowell,¹³ Matthew Shugart,¹⁴ and Scott Mainwaring¹⁵ who disagree and argue for the superiority of the presidential system. This debate continues and has not reached consensus to this date.

A similar debate is currently taking place in the Republic of Armenia between the ruling party and the opposition parties. While the ruling party is pushing for a change in the system (from semi-presidential to parliamentary), three opposition parties have argued against the need

² Bastin, John. 1953. "Parliamentary Government in Southern Asia: Problems of Parliamentary Government in Colonies." *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 118-120.

³ Juan Linz. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy*, pp. 51-69.

⁴ Juan Linz. Fall 1990. "The Virtues of Parliamentarism." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 85-91.

⁵ Arend Lijphart. 1969. "Consociational Democracy." *World Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 207-225.

⁶ Stephan Haggard and Matthew McCubbins. 2001. "Presidents, Parliaments, and Policy." *Cambridge, Cambridge University Press*.

⁷ Massari, Oreste. 1996. "I sistemi semipresidenziali – differenze e analogie in prospettiva comparata." *Semipresidenzialismo – Analisi delle esperienze europee*, pp. 9-53.

⁸ Posquino, Gianfranco. 1996. "Duetti I duelli – l'adattabilità dei semipresidenzialismi." *Semipresidenzialismo – Analisi delle esperienze europee*, pp. 99-148.

⁹ Duverger, Maurice. 1980. "A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government." *European Journal of Political Eesearch*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, pp. 165-187.

¹⁰ Sartori, Giovanni. 1994. "Comparative Constitutional Engineering – An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes." *London/New York (Macmillan/New York University Press)*.

¹¹ Elgie, Robert. 2007. "Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies." *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53-71.

¹² Mcmenamin, Iain. 2008. "Semi-Presidentialism and Democratisation in Poland." Working Paper No. 2, (Working Papers in International Studies), *Centre for International Studies*, Dublin City University, p. 16.

¹³ Barrington Lowell. 2012. "Comparative Politics: Structures and Choices." *Cengage Learning*, pp. 169-171.

¹⁴ Scott, Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy a Critical Appraisal." *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29, pp. 449-471.

¹⁵ Scott, Mainwaring. 1993. "Presidentialism, multipartism, and democracy - the difficult combination." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 198-228.

for such change, without explaining or documenting the fundamental reasons supporting their position. They argue that there are countries with presidential government systems that are successful in solving their problems effectively. They are sure that the existing government system could solve problems facing the country, but it is the current administration that should change. In contrast, another opposition party (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaktsutyun), is for changing the system and supporting the ruling party. The other three opposition parties are arguing that the only reason for the administration in proposing change in the form of government is to allow the current president of Armenia to stay at the helm as speaker or as prime minister (under the new system of government) upon completion of his second and last term as president of the republic in 2018.

Along those lines, the ad-hoc Commission on Constitutional Reform, established by President Serzh Sargsyan, has officially articulated its position in favor of the change from the semi-presidential to a parliamentary system of government that would afford more power to the prime minister and largely a ceremonial office to the head of state. The Republican Party of Armenia with Serzh Sarkisyan at the helm has denied that there are other hidden motives in pushing ahead such change in the system. The current administration emphasizes the importance of that change arguing that it aims at improving governance by providing clearer lines of authority and stronger separation of powers. The other motive for the change is that it will strengthen democratic principles and establish the necessary conditions for ensuring rule of law and respect for human rights. The president of the Republic also has stated that he will not seek a term as prime minister after the Republic of Armenia adopts the parliamentary system of government.

CHAPTER II — LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers the definitions of both semi-presidential and parliamentary government systems, as provided by different scholars. It attempts to articulate the disadvantages and advantages of both systems, as found in the literature on this topic. Moreover, the literature review discusses the specific experiences of a number of countries, and compares and contrasts the two types of government systems. In this literature review, different analytical articles and research are presented, where the authors discuss the main benefits and drawbacks concerning these government systems. According to the works reviewed, there are many pros and cons of two types of systems affecting good governance, as well as from the standpoint of distribution of power. This literature reviewed lays out the complete spectrum of semi-presidential and parliamentary government systems from the perspectives of different authors.

SEMI-PRESIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Duverger's concept of semi-presidential government is defined "by the content of the constitution" and the criteria are of a formal nature.¹⁶ Veser emphasizes three exclusive formal characteristics for semi-presidential regimes:

1. "The president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage;
2. He possesses quite considerable powers; and

¹⁶ Duverger, Maurice. 1980. "A New Political Sytem Model: Semi-Presidential Government." *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 8, pp. 165–87.

3. He has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental powers and can stay in office only if parliament does not show its opposition to them.”¹⁷

Referring to the reasons for the differing applications of the personal power of the president Duverger differentiates three types of semi-presidential government in seven states.

1. “The president can be a mere figurehead (as in Austria, Iceland and Ireland);
2. The president can be all-powerful (as in France); and
3. The power of the president can be shared with the parliament (as in the Weimar Republic, Finland and Portugal).”¹⁸

Elgie emphasizes three characteristics of semi-presidential government systems, which explain the issues related to the relationship between the president and the prime minister. Firstly, the relationship can be described in terms of the supremacy of the president over the executive, i.e., *presidentialized semi-presidentialism*. Secondly, the relationship can be described by the cohabitation of both executive offices, i.e., *balanced semi-presidentialism*. Finally, the semi-presidential system can be reflected as *parliamentarized semi-presidentialism*, which has a ceremonial president who is not able to control the powers of the prime minister, and the prime minister enjoys “the support of the parliamentary majority.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Vesper, Ernst. 1997. “Semi-Presidentialism-Duverger’s Concept - A New Political System Model.” Vol. 88, No. 3, pp. 39–60.

¹⁸ Duverger, Maurice. 1980. “A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government.” *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 8, pp. 165–87.

¹⁹ Elgie, Robert. 2007. “Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53–71.

ADVANTAGES OF SEMI-PRESIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Some scholars are enthusiastic about semi-presidentialism as a form of government primarily because it is expected to offer a very flexible configuration for quick solutions in times of political crisis. According to Duverger, a president elected for a fixed term has a significant advantage compared to a government elected by the parliament. But, the president serves only for a fixed term of office. This feature is the same as the U.S. presidential system. In the case of a semi-presidential system, as the prime minister depends on the parties represented in parliament, (s)he can only be considered capable of acting independently in a limited way: as a rule, (s)he needs the support of government.²⁰

Sartori makes the strongest case for semi-presidentialism. In his opinion, semi-presidentialism can better cope with split majorities and is far more amenable to constitutional changes than parliamentarism. For this reason he strongly promotes semi-presidentialism. He cautions, though, against the inauguration of this regime with a minority president or even with a president without party backing.²¹

One argument in favor of the semi-presidentialism system posits that the “dual executive allows a degree of power sharing between competing forces.”²² However, that may not always happen. The second and third arguments are inter-related, the second contending that the semi-presidential model provides a second set of “checks and balances within the executive,” thereby

²⁰ Duverger, Maurice. 1980. “A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government.” *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 8, pp. 165–87.

²¹ Sartori, Giovanni. 1994. “Comparative Constitutional Engineering – An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes.” *Macmillan/New York University Press*.

²² Elgie, Robert. 2007. “Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53–71.

offering the president the possibility to change the prime minister in times of parliamentary conflicts and weaker government majority.²³ The third argument affirms that a directly elected president offers political stability and increases the legitimacy of the executive, “even if the parliament is highly fractionalized and governments are unstable.”²⁴

In addition, as in Kosovo's experience, the coalition among key political parties endangers the political system in which the Prime Minister leads the parliamentary majority, and the president is unable (because of the coalition agreement) to balance the dominant role of the prime minister. This brings us to the fourth argument which contends that a semi-presidential regime can introduce a president who balances both the politically dominant prime minister and his/her political majority in the parliament.²⁵

The arguments in favor of adopting a semi-presidential system also include the idea that it brings together the best features of both presidential and parliamentary systems. This approach does have a number of advantages, but it also poses challenges to those governing the country and to voters in selecting political leaders who share policy preferences.²⁶

²³ Mcmenamin, Iain. 2008. “Semi-Presidentialism and Democratization in Poland.” No. 2, p. 16.

²⁴ Elgie, Robert. 2007. “Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53–71.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

DISADVANTAGES OF SEMI-PRESIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

Contrary to the aforementioned, scholars like Rub and Linz reject the semi-presidential construct because it is liable to cause deadlock in government.^{27, 28} These scholars stress that the danger of this type of government causes fragmentation and polarization in the parliament; combined with the powers of the president, this could lead to an impasse in which the president uses his “reserve powers” to get out of the deadlock. This is similar to the charismatic leader who shows his “Janus head” — changing to a dictator.²⁹

Elgie Robert makes a number of arguments against semi-presidentialism. First, he argues that the directly elected president may encourage personalization of the political process.³⁰ This may also stem from the “over-presidentialization in semi-presidential countries” — i.e., a combination of a president with extended constitutional powers, supported by a parliamentary majority and a submissive prime minister. This, in turn, would lessen the power of “checks and balances within and between the executive and legislative branches of government.”³¹ Secondly, the splitting of executive authority between the offices of the prime minister and the president raises the problem of a dual executive. In other words, competition between the prime minister and the president over executive and political leadership can result in “politicking and intrigues

²⁷ Rub, Friedbert. 1994. “Schach Dem Parlament! Uber Semi-Prasidentielle Regierungssysteme in Einigen Postkommunistischen Gesellschaften.” *Leviathan*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 260–92.

²⁸ Linz, Juan. 1991. “Presidencialismo Ou Parlamentarismo – Fas Alguma Diferenca?” *A Opcao Parlamentarista*, pp. 61–120.

²⁹ Augusto, Barbera. 1991. “Il Giano Del Presidenzialismo, Democrazia E Diritto.” *Democrazia E Diritto*, no. 4, pp. 163–73.

³⁰ Elgie, Robert. 2007. “Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53–71.

³¹ Elgie, Robert, and Iain Mcmenamin. 2008. “Semi-Presidentialism and Democratic Performance.” *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 9, pp. 323–40.

that may delay decision making and lead to contradictory policies due to the struggle between the president and prime minister.”³²

The third argument against semi-presidentialism, according to Freeman, relates to the dual executive nature of the semi-presidential system and the impediments that it introduces regarding coalition building. In Poland, for example, the prime minister must be careful to achieve the support of both the political majority in the parliament and the president, even when the fractionalized or divided parliament had made this harder to achieve.³³ Moreover, some observers argue that this process also weakens the party system because the political parties within the parliament no longer serve as the sole political actors designing the future coalition government and choosing the Prime Minister.³⁴ This could also be the case in Kosovo, where a candidate for prime minister is required to obtain the support of both the president and the parliamentary majority.³⁵

PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

Eulau discusses collaboration between ministry and legislature, emphasizing the advantage of what he calls a *majority system*.³⁶ The key function of the Chamber of Deputies is to control the ministers not only with respect to the substantive content of bills, but also with

³² Elgie, Robert. 2007. “Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53–71.

³³ Freeman, Mark. 2000. “Constitutional Framework and Fragile Democracies: Choosing between Parliamentarianism, Presidentialism and Semipresidentialism.” *Pace International Law Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 253–83.

³⁴ Mcmenamin, Iain. 2008. “Semi-Presidentialism and Democratization in Poland.” No. 2, p. 16.

³⁵ Friedrich-Ebert, Stiftung. October 2011. “For a Semi-Presidential Regime: Where Is the New-Born Republic Heading?” *Forma Studio*, pp. 7–14.

³⁶ Eulau, Heinz. 1942. “Early Theories of Parliamentarism.” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 33–55.

regard to their administrative activities, appointments, and even public announcements. The legislature can uphold its rights and make itself heard using various channels. It has the right to ask questions on anything it wants to know, and the ministers are obliged to answer all questions except in cases where state security is at risk. In reality, the legislature will not interfere in administrative matters, ask neither embarrassing questions, nor compromise the ministers, because in the parliamentary system "the ministers are what they ought to be, masters of the chambers in fact, its servants in form." Effectual ministerial leadership is achieved by way of "the simplest device in the world: the ministry must command the majority and move with it; without it there will be no government".³⁷

According to Bastin, there should be seven vital ingredients for a Parliamentary Government to work properly; the absence of any of those ingredients will cause system failure. These are: (a) an executive government answerable and dismissible by the people; (b) laws enacted by a legislature regularly elected by the people; (c) an independent judiciary; (d) freedom of speech and thought; (e) impartial electoral officers; (f) a free and independent civil service; and (g) no unlawful detention of persons.³⁸

ADVANTAGES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

The most important advantage of the parliamentary system is that it brings to the center of those governing political affairs the most skilled and talented people; a minister who is not strong will not manage to stay in office for a long time, because his mistakes will be greatly

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bastin, John. 1953. "Parliamentary Government in Southern Asia: Problems of Parliamentary Government in Colonies." *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No 2, pp. 118–20.

scrutinized by the legislature. Any such criticism will be shared in the press, which will bring matters to public attention. In a short period this will result in sacking the minister. If change of ministers is more frequent, this means that implemented policies by the ministers are wrong and counter to public opinion. Ministers have to be changed with more competent ones. There should be no changes as long as harmony is not established between the chambers and the ministry.³⁹

There are different advantages to a parliamentary government system. It distributes the power to govern over various individuals and groups encouraging them to work together with harmony and with full energy. This facilitates the systematic direction of legislative measures. In a parliamentary government system, the policy making plans of the executive are under the control of the legislature.⁴⁰

Bastin is strong in his argument for the parliamentary government system, which he claims has superiority over other government systems. A great advantage of the parliamentary government system is that its influence comes from the centre and is spread onto all spheres of life. A real parliament should not be acting remotely from the common people; it should be a part of them. Such a goal is noble, but it has many obstacles.⁴¹

DISADVANTAGES OF PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

However the parliamentary system has its specific disadvantages as well. One of the main drawbacks is factually the sharpest part of one of the advantages: parliamentary sovereignty.

³⁹ Eulau, Heinz. 1942. "Early Theories of Parliamentarism." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 33–55.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Bastin, John. 1953. "Parliamentary Government in Southern Asia: Problems of Parliamentary Government in Colonies." *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No 2, pp. 118–20.

Because the decisions of the parliament cannot bear any changes, there exist little balances. For instance, parliamentary sovereignty does not give permission for judicial review, which is to review the authenticity of the legislative act.⁴² The decisions made by parliament cannot be questioned in terms of constitutionality. This can result in an extra power, as U.S. Chief Justice John Marshall has claimed, “A legislative intrusion into a judicial monopoly.”⁴³

The other drawback of parliamentary systems is the intra-party unity. Despite the fact that intra-party unity enables the government to act more properly and decisively, it also makes it possible for the dominant party to wield too much power. As Patrick Dunleavy argues, for a long time the measures of the government have been defeated within Parliament very rarely, and it is very much true for nowadays as well. It is unlikely to pass even minor amendments without the support of the government.⁴⁴ Because of the elaborate whipping system, large part of the MPs vote with their party. Consequently, it is possible for the dominant party to pass almost everything, while the opposition can hardly stop it.⁴⁵ Prime ministers have a certain amount of freedom concerning the time of holding elections, which must be every four to five years. If the party of the prime minister is viewed favorably, he will probably go ahead and proceed with

⁴² Elgie, Robert. 2007. “Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53–71.

⁴³ Durano, Christina. 2008. “Does It Work: An Examination of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Parliamentary Systems.” Pp. 1–10.

⁴⁴ Dunleavy, Patrick, and Brendan O’Leary. 2000. “Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy.” *New Amsterdam*, pp. 36–37.

⁴⁵ Elgie, Robert. 2007. “Varieties of Semi-Presidentialism and Their Impact on Nascent Democracies.” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 53–71.

elections. Otherwise, if his party is not so popular any more, he may cancel the elections until his party is in a more favorable position.⁴⁶

DEBATES BETWEEN SYSTEMS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

The decision to adopt either a presidential or a parliamentary government system plays a crucial role in constitutional design.⁴⁷ Throughout past history, there have been debates about the type of government system best suited for a democracy. Taking into consideration the developments in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, Juan Linz emphasizes that presidentialism includes some risks of political instability and could also cause the collapse of a regime.⁴⁸ According to Linz, both parliaments and presidents have rival sources of popular legitimacy and authority which create difficulties to tackle disputes in electoral democracies with presidential regimes. Presidents are elected for a fixed term, which limits the flexibility of office. In presidential regimes, the winner is given full authority to govern, which raises the stakes and leaves weak incentives for those losing in the elections to accept the legitimacy of the outcomes. The fusion of the offices of head of state and head of government may reduce such restraints on political leaders because of a stronger system of checks and balances. There are other scholars who agree with Linz' arguments.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Hague, Rod, and Martin Harrop. 2013. "Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction." *Palgrave Macmillan*, pp. 336–37.

⁴⁷ Giovanni, Sartori. 1996. "Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An inquiry into structures, incentives and outcomes." *Macmillan*, London.

⁴⁸ Juan, Linz. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy*, pp. 51-69.

⁴⁹ Alfred, Stepan and Cindy Skach. 1993. "Constitutional frameworks and democratic consolidation: Parliamentarism and presidentialism." *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 1-22.

Much of the evidence of the debates between presidential and parliamentary systems has been derived from the experience of the presidential system of Latin America, which is strongly influenced by the U.S. constitution. There is a standard practice to compare and contrast the modern history of presidential systems in Latin America and the parliamentary systems in Western Europe and Scandinavia. This limited analytical framework makes it difficult to make comparisons that exclude other confusing factors and characteristics of each region, which are often strongly connected with the success of a democracy.⁵⁰ When the Berlin Wall was brought down, many post-Communist states, such as Albania, Hungary and Slovenia adopted popularly-elected presidents in a mixed form of a republic where the prime minister leads the government.⁵¹

According to Beliaev the comparison of presidential powers in Central and Easter Europe shows that systems with stronger presidential executives were less effective at democratic consolidation during the 1990s.⁵² In both Africa and Asia-Pacific, many countries have adopted presidential or mixed executives. After comparing 170 countries with a working parliament Blais, Massicotte and Dobrynska came to the conclusion that by the late nineties, almost half had a directly-elected president.⁵³

⁵⁰ Mathew, Soberg, Schugart, and Carey John. 1992. "Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics." *Cambridge University Press*, pp. 301–3.

⁵¹ Timothy, Frye. 1997. "A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post-Communist Presidencies." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, pp. 522–23.

⁵² Beliaev, M. 2006. "Presidential Powers and Consolidation of New Post-Communist Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 375–98.

⁵³ Blais, André, Louis Massicotte, and Agnieszka Dobrynska. 1997. "Direct Presidential Elections: A World Summary." *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 441–55.

The Westminster government system of Great Britain and the presidential government system of the U.S. are two ideal types of presidential and parliamentary government systems. Nevertheless, the distinction between presidential and parliamentary government systems does not fully describe where power resides in reality.⁵⁴ The distribution of power to various groups has a key role in democratization and democratic stability. Such power defines the level of influence of these groups; moreover, it defines the degree of benefit that these groups may take from a certain political system. As political interests of various groups are different they will accept democracy if the political system does not pose a threat to their interests.

As such, democracy does not promote the welfare of the majority if the power of the ruling elite is significant. This kind of political system may either bring to a revolution by the majority or to a repression by the minority. Therefore, successful democracy depends upon a stable balance of power between various groups in society.⁵⁵

According to Fish and Kroenig's Parliamentary Power Index (PPI) shows that parliamentary power in parliamentary government systems is not necessarily higher than in presidential government systems.⁵⁶ Therefore, the distinction between parliamentary and presidential government systems does not necessarily indicate various levels of parliamentary power. Moreover, taking into consideration the arguments of the PPI authors, stronger parliaments endowed with stronger democracies. For instance, Mexico, the U.S., and Uzbekistan

⁵⁴ Fish, Steven. 2006. "Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies." *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 5, pp. 19–20.

⁵⁵ Acemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2006. "Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy." *Cambridge University Press*, pp. 34–35.

⁵⁶ Fish, Steven, and Matthew Kroenig. 2009. "The Handbook of National Legislatures: A Global Survey." *Cambridge University Press*, pp. 55–56.

are all considered to be presidential systems. This categorization is not about their stability. The indicators of the Freedom House in 2011 for the period from 1990-2010 show three negative and one positive change for Uzbekistan and three negative and four positive changes for Mexico. The U.S. is the most stable showing no changes during that period. The U.S. shows a PPI of 0.63 whereas the other two countries show lower levels of parliamentary power. However, with a PPI of 0.44, Mexico has a stronger parliament than Uzbekistan (with a PPI of 0.28).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Freedom House. 2011. "Freedom in the World." <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15>.

CHAPTER III — RESEARCH QUESTIONS & METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main objective of this research study is to examine the current RA semi-presidential government system in order to identify barriers that may be lifted if Armenia were to move to a parliamentary system of government. Thus, this essay attempts to articulate and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both systems and identify the specific reasons for or against changing the system. Considering that there is an ongoing debate on this issue between the current administration and opposition parties, a scholarly research on the topic is timely and may serve as a document to consider in deciding whether a change is warranted or not.

The above objective triggers specific research questions, which are:

RQ1: Does the current semi-presidential system limit participatory policy-making in the National Assembly?

RQ2: How does the current system contribute to good governance and regulatory reform in the process of democratization?

RQ3: Would a parliamentary system increase public access to and participation in policy reforms?

To answer the research questions stated above, the following hypotheses will be tested:

H₁: A parliamentary system of government provides improved access for the public to raise issues before the Parliament.

H₂: A parliamentary system of government allows increased public debate and participation in policy-making.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY

This research uses a mixed method that uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the research questions. The design is *sequential transformative* allowing the collection and analysis of qualitative data first, followed by survey research, and integrating both methods in the interpretation phase.

In the initial qualitative phase of the research, a sample of ten analytical essays / research studies were selected and analyzed primarily for identifying the specific descriptors (categories) that characterize the key features of semi-presidential and parliamentary systems of government. The sample of articles was selected on the basis of considerations of geography and democratization phase akin to the Republic of Armenia. The classification and coding of reviewed text were derived from the research questions; descriptors were formulated and used in the content analysis to measure the corresponding strength in the analyzed text.

The second qualitative research included in-depth interviews with members of the RA legislature (the National Assembly). The interview questions were developed from findings of the earlier content analysis of articles and critical essays. Here the sample strategy was aligned with the proportion of party-representation in the National Assembly, and also included representatives from other opposition parties not represented in the National Assembly.

The findings from the initial qualitative phase were built into the survey questionnaire used in the quantitative phase of the research. Basically, the survey gauged the intensity of public

preference for one system over the other for Armenia, and the key drivers of such preference. The survey used a stratified sample with random sampling within each of the selected strata. This approach ensures that the sample is fully representative of the population of Armenia. The total sample size equals 600 citizens, 18 years of age and older. All eleven *marzes* of the Republic were ranked by alphabetical order and every third *marz* was selected for further stratification. Thus, the selected *marzes* were Armavir, Kotayq, and Vayoc Dzor. The capital city of Yerevan was added to this group primarily to ensure that the largest populated city is included in the sample.

The next level of stratification was carried out using the precincts in Armavir, Kotayq, Vayots Dzor and Yerevan. Here again, in order to ensure that the sample is fully representative, each of the selected *marzes* was divided by its respective communities in alphabetical order and every third urban and every fifteenth rural community was selected for inclusion in the survey sample.

According to the official data retrieved from ARMSTAT,⁵⁸ the population of Armenia is nearly 2.07 million. In order to distribute the survey questionnaires proportionally, the total number of survey questionnaires was divided by the total population of the RA.

The population of Armavir *marz* is nearly 283,000, so the survey was distributed to 68 individuals following the above mentioned formula. Accordingly, considering that the population in Kotayq *marz* is 280,000, the number of survey questionnaires used was 67; the population in

⁵⁸ Armstat. 2009. "Population of the Republic of Armenia". Retrieved from: http://www.armstat.am/file/article/marz_09_8.pdf, accessed on 10 February 2015.

Vayots Dzor is 56,000, thus the number of survey questionnaires was 16. The rest of the survey questionnaires were distributed in Yerevan, totaling 451.

1. Marz – Armavir

Urban Community – Vagharshapat

*Rural Community – Arevik, Bambakashat, Hushakert, Mayisyan, Pshatavan,
Voskehat*

2. Marz – Kotayq

Urban Community – Charentsavan, Tsaghkadzor

Rural Community – Fantan, Kamaris, Nor Gyugh, Zovuni

3. Marz – Vayots Dzor

Urban Community – Yeghegnadzor

Rural Community – Gndevaz, Por

4. Marz – Yerevan

District – Avan, Kanaker-Zeytun, Nork-Marash, Shengavit

Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used for data organization, analysis, and presentation. Both descriptive and regression analyses were performed to determine the relationship among variables; to measure whether or not significant relationships exist among variables; and whether a change in one variable causes a change in another variable.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The survey used in this research project is cross-sectional, i.e., administered in a single period of time to get a snapshot of the issues debated across the country. A longitudinal study, conducted over a twelve-month period, at the minimum, would have been more valuable to determine changes in public opinion over time.

CHAPTER IV — DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

This section presents the results of the completed document analysis. As stated earlier, several descriptors were identified for gauging the benefits of either parliamentary or semi-presidential government systems. The strength of each descriptor found in text was measured on a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 is the “*strongest*” and 1 is the “*weakest*”. The descriptors originated from the review of 45 articles on this topic. The actual documents analyzed for content included the following:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (1995)
2. The concept of constitutional reform for changing the government system in the Republic (2015)
3. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) version of the concept of the same constitutional reform for changing the government system (2015).

Descriptors for Content Analysis

Below are definitions of the descriptors used in analyzing the documents cited above.

- ❑ ***Citizen participation (civil society)***: This descriptor refers to the participation of the citizenry in the cultural life (in the arts, sciences, and technologies); in social activities; in economic development activities (work, standards of living, housing, pension, etc.) and political activities (including participation in the selection/voting of government and in policy-making (including reforms and related debates).
- ❑ ***Distribution of Power***: This descriptor is intended to measure the degree to which power is distributed among three branches of government: legislative, executive and judiciary.
- ❑ ***Checks and Balances***: This descriptor refers to the effectiveness of the system to counterbalance decisions by which the political system is regulated. In other words, the level at which checks and balances assure that political decisions are not concentrated in the hands a few individuals or groups.
- ❑ ***Structure of Government (in terms of security)***: This descriptor refers to the identification of the person who should guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of the RA. Moreover, it describes the authority of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and the levels of management of government operations related to defense, including appointments and discharges of top commander(s) of the armed forces. The extent of authority vested in the Commander-in-Chief over decisions related to war and peace, mobilization of the armed forces or related actions within the government structure.

The table below depicts the analysis of the three documents analyzed: the RA Constitution; the RA government concept paper on the proposed parliamentary system; and the ARF concept paper on the proposed parliamentary system.

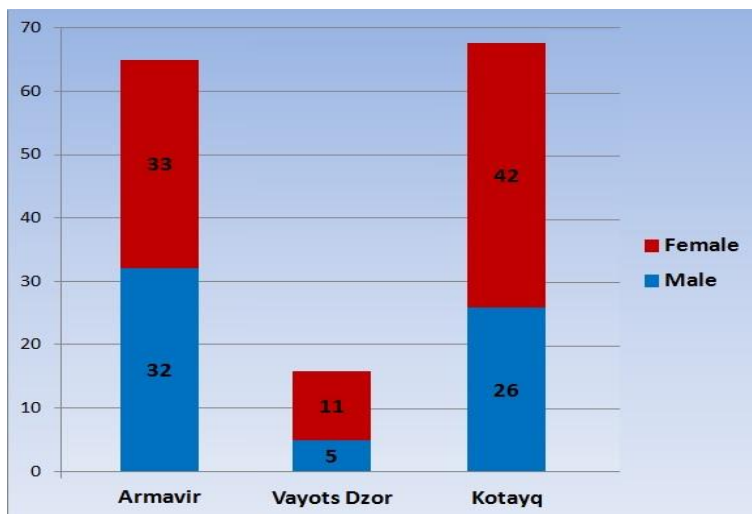
Descriptors	Frequency	Intensity
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	Mean	Mean
Citizen participation (civil society)	4.0	3.0
Distribution of Power	2.3	1.0
Checks and Balances	1.0	0.7
Structure of government	7.0	3.0

The analysis shows that in all three documents the emphasis is on two descriptors, namely: *Citizen Participation* at 4.0; and *Structure of government* at 7.0. The frequency mean of other descriptors was not so high, meaning that they were not targeted as the most important issues.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample used for surveying the population presented a total of 600 citizens of Armenia (selected in the manner explained earlier), 18 years of age or older residing in Armavir,



Kotayq, Vayots Dzor and Yerevan.

The questionnaire contained 14 questions (three demographic, eight multiple choice, and three Lykert scale).

The descriptive statistics in Figure 1 pertains to the rural

population surveyed represents 32 males (49%) and 33 females (51%) from Armavir; 5 (31.2%) males and 11 (68.8%) females from Vayots Dzor; and 26 (38.2%) males and 42 (61.8%) females from Kotayq.

The largest number or 37.5% of male respondents in Armavir were high school graduates, followed by university graduates with a bachelor's degree at 34.4%, and master's degree at 18.8%. It is worth noting that female respondents were more educated: 12 (36.4%) having a master's degree; 8 (24.2%) holding bachelor's; and 1 (3%) PhD. Moreover, there were 6 (18.2%) individuals who had completed high school and 6 vocational schools (*See figure 2*). The picture in Kotayq is nearly the same. The highest educational level attained by respondents was

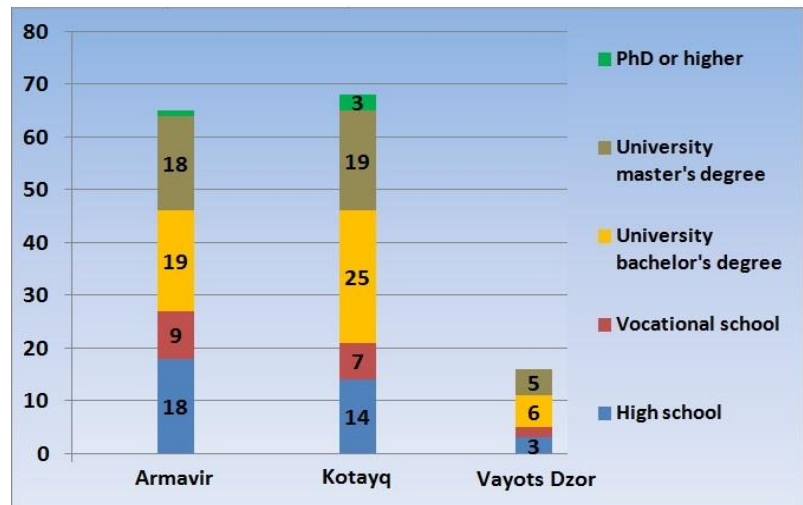


Figure 2— *Educational level of Rural Citizens Surveyed*

3 with PhDs, two males and one female. The largest number of female respondents (45.2%) had bachelor's degrees; followed by 12 (28.6%) respondents with master's degree. Though the number of male respondents was nearly half of the number of females, there were 2 (7.7%) male PhDs; 8 (30.8%) male

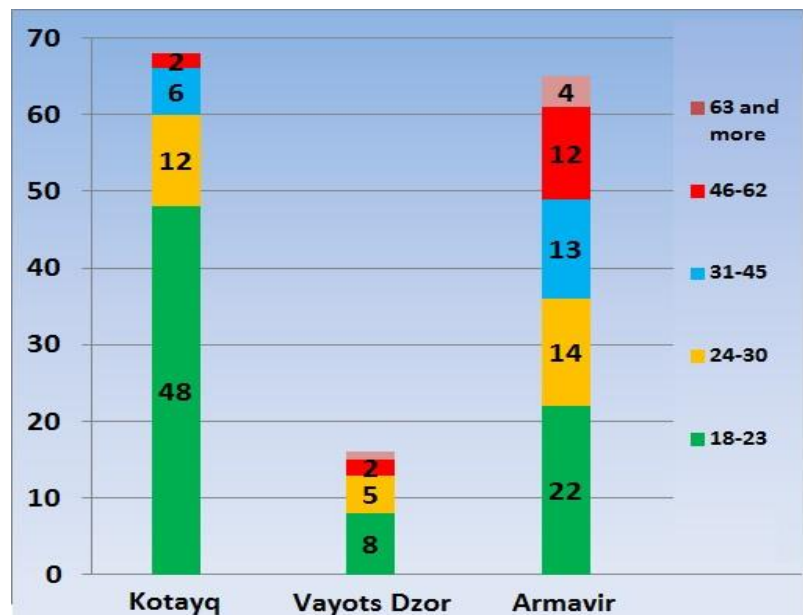
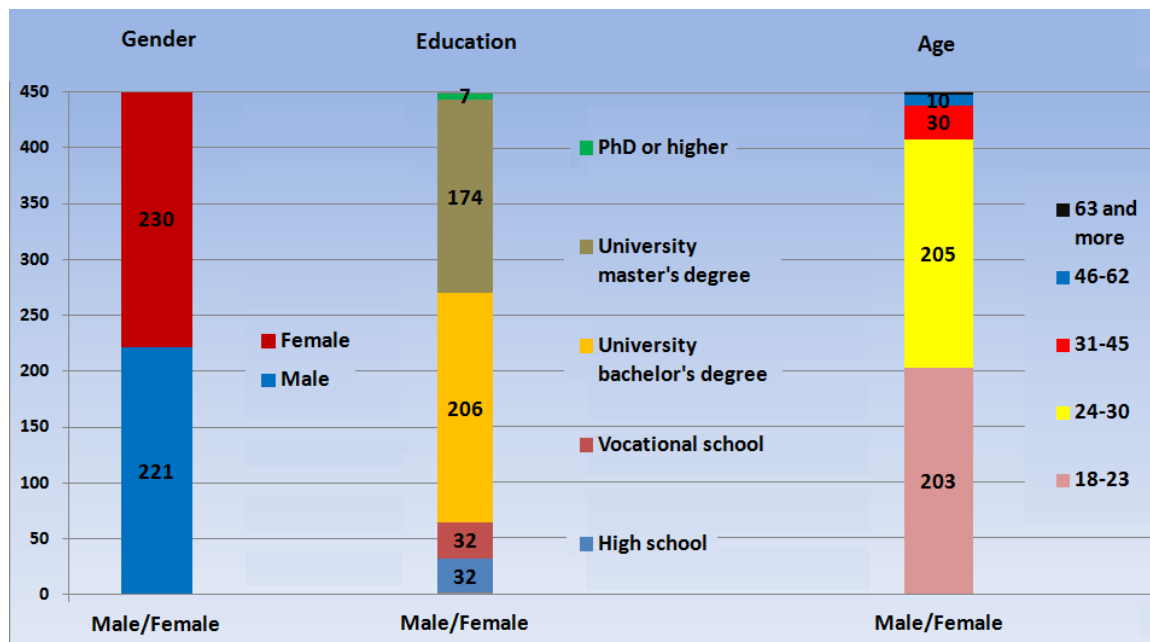


Figure 3— *Age Statistics Pertaining to Rural Citizens Surveyed*

respondents were high school graduates, followed by 7 (26.9%) holding master's degrees and 6

(23.1%) bachelor's. As depicted in [Figure 2](#), the highest educational level attained by both male and female respondents from Vayots Dzor is a master's degree, i.e., 2 (18.1%) female respondents with master's and 6 (54.5%) with bachelor's degrees. The majority of male respondents (60%) hold master's degree.

The age distribution of marz respondents (see [Figure 3](#)) is as follows: 18-23 year-olds represent the majority and 63 or older respondents are the least in Armavir, Kotayq and Vayots Dzor marzes. Most respondents from Kotayq were 18-23, 48 (70.6%); followed by 12 (17.6%) respondents in the age group 24-30. In Vayots Dzor 18-23 age group respondents were dominant (51%).



The largest group of respondents was from Yerevan: 221 (49%) male and 230 (51%) female. The overall picture in the case of Yerevan is slightly different. The highest level of education that both female and male respondents had was PhD. Looking through [Figure 4](#) it becomes obvious that a large number of respondents (45.7%) had bachelor's degrees; closely

followed by (38.7%) having a University master's degree. The respondents in the 24-30 age group represented (45.5%) was; followed by the 18-23 age group at 203 (45%) respondents.

In all four marzes the majority of respondents (51%) were females despite the fact that male to female population differs by a little over 2% in Armenia, where males comprise 51% of the populous while females comprise about 49%. In addition to this most of them (40.6%) belonged to the age group of 18-23. There is no prevalent educational level in the marzes but, generally speaking, variance occurs between residents possessing bachelor's and master's degrees. It should also be emphasized that there were PhDs in three out of four randomly selected samples.

Inferential Statistics

Analyzing the results pertaining to the types of changes that might be expected from the shift to a parliamentary system (Figure 5), 56% of the respondents were sure that it will not have any significant impact on democratization. More specifically, 27% answered that the shift will result in a weaker democracy; and a smaller percentage of respondents (17%) thought that it will move the country toward a stronger democracy.

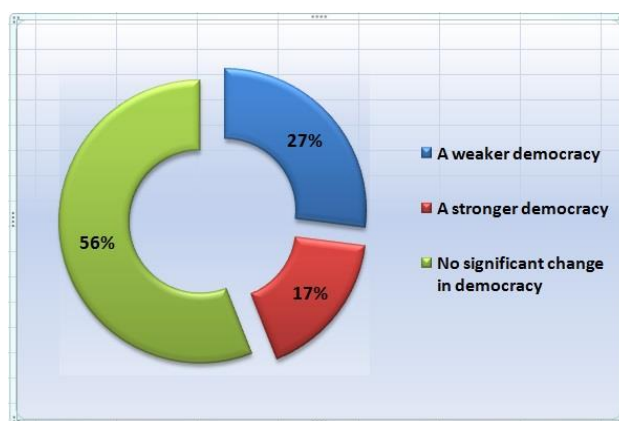


Figure 5 — Results of shift to Parliamentary system

On the need for constitutional reforms, 72 percent of the respondents were sure that Armenia does need constitutional reforms and only 28 percent of them disagreed. Combining all

these responses it becomes clearer that the majority of the respondents opted for positive changes in the constitution but not change in the system of government.

Using a Lykert scale, the study also looked into the position of the population as to the effects of a system change on civil society. As shown in the bar chart (Figure 6), 51% of

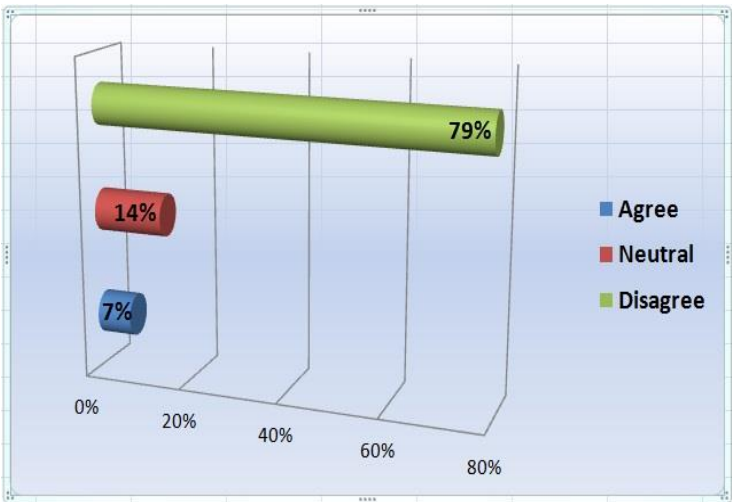


Figure 7 — The members of the legislature have strong links with their constituencies

respondents thought that the current government system did not promote civic engagement in the policy-making process. Moreover, 37% were rather neutral, and only 12% of respondents agreed that the change may contribute to engagement of civil society in policy making.

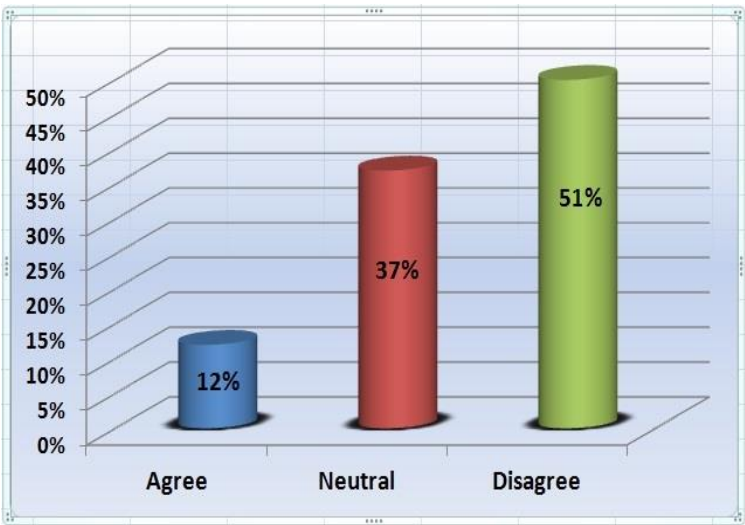


Figure 6 — Semi-presidential government system promotes engagement of civil society in policy-making

The study also looked into the strength of the links with their constituents by parliament members in the current system (Figure 7). On this question, 79% of respondents disagreed that their representative had a close link with the community he/she represented, 14% were neutral, and only 7%

thought that their member of parliament did have strong links with them.

In order to understand whether the current semi-presidential system promotes civil society to be engaged in legislative issues, the study again used a Lykert scale. The percentages of the answers were nearly equal. Thus, the results show that most of the respondents (38%) did

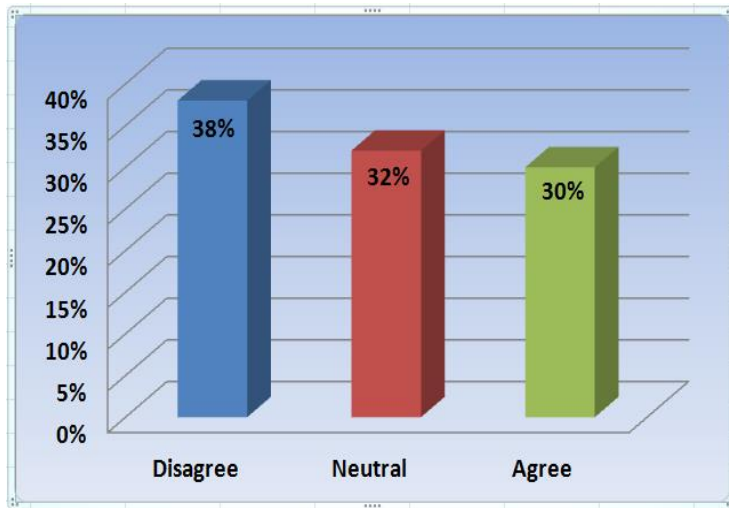


Figure 8 — Semi-presidential system promotes civil society engagement in legislature

not think that the current system promotes civil society engagement with only (30%) agreeing that it does (Figure 8).

Looking at relationships among different pairs of variables, the study computed Pearson's r correlation coefficient using SPSS. The results

show that those who think that Armenia needs constitutional reforms also think that constitutional reforms will influence the democratic processes, i.e., albeit weak, correlation exists with an r of 0.381 correlation between these two factors at a 99% level of significance. In other words, respondents who believe that constitutional reforms will positively influence the democratization process also believe that there is a need for constitutional reform(s). This is a naturally-derived relationship in political thought.

		Need for constitutional reforms	Constitutional reforms will influence the democratic processes
Need for constitutional reforms	Pearson Correlation	1	.381**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	500	500
Constitutional reforms will influence the democratic processes	Pearson Correlation	.381**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	500	500

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the analysis it also becomes apparent that there is no correlation between public trust related to the Administration-established process of constitutional reform and public opinion on the need for constitutional reforms. This means that the prevailing low level of public trust has no effect on the public opinion whether not there is a need to change the system of government in Armenia. On the other hand, a correlation exists between public preference for the president to have the highest decision-making authority and public position that the prime-minister should be elected by the parliament. (Pearson's r is 0.449.)

The analysis also shows that a relatively weak correlation exists between public trust towards the Administration-established process of constitutional reform related to changing the system of government and public opinion on the democratic processes expected after constitutional reforms in Armenia. Pearson's r is 0.239 at a 99% level of significance.

		Constitutional reforms will influence the democratic processes	Trust towards the constitutional reform related to the change of the system of governance presented by the Administration
Constitutional reforms will influence the democratic processes	Pearson Correlation	1	.239**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	500	500
Trust towards the constitutional reform related to the change of the system of governance presented by the Administration	Pearson Correlation	.239**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	500	500

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

In order to be able to triangulate the findings from the earlier analyses completed, the study used in-depth interviews with representatives of different political parties active in the

politics of the Republic of Armenia. Content analysis of ten interviews was performed using the same descriptors as used earlier in the study. The frequency of each descriptor was measured by the number of times each interviewee referred to the descriptor, somewhat referring to the importance of the concept in the context of the subject study. The intensity of the position each interviewee took on the conceptual elements of the study was measured on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 indicated a weaker position on the impact of the change in the system on that element and 7 indicated a strong position.

Descriptors	Frequency	Intensity
Citizen participation (civil society)	9.43	6.0
Distribution of Power	1.43	2.0
Structure of government (in terms of security)	4.29	5.7
Party responsibility	5.49	4.8
Democratic development	3.30	3.7
Civic awareness (about the Legislature)	2.43	5.3

The analysis shows that of the ten politicians interviewed, 70% thinks that Armenia needs constitutional reforms, arguing that the RA Constitution must be changed in order to be better aligned with new political approaches, as well as to better respond to the needs and challenges of the population. A parliamentary system of government would be more beneficial for Armenia, they argue, as it would eliminate single-party monopoly and would allow other parties to participate in the parliamentary processes.

Those who are opposed to constitutional changes place particular emphasis on the country's socio-economic problems, immigration, corruption, etc. arguing that the proposed constitutional change would not resolve the critical issues that the Republic is facing. A change in the system of government, they argue, would only serve as a tool for the ruling party to maintain power over a longer period of time.

In the current semi-presidential government system the government is divided into three major separate and independent branches: legislative, executive and judicial. The legislative power is represented by the National Assembly (parliament). The prime minister is appointed by the president of the Republic. Once appointed, the prime minister presents the cabinet of ministers and a plan of action. The cabinet is confirmed by the president of the Republic. The cabinet of ministers is accountable to the prime minister and to the president. The composition of the judiciary is finalized at the end of several stages in the appointment process. At start, the vacant position is announced for competition; all applicants received are reviewed by the Council of Justice, which then makes a recommendation to the President of the republic to make the appointment. There is no reference to this process in the proposed parliamentary system.

Currently, the Judiciary system comprises the following: the First Instance Court, the Court of Appeals, and the Court of Cassation. Cases move from the first to the next level when the decision of the court is unacceptable to either party. In the event that the decision of the latter is unfavorable, either party involved in the case may take it up with the Constitutional Court and, subsequently, to the European Court of Human Rights.

In the proposed parliamentary system the distribution of power is the same: Legislative, Executive and Judicial. Similarly, the legislative branch consists of parliament members. The

difference lies in the manner of designating the prime minister. In this case, the prime minister is elected from the party who has gained a majority in the parliament. The executive branch is fully responsible to the parliament. In the event that no single party gains majority in the parliament, the parties shape a coalition and elect the prime minister, who then forms the government. The Judiciary comprises the First Instance Court and Court of Appeal combined in one. Membership in the Constitutional court and the European Court of Human Rights remain unchanged.

Of those interviewed, 70% think that in the proposed parliamentary government there is a single executive power headed by the prime minister. This excludes the existing dual executive power. The latter has vital importance especially in the areas of foreign policy, defense and national security. Furthermore, they argue that there is no room for confrontations between the parliament and the president, since the latter serves as a neutral arbitrator endowed with commensurate competences. The parliamentary system will also ensure that the head of state, the prime minister in this case, shall be a representative of the most politically acceptable person in that time period. They also add that the country will become more flexible while facing foreign policy challenges as the political decision-making process will be more participatory, and less reliant on personal preferences and penchants.

The remaining 30% of politicians interviewed state that they are aware only about the distribution of power in the current semi-presidential government system. The proposed concept for changing the system of government does not provide much information about distribution of power and other issues related to governance, thus they would prefer to abstain from making judgment.

The earlier group representing 70% of those interviewed argue that a parliamentary government system is preferable for the Republic of Armenia, claiming that it provides more certainty and strength to the political system. More importantly, the roles and responsibilities of political parties increase significantly in dealing with issues presented by citizens, bringing those issues into the parliament agenda, and making a difference in the policy-making process. Moreover, those supporting the change to a parliamentary system claim that political parties will take ownership of their mistakes and failures and stop passing the blame onto other parties. By the same token, every political faction will be able to participate in the decision making process, naturally pushing their party agenda and policy interests; this also increases the engagement of civil society in the political process.

On the question of security, 40% of those interviewed argue that a parliamentary system provides more security guarantees compared to the semi-presidential system. The supporters of this position claim that important decisions on security issues, such as decisions related to war and peace, should not be the responsibility of one person, but should represent a shared position by the nation. The members of parliament, elected by the people in free and fair elections, are the representatives of the people, thus empowered to make decisions on security issues.

The other 60% tend to believe that in terms of security the semi-presidential government system is preferable in comparison to the parliamentary system. They argue that considering the continuing political conflict with Azerbaijan (and Turkey), there are high-level decisions that are rightfully kept secret. The semi-presidential system affords the decision-making vehicle(s) for such secrecy, which would be less possible in the case of a parliamentary system. Situations of this nature arise occasionally when there is a need for making decisions urgently. In a semi-

presidential system the president has the authority for making such decisions in order to immediately counteract enemy action or effectively respond to security threats, getting the approval of Parliament after the fact. Many argue that this is vitally important for Armenia and the country's chief commander (as well as defense minister) should have the authority to make such decisions urgently and timely.

Those against the proposed change to a parliamentary system of government argue that under that system the responsibility is not adequately defined and is uncertain, while in the current semi-presidential system there are certain leverages that safeguard personal and collective responsibility. A parliamentary system fragments the political elite leaving the weaker political coalitions incapable of carrying out long-term policy. In addition to this, opponents to change emphasize the importance of mentality, noting that semi-presidential government system is closer to the mentality of the Armenian nation, while parliamentary government system is more suitable for European countries.

The majority of politicians interviewed (60%) think that the current government system hinders democratic development. They argue that the semi-presidential government system hinders democracy by way of (a) investing in the president too much power, and (b) affording the president authority over the judiciary through the power of appointing the judges. Conversely, 40% consider that it promotes democratic values. They state that in a semi-presidential government system there are both parliamentary as well as presidential elections, while in a parliamentary government system people will take part only in legislative elections.

Another argument that comes through from the interviews is with respect to differences related to links between parliament members and their constituents. Of the politicians

interviewed, 30% think that the members of the legislature have much weaker links with their constituencies in the current government system than a parliamentary system would afford. The rest of the politicians interviewed (70%) claim that the members of parliament have strong connections with their constituencies, but this will become even stronger in a parliamentary system, as their responsibilities and accountability to their constituents will increase.

CHAPTER V — CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The concentration of this master essay is mainly on civic participation in policy-making of the NA, public access to and participation in policy making, good governance and regulatory reforms both in semi-presidential and parliamentary government systems. The results of the various data analyses on the current master thesis have revealed some problems concerning the current semi-presidential government system in the abovementioned spheres.

To answer the research questions the master's essay has used both qualitative and quantitative tools to explore the advantages and disadvantages, to find the strongest and weakest points of both government systems and reject or accept the hypotheses.

While answering the first research question “*Does the current semi-presidential system limit participatory policy-making in the National Assembly?*” the research has used the results of both survey and in-depth interviews. According to the survey results the current government system does not promote civic engagement in the policy-making process. The study has also concentrated on the strength of the links between the constituents and parliament members in the current system. So, the representative did not have close links with the community he/she represented. In addition to this, the results of the survey show that the current system does not promote civil society engagement in legislative issues.

The results of the in-depth interviews agree with the survey results in the sphere of this issue. According to the most interviewees the civil society does not have any opportunity to take

part in the policy-making process but the elections. In the parliamentary government system every political faction will be able to participate in the decision making process, naturally pushing their party agenda and policy interests; this also increases the engagement of civil society in the political process. Moreover they stress the fact that the members of parliament have relatively strong connections with their constituencies, but this will become even stronger in a parliamentary system, as their responsibilities and accountability to their constituents will increase.

In order to answer to the second research question “*How does the current system contribute to good governance and regulatory reform in the process of democratization?*” most of the interviewees emphasize the fact that current government system does not promote the development of democracy in Armenia. They argue that the president is given too much power and he/she has ruling power over the judiciary.

The answer of the third research question “*Would a parliamentary system increase public access to and participation in policy reforms?*” is given by both the analyses of in-depth interviews and survey results. Most of the survey respondents answered that in the current semi-presidential government system there are no opportunities to take part in the policy reforms. Moreover, the majority of interviewees gave detailed information about the beneficiaries of civil society in the parliamentary government system. They stress that in the parliamentary government system the roles and responsibilities of political parties shall increase significantly in dealing with issues presented by citizens, bringing those issues into the parliament agenda, making a difference in the policy-making process, including the civil society into the policy-making process through different political parties.

Taking into consideration all these facts we can conclude that two hypotheses of the current thesis essay, which are “*A parliamentary system of government provides improved access for the public to raise issues before the Parliament*” and “*A parliamentary system of government allows increased public debate and participation in policy-making*”, have been accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The tools used in the master’s essay are cross-sectional giving a snapshot of the debates, opinions, suggestions of common citizens and politicians on the two types of government systems. This has relevant importance for consideration in the process submitted by the current administration. Considering that the concept paper on constitutional reform for changing the government system in the Republic of Armenia is not yet final and could undergo changes in the period allowed, possible changes could well trigger further discussion, debate, and analysis. Thus, it would be very helpful to continue this research study longitudinally, at least over the next twelve-months, in order to determine whether changes would also bring about changes in public opinion and acceptance of one form or another.

It may be also important to compare and contrast the results before and after the implementation of the new government system. This would provide a great opportunity to examine the attitudes of the public towards the new government system. The comparison between semi-presidential and parliamentary government systems after the establishment of the new system would provide ground for more research related to the democratization of the country.

APPENDIX I — SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Section I — Demographic and personal information: Please choose the most suitable response from the options provided for each of the questions below.

1. Please, indicate your gender.

- a. Male
- b. Female

2. Which of the following age groups do you belong to?

- a. 16-23
- b. 24-30
- c. 31-45
- d. 46-62
- e. 63 and above (*Please, specify*) _____

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a. Elementary school
- b. High school
- c. Vocational school
- d. University bachelor's degree
- e. University master's degree
- f. PhD or higher (*Please, specify*) _____

4. Please, indicate the RA region where you live.

- a. Armavir (City _____, Village _____)
- b. Kotayq (City _____, Village _____)
- c. Vayoc dzor (City _____, Village _____)
- d. Yerevan (District _____)

Section II — Questions related to Constitutional Reform in Armenia: For the questions that follow, please choose the answer that most closely describes your response.

5. Do you think that Armenia needs constitutional reforms?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. Which electoral system is more preferable for you?

- a. Proportional (you elect a specific party)
- b. Majoritarian (you elect a specific person)
- c. Both of them
- d. Either

7. Do you think that constitutional reforms will influence the democratic processes?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Do you trust the established new process of the constitutional reform related to the change of the system of governance presented by the Administration?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9. Please, fill in the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The members of the legislature have strong links with their constituencies					
The current semi-presidential government system promotes engagement/participation by civil society in policy-making					
Semi-presidential government system promotes civil society to be informed about the performance of the legislature					
Semi-presidential government system promotes civil society's participation in policy-making by way of new reform proposals					

10. The shift from the current Semi-presidential system to a parliamentary system will result in:

- a.** A weaker democracy (Civil participation, human rights, equity, freedom, etc.)
- b.** A stronger democracy
- c.** No significant change in democracy

11. How should the principal commander of the country be elected?

- a.** By citizens
- b.** By Parliament

12. In your opinion which of the following should be the main decision-making figure in politics?

- a.** The president (elected by the majority votes of citizens)
- b.** The prime minister (elected by the majority votes of parliament members)

13. Please, fill in the following:

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
MPs represent the people, so they have to make laws for the RA, even if the President does not agree:					
President represents the people, so he/she has to make laws for the RA, even if the Parliament does not agree:					

14. Please, fill in the following:

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
A parliamentary government system will stabilize both the political system and civil society					
The role of social and political organizations (political parties) will increase in a parliamentary government system:					
The responsibilities of the political parties will increase in the parliamentary government system:					
Proportional electoral system is the core of the perfect political system:					
Majoritarian electoral system is the core of the perfect political system:					
In the parliamentary government system political parties will not be able to shift the failures to the executives and achievements to their owns:					

APPENDIX II—QUESTIONS USED IN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

1. Do you think that the Republic of Armenia needs constitutional reforms? Please, specify why.
2. Please, specify the points of the concept of the constitutional reforms you have found mostly important.
3. Do you think that the Parliamentary government system is more preferable for the Republic of Armenia? Please, specify why.
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of semi-presidential and parliamentary government systems in practice?
5. To what extent does the current government system promote or hinder democratic development? And what about the parliamentary government system?
6. What mechanisms are there at the current system to ensure citizen participation in policy-making? And what about the parliamentary government system?
7. To what extent can civil society take participation in the work of the legislation in the current government system? And what about the parliamentary government system?
8. To what extent is there access to information concerning the operations of the parliament in the current government system? And what about the parliamentary government system?
9. To what extent do members of parliament have links with their constituencies in the current government system? And what about the parliamentary government system?
10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of civil society in terms of their ability to engage in the policy process in the current government system? And what about the parliamentary government system?
11. What security guarantees do we have in the current government system? What changes are expected to be in internal and external security of Armenia in the parliamentary government system?

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