ARMENIA POLITICAL PARTY ASSESSMENT

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ARMENIA POLITICAL PARTY ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANM	Armenian National Movement
ARD	Associates in Rural Development
ARF	Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Dashnaktsutiun
CEC	Central Elections Commission
CMG	Conflict Management Group
DG	Democracy and Governance
FSU	Former Soviet Union
ICG	International Crisis Group
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MP	Minister of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Note on terms and spellings:

The spellings and translations of party names differ with the translator or writer. To the extent possible, the spellings and party names used in the assessment are those provided by the parties themselves. A few notable differences in names commonly used include:

Dashnaktsutiun, Dashnaktsutyun, or Dashnaks

Liberal Democratic Party of Armenia: Ramgavars or Ramkavars

Orinats Yerkir: Country of Law or Rule of Law Party

Other terms are used interchangeably. These include:

Member of Parliament and Deputy

Parliament and National Assembly

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Armenian Political Party Assessment examines the level of development among political parties and the opportunities for continued development within the current political context in Armenia. The assessment begins by examining the political environment and then looks at the parties' internal structures, policies, outreach, and financing. Major constraints facing political party development are identified and recommendations are made for possible innovative assistance.

Methodology

Interviews were held in Armenia in February 2005. In Yerevan, the assessment team met with a wide range of political parties, members of Parliament, civil society organizations, journalists, students, and political analysts. It also met with Government of Armenian officials, USAID/Armenia, international organizations, and the US and other embassies. Local and regional political parties, civil society groups, and local government officials were interviewed in Echmiadzin, Ijevan, and Vanadzur. Available documentation and relevant laws were also reviewed.

Overview

Many challenges face the development of a pluralistic, democratic, and competitive political party system. Although Armenia has been independent for almost fifteen years, autocratic mentalities and practices remain embedded. The government is dominated by the executive branch and is without meaningful checks and balances. The judiciary is not independent, and rulings are politically biased. A symbiotic relationship between political and business elites has bred endemic corruption and severely hampers the ability of opposition parties to raise funds or access the electronic media.

Political parties are fractured and personality-based. Individuals use the parties as tools to gain power and do little with them to aggregate public interest. Parties arrange themselves along an ideological spectrum but, with the exception of a few mainly historical parties, their ideologies do not coherently relate to substantive distinctions or serve as a rationale for party loyalty. Party structures are hierarchical, and national party leadership is disconnected from the average citizen.

The questionable 2003 elections still affect the political atmosphere and shape party strategies. The opposition sees the President and Parliament as illegally elected, and is thus boycotting the governing body. They view the electoral machinery as being under the government's control and most opposition party leaders say the only way forward is to remove the "illegal" government through a "velvet revolution."

Party Structures

Most party structures are adaptations of the Soviet model. They are top-down, hierarchical organizations that tend to be run like military organizations. The quality of membership is valued over quantity, and some parties admit to purging members who have made mistakes. There is little room for internal debate, and personal disagreements between leaders often result in party splits and a proliferation of small parties.

Developed political parties with a sizable number of members usually have a pyramid structure, with power concentrated at the top and decisions handed down to the lower party levels. 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. Leadership and organizational structures are somewhat more developed among the historical parties and among some of the independence-era parties. The newer parties tend to be smaller and place less emphasis on party structures, outreach, or membership. There are exceptions such as the Country of Law Party that has created a detailed organizational structure with functional departments.

Parties tend to be heavily dependent on the personality of the party leader. The ideologies of most of the parties are weak, and the parties place themselves on a vaguely-defined ideological spectrum. Being associated with a party in power brings benefits but, for the most part, party loyalty is weak. 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. For most parties, the selection of candidates for party lists and single constituency seats is largely an internal leadership exercise and lacks transparency or internal debate.

Party System

Armenia's constitution allows for a multi-party democratic system. There have been more than a hundred parties since independence, although only a dozen or so have had electoral success. The environment is polarized with parties self-identifying as "pro-government" or "opposition." In assessment interviews, there were frequent references to the recent events in the Ukraine and Georgia and many in the opposition spoke of revolution. They believe the electoral process is closed to all but government allies, and "non-constitutional methods" were seen as the only means to democratic reform.

Parties are not developed in a democratic sense nor do they compete on an even playing field. Although the legal framework is generally adequate for multi-party competition, it is not enforced. The judiciary is also not independent so, for all intents and purposes, there is no legal remedy for a wronged party. Access to the electronic media, in particular television, is severely hampered for parties without links to the executive. One of the main impediments facing political parties, as identified by the opposition and some of the pro-governmental parties, was the government "administration" and its practices. In addition, opposition parties face critical constraints in raising operating funds because of the incestuous relationships between the government, ruling parties, and big business. This has also resulted in the practice of "oligarchs" being elected into Parliament, reportedly for the purpose of gaining parliamentarian immunity for corrupt business practices.

The electoral system for Parliament is mixed, with 56 seats currently being allocated to majoritarian candidates, with the remaining 75 spread proportionally through party lists. The percentage of majoritarian seats is currently under discussion and is likely to be reduced. There is a 5 percent national threshold for a party to be included in Parliament. This threshold, and the executive's dominance over the electoral and administrative systems, has led some parties to create electoral blocs—most recently, the Justice Bloc that united nine opposition parties in contesting the 2003 elections and resulted in six of its parties gaining seats in Parliament. Similar blocs are being discussed for the 2007 legislative elections. In Parliament, three dissimilar parties united into a governing coalition after the 2003 elections. There is discussion and compromise between these parties, as well as with fourth that is not boycotting. However, given their differences and the ambitions of their leaders, it appears unlikely this coalition will endure through the 2007 elections. Parties and blocs with representatives in Parliament are organized into factions that receive administrative support for such things as legislative drafting. It appears that this support will assist with the internal development of several factions in terms of their ability to draft legislation (even among the boycotting opposition).

Findings

The current political environment is not conducive to the development of a pluralistic, competitive, democratic, or accountable political party system. Autocratic systems and mentalities are firmly entrenched within the parties as well as within the government. 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. The absence of functioning checks and balances has enabled the executive branch to continue its domination of political and economic life. In addition, the mutually supportive relationship between oligarchs and government has contributed to the zero-sum political game. The government's primary interest is in remaining in power, and the opposition's primary interest is in replacing the government and seizing power.

The assessment found little impact from donor assistance to political parties. Parties characterized USAID-funded assistance as well-meaning but better suited for a more democratic context. The assessment team agrees and believes that more of the same type of assistance is unlikely to provide meaningful results.

Recommendations

Democratization and the political party system in Armenia are at a cross-road. To ensure that autocratic tendencies and practices do not prevail, the assessment team recommends continued engagement by USAID to support democratic-minded reforms—particularly through support for the rule of law and independent media. At this point in time, an independent judiciary and equal access to media would strengthen political parties in Armenia far more than any direct political party support.

Future assistance to parties should be integrated into the larger context of USAID's democracy and governance programming and should seek to strengthen the democratic development of the party system rather than target individual parties. It should be a cross-sectoral program with the goal to link political leaders with their constituents, raises issues of policy rather than personality, and avoid enabling autocratic leaders or dysfunctional systems. In particular, the assessment recommends:

- **Developing political dialogue on issues and opening the space for political debate** between and within actors (parties, the government, NGOs, the average citizen, women, and youths) and **developing informed policies** on issues of importance to Armenia;
- **Using strategic tools** for parties and government to help focus debate and policies—such as **public research** on the electorate's priorities and images of key institutions/parties, **public communication and conflict-resolution skills, best practices, and regional resource centers;**
- **Promoting stronger internal and public demand for effective political parties and government** through public information, debate, and civic education; and
- **Supporting the development of a transparent and accurate elections administration** through, among other things, the constructive participation of political parties, including developing a critical mass of party monitors.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The Armenian Political Party Assessment was contracted by USAID/Armenia to assess the political party environment and the development of the political party system in Armenia. The independent assessment was performed under the Democracy and Governance Analytical Services IQC (DFD100-04-00227-00) by Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD).

The purpose of the assessment was to: 1) assess the Armenian political party system to identify constraints to political party development; and 2) recommend possible interventions for USAID/Armenia that might be effective in the current environment to foster the development of a pluralistic, democratic, competitive, and accountable political party system. The Scope of Work is detailed in Appendix C.

The assessment team consisted of two experts in the democracy and governance (DG) sectors. The Team Leader was Sue Nelson, an expert in democracy and governance in post-conflict countries and countries in transitions. Ms. Nelson was the former Director a.i. of USAID/Cambodia's Office of Democracy and Governance and managed political party support programs for USAID in Cambodia, Haiti, and Mozambique. She now serves as an independent consultant and has worked for USAID missions, the UN, UNDP, the OECD, other donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private firms. Recent assignments include Afghanistan, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Kosovo, Liberia, Montenegro, Morocco, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone. The Political Scientist was Brian Katulis, a political analyst and public opinion research consultant who has worked on democracy and governance campaigns in two dozen countries, including the United States and several countries in the Middle East, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America. From 2000 to 2003, Mr. Katulis was a senior associate with Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research where he worked as a pollster and communications advisor to political parties in the United States, Great Britain, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Poland, and Romania. His previous experiences include employment with the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State and the National Security Council. From 1995 to 1998, he worked for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs on citizen participation programs in Egypt and the Palestine territories.

The field work for the assessment was done in Armenia from February 9 to 26, 2005. Interviews were conducted with USAID, international organizations, the Armenian political parties, members of Parliament, government officials, and Armenian civil society in Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Ijevan, and Vanadzur (See Appendix B). The team also collected and reviewed available documentation (See Appendix D).

The team was assisted in Armenia by it logistician/interpreters, Aram Ohanian and Liana Korkotyan. ARD support was provided by David Green, Senior Associate, and Joe Curry, Project Manager. The Cognizant Technical Officer was Kristine Herrmann-DeLuca, Deputy Director for the Office of Democracy and Social Reforms, USAID/Armenia.

The team wishes to thank the political parties and those interviewed for their time, insight, and analysis, without which this assessment would not have been possible.

2.0   POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Fourteen years since declaring independence from the Soviet Union, Armenia's democratic transition remains incomplete. Democratic reform efforts have stalled, and the trend towards authoritarianism has gradually increased. The main divide in Armenia's political landscape is between pro-government coalition supporters who allegedly misuse government resources to maintain their grip on power and anti-government opposition supporters who are focused on removing the president and overturning the results of the 2003 elections through a boycott of Parliament and sporadic street protests. The resulting political stalemate has hampered reforms and contributed to Armenia's ongoing regional isolation.

2.1   2003 ELECTIONS

In 2003, Armenia held presidential and parliamentary elections with widely disputed results. In the first round of presidential elections, held in February 2003, nine candidates ran including the incumbent President Robert Kocharian. According to the Central Elections Commission (CEC), Kocharian won 49.5 percent of the vote, opposition leader Stepan Demirchian won 28.2 percent and Artashes Geghamian, a former Communist-era mayor of Yerevan, won 17.7 percent. Geghamian rejected the official results and refused to support Demirchian in the second round. President Kocharian won the March 2003 second round with 67.5 percent of the vote to Demirchian's 32.5 percent. The losing candidates appealed to the Constitutional Court to invalidate the results because of irregularities but were unsuccessful. The court did, however, propose holding a "referendum of confidence" on Kocharian within a year. The government felt strongly that the Constitutional Court overstepped their jurisdiction with this ruling and the referendum has not been held.

In May 2003, parliamentary elections and a referendum on constitutional amendments were held. Seventeen parties and four electoral blocs contested the 75 proportional seats. Six of these passed the 5 percent national threshold requirement and won seats, including the Justice Alliance, an electoral bloc of nine opposition parties headed by Stepan Demirchian. The elections were seriously marred with observers reporting irregularities that included partisan election commissions, vote buying, ballot box stuffing, and numerous discrepancies in the vote count. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), which led international election observation efforts, reported that the elections did not meet international standards but that the flaws were not enough to reverse the results.[1]

The elections gave the pro-government parties a strong majority in Parliament. The two main opposition forces, the Justice Alliance and the National Unity Party (Artashes Geghamian), won 24 out of a total of 131 seats. In the same elections, voters rejected constitutional amendments which, among other things, would have reduced the powers of the presidency in some areas, eliminated a ban on dual citizenship, granted foreigners the right to own land in Armenia, and allowed non-citizens to vote.[2]

Voters have become increasingly disenchanted and disengaged from politics. The turnout for the 2003 parliamentary elections was the lowest since independence at 52 percent, and a 2004 survey found that less than one quarter of the Armenian public believed that the 2003 presidential and parliamentary elections were fair .[3]

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[1] "Report on the 2003 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Armenia," Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

[2] "Armenia Country Report," *Freedom in the World 2004*, Freedom House.

[3] CEC information and IFES 2004 Survey respectively.

2.2   AFTERMATH

In June 2003, three of the parties elected to Parliament—the Republican Party, the Country of Law Party (Orinats Yerkir), and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks)—agreed to form a coalition government. As part of the agreement, they divided the ministerial positions between themselves. This and the fact that opposition parties felt the elections results had cheated them of their actual number of seats led to an immediate parliamentary boycott by the Justice Bloc and National Unity Party. This boycott was still in effect during the assessment, although some opposition members have been individually taking part in certain parliamentary debates.

In spring 2004, opposition supporters took to the streets. Incidents of political violence escalated with attacks on prominent opposition figures such as Victor Dallakian and Ashot Manucharian, resulting in a government crackdown on demonstrations—some of which had reached 10,000 to 25,000 persons. One hundred and fifteen individuals[4] were detained, including Sharvarsh Kocharian, one of Armenia's delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Human Rights Watch documented several cases of torture and ill-treatment of detainees in police custody.[5] Police also raided the headquarters of several opposition political parties, a move later criticized by the government. A PACE resolution urged the government to end its ban on demonstrations but did not support the opposition's call for a referendum on the President. Street demonstrations ended with the crackdown and tensions have abated somewhat, but a "deceptive quiet"[6] has ensued.

President Kocharian and the governing coalition enjoy a monopoly on most meaningful forms of political power, which remain unchecked by a judiciary that lacks independence from the executive branch. Law enforcement is weak and partisan. The authoritarian trend is apparent in other areas including the mass media. In 2002, A1+, Armenia's main independent television station, lost its broadcasting license. It has unsuccessfully since tried to obtain a new license in the competitive bids organized by the National Commission on Television and Radio—a commission whose members are appointed by the President. The press also does not have the freedom to fully report on the problems facing Armenia or on alleged abuses of power. A stronger degree of freedom exists in Armenia's print media, but newspaper production and distribution is weak and most estimates of total daily newspaper circulation are that it does not exceed 1 percent of Armenia's total population.

The country has seen some progress on the economic front as the government has followed macroeconomic reform measures suggested by international financial institutions. As a result, the gross domestic product has grown annually by nearly 10 percent over the past five years. In 2004, Armenia's gross domestic product grew by 10.1 percent, totaling $3.7 billion.[7] The benefits of this economic growth have yet to trickle down to the general population, where an estimated 43 percent are living in poverty.[8] Corruption and the shadow economy continue to be a major problem, as is emigration. More Armenians are reported to now live abroad than reside within Armenia.

Armenia remains regionally isolated; its borders with both Azerbaijan and Turkey are closed. The unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh continues to serve as a potential source of instability in the

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[4] "Armenia: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2004," U.S. Department of State.

[5] *Cycle of Repression: Human Rights Violations in Armenia,* Human Rights Watch.

[6] Tigran Ter-Esayan, Attorney for several of the protesters.

[7] Stepan Mnatsakanian, Chief, National Statistical Service, February 16, 2005.

[8] *Armenia Data At-A-Glance,* World Bank

region and a drain on the Armenian government's budget resources, as substantial expenditures are being dedicated to the military.

2.3   PREPARING FOR 2007 AND 2008

With parliamentary elections in 2007 and a presidential election in 2008 (in which the term-limited incumbent cannot run), political leaders are beginning to jockey for power, offering signs of shifting political alliances and allegiances. This quest for power is likely to impact the current political dynamics and the shaky relationships between the coalitions.

The Republican Party of Armenia, headed by Prime Minister Andranik Markarian, is the dominant party in the national coalition government and controls the majority of posts in the national and local governments. In the June 2003 power-sharing agreement reached by the governing coalition, the Dashnak and Country of Law Parties now also hold ministerial posts and key leadership positions in the National Assembly, but the so-called "power ministries" in the areas of defense, interior, and national security are reserved for individuals loyal to the President. Many observers and analysts describe the current governing coalition as a marriage of convenience and means of power distribution.

Some fissures have recently appeared in the governing coalition. In debates over election law reform, the junior members of the coalition outlined proposals that would either severely reduce or completely eliminate majoritarian constituency seats.[9] In February 2005, the Prime Minister rebuffed efforts by Parliament Speaker Artur Bagdassaryan to institute parliamentary oversight of defense issues, saying that, "the Parliament Speaker has no legal right to set up such structures."[10] Disputes with the coalition partners may become more numerous as the national elections approach, which may in turn increase political competition, but this offers no guarantee that this competition would be any fairer, more democratic, or more open than previous competitions.

 The opposition remains united only in its position that the elections of President Kocharian and the current ruling coalition were illegitimate and should be overturned. Some opposition parties and figures favor a strategy of "revolution," promising a repeat of the 2004 street demonstrations. Others, including a handful of members of the Justice Bloc who participate in the National Assembly's discussions on constitution and election law reform, favor an approach of working within the system. The pattern of creating blocs to contest proportional seats is continuing and includes recent discussions between the Liberal-Progressive Party, the Republic Party, and the Heritage Party.[11] However, other opposition figures deny that efforts to form new opposition alliances are meaningful or real.[12]

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[9] "Armenia: A Crack Emerges," *Eurasianet,* November 29, 2004.

[10] "Armenia's Prime Minister Displeased with Parliament's Interference with Government's Work," *ARMINFO*, February 22, 2005.

[11] "Hovannes Hovhannisian Declares Necessity to Establish Opposition's Ideological Bloc," *Noyan Tapan,* February 16, 2005.

[12] "Victor Dallakyan: No New Blocs, Units or Federations Currently Formed Include Armenian Opposition," *ARMINFO,* February 18, 2005.

3.0   POLITICAL PARTIES

3.1   LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Most parties and analysts interviewed agreed that the legal framework for the electoral and political party systems was adequate, although additional work on implementing regulations was needed.[13] The major problems cited all stemmed from the lack of enforcement of existing laws.

The Constitution provides the framework for a multi-party democratic system based on universal suffrage. It was adopted by popular referendum in 1995 and established a presidential regime with a unicameral parliament. In terms of political parties, 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."

Freedom of association and the right to create a political party is guaranteed in Article 25: "Every citizen is entitled to form political parties with other citizens and join such parties. These rights may be restricted for persons belonging to the armed forces and law enforcement organizations. No one shall be forced to join a political party or association."

President Kocharyan made constitutional reform part of his electoral platform. His initial set of amendments was defeated in a 2003 referendum after receiving less than 50 percent of the vote. The process of constitutional reform is still on-going with three proposals[14] for amendments submitted to Parliament in 2004. With Armenia's accession to the Council of Europe in 2001, drafts are reviewed by its Venice Commission for compliance to European standards on democracy. In principle, the reforms will equalize the power relationship between the three branches; however, some opposition leaders fear that the President will use the opportunity of constitutional reform to eliminate the two-term limit for presidents.

There is a ten-year residency requirement for presidential candidates and a five-year residency requirement for parliamentarian candidates. With many Armenians abroad, this limits their ability to return and participate in political life. The target date for a constitutional referendum is June 2005. Gaining popular support for constitutional amendments is another issue, as a 2005 nationwide poll found only 8 percent of respondents were familiar with the proposed changes.[15]

3.1.1   Political Party Law

The current political party law dates back to 2002, and it regulates the creation of political parties in Armenia. Parties are required to have 200 members and divisions in at least one-third of the regions. Membership is voluntary, and members must be at least 18 years old. Registration is done with the Ministry of Justice and,

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[13] This does not mean that the laws could not use improvement, just that the major problem at this time is the need to enforce that which already exists.

[14] One draft was prepared by the ruling coalition, one was done personally by the leader of the National Democratic Alliance of Armenia, and one was drafted by the United Labor Party. Another draft was prepared in 2005 by the Mighty Fatherland Party with the Ramgavar and Liberal Democratic Union parties.

[15] *Constitutional and Electoral Reforms: Presentation of Public Opinion Poll Results*, Armenian Center for National and International Studies, 2005.

although the registration process is said to be burdensome, more than 120 parties have registered since independence. The law requires the state to ensure equal opportunities for all parties, and those that receive more than 3 percent of the proportional votes are eligible for state funding. This funding is provided in proportion to the percentage of votes won. Parties are given the rights to form alliances without having to establish legal entities with other parties.

Amendments are being discussed in the National Assembly that would increase the signature requirement to 2,000 (200 per region). Supporters of the amendments, such as the Dashnaks and some independent Ministers of Parliament (MPs), believe this will reduce the number of "pocket" parties and encourage coalition building. Others, such as the United Labor Party and Republic Party, thought that this violated the constitutional right to create parties and that it should be left to the voters to decide the relevance of parties. Small parties, such as the National Democratic Party (400 members) told the assessment team that they intended to ignore or circumvent the requirement,[16] if adopted, as they have no interest in increasing the size of their parties.

3.1.2   Electoral Law

The electoral code dates from 1999, with amendments through 2002. This law covers all aspects of presidential, parliamentary, and local elections, as well as campaign financing and the structure and function of the electoral commissions. According to the law, the electoral commissions are politically-composed entities made up of 3 presidential representatives and one representative from each parliamentary faction. This structure starts at the national level and is repeated at the territorial and precinct levels.

The law's provisions include the following:

- A 5 percent quota for women candidates on party lists;
- Campaign financing regulations that limit the amount of donations and spending;
- Equal access to the mass media with free airtime on public television and radio and free ad space in government newspapers.[17] This law also regulates the amount of paid advertising; and
- Reimbursement of 50 percent of the campaign expenses for presidential candidates who receive more than 25 percent of the votes.

Amendments are currently under discussion in the National Assembly. Some of these include the following:

- Raising the ceilings for donations and campaign spending;
- Raising the quota for women candidates;
- Doubling the deposits required for candidate registration and eliminating the current 35,000 voter signature requirement; and
- Modifying the ratio of seats selected in Parliament from proportional lists and through single member constituency districts.

Two constraints that need to be addressed in the electoral law were noted during the assessment. The first involves provisions regarding party monitors and the second involved the regulations concerning campaign financing.

Political party monitors. The law differentiates between party monitors ("proxies") and observers only in its definition of terms and in the assignment of proxies' rights to appeal CEC actions (or inaction) in court. Otherwise, the law treats party monitors exactly the same as domestic and international observers and the

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[16] Since, they said, the laws are not enforced.

[17] For the presidential elections this is 60 minutes for television and 120 minutes for radio.

press. These groups, however, have very different roles and responsibilities. Monitors have a vested interest —to ensure the person or party they represent is treated equally—and, as such, they are part of the process. International standards enable monitors to intervene in the process so that problems are corrected long before they need to end up in court. Observers are not part of the process and serve as witnesses to help ensure accountability and transparency through their presence and reporting to the public. The law should ensure that monitors have the power to intervene.

Campaign finance regulations. These regulations focus on disclosure, reporting, and funding limits but they are very broad and dated. They require parties to open a temporary election fund account in the Central Bank for all campaign-related finances. The Central Bank reports to the CEC on account transactions every three days. The law creates an oversight committee within the CEC that examines these accounts and makes them public—but this is only required 15 days after the elections are over.

The law also sets an arbitrarily low ceiling on the size of campaign funds. For the presidential elections, this is 60,000 times the minimum wage. For parliamentary elections, the ceiling is set at 5,000 times the minimum salary, although party spending is limited to 60,000 times. For the 2003 parliamentary elections, this meant a limit of about $102,000. This amount is inconsistent with the costs of developing a modern-day mass media campaign. In addition, the proposed doubling of the deposit for candidate registration is almost equal to the ceilings. This would leave nothing for campaigning.

The law also sets ceilings on the amounts that individuals may donate, using similar formulas. There are restrictions on who may contribute (government and its enterprises, foreigners, and international NGOs are prohibited), and anonymous and cash contributions are illegal. There are many issues related to campaign financing (discussed in Section 3.4.4), but, in general, the law needs to be rewritten so that the rules are clear and funding limits reasonable. The enforcement aspect also needs to be addressed since this appears to have been ignored in previous elections.

3.2   PARTY STRUCTURES

Political parties in Armenia can be grouped into three broad categories based roughly on their emergence during Armenia's political chronology: historical parties, independence parties, and post-independence parties (Table 3.1). Regardless of their date of creation, nearly all parties are top-down, hierarchical organizations centered on individual leaders.

Historical parties have a history that stretches back several decades and, in some cases, to much of the twentieth century. These 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.

TABLE 3.1 SOME OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN ARMENIA[1]	
PARTY	**FOUNDED**
Historical Parties	
Liberal Democratic "Ramgavar Aratakan" Party	1885
Social Democratic "Hnchakian" Party	1887
Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks)	1890
Communist Party of Armenia	1920
Independence Parties	
Union of Self-Determination	1987
Armenian National Movement	1989
Union of Constitutional Rights	1989
Republican Party	1990
Free Armenia "Hayk" Mission	1990
Christian Democratic Union	1990
Democratic Party of Armenia	1991
National Democratic Union	1991
Post-Independence Parties	
National State	1993
Intellectual Armenia	1994
Union of Intellectuals	1994
Women of the Armenian Land	1994
Shamiram	1995
Scientific Industrial and Civic Union	1990s
Social Democratic Party	1990s
National Unity Party	1996
County of Law (Orinats Yerkir)	1998
United Progressive Communist Party of Armenia	1998
People's Party	1998
Democratic Homeland	1998
Powerful Motherland	1999
Dignified Future	1999
National Democratic Party	2001
Republic Party	2001
United Labor Party	2002
Heritage Party	2003
Liberal Progressive Party	2004
New Times Party	2004

Independence parties have their roots in the movements for Armenian independence in the 1980s and early 1990s, such as the Karabakh Committee and the Armenian National Movement (ANM). The ANM was an inclusive umbrella organization during the push for independence; however, when the ANM became a political party, personality differences and ideological disputes led to the first major splintering of political power, now a recurring theme in Armenia's transition to democracy. Independence parties tend to lack the same degree of ideological clarity as the traditional parties, and fewer independence-era parties maintain a broad and consistent national presence.

Post-independence parties started to emerge in the mid-1990s. Among this new generation of political parties were those centered almost exclusively on their leader—sometimes called "pocket parties." Many of the post-independence parties are splinter groups from the independence-era parties. Very few of the post-independence parties have developed a broad base of popular support.
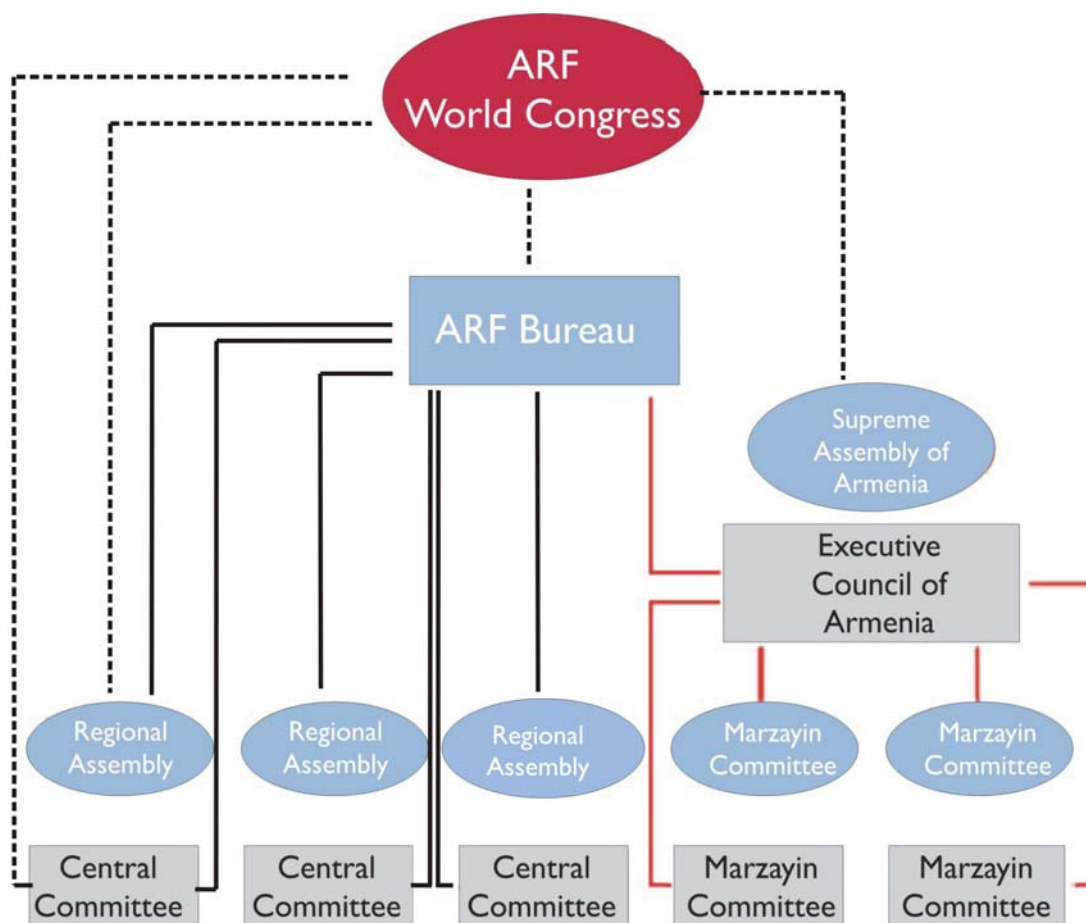
3.2.1 Organizational Structure

Most political parties have an organizational structure modeled in part on the structure used by the Communist Party during the Soviet era. Consciously or unconsciously, political party leaders have created organizations that tend to concentrate power at the top levels of the party and limit autonomy at the local levels.

Leadership and organizational structure. Most developed political parties with a sizable number of members have a pyramid structure, with power concentrated at the top and decisions handed down to the lower party levels. The party chairperson is usually the single most important figure, particularly as Armenia's political parties have become more personality-centric.

On paper, most parties are managed by a board, which varies in size from five to several dozen members. A party congress consisting of delegates chosen at local levels meets regularly, usually once every two years, to discuss the party program and select its leadership (Figure 3.1 shows an example of the party structure of the ARF-Dashnaks[18]). In some parties, board members have nominal responsibility for a geographic area and perhaps some functional responsibilities, such as heading up the international relations department or the women's department.

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[18] Organizational chart from the ARF website.

FIGURE 3.1

Leadership and organizational structures are somewhat more developed among traditional parties and less developed among the parties that emerged later in the independence period. Certain exceptions exist, such as the Country of Law Party whose leaders stress the serious efforts that they have undergone to create a sustainable party organizational structure with functional departments.

In practice, the current leadership and organizational structures of most Armenian political parties are heavily dependent on the personality of the party chair and top leaders without whom many parties would likely whither. As one analyst told the assessment team, "In other countries, the party picks the leader. In Armenia, the leader picks the party."

Membership base. Many political parties do not actively recruit members and prefer to keep their ranks small. Only a few said they were actively looking for members (e.g., the Country of Law, National Unity, and the New Times parties). Most parties appeared to value the quality of members over their numbers, reach, internal diversity, and broader societal impact. The United Labor Party, which enjoyed electoral success in 2003, said that even large parties should not have more than 1,000 members between elections because on-going party work only requires 350 to 400 party activists. Some parties admitted to purging members, sometimes for "mistakes." The Dashnak representative joked during his interview that more members had been expelled from the Dashnak Party than had remained within the party.

Party size reported during assessment interviews ranged from 300 to 400 members (Liberal Democratic Party [LDP] and National Democratic Party) to around 2,000 members (Christian Democratic Union, Dignified Future Party, National Democratic Union Party, Social Democratic Hnachakian Party, and United Labor Party) to 6,000 the 12,000 members (ANM, Dashnaks, Liberal Progressive Party, Ramgavars) to 20,000

members (New Times Party) to more than 30,000 members (National Unity Party and People's Party). Independent verification of the membership numbers claimed by parties is not possible, and many of those interviewed expressed doubts about some of the larger membership claims.

Membership and the state administrative machine. Traditionally, parties in power have used the administrative resources of the state to reward followers and shut out potential opposition. As a result, according to several party leaders interviewed during the assessment, civil servants such as teachers and municipal workers often change their party allegiance, either voluntarily or under pressure (either perceived or actual) when a new party wins power in order to ensure job security or for the benefits that they may receive.

These informal political structures and practices—the connections between individuals on the periphery of political parties and nominal members of a particular party and the political party leadership with its core supporters—are a key component of political life. The unwritten rules that cover the potential rewards and risks associated with supporting a particular party are distorted in a system such as Armenia's, a system that lacks full transparency and accountability of its leaders, particularly as the problems of poverty continue to persist.

3.2.2 Internal Procedures

The formal/informal divide within political parties pervades their internal procedures. On paper, most parties have a structure and policies that allow for a degree of internal democracy in selecting candidates, developing policies, and negotiating intra-party disputes. In practice, parties are top-down and their organizational culture places great emphasis on the leader. Party leaders, members, and, to a certain degree, the general public perceive diversity of opinion within a party as a sign of weakness and division.

Although structures exist within most parties to connect the grassroots with party leaders, there are few signs that policy changes from any bottom-up processes. During the assessment, local political party leaders were extremely wary and cautious of making any independent statement; party line and party discipline were paramount. In one location, the assessment team dropped in unannounced to a regional party office. The local party official finally agreed to speak with the team but only off the record and with obvious distress.[19]

Cadre development and candidate selection. Only a handful of the political parties that were interviewed indicated that they had regular programs to train party members. These were primarily programs assisted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) with the National Democratic Union Party, Country of Law Party, and the Ramgavars. Except for a handful of parties with youth outreach and related trainings, there were few indications that these training programs are sustainable efforts which the political parties will make an ongoing feature of their activity.

The selection of candidates for party lists and single constituency seats is largely an internal exercise lacking transparency and open debate. Procedures for setting the party's slate of candidates tend to marginalize the average party member's position, with party leaders holding most of the authority over the list of candidates. Many parties provide slots on their ticket for major donors, in particular the "oligarchs." In several instances, the top leaders of political parties will run both as candidates in the single constituency majoritarian districts as well as at the top of the party list, enhancing their chances of obtaining a seat.

This can be an effective strategy for parties to increase the number of seats because of the name recognition of the person at the top of the party list. This is particularly effective with strong leaders facing weak competition in the single-mandate race. This strategy is also beneficial to the party if an important leader faces a tough challenger in the single-mandate district, to ensure the leader will win a seat in Parliament.

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[19] One of the exceptions was the National Unity Party's whose regional and local leaders, attending a conference in Yerevan, had no issues speaking up and disagreeing with each other on issues, even when a national leader was present.

Ideology and policy development. Most political parties lack a coherent ideology, platform, and policy program. Even the most seasoned and astute analysts interviewed by the assessment team had difficulty distinguishing between different parties' substantive outlooks and positions on issues. 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. The assessment team heard of numerous examples of unilateral actions taken by party leaders without consultation with their party members. These actions typically involve decisions being made to enter into coalitions or alliances with other parties, in addition to a lack of consultation on policy development.

There are a few exceptions, particularly among the historical parties and some of the newer parties being created by former government officials, but even in those cases, the assessment team found little evidence that ideology and policy is developed by anything other than a top-down, leadership-centric approach.

3.2.3 Public Outreach

Most Armenian political parties lack broad societal reach and deep contacts in Armenian society. Exceptions to this rule exist, in particular among traditional parties like the Dashnaks who have extensive contacts both inside and outside of Armenia, in the Diaspora, and as a member of Socialist International, an international political party group. But on the whole, most political parties lack strong roots in Armenian society and are disconnected from a shifting electoral base.

Regional outreach. Parties in Armenia are Yerevan-based and most activity between elections is limited. Outreach activities are confined by the scope and purpose of the party and its funding. Pocket parties, for example, are less likely to have regional outreach than parties of more moderate size. Parties with more resources, particularly those in the governing coalition, conduct activities in most regions. The National Unity Party and People's Party have offices in most regions. With the exception of the pocket parties, most parties claimed to have good outreach and continuing contact, but this was not readily apparent during assessment field visits. For many of the non-electorally relevant parties, outreach is practically nonexistent.

Consultations with the general public. 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.

The lack of a free and fair electoral process and endemic corruption skews incentives in Armenia's political process and, as a result, most political parties are not responsive to the electorate's interests. Political parties do not compete with each other over who is the most responsive to the voters' interests. This has resulted in a vicious cycle that has added to increasing citizen disenchantment. Since parties do not aggregate interests or coherently frame political debates, the general public has begun to disengage from political life. As a result, the public image of political parties has suffered, with less than one in five Armenians saying that they trust the governing political parties (19 percent) or opposition parties (17 percent). This low level of trust cuts across gender, age, and education levels.[20]

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. Because political debate mostly centers on the struggle for power rather than a struggle of ideas and visions, parties generally see little need to consult and work with organizations aimed at addressing public policy issues.

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[20] *Citizens' Awareness and Participation in Armenia: Survey 2004,* IFES, 2004

Outreach through the media. Although parties do not see the necessity of interactive communications or outreach with the general public, they highly value opportunities to get their message out. Parties identified the media as the single most important means with which to communicate to the public. Most are critical of the quality, reach, and freedom of Armenia's media, and opposition parties in particular have strong criticisms of what they perceive as unequal access to the media. Several political parties operate their own newspapers, though circulation and readership of print media is quite limited. Some political parties own broadcast media outlets, such as the United Labor Party's Gurgen Arsenyan who owned Kentron (a private television channel) and the Popular Party's Tigran Karapetian who owns ALM TV.[21]

Outreach to women. Although political parties and blocs are obliged to ensure that 5 percent of their party list candidates are women, women remain grossly underrepresented in political life, particularly at the leadership levels. According to the OSCE, women accounted for just 15 percent of the candidates on the 2003 election proportional lists and only 4 percent of the majoritarian candidates. Seven women won seats in the new Parliament, an increase of four from the previous National Assembly.

Several parties claimed to have large percentages of women members during interviews. For example, the Country of Law said 56 percent of their members were women and the Dignified Future Party claimed 40 percent. Only one party visited during the assessment had a woman chair (Social Democratic Hnchakian Party). Several parties claimed to have women's wings that conducted women's outreach, including the Country of Law. The Armenian Association of University Women said they had just completed a study of women in political parties. The data was not yet available during the assessment, but the association's president stated: "Parties think they have no problems. We think they do. Political parties are men clubs." The assessment team spoke to a female MP who won on a majoritarian basis. She believes women members form a large percentage of the party rank and file, but that this percentage is not reflected on party tickets. She has proposed an increase to 15 percent in the quota for women candidates in proportional seats and believes this should be a transitional measure until societal norms allow for the equal participation by women.

Youth Outreach. Most of the larger political parties have sizable youth organizations and movements. In particular, the three parties in the governing coalition highlighted their efforts to engage youth. The Dashnaks have three youth wings, including a student federation. Other parties such as the ANM and New Times Party spoke of their efforts to recruit youth. As with other members, those young Armenians who are interested in becoming a member of a political party must submit a formal application and demonstrate strong commitment and loyalty to the party. In the larger and more developed political parties, youth wings are involved in campaign activities during election periods, in cadre building programs, and, to a lesser and more limited degree, in volunteer activities aimed at providing social services outside of campaign periods.

However, the establishment and management of these youth wings mirrored the overall dynamics of virtually all of the parties—a top-down management with a focus on creating an exclusive, rather than inclusive, membership base. The programs did not seem to focus on the empowerment of youth or development of leadership skills. Rather, the focus appeared to be creating a cadre loyal to the party's top leadership.

On the whole, it appears that the younger generation in Armenia is cynical and less engaged in politics than their older counterparts. One notable exception came in 2004, when students mobilized to oppose a draft law that would have lifted some current exemptions used to delay the military draft.

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[21] According to the Yerevan Press Club that monitoring the media during the 2003 parliamentary elections in which Arsenyan was a candidate, "the owner of Kentron Gurgen Arsenyan had no advantages in the coverage of this TV channel, the owner of ALM Tigran Karapetian used the air of his channel for pre-election promotion of this own party." p. 255

3.2.4 Financing

The political party allows parties to receive funding from membership fees, donations, and budgetary financing and civil-legal transactions. In many countries, basic operating costs for parties are covered by membership dues. However, only some of the parties interviewed said their membership dues covered their party's expenses. These included the Country of Law and the Social Democratic Hnchakian parties. For others, the limited number of members and Armenia's weak economy has limited the amounts of dues they can collect. Several parties appear to receive assistance from the Diaspora for outreach activities such as appearances on private television, although donations from foreigners are prohibited by law. A few of the parties were headed by self-described "financially independent" businessmen—including the New Times Party and the United Labor Party. The assessment team also heard allegations of criminal funding for some parties and Russian funding for other parties that were sympathetic to Russian interests.

Parties in Parliament receive government subsidies that help pay for such things as office space. Parties in power also not only attract funding from large businesses but have integrated some businessmen into their tickets. This mutually-supportive relationship between power and money has severely hampered the ability of smaller and out of power parties to attract donors. The many constraints related to party financing are discussed in Section 3.4.4.

3.3 PARTY SYSTEM

Armenia's party system is indicative of its Soviet past and national history. The historical parties still retain their nineteenth-century flavor, and the cluster of twentieth-century parties that were created immediately before and after independence still remain, although many have been splintered by leaders who have left to create their own parties. There has been a proliferation of parties since, more for leaders to have their own party vehicles rather than for ideological purposes. In addition, the team heard anecdotes about parties being created for reasons which were less than democratic, such as party names chosen to mimic a larger party in the hopes that the larger party would buy the smaller party out or the government orchestrating the creation of new opposition parties to create the illusion of democratic competition.

The party system in Armenia is polarized. All but one party self-identified as "pro-government" or "opposition."[22] According to assessment interviews, this practice dates back to independence. It is a black or white system where opposing parties are seen as enemies rather than as democratic competitors or a loyal opposition. Although nationalism was high, respect and trust for the government and its political institutions (including parties) were dismally low.[23] In a system where elections are fixed rather than won, gaining control of the system is of the primary importance. Developing a solid base of voter support and promoting the public interest is not. This democratic principle was not even mentioned during most interviews even when the assessment probed for this particular response.

3.3.1 Proliferation, Fragmentation and the Pyramid of Power

Armenia has had more than 120 political parties. There are reportedly now about 70. As discussed in Section 3.2, most of these are small clubs rather than organized parties and lack the popular support, organizational structures, and internal resources necessary to win votes and run a government. The number of parties in Parliament has been limited through the 5 percent national threshold, which only a dozen or so parties have been able to meet since independence (Table 3.2).

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[22] This was the United Labor Party, which classified itself as in the middle between government and opposition. Most analysts, however, placed the ULP in the government camp.

[23] Seventy-four percent of respondents of the IFES 2004 survey said they distrusted the National Assembly.

TABLE 3.2 ELECTORAL RELEVANCE: NUMBER OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS				
PARTY	1990	1995	1999	2003
Alliance of National Democrats	–	–	–	1
Armenian National Movement	52	65	–	–
ARF/Dashnaks	17	1	8	7
Christian Democratic Union	1	3	–	–
Communist Party of Armenia	–	7	10	–
Country of Law	–	–	6	19
Democratic Party of Armenia	23	–	–	1
LDP (Ramgavars)	17	7	–	–
National Democratic Party	–	–	–	1
National Democratic Union	9	5	6	1
National Unity	–	–	2	4
People's Agro-Industrial Union	–	–	11	–
People's Party	–	–	27	5
Republic Party	–	–	–	4
Republican Party	1	5	40	26
Scientific Industrial Civic Union	–	–	1	1
Shamiran	–	8	–	–
Social Democratic Party	–	2	–	–
Union of Intellectuals	–	3	–	–
United Labor	–	–	–	6
Union of Constitutional Rights	1	–	4	1
Union of Self-Determination	1	3	–	–
Independents	125	81	26	54
Nagomo-Karabakh Reps	13	-	–	–
Total Number of Seats	260	190	131	131

Adapted from information and tables provided in *Party Politics in Armenia: A Primer* and other sources. The number reflects party membership, which differs in some cases from faction size because some factions include deputies who are not members of parties (independents).

With the exception of the historical parties, most political parties are not unique or distinctive. Parties place themselves along the political spectrum that runs from communism to western European liberalism. But the depth of commitment and understanding of that ideology varies considerably. The historical parties have a firm commitment and understanding of their ideological principles, although the Ramgavars may be evolving slowly to modern realities. The vast majority of parties spoke of their commitment to liberal and democratic values. Only a few of these had platforms or an in-depth understanding of the meaning of the democratic vocabulary they used. Nationalism is an underlying current for almost all.

One interesting development is the creation of parties by former high level government officials who lost recent elections or had somehow fallen from favor. Their parties have developed more in-depth policies and positions on issues such as European integration and joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). More often than not, they focus on external issues related to foreign policy rather than the list of domestic problems facing Armenia. However, they follow the pattern of other Armenian parties in that they remain centered on individuals rather than creating a larger, stronger party of like-minded persons.

Most of the newer parties appear to be the product of personal differences between party leaders who have split away and created their own parties. Examples include the National Democratic Union, which has split into four, and the Communist Party, which has split into six. This has fragmented the party system and diminished their chances for an electoral win. It has also weakened the ideological basis for many parties, some of which switch ideologies with leaders. Politics in Armenia is a zero-sum game and allegiance follows power with hardly any reference to ideology.[24] In this context, politics is positioning for power rather than taking positions on issues.

This system was referred to as a "pyramid" system that had been inherited from the Soviets and perpetuated by post-independence politics. Power is at the top and the system is run by a few individuals. No one who is within the pyramid can act independently. Voters are perceived as subjects rather than the determiners of who gets into office. This affects the dynamics of the party system and widens the gap between party leaders and voters.

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[24] An example cited by several parties, including the ANM, was the defection of almost two-thirds of the ANM MPs on the eve of President Ter-Petrossian's resignation.

After the 2003 elections, three dissimilar parties united into a governing coalition in Parliament. This has necessitated discussion and compromise between these parties along with a fourth party which is not boycotting. Whether this is a positive step towards a more inclusive system of governance or a co-optation into a closed system is not clear. However, given the differences among these parties and the ambitions of their leaders, it appears unlikely that this coalition will endure through the 2007 elections.

3.3.2 Defining Factors

Several factors have shaped the development of Armenia's political party system. Many of these are constraints which are more fully discussed in Sections 3.3.3. and 3.4. One factor is the Soviet legacy, which permeates Armenian politics and parties. Another is the electoral system which, through its flawed elections, marginalizes the role of the voting public and perpetuates an elitist and nonresponsive party system. This also makes it difficult to determine which party has an actual base of public support, especially given the lack of public opinion polling. Yet another factor is the dominance of the executive branch and the uneven playing field which limits the chances of any non-government affiliated party to win public office.

The party system is shaped by the relationships between individuals. The International Crisis Group (ICG) divides these individuals into clans:[25]

- Karabakh Clan, composed of President Kocharian and his Karabakhtsis network, including the Minister of Defense and security forces. The ICG includes the ruling coalition in Parliament in this clan (the Republican Party, the Country of Law Party, and the Dashnaks);
- Demirchian Clan, composed of Stepan Demirchian (of the People's Party and son of the speaker who was assassinated in 1999) and his Justice Bloc, along with Vazgen Manukian;
- Sarkisian Clan, composed of Aram Sarkisian (of the Republic Party and brother of the Prime Minister who was assassinated in 1999), which the ICG says has links to the ANM;
- Geghamian Clan, composed of Artashes Geghamian (of the National Unity Party), which the ICG believes is open to any coalition; and
- Armenian National Movement (ANM) which was in power from 1991 to 1998. The ICG now considers the ANM more of a lobby group than a party.

In addition, the assessment would add the oligarchs who align themselves with those in power and whose finances support them. This group has started to enter politics directly by contesting majoritarian seats or buying their way onto party lists. One analyst estimated that nearly two dozen of the members in the current National Assembly are well-known millionaire businessmen, many of whom have close ties to Russian businessmen.[26] Whatever their purpose, these individuals and the power of their money have a deep influence on the political party system.

Accompanying personalities and the ties between leaders are the issues of nationalism and populism. Nationalism was a key characteristic of the original parties. It was also the underlying component for the ANM whose founding members are now sprinkled throughout many other parties. Nationalism is still one of the basic values of political leaders; the New Times Party leader told the assessment team, "I am not a democrat, I am a nationalist."

Two nationalist issues that emerged during the assessment were relations with Turkey and the situation in Karabakh. In particular, taking the wrong position on Karabakh appeared to be the only issue that could

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[25] *Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead,* International Crisis Group p. 9-13.

[26] "The Armenian Parliamentary Election: Trends and Trouble," Richard Giragosian, *Caucasus Election Watch,* Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003.

bring down a party or a government. The intention of the former President, Levon Ter-Petrossian, to compromise on Karabakh was universally cited as the primary reason for the fall of his government. [27]

Populism was another issue. Apprehension was expressed among some political leaders and analysts that a party would appeal to populist sentiment by making promises that would be impossible to keep. This issue was raised in relation to the New Times Party, as well as the Country of Law Party and others. It was unclear whether the concern related to the deception of voters or to the firing up of the popular vote for the "wrong" candidate.

Another factor is the difference between parties in Parliament and parties not in Parliament. Parties in Parliament receive financial support and the distinction of being in Parliament. They are also treated as "factions" and are provided with administrative and legislative drafting support. Even boycotting parties have reportedly been using this support to develop their ability to draft bills and fulfill their parliamentary role. Over time, this should positively impact the evolution and maturing of these parties.

International context is another key factor. In almost every interview, parties analyzed the recent events in the Ukraine and Georgia. The opposition sees this as a model for Armenia to return to a democratic track and use the language of revolution. They were all very aware of the international community's role in these events and felt there was a double standard when it came to Armenia—that the international community (and the US in particular) supported stability over democracy. They felt this was especially evident after the 2003 elections and the 2004 protests.

3.3.3   Competition

Although multi-party elections are held according to constitutional requirements, the playing field has not been free or fair.[28] This means that parties have not been able to develop in a normal sense through open competition and the political choice of voters. One result has been the continued proliferation of unelectable parties and an elitist party system. Parties do not articulate public interest, and the voters have become disillusioned and disconnected. One free and fair electoral cycle would go a long way to develop a more responsive and democratic party system and to consolidate many of the like-minded small parties into real political entities.

When the electoral system does not produce accurate elections, there is little incentive for parties to operate within the rules of the system. The opposition sees the electoral process as closed to all except for the government and its allies and, thus, reverts to boycotts or revolutionary rhetoric. The issue of free and fair elections must be addressed before the "normal" issues related to political party competition (campaign funding, media messages, and campaigning) can make a difference.

National and local elections are competed in Armenia.[29] The assessment team found a measurable difference between local and national elected officials. The locally-elected officials were much more aware of their constituents' needs, as well as the need to be responsive. This was lacking among most of the nationally-

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[27] The 2004 *Public Opinion and Urgent Issues on Armenia's Political Agenda* poll performed by the Armenian Center for National and International Studies showed that 73 percent of respondents were still concerned or dissatisfied with discussions on Karabakh.

[28] Only the Country of Law Party thought that the playing field was "100%" free and fair. The Speaker said he believed that opposition parties used this issue as a reason to not accept the election results.

[29] Excluding Yerevan, Armenia is divided into 930 communities, each with popularly-elected mayors and a council of 5 to 15 members. There are 10 regions, each headed by a governor. Yerevan is divided into 12 districts, each governed by a district head who sits on the Yerevan Council. The Council is chaired by the mayor. Governors and the mayor of Yerevan are appointed positions. In a democratic system, these should be elected, and this is an issue which should be addressed in DG programs.

elected officials interviewed, although it appeared to be more developed among those who won seats on a majoritarian basis.[30]

The assessment team heard that parties do not play a significant role in local elections and most candidates run as independents. Members of the ruling national governing coalition have indicated that they will not try to compete against each other in local elections. However, several parties told the assessment that they were becoming more interested in local elections, especially with decentralization, which is giving local governments more power over local taxation and expenditures.

In national elections, a mixed proportional-majoritarian system is used to elect the 131 deputies in Parliament. In the 2003 elections, 56 seats were elected from single member districts on a one-round basis and the remaining 75 seats came from party lists. The electoral law allows independent candidates and members of other parties to be included on party lists or in blocs (Table 3.3). This practice has enabled leaders of some of the small parties to be elected without having to change their party's exclusive nature.

Many candidates who run for majoritarian seats are associated with a party list, giving them double the chance at winning. The majoritarian seat is accepted over the party seat, which then frees up the proportional seat for another party member. Many majoritarian seats are contested by businessmen. According to the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's *Election Assessment in the South Caucasus,* these people fall into two categories: oligarchs looking for new social status who run calm and well-organized campaigns; and lower caliber businessmen looking for new opportunities to expand their businesses. This latter group was said to be more likely to resort to intimidation and more 'unprofessional' types of vote buying. The percentage of majoritarian versus proportional seats is under discussion. The current consensus appears to be leaning towards reducing the number of majoritarian seats to 41, allegedly in an effort to curb the number of businessmen who are buying their way into Parliament.

The 5 percent national threshold set for a party to be included in Parliament has effectively kept many of the smaller parties out of office. This threshold, and the executive branch's dominance over the electoral and administrative systems, has led some parties to create electoral blocs. In 1999, the Unity Bloc led to the electoral win of its two members, the Republican and People's parties, although this Bloc did not survive the assassination of its two leaders.[31] In 2003, the Justice Bloc united nine opposition parties to contest the elections, six of whom gained seats in Parliament. Similar blocs are being discussed for the 2007 legislative elections. These are pragmatic relationships that have little to do with policies or ideologies but which are positive developments in terms of coalition building and positioning for electoral competition.

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[30] The exception to this would be the oligarchs.

[31] The Republican Prime Minister and the People's Party's Parliamentary Speaker, along with 6 other members of Parliament, were assassinated in Parliament in 1999.

TABLE 3.3 ELECTORAL BLOCS AND PERCENTAGE OF VOTES IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS		
1995	**1999**	**2003**
REPUBLIC BLOC 43.9% Armenian National Movement LDP (Ramgavars) Republican Party Christian Democratic Union Union of Intellectuals Social Democratic Party	**UNITY BLOC 41.7%** Republican Party People's Party **LAW & UNITY BLOC 7.97%** National Unity Party Union of Constitutional Rights Artsakh-Armenia Scientific Industrial & Civic Union **UNION OF COMMUNIST & SOCIALIST PARTIES 2.49%** United Progressive Communist Party Women of the Armenian Land **UNION OF SOCIALIST FORCES & INTELLECTUALS BLOC 0.24%** Kaissa Social Democratic Party Union of Intellectuals **AIM+ BLOC 2.29%** Motherland Diaspora Union Union of Self-Determination Intellectual Armenia	**LIBERAL BLOC 0.82%** NDSU (Christianocrats) Intellectual Armenia **JUSTICE BLOC 13.78%** People's Party Republic Party National Democratic Union Democratic Party of Armenia National Democratic Party Bloc of National Democrats? Arshak Sadoyan Social Democratic Hnchakian Party **UNION OF INDUSTRIALISTS AND WOMEN BLOC 2.06%** Women of the Armenian Land United Progressive Communist Party NGO: Domestic Producers NGO: Yerevan & Its Inhabitants **DIGNITY, DEMOCRACY, MOTHERLAND BLOC 2.84%** Popular Democratic Party Dignified Future Party

3.4   CONSTRAINTS

The development of a democratic political party system in Armenia faces a multitude of constraints. Many of these are systemic problems that require political will for genuine change. This will was not evident during the assessment. Others are related to the autocratic political culture and Soviet legacy—overcoming these may require a generational change. Many of these constraints are shared with other post-communist-states. In addition, there are the conventional constraints to political party development which are found in all democratic systems.

Some of the major constraints are described below.

3.4.1   Executive Dominance and Lack of Enforcement

These systemic problems were the primary constraints identified during interviews, including those within the ruling coalition. They have resulted in nonresponsive parties, an undemocratic party system, election fraud, an

uneven playing field, intimidation of the opposition, and limited means for any party without ties to those in power.

In particular, the following issues need to be addressed before tactical assistance to strengthen political parties could be hoped to make a difference:

- **Lack of enforcement of existing laws.** Many parties felt cheated of seats in past elections. They see the court system as politically biased in favor of the executive and not as a means for recourse. They believe the legal framework is not perfect, but adequate, and that the primary problem is its lack of enforcement by regulatory bodies, law enforcement, and the courts.[32]
- **Use of government for partisan purposes.** The state system is geared towards the perpetuation of those in power. This includes the use of administrative resources for partisan purposes between and during elections, use of administrative sanctions to discourage opponents, controlling media access, ensuring partisan news coverage, and stacking regulatory and other boards for partisan advantage.[33] In a 2005 opinion poll, 37 percent thought the use of administrative levers (abuse of power) was the major factor influencing elections.[34]
- **Control over electoral commissions.** Control over the electoral machinery has been used to fix elections, and the goal of most parties is to get their own members inside the commissions. There is no concept of an independent electoral commission or effective monitoring from the outside. As one party put it: "if we are not in the CEC, our votes will be manipulated."
- **Intimidation.** Although political violence has been minimal, the assessment heard much about intimidation of supporters of non-government affiliated parties. This includes petty intimidation, where an MP's daughter is given B's in school instead of A's because her father's political party leanings, the loss of jobs because of party affiliations, overt surveillance of party members, and businesses being threatened with administrative punishments for contributing to the wrong party.

3.4.2   Historical Legacy

Armenia has been independent for less than 15 years. Everyone over 30 years of age received their education and worked under the Soviet system. Under this one-party system, party membership meant access to power, resources, and jobs. Political pluralism and diversity of opinion was not tolerated. Many Armenian political leaders were part of that political system, and few were persecuted as dissidents. Most party leaders today are in their 40's and 50's and also participated in Armenia's independence movement. Many were members of the Karabakh Committee that was created to protect Armenian interests in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. These experiences have formed the political culture, institutions and outlook in Armenia today.

In terms of constraints, this legacy is visible in:

- An autocratic political culture and autocratic leaders and party institutions;
- A lack of basic understanding of how a democracy actually functions, including its value systems, basic principles, and practices;
- A focus on the past rather than future;

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[32] This is also a public concern. In a 2005 poll, 25 percent of respondents thought the constitution was not working because no one was held accountable for violating it, and another 39 percent said implementation of the constitution did not suit authorities. *Constitutional and Electoral Reforms,* Armenian Center for National and International Studies, p 4.

[33] This includes the media frequency board and election commissions.

[34] Armenian Center for National and International Studies, *Constitutional and Electoral Reforms,* p 9

- "Tunnel vision" on some important issues such as Armenia's relations with its neighbors and an inability to constructively debate these issues; and
- A generalized lack of vision beyond the pursuit or retention of power and an inability to articulate a compelling alternative vision for the future.

3.4.3 Lack of Access to Media

The lack of access to the mass media, in particular to television, for parties to disseminate information was a key constraint cited by opposition parties. This appears to have been less of a problem when the relatively independent A1+ television station was broadcasting. However, since the government failed to renew A1+'s broadcasting license, despite repeated applications, opposition parties say access has become a critical issue. Public television is seen as an arm of the governing parties, and the opposition believes that private television stations have been bullied into restricting their access.

Equal access to free and paid air time is a part of the electoral law. Donor-funded media monitoring of the 2003 elections found that competing parties were able to inform the public of their platforms by using all of their free air time. However, it found the press coverage was not objective, fair, or balanced and was at its worst during the presidential elections. The print media is considered more open and easier to access, primarily because circulation is so low it is not seen as a threat. Some parties have their own newspapers, and several parties asked for funding to support or to create their own papers. In fact, one party, the Union of Constitutional Rights, said it was supported by the proceeds of its newspaper which had made it financially independent.

3.4.4 Limited Resources and Weakly Regulated Campaign Financing

Parties run on funding. Funding is needed to pay for operating costs and to run a campaign during an election. In many countries, basic costs are covered by party dues, but in Armenia, parties are small and the number of members is limited. This limits the amount of funding brought in by dues. Government parties compensate by using the administrative and regulatory resources of the state and by leveraging their connections with big business. They also use these resources against opposition parties. There were anecdotal accounts by opposition parties of their difficulties in raising funds about how small businesses were discouraged from contributing by government functionaries that threatened to pull permits or increase taxes. As a result, most of their contributors want to remain anonymous and parties either do not report these donations or divide up large donations to hide the source.

There is also the issue of the shadow economy and its connection with political financing. One of the independent MPs told the assessment team that 99.9 percent of campaign funding was from illegal businesses. Recipients of this type of funding obviously do not wish to disclose the source nor the amounts of these contributions. Another issue is tax evasion. Reported purchases require a 20 percent value-added tax and paid employees require an additional 33 percent social security tax.[35] As a result, there are many under-the-table deals that are not included in any financial disclosures.

Forty percent of the public thinks money is the most important factor influencing elections.[36] Campaign finance regulations focus on disclosure and spending limits. A fundamental problem is the unrealistically low ceiling. This is set at around $100,000 when parties have said that actual parliamentary campaign costs average $300,000—with some costing in the "millions." As campaigning in Armenia evolves into the mass-media types of campaigns which are used world-wide, these costs can only increase. The low ceilings, the fear of

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[35] Thirty-three percent is an approximate number and includes social security, income tax, and pension contributions.

[36] Armenian Center for National and International Studies, *Constitutional and Electoral Reforms,* p 9.

identification, and the shady deals mean that parties use other accounts to finance expenditures and the amounts and sources disclosed to the CEC from their official campaign account have little bearing on reality.

Transparency International attempted to monitor the campaign financing of the 2003 parliamentary elections. It found it difficult to obtain information, not only from many parties, but from the media outlets themselves, some of which would not even provide advertising rate cards. Among other issues, it found that three parties spent more than the limit[37], and that no party used paid staff (all staff members were reported as volunteer). Yet, no violations were registered by the CEC.[38]

The regulations on campaign financing need serious review and revision so that they can fulfill their purpose of limiting the hidden influence of large donors and contributing to a more equal playing field. In particular, these revisions include:

- More realistic spending ceilings so that parties are more inclined to use their official campaign account and to provide a more accurate reporting of their expenditures;
- Better defined rules and regulations that are less open to interpretation;
- Ensuring independent enforcement of regulations with sanctions for violations; and
- Timely publishing of disaggregated data by the CEC, not the global amounts which are currently released at the end of the process.

Party subsidies. Several parties thought direct financial assistance to cover party operating costs would be the best type of donor assistance. These were actually quite few, as most parties thought that, even if they had ample funding, the state resources being used against them and the lack of media access would still limit their ability to compete. However, a few parties mentioned the costs to maintain and operate national and regional offices. After independence, the government of Armenia provided assistance to all parties. This included office space in publicly-owned buildings. With privatization, several non-parliamentarian parties said they were being evicted, and their concerns were now turning towards finding rent money. Parliamentary parties, including those without seats in Parliament but that are associated with a winning bloc (such as the Justice Alliance's Social Democratic Hnchakian Party), receive a government subsidy and these maintenance-type issues are not an issue for them.

3.4.5   Disconnected and Uninformed Parties and Public

The detachment between parties and the public is a major constraint to democratic development. Party leaders are isolated from the average voter and the two groups "speak different languages." In the IFES 2004 survey, more than half the respondents had no interest in politics or government, and more than 70 percent distrusted the governing coalition and opposition parties. Only 3 percent of respondents thought political party membership was a way to influence government.

The assessment team found a general lack of understanding and knowledge in both the parties and the public of not only some critical issues facing Armenia, but of the content and spirit of the constitution and laws. For example, the Central Elections Commission cited one of its main problems as the lack of knowledge by parties and their proxies on the electoral law and regulations. An independent MP said one of the main problems in Parliament was the lack of informed deputies, deputies who could be in Parliament for years before they understood the importance of government institutions. Women's groups said the lack of knowledge of women was responsible for their low levels of participation and the disregard with which

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[37] Country of Law Party = $208,590, Dashnaks = $103,108, and the Republican Party = $166,536.

[38] Center for Regional Development/Transparency International Armenia, Monitoring of the Parties' Campaign Finances During the 2003 Parliamentary Elections, 2003.

political parties treated them. And other parties, such as the Christian Democratic Union, stated that a major problem was that party members did not understand the ideology of the parties they had joined.

Many parties referred to a basic need for information on political party operations, comparative development in other countries undergoing democratic transition, and basic information related to issues facing Armenia such as European integration or NATO. As an example, the Republican Party lamented the limited print run of books (fewer than 1,000 copies), the lack of political journals for intellectual dialogue, and the lack of political works translated into Armenian. The Country of Law Party asked for funding to open a party school where his cadre could be trained in leadership, party administration, development of a modern political party, and resources on western (European) parties and values.

3.5   POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE

USAID/Armenia provided support to political party strengthening primarily through the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). Since 1995, NDI's political party program provided training and assistance to a select number of democratic parties.

NDI assistance is designed to:

- Train democratic parliamentary election candidates;

- Enable parties to participate in future processes to amend the electoral code and constitution;

- Help political parties communicate with citizens more effectively and regularly;

- Develop the capacity of political parties to conduct their own internal training seminars and develop more effective internal and external party communication; and

- Increase the political participation and influence of women and youth.[39]

In addition to in-country training and seminars, NDI provided Armenian party leaders and activists with opportunities to learn from political parties in other countries through short-term visits. In the 2003 parliamentary elections, NDI supported efforts by the parties in the Justice Alliance to develop into a unified coalition. NDI has since expanded its activities to include parties in the governing coalition.

USAID also funded participant training in-country and abroad through the Academy for Educational Development that focused on political party issues (2000–2004). This included sessions in Democratic Leadership Development/Political Parties, conducted by the Conflict Management Group in Boston and NDI. Fourteen participants went to the US and another 68 were trained in country. The US Embassy also organized visits to the US on the "Role of Congress and State Legislation," the "US Presidential Campaign," "Political Parties and Party Leadership," and "Political Parties in the US" through its International Visitors Program. About 20 participants attended these visits that looked at US political processes, foreign policy issues, and the role of political parties in the US.

In 2004, USAID/Armenia found that "the very nature of the (political party) system has hindered party development" and subsequently limited its political party development activities to "encouraging women's participation in politics and developing women political leaders."[40] It does have a continuing Armenian Legislative Strengthening Program implemented through Development Associates and Development

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[39] NDI, *Quarterly Reporting 2003-2004.*

[40] USAID/Armenia, *Strategy for 2004-2008,* p. 31

Alternatives, which is, in effect, training parties indirectly through the professionalization of their parliamentarians.

Other donors have largely focused their resources and efforts on developing related sectors and institutions, such as the media, women's organizations, and legal framework. In the 2003 elections, the Open Society Institute funded the local chapter of Transparency International to monitor political party financing for the elections as well as the Yerevan Press Club for media monitoring of the campaign.

4.0   CONCLUSIONS

The political environment in Armenia is not conducive to political party building assistance. Most of the major constraints are related to the lack of political will for clean elections and accountable governance. Most of the political actors are undistinguishable in terms of attitudes or policies. Few parties offer alternative choices to the voting public in regards to concrete policies, and the parties are not organized as viable political parties based on public support and focused on aggregating public interest and governing.

The primary constraint is the lack of a free or fair electoral process that accurately reflects the will of the majority of voters. That, and the executive dominance over all aspects of political and economic life, completely blocks the development of an accountable and democratic party system. Most parties are as autocratic and as disconnected from the people as the government. To date, most party assistance has been apples and oranges, or, in the words of one party, like trying to put a round peg in a square hole. Some said the assistance would be appropriate if there were "democratic conditions" in Armenia, which few felt there were. Some felt that exchanges with European parties would be more appropriate, as their parties and systems were closer to what Armenia wanted to accomplish. Others were more critical, saying that this type of support only created an illusion of competition and served only a narrow sphere. Others warned it was difficult to find the right partners and this "never brings results." The assessment found little impact visible from political party strengthening programs and found nothing to indicate that more of the same would make any significant difference.

Many of the problems facing Armenian political parties are shared with other post-communist states. In many of these states, there are both democratic and autocratic characteristics, a poor quality of governance, and a lack of transparent and democratic political leadership. Corruption and the rise of powerful oligarchs are common critical issues as well as a public that is becoming increasingly disillusioned and politically disengaged. The rigid party structures, top-down internal management styles, and disconnection from the public are problems confronting political party development in a wide-range of developing democracies, from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) countries, such as Russia and Kazakhstan, to states in other regions, such as Bangladesh, Bolivia, and much of the Arab world.

Armenia, as with other FSU countries in similar circumstances, is at a cross-road. It can either continue its autocratic consolidation under the mantle of democratic discourse or it can move towards real reform and democratization. As with other post-communist states, it is very difficult to tell the democrats from the autocrats. The language of some parties is very democratic, but their actions are autocratic. Some of these parties are recipients of international assistance, and the assessment did not find a correlation between assisted and non-assisted parties in terms of their democratic development.

Nevertheless, continued engagement by the international community in the democratization of Armenia is essential. This involvement is needed to deter backsliding and to ensure that autocratic tendencies and practices do not prevail. It is it is extremely important that assistance focus on building a democratic political system and not inadvertently enable autocratic leaders or dysfunctional systems. In particular, donors need to provide support to the rule of law and the development of an independent media. At this point in time, an independent judiciary and equal access to media would strengthen political parties in Armenia far more than any direct political party support.

4.1   RECOMMENDATIONS

Until the political environment becomes more conducive to political party strengthening, the assessment recommends that assistance to parties be focused on developing the political party system instead of developing party structures or individual parties. It should be a cross-sectoral program that is integrated throughout USAID's ongoing democracy and governance programming. It should seek to link political

leaders with their constituents, raise issues of policy rather than personality, and open the political space for dialogue on issues of importance to Armenia's future.

In particular, the assessment makes the following recommendations.

Develop political dialogue on issues and open the space for political debate. Open political debate is virtually nonexistent. At the moment, there are several small groups of individuals who speak primarily to themselves within a small Yerevan bubble. This needs to opened up and done at every level between and within the parties, government, NGOs, and citizens. It needs to be done at the regional and local levels as well as at the national level. It should be televised and publicized. In addition to opening up the space for debate, it should be part of an educational process that informs voters, parties, and leaders on laws, policies, and proposed legislation.

A constructive debate moderated by impartial professionals is needed. The monologue-type "discussion" witnessed by the assessment team is not useful. It should be infused with tangible policies and programs that translate parties' vision into action. It should also be an ongoing dialogue, not a one-time event. It should continue up to the next electoral cycle in 2007, at which point it should be supplemented with campaign and party debates.

At the same time, assistance should be given to develop informed policies on issues of importance to Armenia. Parties need to move beyond their personal differences and work together to develop policy alternatives and solutions to Armenia's problems. This is already being done to parties within Parliament through assistance to factions by the legislative strengthening program. This type of assistance should be extended to non-parliamentarian parties and think tanks so that they can add substance to the political debate.

Use strategic tools for parties and government to help focus debate and policies—such as public research, public communication and conflict-resolution skills, best practices, and regional resource centers. Public opinion research can help political parties appreciate and understand the electorate's priorities and image of political parties and other key institutions. This assistance should be made available not only to parties, but to Parliament, government agencies, think tanks, and civil society organizations.

Assisting parties to communicate more effectively with the public would also be useful so that parties would speak in a way that the public could respond to and understand. Public relation skills are undeveloped across the board, and assistance could target developing better communication skills.

Regional resource centers could also provide a locale, not only for debate but for parties to find documents and access the Internet for information on political parties and national development. In addition to Armenian laws and government documents, there is a wealth of documentation created by donor-supported programs. Placing copies of these documents in regional locations would enable parties, civil society organizations, and others access to these valuable informational tools and disseminate key information beyond Yerevan.

Promote stronger internal and public demand for effective political parties and government through public information, debate, and civic education. Opening the space for real debate and disseminating information beyond political and civil leaders in Yerevan should help empower the public and the lower level party and government officials and enable them to express their concerns and opinions—ultimately leading to a stronger demand for more responsive and effective governance.

The process can be assisted by developing new political leaders among youth and women. Politics is an old-boys club. Opening up the process can change the dynamics of the system as different interests get represented. Generational change is inevitable, and it is important there be a constructive and democratic participation of youth and not a continuation of the status quo. Those interviewed were divided as to which direction the youth would take. Support for youth leadership development, including exchange opportunities that provide experience and comparative examples in countries that have undergone a similar transition to democracy, could prove useful to ensure their positive participation.

Support the development of a transparent and accurate electoral administration, through the constructive participation of political parties. The assessment team recommends a close look at the experiences of other developing countries, in particular those of Mexico. In Mexico, the state party won every election through its use of state resources and its control of the electoral apparatus. The situation was completely turned around by creatively incorporating political parties and their monitors into election administration at every stage of the process and by revising their electoral law to limit the discretionary powers of the election commissions.

At a minimum, donors should support the development of professional and well-trained political party monitors. Party monitors have a vested interest in ensuring that no other party has an unfair edge over their party's candidates. They already have the legal standing to file complaints on alleged violations and improvements to the law could help solidify their role. A critical mass of well-trained monitors is essential for election integrity. Parties need to realize the utility of their monitors and how to use this them constructively. Previous monitor trainings were inadequate in both scope and content.

4.1.1 Fit into USAID's 2004-2008 Strategy

The recommended activities cut across USAID/Armenia's DG programming. The focus on opening political space and linking political leaders with their constituents fits squarely within USAID/Armenia's Strategy for 2004-2008, its Strategic Objective SO2.1: Improved Democratic Governance and its two Intermediate Results (IR):

- IR1: Civic Participation Expanded; and
- IR2: Targeted Governance Institutions Strengthened.

The recommended activities would contribute directly to these intermediate results and their sub-results.[41]

These activities do not need to be implemented by one grantee or contractor. They could be a series of interventions done concurrently, but conducted by different partners and programs. There are several good fits between USAID's on-going programs and some of the activities suggested. For example, activities that include press coverage, especially televised debates, could be supported by existing media assistance programs. Work towards ensuring a good legal framework for parties and elections could be assisted under ongoing rule of law programs. Dialogue with civil society could be taken up under existing civil society programs as well as with the local governance program. The legislative strengthening program could play a significant role in linking political actors with constituents and in developing policy dialogue.

As some issues are more politically sensitive than others, USAID programs in sectors such as health and, especially, education could help start the dialogue with some of their key issues, which might be less threatening politically to parties and government officials. This could help ensure participation by all political actors from the start and build a tradition and expectation of participation—one that would be noticeable if certain sides stopped participating when more sensitive issues started to be discussed.

These activities should also be done through different mediums to ensure they reach the greatest number of beneficiaries. For example, local debates should be covered by the local media as well as the national media, in particular through broadcasting on local television and radio stations. Phone-in programs that involve audience participation could also be organized. The distribution of public information though printed civic guides could be used to systematically supplement debates and other informational programs; these could include art work or articles selected through competition (and rewarded with some type of prize). If creatively designed, the secondary benefits from these types of programs could be significant and include such things as

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[41] USAID's SO2 Results Framework is shown at the end of Appendix C.

improving the distribution networks of printed materials, strengthening the capacity of local independent media and investigatory journalism, and improving the long term governance of public officials.

APPENDIX A.   QUOTES

The following is a sample of some of the statements heard during the assessment.

On competition and elections
- "We are not novices here. We will be ready for 2007." (Politician about to create a political party)
- "When we really want to we can, and we really want to win." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "Forget about clean elections." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "We do not have much leverage, so we will probably boycott elections." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Every party dreams of being Number One." (Journalist)
- "Political pluralism is acceptable to us." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Elections won't change the nature of government in near future." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "It doesn't matter if we are brave or active. It doesn't change the final results." (Opposition party not in Parliament)

On money and politics
- "Parties with clean politics principles have serious resource problems. You either get dirty and get resources or stay clean and have no resources." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Principles are expensive. We are in personal debt." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "We have no assistance from NDI or anyone else. We are deprived of the opportunity to get dues. Those who help us financially are persecuted." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "The practice is not very open, not very forbidden, and not very pleasant—large businesses give large donations in time to get seats." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "It's easy to buy a party here." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Elections are done through vote buying. It's obvious that to succeed you need good financial resources." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "Businessmen seek from where the wind blows and finances where he gets power." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "For women to enter politics, they must first become owners and enter the ranks of the rich." (Gender specialist)

On access to media
- "Frequencies are never given to a company if the owner is not loyal." (Journalist)
- "Information is filtered on TV through the Russian perspective. This needs to be opened up." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "Money is not the problem. Even if we paid double, they wouldn't sell the airtime to us." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "At decisive moments, we were unable to deliver our view to society." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "To establish democracy in Armenia, you don't need much—just exert pressure so there would be a TV for free expression." (Opposition party not in Parliament)

On political parties and the political party system
- "Normal political parties do not exist here." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Political parties are not developed or successful—the same communist system exists today under a democratic mask." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "It's not important how many are in my party but how many think as liberals." (Opposition party not in Parliament)

- "We try not to enter populism too much because grass-root demands can be unrealistic to implement." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "There are few new faces in political life and posts. Parties have a problem to attract people with good ideas and good professional skills. Those people prefer to stay out of politics." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "We have the Soviet mentality—after a political party takes power, the opposition becomes the enemy." (Independent MP)
- "I'm trying to transform (my new party) into an army in terms of discipline. It would be impossible to organize it otherwise. Why? Because of the attitude of the people, it's always the attitude of the elite that dictate. We need order or we will fail." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Russia creates many illusions here from time to time and society follows them. This prolongs the life of autocrats." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Since Armenia is always on the verge of revolution, we get together to contest the authorities, so ideology takes a back burner." (Opposition party in Parliament)

On being pro-government and opposition
- "We have nothing to do with graft and corruption." Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "The authorities assembled a Parliament that looks like a rich man's club." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "The shadow government terrorizes those in opposition. Very often people are afraid to show their party affiliation." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "Every Armenian child is a Dashnak and then they grow into something else." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "We may only be 3,000 strong, but our people stand up until they are stabbed." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "They have no program, they just want to drive." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "We've never had any problem working with the opposition. We may be in the opposition tomorrow." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "They (the boycotters) smell victory, but we are working without them." Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "We never do anything behind closed doors. We are the only party with open doors." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "You cannot be a leader of an opposition party and have a businessman as a partner- he would be eliminated as a businessman." (Independent MP)

On reform and change
- "To get rid of this president, I would work with anyone." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "We work within the system to change the system. Criticizing from the outside will not change anything." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "When we entered Parliament we found out problems were more serious than we realized." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "Non-constitutional methods could have good results." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "We can only break the dense pyramid of power if we have a widespread grassroots velvet revolution." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "Revolution is the only way to change the political system. Otherwise, there is no way. Elections are vote-buying, and political parties will not get established in Armenia." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Nothing stops me. I am a strategic thinker with an objective in mind." (Opposition party not in Parliament)

- "Most parties only knew the communist party and nothing else. The bulk of the members in most parties are former communists. Maybe they are incapable of creating anything new." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "The system is spoiled, so if good people go, they will be spoiled. The system needs to be changed." (Armenian NGO)
- "Generational change? Maybe, but not in the near future. The new generation is not heading towards reforms. (Journalist)
- They've been brought in and bought off. The rest are apolitical." (International NGO.
- "I only believe in generational change." (Armenian NGO)

On biggest constraint
- "Administrative resources used against us." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "Authorities try to create headaches for authentic opposition." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "Lack of money is the biggest problem at every level. People come to us with problems but we have no resources to help them." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Corruption and lack of enforcement." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Law is ok, but enforcement is the problem." (Opposition party in Parliament)

On assistance to political parties
- "Do not assist political parties who are not democratic but who talk democratic." (Pro-government party in Parliament)
- "Don't assist a party—assist an idea." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "If USAID is giving political party support, why are we never invited to anything with NDI?" (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "NDI training will not work in Armenia." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "We have a positive opinion of NDI, but the big limitation is their programs don't work in an authoritarian system. Hence we don't understand each other and when you see the elections results it's as though nothing was done." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "We see a change in 16 members of our rank and file after NDI assistance. But our party supports revolution and believes no change is possible through elections. NDI does not teach this but must take this into account." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "Parties true to democratic principles must be morally supported, so watch the actions of the authorities and don't keep quiet when there are illegal actions." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "Invest in youth." (Armenian NGO)
- "Spend your money on economic development." (Foreign embassy)

Outlook for the future
- "No one has ever escaped reality." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "Next elections will be worse." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "By 2007, Armenia will look like Africa." (Opposition party not in Parliament)
- "We still don't have a dictatorship here but the regime is moving towards it." (Opposition party in Parliament)
- "With your help we can do more." (Local government official)
- "We are sure Armenia will take the right path. We haven't been in politics so many years to watch it backslide." (Opposition party not in Parliament)

APPENDIX B.   CONTACTS

Armenian Association of Women with University Education

American Chamber of Commerce

Armenian Center for National and International Studies

Armenian National Movement

Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak)

Arnat Center for Democracy and Civil Society

British Embassy

Central Electoral Commission

Christian Democratic Union Party

City Officials, Echmiadzin, Ijevan, Vanadzure

Communist Party

Community Finance Officers Association

Country of Law Party (Orinats Yerkir)

Democratic Liberal Party of Armenia (Ramgavar)

Democratic Party of Armenia

Department for International Development (DFID)

Development Associates/Development Alternatives, Armenia Legislative Strengthening Program

Dignified Future Party

District Electoral Commission, Vanadzur

European Union

Government of Armenia

Ijevan Studio TV

International Center for Human Development

International Union of Advocates

Investigative Journalists of Armenia

IREX

It's Your Choice

Justice Alliance

Liberal Democratic Party

Liberal Progressive Party of Armenia

National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

National Democratic Institute

National Democratic Party

National Democratic Union Party

National Unity Party

New Armenia

New Times Party

Noyan Tapan Newspaper

Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation, Armenia

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

People's Party of Armenia

Political Discussion Club

Republic Party

Republican Party

Russian Embassy

Self Determination Party

Social Democratic Hnchakian Party

Union for Self-Determination

Union of Constitutional Rights

United Labor Party

Urban Institute, Armenia Local Governance Program

USAID/Armenia

Yerevan Press Club

Yerevan State University

APPENDIX C.   STATEMENT OF WORK

I.   OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSESSMENT

This Statement of Work (SOW) provides guidelines for an assessment team that will conduct an assessment of the political party environment and development of the political party system. The objectives of this activity will be to:

- Assess the Armenian political party system to identify what has prevented political parties from developing further, and

- Recommend possible interventions for USAID/Armenia, if any, that may be effective in the current environment to foster the development of a pluralistic, democratic, competitive and accountable political party systems.

II.   BACKGROUND

A.   The Armenia Context

Armenia inherited tremendous challenges upon regaining its independence in 1991. In a little more than a decade of transition, the country has had mixed progress in transforming the inherited Soviet system into a democratic system of government. Much remains to be done to help Armenians create a truly democratic Armenia. Citizens are still learning their roles and responsibilities in a democratic system, and democratic institutions remain in their infancy.

Both the Soviet legacy and the troubled path of democracy since independence present obstacles and opportunities for the further development of democracy in Armenia. Constraints to Armenia's democratic development can be categorized into three inter-linked and mutually reinforcing problem areas: dominance of the executive branch, a lack of democratic political culture, and corruption. All other problems fall into one or more of these three categories. Significant progress in one area cannot be made without also addressing obstacles in the others. Similarly, progress made in one contributes toward progress in the others.

A major legacy of the Soviet system is a politically passive population coupled with institutions that do not enable civic participation. The notion that citizens might organize without the state, either within specific communities or to form non-governmental organizations to address local projects or advocate for shared interests, was limited to a few dissidents. The initial democratic fervor prompted by the political opening of the Gorbachev period produced massive civic activism in the country around independence. But the extremely difficult socio-economic situation following independence and discouragement over the many problems with the development of the democratic system since then have led to cynicism among many citizens. They are not apathetic; many citizens appear to care deeply about politics. However, they are discouraged by the events over the past decade in which citizens' voices found few sympathetic ears in state institutions and politics, and many have withdrawn from participation in public life into private concerns.

Recent demonstrations to protest the flawed 2003 presidential elections are reminiscent of the mass rallies just prior to the demise of the Soviet Union. However, it remains to be seen whether the public will channel this energy into greater political involvement, or whether the government's turn of a cold shoulder to their demands will create a populace that is dejected by the futility of its efforts and becomes even more politically reclusive than before)

Without significant checks from civil society and without the political will to allow a sharing of power, an equal separation of powers will not be realized. As noted by the USAID/Armenia-commissioned Democracy and Governance Assessment, "Executive dominance within the Armenian political system poses the greatest threat to D/G consolidation in the country. Executive leaders have reduced competition sharply in the political and economic spheres, and created a *political machine* through which they control the country. This enables them to limit or eliminate citizen recourse, reducing Armenians' capacity to challenge officials' use of their powers to enrich themselves."[42]

Electoral Process and Parties

Since the presidential elections of 1996 and 1998, criticized as patently unfair and manipulated, the situation gradually improved until the backsliding in the 2003 parliamentary and presidential elections. NDI judged that the May 1999 NA elections demonstrated Armenia's "capacity to conduct free and fair elections,"[43] but on balance, Armenia's performance did not meet international democratic electoral standards (NDI, n.d.: 1-2). In 2003, the opposition refused to recognize the legitimacy of President Robert Kocharian's re-election, alleging vote-rigging. After failing to have the voting results invalidated, the opposition parties began a boycott of NA sessions in February 2004, which has not ended as of October 2004. In April 2004, the opposition began organizing mass street demonstrations, which fizzled out in May amid a government crackdown and never proved to be a serious threat to Kocharian's hold on power)

Currently the president appoints one-third of the 13-person electoral precinct committees. He usually controls committees because representatives of parties loyal to him vote with his appointees. Many opposition committee members allegedly sold their votes, once on the committee, to the presidential majority. In April 2002, the executive had sought to modify the country's electoral law to consolidate majority control of precinct electoral commissions. The issue of electoral code amendments arose again after the findings in a February report by the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which cited the formation of electoral commissions as a "serious obstacle to the impartiality of the electoral administration."

Political parties in Armenia are numerous and weak. National Assembly (NA) electoral rules incorporate a combination of plurality rule in single member districts (75 seats) and proportional representation based on party lists (56 seats). This should produce a legislature both broadly reflective of political opinion in Armenian society and characterized by a stable core of parties. But many Members of Parliament (MPs) win office through vote buying, modifying voter lists, and intimidation. To pursue such strategies, some MPs require substantial war chests to finance vote purchases, bribe electoral officials, and employ enforcers who intimidate both voters and other candidates. Once in the NA, few MPs invest effort in constituency relationships. Most lack the skills to build and maintain party structures. They do not represent much of the population and the population views them with skepticism. Most Armenian parties lack distinct ideologies and platforms. Their platforms boil down to support for or opposition to President Robert Kocharian. Few citizens view political parties as effective vehicles for problem solving)

Corruption

The lack of transparency and accountability, along with the weak economy, has created an environment that allows corruption to flourish. Corruption is an enormous problem that affects all sectors of the Armenian political, social, and economic landscape and permeates all levels of government. The entrenched state and business interests have little will or incentive to disrupt the status quo. Despite pronouncements by the

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[42] ARD, Inc., "Democracy and Governance Assessment of Armenia," (hereafter "DG Assessment"), June 2002, p. 2.

[43] Perhaps, in part because the coalition Unity Party, comprising the Republican and People's Parties, were sure to win that election and therefore saw little need to rig the outcome by the usual techniques of electoral manipulation.

Government against corruption, the GOAM has yet to demonstrate a genuine commitment to combating corruption. Moreover, given the public's acceptance of corruption as a fact of life, weak challenges from civil society have not been able to impact significantly the problem.

B.   USAID Assistance to Armenia on Political Processes

In spite of challenging conditions for greater democratization, there has been some progress and a number of isolated successes, both within civil society and the government, that signal opportunities for change. Activities under the previous strategic objective, "More Transparent, Accountable and Democratic Governance," focused on enhancing citizen participation, supporting the development of civil society and non-governmental organizations, and developing non-state print and broadcast media. In addition, democracy activities strengthened the capacity of local governments, parliament, and, to a limited extent, the judicial system.

To improve democratic governance, citizens of Armenia need both expanded opportunities to participate in civic life and more open governance institutions through which to channel participation, into a stronger, more democratic system of governing. Through Strategic Objective (SO) 2.1, Improved Democratic Governance, USAID/Armenia seeks to both expand civic participation and strengthen governance institutions in Armenia. USAID is working to increase competition within elite circles and de-concentrate power in Armenia through a number of programs, including legislative strengthening, rule-of-law programming, limited political party building to encourage women's participation in politics, local government capacity building, and civil society strengthening. Key to addressing this issue is the reinforcement of separation of powers and the promotion of alternative voices and centers of power.

By supporting NGO advocacy efforts and non-state media, USAID is helping to ensure that alternative points of view are raised and introduced into the decision-making process. In the classical sense, civil society challenges the state to bring about change. Over the past several years, USAID has successfully supported the formation of a civil society in Armenia which has begun to assume that role. Present USAID efforts will support NGOs as effective, knowledgeable advocates for policy and legislative change.

A significant thrust of USAID's new strategy is encouraging civic participation at all levels, in an effort to engage citizens in the decision-making process. USAID is broadening efforts to foster citizen participation at the grassroots level and strengthening advocacy NGOs, by providing core-funding and advocacy grants as well as tailored technical assistance. The Mission is working to encourage civic activism among youth and women and to increase community involvement in local concerns. USAID is also supporting public awareness campaigns, involving NGOs, media, and the private sector, that cover both the costs of corruption and the shared responsibility in combating it. Another program is supporting civic development through citizen action committees and by developing political parties' ability to reach out to their constituents)

USAID/Armenia acknowledges that political party development is a long-term process, as is the growth of multi-party democracies. Nonetheless, progress since activities began in 1996 has been limited. In the Mission's 2004-2008 Strategy most resources have been shifted from political party development to other areas where results and progress are more likely, while not completely ceasing all political party building efforts. Under the new strategy, political party assistance is limited to encouraging women's participation and occasional specific interventions and trainings through the Mission's participant training provider. Additionally, the Mission has incorporated limited work with the parliamentary factions elected as part of its legislative strengthening effort.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked with political parties in Armenia since 1996, providing them with technical assistance in organizational development, canvassing skills, and coalition building, among other topics. NDI has also worked on coalition development and community involvement. Over the years, NDI has helped maintain and expand several democratic parties in Armenia – the National Democratic Union, the Armenian People's Party, the Self-Determination Union, and the Constitutional Rights Party.

Only one of these parties is represented in parliament: the Armenian People's Party is part of the Justice Alliance. Despite NDI's efforts, political parties in Armenia are still extremely fractured and personality based.

The Armenian Legislative Strengthening Program (ALSP) is strengthening the internal capacity of the National Assembly (NA) and focuses particularly on improving the analytical aspects of the budget oversight process. The ALSP is also helping to improve the NA systems for constituency relations and outreach, and increasing public and media access to information about the NA. The new program focuses on standing committee work to institutionalize procedures at the NA for open public hearings through engaging civil society in discussions, and soliciting public input into policy issues by committee members, staff, and Members of Parliament. ALSP looks for opportunities among those Members that represent their constituents)

Per the 2004 Annual Program Statement (APS 111-04-008) "Civic Participation and Media Support in Armenia," USAID/Armenia will consider awarding a cooperative agreement or grant in the amount of $250,000 over five years ($50,000 each year) to support women political leaders. At the time of writing this SOW, an award had not been made. However, a program may be in place during the time that this assessment is conducted)

III.   TASKS

The primary task of the consultants will be to produce an assessment of the political party system which identifies the constraints on political party development in Armenia and to identify possible interventions. The assessment will answer questions, among others, regarding the level of development that potential program partners have already achieved, their internal organization and structure, the state of their grassroots organizations, their internal procedures to select candidates, their campaign financing, and the political environment in which parties exist and its conduciveness to political party building assistance. The assessment should look at the variety and quality of main political actors and recommend whether viable new entrants should be encouraged.

The consultants will meet with key actors in the political parties, Assembly representatives, and implementing partners, and others they deem necessary, (e.g., civic and political activists, academicians or think tank experts, civil society organizations, government officials, local government leaders, and citizens), to determine the levels of opportunities for political party development that may be possible within the current context. The assessment should take into consideration the activities already in process, or soon to be in process, under SO 2.1, IR1 and IR2 (See the Results Framework at the end).

The assessment is intended to provide USAID/Armenia with:

a) Understanding of the political party environment in Armenia;

b) Thorough analysis of political parties' internal rules and structures, the incentives that shape Armenian political party structures, and possible ways to change them;

c) Thorough analysis of the constraints on the development of a pluralistic, competitive, democratic and accountable political party system, including intractable problems unlikely to benefit from donor assistance and a determination of whether or not the environment in Armenia is conducive to a political party building assistance program;

d) Political party building assistance is recommended, recommendations for possible innovative interventions that could be undertaken by the Mission)

e) Prognosis for party development and/or projected trends in party development)

IV. METHODOLOGY

Prior to beginning the field research, the assessment team will review key documents. Some of the relevant documents, with their internet links, are:

- 2004-2008 USAID/Armenia Strategy [http://www.usaid.gov/am/strategy.html]
- June 2002 USAID/Armenia Democracy and Governance Assessment of Armenia [*hard copy to be provided*]
- USAID Political Party Assistance Policy, 2003 [http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/200maz.pdf]
- Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2004*, Armenia Country Report, [http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/nattransit.htm]
- Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2004*,Armenia Country Ratings, [http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2004/countryratings/armenia.htm]
- International Crisis Group, "Armenia: Internal Instability Ahead," (18 November 2004) [http://www.icg.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=3076]

V. KEY PERSONNEL

Experience in conducting evaluations or assessments is expected of all members, and experience in developing strategies would be useful. Ability to conduct interviews and discussions, and to write well in English, is essential. A working knowledge of Russian and/or Armenian is not required, but would be preferred of at least one team member. It is preferred that team members do not have previous experience managing or implementing USAID-funded political party building activities. However, team member(s) should have relevant experience with donor funded political party assistance, and should also have a broad enough development and strategic planning experience to be able to make innovative recommendations, make recommendations within the context of broader development constraints, and/or recognize when conditions are not conducive to certain types of development activities.

Team Leader: The team leader will be a social or political scientist with relevant experience in international political party development work, preferably in the Europe and Eurasia (E&E) region. Some post-Communist transitional experience is required. At least five years experience in democracy and governance (DG) research and programming is required. He/She will have at least three years experience in conducting assessments.

Other team member: Social scientist/political scientist with graduate level training. At least three years experience in international DG research and programming, preferably outside of the E&E region, is required. He/She will have also relevant experience in conducting assessments.

Interpreter and/or Coordinator: For the Interpreter (or Interpreters, if necessary), a local Armenian with excellent Armenian/English (Level 5 Armenian/Level 4 English minimum) interpretation skills. For the Coordinator, a local Armenian (or local resident) with excellent knowledge of the country, experience in making travel and business arrangements, and a good knowledge of the English language.

The contractor may propose other personnel it may deem necessary and provide terms of reference for such personnel.

The contractor will be responsible for all logistical support in-country, including but not limited to:
- suitable in-country transportation for assessment team members,
- interpreter for assessment team members, when needed,
- scheduling appointments for meetings and interviews,
- meeting facilities to conduct group meeting and workshop,
- computer, printer, photocopying, and internet access facilities)

VI. TIMELINE

Completion of this SOW will take six to eight weeks to complete, which includes the desktop review in Washington, field work, discussions and debriefing in Armenia, and report writing. A six-day work week is authorized. **Final report is due to USAID/Armenia by March 15, 2005)**

Timeline:

Number of Days	Task
2	Preparation of desktop study (Washington)
2	Travel to Armenia
1 to 2	Discussions with USAID/Yerevan and finalize logistical arrangements
14 to 15	Conduct Fieldwork and interviews in and outside of Yerevan
2	Prepare and submit draft report; Presentation of Findings and Discussion with USAID/Armenia and Embassy staff.
1	Follow-up interviews or discussions as needed
1	Depart Armenia
4	Complete Assessment Report in Washington (or US) and submit to USAID/Armenia
4	Revise Draft Report according to USAID/Armenia comments and submit Final Report to USAID/Armenia
Total: 31 to 32	

VII. DELIVERABLES

Prior to arrival in country, the contractor will provide USAID/Armenia with an agenda, listing persons, organizations, and other relevant individuals whom the team will meet and interview. This list will be reviewed by USAID and the team upon their arrival in country.

Once in the country, the assessment team will have introductory meetings with relevant USAID and Embassy personnel to review the scope of the assessment and to agree on the agenda and schedule)

Prior to departure, the contractor will provide a debriefing to the relevant USAID and Embassy personnel, presenting their conclusions and recommendations. A draft assessment report will be presented per the schedule)

A draft report shall be presented to USAID/Armenia by the date agreed to, according to the Timeline Section. This report shall contain a stand alone executive summary (between 2-3 pages) which will include but not be limited to a brief overview, description of the methodology used, conclusions and recommendations. The report shall not exceed 25 pages in length single-spaced, excluding attachments. After receiving comments from USAID/Armenia, a final report will be submitted to reflect responses to comments.

APPENDIX D.   REFERENCES

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