

Paper:

Democracy in Armenia. EU's Eastern Partnership as a Supportive Tool
Towards Democracy

Hasmik Grigoryan

Researcher at Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation,
Partner in "Together + " Project Funded by International Visegrad Foundation

PhD Course: Democracy in Europe

Instructor: John Erik Fossum

Institute of European Studies and International Relations

Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences

Comenius University, Bratislava

Yerevan, Armenia

July, 2013

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to show the level of democracy of the Republic of Armenia and the role of the European Union (EU) in the transition from soviet socialism to the market economy and democracy, in the formation of an active civil society in Armenia. The paper refers to all the presidential elections in Armenia which have been held since its independence. The paper focuses on electoral processes in the Republic of Armenia and tells about the internal and external situation of the country during the 3 presidents in office. It also outlines the differences and conditions of domestic and foreign policy of Armenia during the different periods of governance. The paper shows the developments of the civil society and public movements. It covers the cooperation of Armenia with the EU in the framework of Eastern Partnership programme (EaP) and shows EaP's positive impact on the development of the country. It also covers Armenia's relations with EU and Russia and brings the opinions that exist in the Armenian society.

Introduction

Armenia has gained its independence since 1991. Being a Post-Soviet country Armenia can be described as a transition country. After becoming an independent state Armenia entered into a new life which couldn't be an easy one. It has passed through economic and social difficulties, energy crisis and through a war. In such conditions Armenia was to construct independent and solid basis for statehood. The paper shows that during the first years of its independence there were both objective and subjective obstacles in the country. On one hand there was a war which brought to economic and social difficulties and on the other hand there were serious mistakes made by the political leaders. These were mistakes that couldn't be accepted in a democratic country. The paper shows that on one hand formally and constitutionally Armenia is ahead but on the other hand it has problems in the sphere of

implementation. We can see that Armenia has quite strong legal basis and Constitution, separation of powers which are the main factors in democracy but the rule of law is not that strong in Armenia. The aim of the paper is also to show that most of the elections of Armenia have finished with protests. Despite of all the dissatisfactions from the side of the people, new elections were never appointed and formally elected presidents took the office. It is shown that during the years the civil society started to become more and more informed and willing to be involved in the processes of the democratic development of the country and that during the recent years the freedom of speech has been established and the society has started to raise their rights. The paper outlines the negative and positive steps made by the government. EU's Eastern Partnership, its tools and mechanisms of cooperation are introduced at the end of the paper. The aim of the paper is to show that despite the crisis and difficulties in the European Union, EU is still important for Armenia and gives a huge assistance to Armenia in the formation of democracy, state institutes and civil society. The paper also shows the recent developments of Russia's foreign policy towards Armenia and points out that Armenia's relations with EU should not weaken despite any pressures.

On Democracy

Speaking about democracy, democratic values, transition in Armenia we should have some definitions of Democracy. Nowadays Democracy and its values are perceived in Armenia as European values. Democratic values are the values towards which Armenia is striving. Rule of law, human rights, freedom of speech, pluralism, struggle against corruption, democracy are among those values.

"What is democracy? Promises and perils of the Arab Spring" by Valentine M Moghadam (2013) gives some definitions of Democracy:

In the minimalist definition, democracy is a type of political system in which power alternates through regular, competitive elections, and citizens enjoy certain basic rights.

In a liberal democracy, a high degree of political legitimacy is necessary, as is an independent judiciary and a constitution that clearly sets out the relationship between state and society, and delineates citizen rights and obligations. Written constitutions serve as a guarantee to citizens that the government is required to act in a certain way and uphold certain rights.

In a more expanded definition, democracy refers to a political regime in which citizens enjoy an array of civil, political, and social/economic rights that are institutionalized, and citizens participate through the formal political process, civil society, and social movements; it also refers to a society or culture governed by the values of tolerance, participation, and solidarity.

Those definitions concretely define that in a democratic state the law, the Supreme law, the Constitution is one of the main components. The rule of law which is also considered in Armenia as one of the European values is one of the main things to follow in democracy. In order to insure the law the judiciary must be independent. Hence in 2005 according to the cooperation and obligations with the Council of Europe changes were made in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. According to one of those changes the President was removed from the Council of Judges which appoints judges in Armenia. So we can see that before the changes the judicial power was concentrated in the hands of the President. In the democratic states the separation and balancing of the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Powers is very important. The definitions also outline that the civil society, the active people are also a guarantee of Democracy. The citizens must participate in political processes actively, go to the elections, they must be a part of civil life in political, economic, social, cultural spheres, protest in case of violations of their rights. The other important thing in democracy is free and fair elections and the rotation of authorities.

"The transition is the stage between one political regime and another, during which time negotiations ensue and pacts are made, and new institutions and laws are enacted. Characterized by uncertainty, this stage determines whether a successful democratization takes place – consolidation – or if there is a breakdown, a return to authoritarianism, or the outbreak of revolution". (Valentine M Moghadam "What is democracy? Promises and perils of the Arab Spring"). We can state that Armenia is a country in transition. Since its independence it has become a member of international organizations (United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe) and a part of different international conventions that promote stability and democratic values in all the member state countries. Upon gaining its independence Armenia started to found and develop state institutions, make changes in the constitution according to its obligations with international organizations, adopt new laws according to the necessity. During the process of the transition Armenia has been trying to find

its place in the international arena and at present is leading a balancing and complimentary foreign policy. It cooperates with the European Union (EU) for importing European values.

Newly independent state: objective and subjective obstacles

Armenia is a country which can be seen regionally in different positions. Sometimes it is called a Post-Soviet territory along with the other states which were a part of the USSR. It is also perceived as a country that belongs to the South Caucasus region together with Georgia and Azerbaijan. Armenia is also a part of the Black Sea region and is a member of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. It is also said that Armenia is situated in the two continents of Asia and Europe. We can also hear that Armenia is a European country.

"Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, many countries in Eastern Europe, and even Russia itself, have become democratic. Most of these newcomers to the family of democratic regimes have fashioned their government structures after the model of Western European multiparty parliamentary systems". ("Multiparty Democracy: Elections and Legislative Politics" N. Schofield and I. Sened, 2006). From the above mentioned we can see that after the fall of the USSR which had a totalitarian regime, all the member states including Russia which was the actual creator of the Soviet Union understood that the right way for a development is maintaining of democracy. To which extent those countries were able to ensure it is another question. But it's essential that all those states took the path of democracy.

Armenia gained its independence in 1991 on 21 September. As an independent country it has passed 22 years and is a young country. In the first Article of the first chapter of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia it is written that "The Republic of Armenia is a sovereign, democratic, social state governed by rule of law". But of course the words are not enough to be a democratic country. Armenia is striving for democracy and has established institutions which are of a model of a democratic state. The three separations of the powers are the proof of it. The legislative power belongs to the National Assembly (Parliament). The Executive power belongs to the Government and the Judiciary belongs to the system of courts. Though formally the separation exists on constitutional level but in practice Parliament and the Courts depend on the Government. And there is a lack of trust towards judges as well. That's why it's difficult to call Armenia a democratic country. Since its independence many reforms and

changes, many steps forward have been done by the government. But at the same time there were steps that brought the country backward. Some of the fails emerged objectively some because of the mistakes made by the government.

Since its independence Armenia has had 6 presidential elections and 5 parliamentary elections. However only the first parliamentary (1990) and presidential elections (1991 September) were the only ones to be free and fair. The rest of the elections taken place till nowadays in Armenia has been followed by protests and riots, by dissatisfaction of the people. Armenia doesn't have the culture of cooperation that exists in Europe and the United States between the presidential candidates of different political parties after the elections. None of the main candidates for President recognized the results of the elections.

The first president of the republic of Armenia was elected in 1991 and was reelected in 1996. During the first years of its independence Armenia was the first country among the other post-soviet countries to start the process of privatization of state properties. This was one of the first and foremost steps towards development. None of the other post-soviet countries started the privatization that early as Armenia did. Privatization was an essential step towards market and not monopolized economy.

According to the details given in the publication of the official website of the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia the privatization of the land started at the beginning of 1991 and it continued from 1992 till 1996. In 1991-1992 the privatization of enterprises in Armenia started from small objects as a try based on the decision of the government as there was no law on privatization.

And already based on "About the project of 1996-1997 on state enterprises and privatization and denationalisation of the unfinished construction "objects"" law of August of 1992, large scale of privatization started in 1993. In 1994-1997 1252 big and middle and 6021 small enterprises were privatized. The privatization of flats was also in process. By 1997 80% of flats were privatized. ("Social Snapshot and Poverty of Armenia", 1996, in Armenian)

We can see that upon its independence Armenia started to construct its legislative system and there were many cases where respective laws didn't exist yet. The country was trying to adapt itself to the new situation. So as a new state it started to construct the legal basis and adopt the necessary laws.

But it was also the period of economic and social difficulties. Armenia was in an economic instability and energy crisis. These difficulties were followed by the war: Armenian-Azeri war broke out in 1992 and lasted till 1994. During this period Armenia was in an extremely difficult situation and the country was in a blockade by its 2 from 4 neighbouring countries. Armenia had an access to the rest of the world only via its northern neighbor Georgia and Iran in the South. The blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey continues till today because of the unresolved conflict, lack of trust and different positions.

Because of the conflicts in the South Caucasus (Georgian-Abkhazian and Armenian-Azerbaijani conflicts) the railways going through Abkhazia to Armenia and from Azerbaijan to Armenia were closed down. This fact brought to the termination of importing of fuel oil to Armenia. During the 1992-1994 the gas pipelines coming to Armenia from Russia via Georgia were always exploded. This situation became a result of energetic crisis and Armenia was getting only 20% of necessary energy resources.

It should be noted that Armenia is a landlocked country which doesn't have any energy resources. Armenia depends on imported energy mainly from Russia and only recently the energy access was also diversified with the gas coming from Iran. "Depending almost 80% on the Russian Federation in the field of energy resources, Armenia tried to reduce this dependence and after talks with Iran, the two countries decided to build a gas pipeline through the Iranian gas to arrive to Armenia. Iranian-Armenian Natural Gas Pipeline was completed in October 2008, and has a length of 140 km from Iran to Armenia". ("Energy Security in Armenia" by Stepan Grigoryan, Adriana Sauliuc from the book "Energy Security Strategies in the Wider Black Sea Region", 2010). Iranian gas started to flow to Armenia from 2009. But because of the policy of Russia not to lose the dependence of Armenia on itself the pipelines from Iran were constructed in a way that it can only satisfy the needs of Armenia and cannot be exported through Armenia to the outside world. These facts are not stated for the justification of the internal situation of Armenia, but the energetic crisis is shown to have the full picture of the economic difficulties of the country.

Concluding, Armenia can't be called a democratic country during the period of 1990s as Armenia was concentrated on its external relations more, especially on the war over Nagorno Karabakh. Though it was during the presidency of Levon Ter-Petrosyan that Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh won the war over Nagorno Karabakh it wasn't enough for the President to

gain enough popularity among the people. According to the official results of the presidential elections of 1996 Levon Ter-Petrosyan was re-elected as a president with the 51% of votes. But the people of Armenia were quite unhappy with the results. Protests started under the leadership of the opposition party. The riots brought to the resignation of the President and to new elections. It was also the controversial decision of Levon Ter-Petrosyan who on December 25 of 1994 signed an order according to which the activities of left-wing nationalist Armenian Revolutionary Federation "Dashnakcutyun" Armenian political party were banned. The newspapers that belonged to "Dashnakcutyun" party were closed down. Many members of the party were arrested. (Official Newspaper of the Ministry of Defence of RA, Chronology of Independence in Armenian). The party (one of the oldest political parties that exists since 1890) was suspended under the reason that it was supported by the outside powers. However this step was perceived as a suppression of the freedom of speech, against democratic values and Levon Ter-Petrosyan lost its rating among the people and in the international community. It should be noted that till now "Dashnakcutyun" party has nationalist harsh position towards Armenian-Turkish relations, i.e. no relations with Turkey unless Turkey recognizes the Armenian genocide, and it was the party that condemned Armenia's initiative of Armenian-Turkish protocols of 2008. It also has quite harsh position on Nagorno Karabakh conflict and has strong ties and influence on Armenian diaspora.

Fragile Democracy

The Extraordinary elections took place in 1998. During the period led by the second president Robert Kocharyan Armenia went into a new stage. Already the society started to be more active. Many NGOs were registered and started to try participating in a civil life of Armenia. During the time when Robert Kocharyan was on power, the powers became more concentrated around the presidential institute. A big control was over the mass media. The electoral system was controlled by the government. In his foreign policy R. Kocharyan was close to the one of "Dashnakcutyun" party. Robert Kocharyan was reelected in 2003 though the

elections brought to a consequence of big protests but R. Kocharyan stayed on the power and the protests were suppressed. In 2003 it was for the first time that the parliament consisted of oligarchs. The parliament lost its political features and the legislative power was intertwined with business. The Article 65, Chapter 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia says "A Deputy may not be engaged in entrepreneurial activities, hold an office in state and local self-government bodies or in commercial organizations, as well as engage in any other paid occupation, except for scientific, educational and creative work. A Deputy shall discharge his/her responsibilities on a permanent basis." This means that the Parliament existing at that time was not in the accordance to the Constitution. Perhaps the most roughly suppressed protests from all the post-election riots were in March of 2008 after the presidential elections of February, when Serzh Sargsyan was elected. "The presidential election — the fifth since Armenia won independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 — pitted Mr. Sargsyan against Levon Ter-Petrosian, Armenia's first president after the Soviet Union's fall. Mr. Sargsyan is an ally of the current president, Robert Kocharyan, who is stepping down because of term limits". ("Thousands in Armenia Protest Results of Presidential Election", February 21, 2008 New York Times).

As it is written above from the abstract of the New York Times, Serzh Sargsyan was considered to be an ally of R. Kocharyan. People were afraid that S. Sargsyan is his successor and that he will continue the policy of R. Kocharyan. Apart from that during the presidential campaigns of 2008 Levon Ter - Petrosyan was able to regain a great popularity and a big number of supporters. The first president of Armenia didn't recognize the results of the elections. However the inauguration ceremony took place. March 1 of 2008 is memorized as one of the most tragic days in the battle towards democracy as the protests were suppressed in the most brutal way, 10 people were shot at the peaceful protests. State of Emergency was declared. Each year 1st of March is remembered in Armenia as a day of victims of the peaceful protests.

A Change in the political course of Armenia

After such protests it was difficult to imagine how Serzh Sargsyan was going to take the position. But S. Sargsyan changed both internal and external policy. In the external policy it was Serzh Sargsyan who initiated the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement process without any pre

conditions, which ended by signing of two Armenian-Turkish protocols in 2009 and activated the process of negotiations on Nagorno Karabakh issue in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.

In the internal policy Serzh Sargsyan liberalized political sphere. It became easier for the opposition leaders to organize protests, have access to media. The development of the civil society, NGOs, public movements should be mentioned when speaking about Serzh Sargsyan's term of president. There is a big number of registered NGOs in Armenia, mainly in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor and etc. And many of them are active and can work independently. There are also public movements which raise their rights in different areas. Recently there were public movements in protection of Teghut forests of Lori region from mining destruction. There was also a movement against the decision to construct shops in the territory of "Mashtots" park in Yerevan. The movement started on February, 2012. People protested against the constructions and stayed in the park. Serzh Sargsyan visited people protesting in "Mashtots" park, spoke with the people and guaranteed the safety of the park. The constructions in Teghut and in Mashtots park were stopped. These facts show that during last years the independence of the civil society, public movements is allowed and freedom of speech is ensured. This can be scored as a big success of the civil activities in Armenia.

During the last two years parliamentary and then presidential elections took place. At the parliamentary elections most of the votes gained the ruling Republican party, the second came Prosperous Armenia party which at that time had a big popularity among people. It can be admitted that the parliamentary elections differed from all the previous ones and reflected to some extent the mood of the people towards the parties. At present there are 6 factions in the parliament. Republican party and the Rule of Law party as the coalition government ones, Heritage, "Dashnakcutyun", Armenian National Congress parties as the opposition and Prosperous Armenia party as an alternative party. All the main opposition parties are presented in the Parliament.

During the presidential elections of 2013 in February Serzh Sargsyan won the second term in office with the votes of 59% being ahead of the other candidate. His closest rival Raffi Hovhannisian (Heritage party) received nearly 37%. The recent presidential elections can be called legitimate. Though after the elections Raffi Hovhannisian didn't recognize the results and there were riots, Raffi Hovhannisian wasn't strong or maybe deterrent enough. During the last mass riots people were ready and constant but Raffi Hovhannisian didn't go for the steps

towards revolution. The readiness and willingness of people towards the change of power through rallies started to diminish. It is worth to mention that the last presidential elections were quite legitimate. Unlike the previous times there were almost no clashes between the people and police, there wasn't implemented violence towards people. The protests stopped on their own. This example showed that Armenia for that moment didn't have any strong candidate for president upon who people could rely on.

The Post - election interim report by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Right, Election Observation Mission reported that the 18 February 2013 presidential election “was generally well-administered and was characterized by a respect for fundamental freedoms. Contestants were able to campaign freely. Media fulfilled their legal obligation to provide balanced coverage, and all contestants made use of their free airtime. At the same time, a lack of impartiality of the public administration, misuse of administrative resources, and cases of pressure on voters were of concern. While election day was calm and orderly, it was marked by undue interference in the process, mainly by proxies representing the incumbent, and some serious violations were observed.”

The freedom of speech, access to media, less violence was assured during the presidential campaign of 2013. Taking as an example the previous two presidential elections, the candidates from the opposition party had very limited access. Indeed there were still bribed votes and use of administrative resources during the 2013 elections. But under the leadership of Serzh Sargsyan the media and especially the printed media and internet based media gained independence. Also during the presidential campaign all the candidates had a free access towards mass media.

Eastern Partnership as a support in democracy

Apart from the internal factors which play great role in the transformation, external factors are also of a great importance. One of the most important external actors that plays a great role in the support of the development and construction of a democratic country embedded with European values is the European Union. The legal basis of the relations between Armenia and the European Union were established in 1996 when the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed between Armenia and the EU. Later in 2004 European Neighbourhood

Policy (ENP) was designed. Today the main tool of cooperation between Armenia and the EU is Eastern Partnership programme.

It is necessary to note that Eastern Partnership was initiated by Poland and Sweden and supported by the Czech Republic in May of 2009 during the Czech presidency in the European Council. Poland and the Czech Republic are the countries which were in the Warsaw pact, those countries were not in the USSR but they had a socialist ruling. After the fall of the USSR and gaining its independence they have passed through the same transition from socialism to democracy and to the market economy. Armenia is a country in transition. And it's important that the initiators of EaP are the representatives of New and Old Europe. As the New Europe can easier understand the needs and problems of a former soviet country and its experience can be better implemented in former soviet country Armenia. And the Old European representative can balance the interests of all the EU member states: Old and New ones.

Eastern Partnership is a newly designed programme and it has novelties in it and differs from the ENP. It includes 6 post-soviet countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Unlike the ENP that along with these 6 countries included countries from Northern Africa and Near East of different political orders and different wills and regimes, EaP includes the 6 countries which have chosen the root of democratization. It is worth to pay attention to the fact that the EU has separated those 6 countries taking into consideration their ambitions, priorities, regimes and geographic situation.

European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries (2012) says that "the EU made "deep and sustainable democracy" a core value against which to assess progress and adapt its level of support. The EU's main benchmarks include: free and fair elections, respect for human rights - particularly freedom of association, expression and assembly-, press freedoms, the abolition of torture, non-discrimination and religious freedom, the independence of the judiciary, combating corruption, and security and law enforcement reforms".

"A change in EU democracy promotion strategy towards Eastern European and South Caucasus post-soviet countries began to occur after 2005 as a result of EU enlargement and the introduction of the ENP. Events such as Georgia's Rose revolution of 2003 and Ukraine's Orange revolution of 2004 led to the EU becoming one of the key democracy promotion actors in the Eastern neighbourhood". ("EU Democracy Promotion in the Eastern Neighbourhood", Natalia Shapovalova, Richard Youngs, 2012)

Indeed, the Joint declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit 2009 states: "The participants of the Prague Summit agree that the Eastern Partnership will be based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to, market economy, sustainable development and good governance". During the summit all the EaP countries, expressed their willingness of cooperation on fundamental values. Democratic values were prioritized in Eastern Partnership programme.

Eastern Partnership has two dimensions: bilateral and multilateral. In the framework of bilateral cooperation it is designed that Armenia must sign Association Agreement as the successor agreement to the PCA. The Association Agreement has 4 parts: 1. political dialogue and foreign and security policy; 2. justice, freedom and security; 3. economic and sectoral cooperation. The fourth part is the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement which is negotiated separately. Under the political part Visa liberalization process is one of the most important parts. Armenia, Georgia, Moldova are expected to initial Association Agreement with the EU before the Vilnius Summit of the presidents and heads of governments of EaP and EU member states. Ukraine has the chance to sign the Agreement.

Eastern Partnership works on 4 platforms on multilateral level: 1. Democracy, good governance, stability, 2. Economic integration and convergence with EU policies, 3. Energy security, 4. Contacts between people

One of the main components of Eastern Partnership in the multilateral level is the EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF). The Forum is a cooperation among the NGOs of EaP countries and the EU member states. One of the main components of democracy is the active and well informed civil society which participates in the civil and political processes. Thanks to the EaP CSF Armenian civil society is becoming more and more active. More than 200 NGOs participate in the EaP CSF Annual meetings where the ongoing issues and processes of Eastern Partnership programme are discussed. "The EaP Civil Society Forum was formed in Brussels on 17 November 2009. The best most innovative recommendations given by participant in the CSF were presented to the foreign ministers of EaP member states on 8 December 2009. According to European Commission officials, the recommendations would be useful during discussions on the EaP thematic platforms. That is an important innovation providing an opportunity to use the entire potential of EaP countries. Besides, it provides conditions for dialogue between the

government, civil society and the EU, and for cooperation between EaP countries and their European integration". (Agenda for Armenian Foreign Policy 2011 published by Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation, 2011). EaP CSF became a tool for the civil sector in Armenia to be informed about the steps of the Government in the processes of EaP and to have its own influence and input in putting forward the reforms and changes in Armenia.

Another important part of EaP is the EURONEST parliamentary assembly where 10 parliament members are represented from each EaP country (except for Belarus because of political issues in the country) and 60 from EU. The EURONEST is a great experience of European parliamentarism for the parliament members of Armenia.

The European Integration Index (2012) shows that "Armenia is doing relatively well in terms of independent judiciary, quality of public administration, fighting corruption and accountability, ranking either 2nd or 3rd among EaP countries. Nevertheless independent assessments of the reform process in Armenia suggest that, despite certain achievements on the institutional, formal level, such as adopting laws, signing agreements and reorganizing structures, qualitative improvements in the key areas are either taking place slowly or are not happening at all. For instance 23 laws were adopted between February and April 2011 with the aim of improving the business climate and easing the process of setting up a business, as specified in the Progress Report on ENP Action Plan implementation. In practice, however there are no signs that the monopolies that control the most profitable segments of business are losing market share, or that market competition has increased".

So on one hand thanks to EaP and cooperation with the EU, reforms and changes are made but still Armenia has a problem in implementation. Armenia must work on development of mechanisms of implementation.

One of the successes in Eastern Partnership is the visa facilitation process. It is thanks to the Eastern Partnership cooperation, civil initiatives such as Visa Free Europe that EU-Armenia agreement on facilitating the issuing of visas was signed on 17th of December, 2012.

The mechanisms of cooperation in the framework of EaP are simple. The EaP countries feel accountability and commitment but it is not that EU makes its partners to do something. But it proposes "more for more" principle. If the reforms are not done or there are big violations or steps backward, Armenia will not get more but the process of cooperation will be frozen or made less.

EU or Russia: clashes of interests?

There are some opinions in Armenia which diminish the values and realities of the European Union. One of the opinions is that the EU is currently in crisis and might collapse which means it can't help Armenia and its neighbor countries. The other opinion is the narrowing of the European values and connection of European values only with the rights of homosexual minorities and religious minorities. Some of the opponents of the EU and European integration also connect the EU's policy with so called "games of states" and that it is not the values that play the role but the interests prevail.

Another bothering point is the relations of Armenia with Russia. After declaring his candidacy in presidents in 2012, Vladimir Putin declared that Russia will establish "Eurasian Union" including all the ex-soviet countries. This declaration became a disturbing point in the society of Armenia. There was also a fear that Armenia will join Customs Union (Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan) and that Russia doesn't like the fact that Armenia deepens its relations with the EU and that Armenia's relations with the EU and Russia are incompatible. The recent facts of summer 2013 that Armenia's strategic partner Russia raised the prices of gas for Armenia for about 20%, and supplied Azerbaijan with offensive weapons costing 1 billion USD brought different doubts. It is considered that Russia did those steps to show its dissatisfaction with Armenia's active relations with the EU and to frighten and press Armenia. There is a point of view that Armenia will be put in front of a dilemma: to chose either Russia or the EU.

However, there is no doubt in the great necessity of cooperation with the EU. Russia was the founder of the authoritarian regime of the USSR, it is still continuing its authoritarianism in the country, it holds unfair elections and arrests leaders of opposition, there are many cases of human rights violations, corruption and monopoly in the economic sector. It's very dangerous for Armenia to cooperate only with Russia as it will put Armenia backwards and the democratic values will stop developing in Armenia. Moreover Eurasian Union does not exist and its mechanisms are not known, so there is no need to think of the membership in not existing Union.

There is no doubt that Armenia must continue the path of its European integration. The EU has been providing a huge assistance since 1990s through TACIS, Twinning and ENPI funded programmes. It has been providing personal advisors to Armenian ministers, the Presidents Office, the Human Rights Defender and to the National Assembly through EU Advisory Group in Yerevan. EU was stroke by the crisis but it is also working to overcome it. It is going forward and has the new member state Croatia. Latvia has entered the euro zone. It holds free and fair elections, has freedom of speech. The mechanisms and basis of EU are profound and flexible. The decisions are made through consensus which means that even a small member state can have its voice in the decision-making process.

Conclusion

After the fall of the USSR Armenia understood that the only way for its development is the construction of a democratic state. Armenia till now is in a blockade and has unsolved conflict with Azerbaijan and closed border with Turkey. It doesn't have any natural energy resources and is a landlocked country. A country that has an access to the sea or energy resources has better conditions for developing its country and economy. Having only 2 points connecting with the world Armenia must continue and work on its domestic problems. In such conditions Armenia must focus on democratic values, insurance of human rights, the rule of law. Armenia must stop the monopoly in the economic and business area. Unfortunately, during the 22 years the three presidents made only small steps towards democracy. During the first decade of the independence the first violations of freedom of speech and also violations during the elections took place. Later on the tradition of unfair elections continued. During some period freedom in the media sphere was prohibited and oligarchy came to politics. But it is also worth to note that during the recent years we can see some steps forward especially in the area of freedom of speech, civil society, less cases of violence during electoral process and protests and to some extent progress in construction of dialogue with its neighbours. However Armenia must put much more efforts in order to save its statehood. In its foreign policy Armenia should concentrate on its cooperation with the European Union as EU is based on democratic values. EU is interested in stable and democratic neighbourhood. At the same we can see that Armenia has progresses

and potential of being a developed country in the world. We can see examples of democratic values in the foreign policy of Armenia. Armenia was able to construct good relations with its neighbour Iran. Despite of the fact that Iran is nowadays a problematic country, Armenia being a Christian country managed to construct proper relations with a Muslim country Iran. Armenia economically and politically being dependant on Russia is at the same time constructing its relations with the EU and NATO: with two organizations where transparency is the important value. Armenia is not aiming to be a member of the EU and NATO yet. But Armenia's foreign policy priorities are European integration and cooperation with NATO. Association Agreement which is to be signed with the EU in the scope of Eastern Partnership is one of the most important and main documents for Armenia's future development, as the Agreement include both democratic development, deep and comprehensive free trade which will bring to open market economy and visa facilitation that will insure mobility and contact between people for Armenia and the EU.

References:

1. Valentine M Moghadam "What is democracy? Promises and perils of the Arab Spring", 2013
2. Norman Schofield and Itai Sened "Multiparty Democracy: Elections and Legislative Politics", 2006
3. Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, adopted on 5 July, 1995 by a referendum, constitutional amendments were adopted on 27 Novemebr, 2005
<http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1&lang=eng>
4. "Social Snapshot and Poverty of Armenia", 1996, in Armenian, published on the official website of the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia
<http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=74>
5. Stepan Gregorian, Adriana Sauliuc "Energy Security in Armenia" from the book "Energy Security Strategies in the Wider Black Sea Region", 2010
6. Official Newspaper of the Ministry of Defence of RA, Chronology of Independence in Armenian
<http://www.hayzinvor.am/6523.html>
7. "Thousands in Armenia Protest Results of Presidential Election", February 21, 2008 New York Times
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/21/world/europe/21armenia.html?_r=1&
8. Post - election interim report by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Right, Election Observation Mission, Presidential election, Republic of Armenia, 19-26 February, 2013
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/99931>
9. European Integration Index for Eastern Partnership Countries, 2012

10. Natalia Shapovalova, Richard Youngs "EU Democracy Promotion in the Eastern Neighbourhood", 2012

<http://www.fride.org/publication/1088/eu-democracy-promotion-in-the-eastern-neighbourhood>

11. Joint declaration of the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit, 7 May, 2009

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/eastern_partnership/documents/prague_summit_declaration_en.pdf