Armine Ishkanian

(Re)claiming the emancipatory potential of civil society: a critical examination of civil society and democracy building programs in Armenia since 1991

Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)

NOTES

1   See Andrew T. Green, "Comparative Development of Post-Communist Civil Societies," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 3 (May 2002): 455-471; Kathleen M. Dowley and Brian D. Silver, "Social Capital, Ethnicity and S=upport for Democracy in the Post-Communist States," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 4 (June 2002): 505-527; and Heiko Schrader, "Social Capital and Social Transformation in Russia," *Journal for East European Management Studies* 9, no. 4 (2004): 391-410.

2   Dowley and Silver, "Social Capital, Ethnicity and Support ...," 506.

3   Ibid.

4   Dowley and Silver, "Social Capital, Ethnicity and Support for Democracy ...," 509.

5   Andrew T. Green, "Comparative Development ...," 466.

6   Ibid, 456.

7   Ibid, 465.

8   Heiko Schrader, "Social Capital ...," 392.

9   Ibid, 407.

10   Dirk J. Bezemer and Zvi Lerman, "Rural Livelihoods in Armenia," *Post-Communist Economics* 16, no. 3 (September 2004): 346.

11   Robert S. Chase, "Supporting Communities in Transition: The Impact of the Armenian Social Investment Fund," *The World Bank Economic Review* 16, no. 2 (2002): 219.

12   Ibid, 220.

13   Ibid, 219.

14   Ibid, 234.

15   Anna Walker, "Nations in Transit 2007 Reports: Armenia," 90. Freedom House Report available at http://www.freedomhouse.hu//images/fdh_galleries/NIT207final/nit-armenia-web.pdf (accessed November 30, 2009).

16   See Filiz Bikemen, "Progress on Civil Society Legislation in Turkey," *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* 7, no. 2 (February 2005).

17   For a detailed discussion on pre-2000 civil society development in Turkey see M. Lutfullah Karaman and Bülent Aras "The Crisis of Civil Society in Turkey," *Journal of Economic and Social Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): 39-58.

18   For a more detailed discussion on this issue see Asbed Bedrossian and Asbed Kotchikian, "Hrant Dink: The Martyr for Many Causes," *Armenian News Network/Groong Review & Outlook (February 01, 2007).* Available at http://www.groong.com/ro/ro-2070201.html

19   See Michael Bernhard, "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe" *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 309.

(Re)Claiming the Emancipatory Potential of Civil Society:
A Critical Examination of Civil Society and Democracy Building Programs in Armenia since 1991[1]

By Armine Ishkanian, LSE

FOLLOWING the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe,[2] Western governments embarked on an ambitious project to support the transitions to democracy in those countries. At that time, the idea of civil society as critical to development, democratization, and successful transition became prominent among Western donors and policymakers. This was due to the growing disillusion of Western governments and donors with state-led development and the ascendancy of the neoliberal paradigm of New Public Management, which supported the rollback of the state and the privatization of social-service delivery. Some Western policymakers believed that by supporting and strengthening civil society "democratic forms" could be transformed into "democratic substance."[3] In this context, civil society promotion became a new mantra in both aid and diplomatic circles[4] and led to the extraordinary growth of NGOs worldwide.

Based on extensive fieldwork[5] in Armenia—including participant observation, formal interviews with women's rights and human rights NGO leaders, representatives of donor organizations, government of-

ficials, academics, and journalists—as well as analysis of NGO, Armenian press, and donor publications, in this article I examine the impact of civil society strengthening efforts in Armenia since 1991. I argue that in Armenia, as in other post-Soviet countries, Cold War ideologies strongly influenced and shaped the design and implementation of policies and practices in the area of civil society strengthening in the 1990s. These Cold War ideologies engendered the notion that everything created prior to the collapse of Communism was either "not true civil society" or that it was polluted and contaminated by the Communist legacy and had to be purged before true civil society and democracy could flourish.[6] I maintain that in Armenia these beliefs supported the promotion of a particular model of civil society, which I refer to as a genetically engineered civil society, characterized by the extraordinary growth in the number of NGOs (from 44 registered NGOs in 1994 to more than 4,500 in 2008). This genetically engineered civil society, with the injection of foreign funding (growth hormones), underwent spectacularly rapid growth, which would have not occurred organically. Similar to genetically modified crops, this genetically engineered civil society also began to colonize and squeeze out all indigenous competitors, becoming the dominant type in its environment. In the process, civil society was reduced to professionalized service delivery or advocacy NGOs. I do not deny that NGOs are important institutional actors within civil society, but they are only a subset of civil society. Other civil society actors include trade unions, faith-based organizations, grassroots and informal associations, self-help groups, and others. Thus, the post-Soviet Armenian civic universe today is populated by several thousand advocacy and service-delivery NGOs that largely owe their existence to Western donors. It most certainly is a vibrant NGO sector; a vibrant civil society it is not.

I argue that this "NGOization" has led to the depoliticization and taming of the emancipatory potential of civil society. That potential, I maintain, is one of the most important elements of civil society in that it provides a space for discussion, debate, and the challenging of hegemonic discourses that are essential components in democracies. If the emancipatory dimension is diluted or tamed, civil society loses one of its most important purposes, which is "the freedom to imagine that the world could be different."[7]

In the next section, I examine how a concept as elusive and difficult to define as civil society became a central part of international donor policymaking.

The Repackaging of an Elusive Concept into Policy

Although he did not use the term civil society,[8] Alexis de Tocqueville was the first to attribute the importance of "associationalism" and self-organization for democracy.[9] In the late twentieth century, de Tocqueville's work became popular among some American scholars, including Robert Putnam, Francis Fukuyama, and Larry Diamond, and it was subsequently influential in US policy circles. The neo-Tocquevillian position is that democracy is strengthened, not weakened, when it faces a vigorous civil society[10] and that successful transitions to democracy are possible only if civil society or "something like it" either predates the transition or is established in the course of a transition from authoritarian rule.[11] For many neo-Tocquevillian scholars, the assumption that civil society has a positive and beneficial influence on democracy is a given. Putnam, for instance, refers to civil society organizations as "schools for democracy."[12] Diamond meanwhile argues that civil society not only checks and limits the power of the state but also strengthens and legitimates democracy.[13] The belief that civil society is a bulwark against the "monstrous state,"[14] "unaccountable and unresponsive leaders,"[15] and a counterweight to state power[16] supported the emphasis on civil society promotion in US foreign aid programs and what some describe as the "democracy aid industry."[17]

In this article I focus mostly on US-led civil society strengthening and democracy promotion efforts, because although democratization is by no means a new departure for the European Union or European bilateral donors, as Richard Gillespie and Richard Youngs argue, the US began focusing more systematically on democratization slightly earlier than the EU and the effective coordination of EU democracy promotion efforts has been conspicuously absent.[18] They maintain that until the late 1990s the lack of mechanisms for marrying national initiatives to overall common guidelines on democracy still presented a serious challenge to effective concerted European action.[19] Discussions on transatlantic democracy-building efforts intensified following Septem-

ber 11,[20] but as Jeffrey Kopstein points out, following the war in Iraq many European leaders and the European public remain suspicious of democracy promotion, interpreting it as "a repackaged commitment to the unilateral use of force as well as justification for war and occupation."[21] Moreover, there is relatively less focus on civil society as a key pillar of democracy promotion among European bilateral and multilateral donors than among US donors. Indeed, organizations such as the US National Endowment for Democracy that focus heavily on civil society promotion were described as "pushy" by some respondents in a report by the FRIDE think tank (Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior).[22]

Though some Europeans might consider American-led efforts as "pushy," since the early 1990s civil society assistance has been "a centerpiece of America's international outreach"[23] and "a matter of principle."[24] In fact, since the early 1990s, civil society assistance has been at the top of all sub-sectors of USAID democracy assistance.[25] From 1990 to 2003, the bulk of USAID democracy assistance was sent to countries in Eurasia ($5.77 million), with the lowest levels of aid going to Africa ($1.29 million) and Asia ($1.29 million).[26] US-funded civil society assistance was largely directed at NGOs, as the USAID position in the early 1990s was to provide "vigorous" support for local NGOs, which would "be a critical element of strengthening civil society."[27] The assumption that "a strong civil society is desirable and makes democratic practices and traditions more likely to flourish"[28] persists; as current US Vice-President Joseph Biden stated in the 2006 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on NGOs, "we must understand that an election does not a democracy make....A democracy must rest on the foundation of a strong civil society."[29] [Emphasis added.]

But the US was not always so interested in civil society. On the contrary, during the Cold War, civil society was viewed with suspicion and, at that time, maintaining political stability and warding off the spread of communism were key preoccupations in American foreign policy. In the late 1960s and 1970s, "overly active" societies were seen as being potentially harmful for democracy.[30] As Nancy Bermeo writes, "Rather than being portrayed as the possible savior of democracy, civil society was often cast in the role of spoiler: it was portrayed as sometimes

asking too much—as spoiling the chances for democracy's survival."[31] Samuel Huntington, for example, wrote about the dangers of politicized social forces and their ability to not only dominate the agenda but also disrupt political stability. He noted the difference between "institutionalized societies" in which organized civil society reduced tensions and "praetorian societies" in which civil society exacerbated it. Huntington argued that an "excess of democracy" and "increased popular participation" could erode a government's capacity to deal with issues.[32] He insisted that political institutions must come to dominate these "raw social forces" in order to maintain the stability of society.[33] Other scholars, meanwhile, saw the danger for rent-seeking by civil society groups[34] and the threat that such groups posed to the governability of democracies through their disproportionate influence on policymaking.[35] Although these arguments largely fell out of favor when the Cold War ended, some scholars still critically interrogate the unquestioning tendency to associate the presence of an active civil society with the emergence of a democratic order. Some argue that democracy can be weakened by civil society,[36] while others contend that the nature of civil society is far more important than the existence of civil society alone.[37] I concur with the latter view.

Even though these critics raise important questions and challenges for the normative view of civil society, it was the normative, neo-Tocquevillian model that was most influential among policymakers and donors in the 1990s. When conducting interviews with US-based donors in Armenia, I was struck by the fact that none of the respondents from donor agencies engaged in democracy-promotion programs ever questioned whether civil society should be strengthened as part of their democracy-promotion efforts; the question was always how it could best be done.

It should be recalled, however, that while this normative model was popular among donors, in Latin America and Eastern Europe intellectuals, dissidents, and activists were far more inspired and influenced by the ideas of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. For Gramsci, civil society was more than political economy, and he questioned the economism of the Marxist definition and went on to invert Marx's vision by arguing that ideologies come before institutions and that ideology is the force

capable of shaping new histories.[38] Gramsci placed the emphasis on civil society's politically relevant cultural dimension[39] and considered civil society as the space for the (re)production and contestation of hegemonic as well as counter-hegemonic discourses. In both Eastern Europe and Latin America, civil society referred to autonomy and self-organization, with an emphasis on withdrawal from the state and the creation instead of "islands of civic engagement."[40] In Eastern Europe in particular, civil society activists hoped that following the collapse of communism civil society would provide the means for sustaining individual freedom and empowerment in a modern mass society, thereby keeping liberal democracy reinvigorated and honest.[41] However, as the transitions in Eastern Europe progressed, the radical democratic ideas and visions dissipated, giving way to more-established and less revolutionary ones. In the former Soviet states, where the debates around civil society had not yet developed to the same extent when the communist system collapsed, the dissipation of the visions for reform occurred even more rapidly.

Debating the Existence of Civil Society in the Soviet Union

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and began instituting the reforms of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness), many Western Sovietologists, particularly those who subscribed to the totalitarian school of thought, were caught off guard and were unable to analyze the impact of those reforms.[42] Those scholars used Arendt's theory of totalitarianism as a theoretical framework for understanding the Soviet system.[43] They believed that the Soviet Union was a totalitarian state in which all dissent and life was controlled by the state. The rise of independent movements and organizations in the 1980s not only challenged Soviet bureaucratic rule, but also the perceptions of these Sovietologists who had viewed the Soviet state as an immutable monolith. Indeed, many Sovietologists believed that perestroika was another temporary thaw, such as the earlier Khrushchevian thaw of the 1960s, and would sooner or later be followed by a freeze. As Moshe Lewin writes, "Although Western observers admit that things look extremely promising, they are rather skeptical, if not baffled, for many, among whom the US specialists are the most influential, do not believe that the USSR can

produce meaningful social, economic or political change."[44] This commitment to totalitarianism as an ideological explanation meant that most Western perceptions of the Soviet Union were hampered by a cognitive schema that prevented seeing the world in a realistic way.

One such scholar, Alfred Evans, argues that civil society did not exist in the Soviet Union. He writes, "Most scholars have agreed that civil society as usually defined by Western theoretical approaches, did not exist in the Soviet Union."[45] Evans argues that there were no organizations that were free from state or party control and that even the informal groups that emerged in Russia in the late 1980s had "shallow roots" and their existence did not lead to "the birth of organizations formed by the initiative of citizens and drawing on society's independent resources."[46] While citing the dissident movement, Evans contends that these dissidents were "isolated" from the population and viewed as reckless dissenters whom people feared associating with.[47] Evans's definition of civil society is very narrow and largely refers to professionalized advocacy or service-delivery NGOs. It was also the definition, as I noted earlier, that was embraced by Western donors in the early 1990s.

Certainly, if we apply such a narrow definition of civil society, then it is easy to claim that there was no civil society in the Soviet Union and that civil society had to be created from scratch. However, that narrow perspective ignores the multitude of voluntary groups and informal associations that were emerging in some Soviet republics beginning in the mid 1980s. Lewin (1988) contends that civil society in the late Soviet period was not only an effect of Gorbachev's policies but also, more importantly, the cause for the introduction of the policies of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness). Henry Huttenbach, meanwhile, points to the publication of Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, public demonstrations on the pollution of Lake Baikal, and calls by ethnic groups for the right to return to ancestral homelands (e.g., Crimean Tatars) or to emigrate (Jews, Armenians, and Germans) as trends that increased in the late 1970s and 1980s, leading up to Gorbachev's reforms. He cites them as evidence of a "proto-or pre-civil society in the making."[48] Russian human rights activist Ludmilla Alexeyeva writes in a 1990 Helsinki Watch report, titled Civil Society in the USSR, that the informal associations (nyeformalniye obyediny-

eniya) were "sowing the seeds of democracy" and that the emergence of the informal associations was facilitated rather than mandated by Gorbachev:

> The wave of spontaneous civic energy and self-expression that gave birth to many of the Soviet informal associations is one that Gorbachev released rather than ordained. Not the product of an official initiative, it is the response from below to the relaxation of pressure from above.[49]

Russian writer and dissident Boris Kagarlitsky, meanwhile, describes the efforts of students protesting the demolition of historical buildings, the rehabilitations of political prisoners and exiles, the intensifying publishing of samizdat (clandestine publication), and the election of "wrong candidates." Kagarlitsky argues that changes were already occurring in the Soviet system in the 1980s and that the year 1986 marked the "golden age" of perestroika when the "life of society was reviving."[50] Interestingly, some authors use biological terms, such as "embryonic," "vestigial," or "germs," to describe the nascent development stage of civil society in the Soviet Union in the 1980s.[51] But, to be clear, no one writing in the late 1980s or 1990s went so far as to claim that a vibrant civil society had already emerged in the Soviet Union.

Civil Society in Armenia before Independence

In the South Caucasus, Armenia enjoyed the greatest official tolerance. It was Moscow's showpiece to the world, to prove that religious freedom prevailed in the USSR. Not only were Armenian churches functioning in the 1980s but centuries-old monasteries and chapels were being renovated; moreover, there were social clubs and societies, such as compatriotic unions, that helped maintain Armenian national identity. There was the "duality of life" under the Soviet Union in Armenia; that duality, Razmik Panossian contends, consisted of the official acceptance of the Soviet/Marxist line alongside the perpetuation of nationalist ideologies.[52] Despite the political limits placed by the Soviet regime, Armenians managed to develop a "degree of autonomy and self-expression" under Soviet rule.[53] Abrahamian maintains that the "embryos of civil society"[54] were present in Armenia in the late 1980s. To illustrate, he refers to the emergence of the information tables (stoliki) that sprung

up in Theatre Square in central Yerevan in 1988, describing them as promoters of change and the "germs" (i.e., seeds) of civil society. The stoliki were places where people could receive written or oral information about elections, deputies, registration rules, electoral and polling districts, and many other details about the constitutional rights of Soviet citizens from those versed in Soviet constitutional law.[55] He maintains that in 1988 Armenians "began their education in democracy" and in several months there were many people who would use the constitution to legally win a number of electoral campaigns:

> The members of these groups were at the same time the first agitators of the campaigns. Without their scrupulous and routine work the movement would hardly have won the first and following elections. The tables disappeared when the festival ended and have not been seen since.[56]

At the peak of the Karabakh Movement, in November 1988, the movement leaders, informed by Soviet constitutional law, collected the required number of deputies' signatures to have the right to call an extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet. Although the Communist authorities banned the session, the movement defied them and called an alternative extraordinary session, to be held in Theatre Square on 24 November 1988. According to Abrahamian, the deputies were asked to gather at the Opera House in the Theatre Square. When some deputies failed to turn up, the "hunt for deputies" began. The people in the movement, Abrahamian argues, were absolutely convinced that when a legitimate session was called the deputies should not refuse to participate in it. Demonstrators from the square went to the homes and offices of the absentee deputies and compelled them, sometimes even dragging them kicking and screaming, into the Opera House, where they were obliged to carry out their duties as representatives of the Soviet Armenian people.[57]

While the stoliki and other nonviolent demonstrations and actions led by the leaders of the Karabakh Movement and the demonstrators in the square prompted the authorities to declare a state of emergency and to arrest the Movement's leaders in late November 1988, nonetheless an important event had occurred and inspired people's faith in democracy. Abrahamian writes, "The communist authorities seemed to be so shocked by the people's rapidly increasing legislative experience that

they failed to create some effective illegal preventive structures to resist their activity."[58] It is important to remember that the stoliki emerged without the capacity-building or civic-education grants that have become common in the post-Soviet period. On the contrary, the stoliki were local efforts at self-education and empowerment that disappeared in the post-Soviet period. Abrahamian ends by describing how the carnival or festival civil society that had blossomed in 1988 vanished once independence was achieved and the time for nation-building ensued. He adds, "After independence, which was in a sense an offspring of the festival in the square, one of the first parliamentary sessions of the new republic reasserted the resolutions of its festive progenitor, thus taking upon itself the difficult task of constructing, step by step, a real, and not a festive, civil society in Armenia."[59]

On 21 September 1991, Armenia declared independence from the Soviet Union. The post-independence period was complicated by the conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh, the ensuing blockade initiated by Azerbaijan and Turkey, and the influx of some 400,000 ethnic Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan who had fled pogroms in Sumgait, Baku, and elsewhere. The situation was worsened by the collapse of the economy, skyrocketing inflation, the rapid implementation of privatization reforms and austerity measures, including limits on state spending and subsidies, which were part of the so-called shock therapies introduced by the international financial institutions. There was mass unemployment and impoverishment, and the blockade led to long blackouts, stoppage of state-provided heat and hot water services, and closures of factories, schools, and research institutes. In northern Armenia, the already difficult situation was exacerbated by the fact that the authorities had to deal with the tens of thousands of people who were wounded and left homeless after the 7 December 1988 earthquake that left 25,000 people dead and virtually destroyed the cities of Leninakan (now Gyumri) and Spitak.

Given these harsh socioeconomic conditions in the early post-Soviet years, most people did not have the time or inclination to participate in civic projects; the civic activism that had become a part of Armenian life in the late 1980s was replaced by disillusion, apathy, frustration, and dislocation in the 1990s. As in Soviet times, the extended family remained the primary mode of social protection and form of identification and advancement.[60] The political turmoil and socioeconomic hardships that followed independence led to the devaluation of democracy and to a re-evaluation of the ideas and goals of 1988.

When I began my fieldwork in Armenia in 1996, Armenia and Azerbaijan had signed a cease-fire over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and daily life was returning to a more normal state as electricity was available 24 hours a day and the economic situation, although still difficult, was slowly improving. In 1996, the USAID-funded Armenian Assembly of America NGO Training and Resource Center (NGOC) in Yerevan was in its second year of operation. The opening of the NGOC was the watershed event in the development of Armenia's NGO sector because it provided Armenians with a template for how to create an NGO and how to seek funding from donors in order to sustain that NGO.[61] When the NGOC opened in 1994, there were only 44 local NGOs registered with the Armenian Ministry of Justice; by 1996, there were more than 1,500. As of June 2009, there were more 4,500 registered NGOs. Considering that Armenia has a population of 3.2 million, that is a very large number. The NGOs that attended the NGOC educational and training seminars not only learned how to write grant proposals and how to approach donors but also, most importantly, began to master "NGO-speak." Although NGOs must register to become legally operational, there is no requirement for them to cancel their registration when they cease operating. Hence, the large numbers are not a true reflection of the vibrancy of the sector, and most of the work or activism can be ascribed to less than 500 NGOs throughout the country.

In the next section I focus on civil society activism connected with elections. I argue that this is one area where we are beginning to witness more organic participation apart from NGO activities that are funded and led by donors.

Civil Society after Independence in Armenia

Since the early 1990s, elections have been an important component in the democracy-building programs implemented and supported by Western donors in the former socialist states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Globally, elections have been used as "bench-

marks" and "litmus tests"[62] in measuring the level of democratization of the post-Soviet countries and for assessing the progress that the various countries have made in their transitions to democracy. A great deal of time and money has been spent training, preparing, as well as observing and monitoring elections by donors, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs over the past 15 years in Armenia. Regardless of whether the preparations, trainings, and monitoring of elections have had an impact in stopping fraud or decreasing the frequency of irregularities, and many observers of Armenia's post-Soviet elections would emphatically argue that they have not, a focus on elections remains a key component of the democracy-building programs in the twenty-first century.

Robert Pastor argues that most scholars of government would agree that elections are essential instruments of democracy and that "to many, democracy should be more than free and fair elections, but it cannot be less."[63] Similarly, Neil Nevitte and Santiago Canton contend that free and fair elections are not only a litmus test of a regime's devotion to democratic values but also provide critical opportunities for voters to weaken or break the grip of authoritarian governments.[64] While agreeing that elections are essential for democracies, Jorgen Elklit and Palle Svensson problematize the meaning of the phrase "free and fair elections," arguing that there is no single, universal definition or standard of what constitutes a "free and fair election"[65] Given the absence of a universal standard, they argue, a vibrant and independent civil society, in addition to an independent judiciary, legislature, and media, are important components in any democracy.[66] Civil society, they add, plays a particularly important role in that it helps promote active civic participation, the building of social capital and trust, and the existence of open spaces for dialogue and debate. This perspective (that democracy includes free and fair elections, vibrant civil society, rule of law, etc.) is shared by donors working in Armenia. Beginning with the 2003 election, and intensifying in each subsequent election (i.e., 2007 parliamentary, 2008 presidential elections, 2009 mayoral election), NGOs have implemented a number of initiatives in the pre- and post-election periods, including supporting civic participation initiatives, raising public awareness about defending one's vote, sponsoring information hotlines, and training and serving as local election monitors.

Of the five presidential elections since independence in Armenia, only the 1991 election is considered to have met international standards for free and fair elections. The other four elections appear to follow a pattern that has unfortunately become all too familiar: flawed elections[67] followed by protests and demonstrations by the opposition.

The most recent presidential election in Armenia, held on 19 February 2008, was followed by large public demonstrations as supporters of the leading defeated candidate (and former president) Levon Ter-Petrosian responded to the declared outcome by organizing a continuous mass protests in Yerevan's Liberty Square. The atmosphere at the tented encampment was celebratory rather than threatening, typified by protestors' singing and dancing around bonfires. The post-election standoff remained very tense and culminated in the violent attacks on demonstrators in the morning of 1 March. Following the break-up of demonstrations and the violence, the government, led by Robert Kocharian, declared a 20-day state of emergency as all events and public gatherings were banned and media outlets, including TV and radio channels, newspapers, journals, and Internet news sites, were allowed to transmit only official communiqués.

Despite Armenia's commitments to the Council of Europe, on March 18 the National Assembly passed amendments to the Law on Conducting Meetings, Assemblies, Rallies, and Demonstrations, instituting more-stringent restrictions on public gatherings. One of the amendments complemented the clause dealing with cases where authorities have "reliable information" that street protests would pose a threat to "state security, public order, public health and morality"; the amendment sets forth that any such information coming from the Armenian police and the NSS is automatically deemed "reliable." According to Human Rights Watch, these amendments "are incompatible with Armenia's obligations to respect freedom of assembly under the European Convention on Human Rights"[68] Despite these restrictions, however, and to a large extent in response to them, there was renewed civic activism by NGOs, social movements, and other civil society organizations. What emerged was not simply the activism of NGOs but, rather, a whole set of other civic actors, including youth groups and women's groups; moreover, spaces, both real and virtual, were created

for debating and discussing political developments. I would argue that this is an unprecedented development in Armenia's post-Soviet history. The movement that emerged after the 2008 elections has its roots in and clearly identifies itself with the Karabakh Movement of 1988. The movement led by Ter-Petrosian and his Armenian National Congress, embraced and utilized the Karabakh Movement's symbols, practices, and discourses, including holding meetings in Liberty Square and the Matenadaran as well as using particular chants (e.g., "struggle until victory") that are associated with the Karabakh Movement.

In the post-election period, some pro-government NGOs attempted to convince the opposition demonstrators to stop the protests and to be "tolerant,"[69] but most of the human rights NGOs claimed they were challenging the climate of fear that, they argued, had emerged following the events of March 1-2, 2008. According to these NGOs, arrests of opposition political activists and attacks on high-profile civil society leaders fueled the prevailing climate of fear. For instance, following the beating of young civil society activist Arsen Kharatyan on May 28, a number of human rights and media freedom NGOs wrote in their statement:

> We condemn such actions and declare that the attempts at silencing the voices of the people and of creating a climate of fear only serve to intensify dissatisfaction and resentment with the current administration.[70]

Also following the elections, a number of these human rights NGOs began to challenge findings of international observers. For instance, when supporters of Serge Sargsyan cited the findings of the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM)[71] to argue that the vote met international standards, some Armenian NGOs criticized the premise of the IEOM report that the election was "administered mostly in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards." In February 2008, nine human rights and media freedom NGOs[72] released a statement arguing that "the apparent discrepancy between the actual findings of the assessment with the formative first two sentences of the report resulted in the government only referring to this paragraph in the international observers' assessment in order to legitimize the results of the election."[73] At the pickets near the OSCE office in Yerevan, demonstrators repeatedly shouted the word "shame" to indicate their

disappointment with the observers' report and what they considered to be a legitimization of a flawed electoral process.[74] NGOs also sent open letters to international organizations and foreign governments. The letters outlined the various human rights abuses and violations by the authorities. In a strongly worded open letter dated March 27, ten NGOs[75] accused Armenia of Soviet-style repression and "state terror." They wrote: "The scale of such violence increases day-by-day. The Armenian authorities arbitrarily violate constitutional rights and fundamental freedoms of the people."[76] Although these letters did not have an impact on local political developments, they publicized the various human rights violations both domestically and internationally. Globally, NGOs engage in such activities in an effort to attract international attention to domestic human rights violations and repression. Such behavior is described to as the "boomerang effect" by which non-state actors (including NGOs, social movements, etc.) achieve change domestically by focusing international attention on the state.[77]

Apart from issuing statements, writing open letters, and engaging in protest actions, some Armenian NGOs created a toll-free telephone hotline to assist those who were illegally kept in police custody, had their homes searched, or felt vulnerable. Hotlines are relatively new in Armenia; the first toll-free hotlines (established in 2002), were created to support victims of domestic violence.[78] These new hotlines received large number of calls following the March 1-2 events. The authorities and pro-government media outlets subsequently attacked a number of NGOs for what they considered unpatriotic behavior, and published articles that raised questions about the motivations of those NGO leaders and the sources of funding their organizations.[79]

Apart from the activity of NGOs, other civil society organizations and social movements, such as the Azgayin Zartonk (National Awakening), the Save Armenia Action Group (SAAG), and the group of wives of political prisoners, among others, have become active since March 1-2. A group called Azat Hayer (Free Armenians) issued a letter to Armenians worldwide calling for acts of civil disobedience and boycotts of the traditional Diaspora political parties and organizations. Quoting Henry David Thoreau and Thomas Jefferson, the authors wrote:

Now the time has come for the Armenian to live, put into effect, and bring into the light of day "civil disobedience," meaning "disobedience of the government," and to win his personal freedom from the oppression and fear of other powers and Armenia's government.[80]

A group of exiled writers and intellectuals also expressed their position regarding the electoral turmoil in Armenia. A declaration prepared by the group for a conference in support of democracy in Armenia that took place in Los Angeles on May 26 called for (1) the release of all political prisoners, (2) the creation of a provisional governing authority jointly with the opposition to oversee new presidential and parliamentary elections, and (3) the return of all misappropriated state and private assets.[81] The continued ban on public assemblies and demonstrations has indeed led to acts of civil disobedience as civil society organizations have had to resort to alternative—and often innovative—means of organizing public gathering, such as public walks (zbosanqner) on Northern Avenue. During these walks, participants read, ate, or plaid chess. Videos of some of the public walks are posted on YouTube and discussed on various blogs.

Despite the seemingly innocuous nature of those activities, police began detaining participants and in April 2009 the walks were halted by the authorities ahead of the May 2009 Yerevan mayoral election. Police began closely monitoring Northern Avenue to prevent it from becoming a public meeting space. Moreover, the ongoing construction in Liberty Square, where an underground parking garage is being built, has meant that the meeting space that was so fundamental to the struggle for independence in the late 1980s is no longer available for public meetings or other gatherings. Yet, the closing off of real/actual spaces is today accompanied by the opening of virtual spaces, including blogging sites. During the state of emergency, individuals began using new forms of communication technology, including camera-equipped mobile phones and Web 2.0 technologies such blogs, wikis[82] and social networking (e.g., Facebook) and video-sharing (e.g., YouTube) websites to share and exchange information, opinions, photographs, and videos about the latest political developments. During the state of emergency, the use of these technologies allowed for the circumvention of the official information blockade. That blockade did not stop discussion of

politics; if anything, the flow of information, at least for those who had access to the Internet, went from a trickle to a tidal wave as news, comments, photos, and videos were shared via blogs that were constantly updated. Some of the opposition sites, such as Payqar.org ("Struggle"), referred to their publications as "samizdat,"[83] especially during the state of emergency, when access to the site was done via proxy server.

The number of posts and comments on the blogs dramatically increased during the state of emergency, when there was otherwise a dearth of information. A few blogs, in particular Armenian Ditord and Oneworld Media, have reflected on the vibrancy and growing popularity of Armenian blogs. The Armenian blogosphere is also discussed on a weekly Podcast from Radio Hay. Frequently updated blogs include the Armenian Ditord, Bekaisa, Caucasus Knot, Nazarian, Pigh, Seetizen, Tzitzernak, Unzipped, and Uzogh. Such has been the popularity of these blogs that even Serge Sargsyan created his own blog on Live Journal and began encouraging people to write to him with questions and comments. Perhaps we shall see more presidential blogs in coming years, seeing that blogs are beginning to figure more prominently in elections around the world. For instance, in the US, all the presidential candidates had blogs that supported their campaign and fundraising efforts. President Barack Obama continues to use the Internet to send messages as well as video clips to his supporters asking for support of his initiatives.

The Armenian blogs tend to have a predominant language, either English or Russian, but also provide information in Armenian, English, and Russian. The multilingual blogs demonstrate the global reach of these technologies as well as the diversity of the participants. The blogs, while generating debate and discussion, also provide anonymity to the discussants. Although this leads to freer expression and discussion, it can and does mean that people at times hide behind fictitious identities.

YouTube in particular added a new dimension by hosting videos showing segments of demonstrations, fraud at polling stations, and discussions with people on the street. Having its license continually denied, A1+ created its own YouTube channel, which has consistently been among the most-watched channels on YouTube in the months following the election. The most widely circulated video during this pe-

riod was a clip that showed masked gunmen firing live rounds in the direction of demonstrators. The scenes of the shooting were juxtaposed with excerpts from a spokeswoman from the Prosecutor General's office stating that government forces did not shoot at demonstrators. Following the global circulation of the video, on 14 March 2008, the Armenian government issued reports on public television that the video was a fake. These developments demonstrate how events online can have real-life consequences.

Given the limited access to the Internet in Armenia (by some estimates it is 6 percent), questions remain as to how broad the participation is in online debates. Regardless of how widespread it might be, what is clear is that a politically engaged group of individuals is participating, and this trend can only grow as access to the Internet increases.

Conclusion

The minimalist or procedural definition of democracy is identified as originating with Joseph Schumpeter (1947), who argued that democracy at the conceptual level is the existence of citizens holding their rulers accountable and the existence of procedures by which to do so. This narrow approach focuses on the formal institutions of democracy and does not consider social and economic inequalities and how they affect participation, access, and decision-making. The problem with the procedural definition is that it ignores questions of inclusion, participation, deliberation, and diversity. Proponents of the broader, substantive conception of democracy argue that it is important to look beyond the formal institutions and to focus on the impact of structural inequalities, power relations, and struggles by popular movements. Iris Marion Young, for instance, focuses on inclusion within democratic practices and argues that the normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making processes and have had an opportunity to influence the outcomes.[84]

While procedural democratic institutions and mechanisms are necessary and in fact represent an a priori safeguard against the abuses of power and for the development of substantive democracy,[85] there are many "managed" democracies where the procedural elements are

present but substantive democracy is absent. "Managed democracy" (upravlyayemaya demokratiya) is a phrase adopted by the Russian authorities in the early 2000s and is now increasingly used to describe the situation in other former Soviet states, such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. It refers to a situation in which the formal/procedural institutions and practices (e.g., elections) of democracies exist but are controlled and managed by the authorities.[86]

Thus, while recognizing the successes, we must be cautious in prematurely proclaiming the triumph of democracy-promotion efforts. I argue that the results of democracy-building and civil society strengthening efforts in Armenia thus far have been varied. Policies aimed at strengthening democracy and civil society led to the establishment of the formal institutions, procedures, and mechanisms associated with democracy, including the holding of regularly scheduled elections and the existence of a large number of NGOs; however, if we consider the development and spread of substantive democracy, then it is clear that donor-supported democracy-building and civil society strengthening programs have not met with great success in Armenia. Because, although the formal institutions, procedures, and mechanisms have been created, we are not witnessing greater civic participation, engagement, inclusion, and debate.

As I have demonstrated in this article, donor-based civil society strengthening programs led to the exponential growth of NGOs, but they also thwarted natural political processes and imposed a particular model of civil society. This tendency has led to the establishment of a genetically engineered civil society that consists of professionalized service-delivery and advocacy NGOs. Other academics have described foreign-funded civil society strengthening programs as leading to the "abortion of local processes of change"[87] and the taming of social movements.[88]

Certainly NGOs have played a part in Armenia's political, economic, and social development over the past 15 years; however, given their small size, continued dependence on foreign aid, limited access to the mass media, low membership numbers, and tendency to preach to the converted, their impact has been at the project or program level. Indeed, NGOs have designed and implemented some innovative and important projects, but they have not affected the broader political,

economic, and social context nor have they created a space for discussion and debate. Yet today—as Armenia is faced with many important socioeconomic and political issues, including the impact of the global credit crunch, the push to find a resolution to the Karabakh conflict, and the attempts to normalize relations with Turkey—it is of utmost importance that civil society become more engaged in these discussions and debates.

For that to happen, the government must not keep civil society in the dark regarding developments. Yet, while government officials engage in behind-the-scenes negotiations about the status of Karabakh and the Turkish-Armenian border, civil society and the public at-large remain ignorant of the details of those negotiations that will undoubtedly affect their lives. For instance, what are the contents of the Madrid Principles or the 22 April 2009 Turkish Armenian Road Map? This lack of information led one UK-based civil society activist to write an open letter to the Armenian Catholicos requesting more information about these negotiations:

> Everyday, different newspapers present us with different versions of the talks and negotiations held between the Leaders of our country [Armenia] with those of Azerbaijan and Turkey, yet most articles are contradicted by the negotiating parties; every day the Madrid Principles are mentioned and either refuted or agreed by the reporters, yet no one can tell us what—exactly—these principles are; everyday the setting-up of a joint committee to analyze the documents of the genocide is reported and criticized, yet the authorities deny that agreement; and a map route for the opening of the borders between Armenia and Turkey is supposed to have been drawn yet no one has seen it and no one can describe it.
>
> Where is the truth? ... Decisions which have to be taken now when Armenia is at this cross-roads and which will affect, irrevocably and forever, the lives of every man, woman and child in our Motherland and its Diaspora. We want to know.[89]

Armenia's democratization is, has been, and will continue to be influenced to varying degrees by foreign donors, international NGOs, global civil society activists, and, of course, civil society organizations, political parties, and individuals from the Armenian Diaspora communities in the US, Russia, and Western Europe. Civil society can be a space for participation, political debate, and the contestation (as well as reproduction) of hegemonic discourses. If we consider civil society as a site for struggle, diversity, and complexity instead of one where we find professionalized, tamed, technically savvy but apolitical NGOs, then we can identify the emancipatory potential for civil society. Yet the government, too, must play a part by both providing greater space for civil society to developing and by engaging in a more constructive manner with civil society organizations.

As Armenia approaches 20 years of independence, many questions remain about its future economic and political development. From very difficult beginnings, Armenia has significantly strengthened and rebuilt its economy and provided a level of stability and security for its citizens. How its future political, social, and economic developments will proceed is an open question. Armenia's leaders face many important political and diplomatic challenges around the issue of Turkish Armenian rapprochement[90] as well as the negotiations concerning the future status of Karabakh. Much depends on Armenia's leaders, but civil society actors must also have a role—but whether they will remains to be seen.

NOTES

1   I would like to thank the International Research and Exchanges Board, the US National Research Council, the US Academy of Educational Development and the London School of Economics for funding different phases of this research beginning in 1996. None of these organizations is responsible for the views expressed in this article.

2   Although the post-socialist states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states share the historical legacy of state socialism, I recognize that since the early 1990s they have traversed different paths in terms of democratization.

3   Thomas Carothers, "Democracy Promotion: A Key Focus in a New World Order," *Issues of Democracy* 5, no. 1 (May 2000) http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itdhr/0500/ijde/carothers.htm (accessed March 28, 2007).

4   Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy* Promotion (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), 6.

5   This article is based on research conducted in Armenia during the following periods: March 1996 -to September 1997, September 1999, October 2002 to- July 2003, and March -to April 2005.

6   Ruth Mandel, "Seeding Civil Society," in *Postsocialism: Ideals, ideologies and practices in Eurasia*, ed. C.M. Hann (London: Routledge, 2002).

7   Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development. A Critical Interrogation* (Lynne Rienner Inc. Boulder, 2002), 237.

8   Of the various definitions of civil society, I prefer Jean Cohen's and Andrew Arato's formulation, which defines it as "a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary organizations), social movements and forms of public communication." Cohen and Arato, Civil Society, ix.

9   Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003),19.

10   Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

11   Victor Perez-Diaz, *The Return of Civil Society: The Emergence of Democratic Spain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1993), 40.

12   Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York : Simon & Schuster, 2000), 338.

13   Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

14   F. C. Weffort, "Why Democracy?" in *Democratizing Brazil: Problems of Transition and Consolidation*, ed. Alfred Stephen (New York: Oxford University Press,1989), 349.

15   D. W. Lovell, "Civil Society and Soviet studies: an introductory essay" in *The Transition from Socialism: State and Civil Society in the USSR,* eds. Lovell C. Kukathas, Lovell, D. W. and W. Melbourne Maley (Longman Cheshire, 1991), 1.

16   D. Rueschemeyer, E. Stephens, and J. Stephens, eds. *Capitalist Development and* Democracy (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6.

17   Encarnacion, "Beyond Civil Society: Promoting Democracy after September 11" in *Orbis,* 47, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 709.

18   Richard Gillespie, and Richard Youngs, "Themes in European Democracy Promotion," *Democratization* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 1-16.

19   Ibid, 6.

20   Dorothee Schmid, and Fares Braizat, *The Adaptation of EU and US Democracy Promotion Programs to the Local Political Context in Jordan and Palestine And their*

Relevance to Grand Geopolitical Designs (EuroMesco Research Project, 2006), 4.

21   Jeffrey Kopstein, "The Transatlantic Divide over Democracy Promotion," *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 85.

22   Richard Youngs, *Survey of European Democracy Promotion Policies 2000-2006* (Madrid: Fundacion Para Las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE), 2006), 18.

23   US Senate. *Nongovernmental Organizations and Democracy Promotion: "Giving Voice to the People,"* A Report to the Members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 22 December 2006. http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2006_rpt/democracy.pdf (accessed March 20, 2007).

24   Randall L. Tobias, "Democracy and the New Approach to US Foreign Assistance, 2007". Available from http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2007/sp070117.html (accessed March 20, 2007).

25   For instance, while civil society aid was $2,438.2 million from 1990 - 2003, governance and rule-of-law programs received $1,457.6 million and 1,218.5 million, respectively. In Steven E. Finkel, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, Mitchell A. Seligson and Dinorah Azpuru (2006) Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building: Results of a Cross-National Quantitative Study." http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/publications/pdfs/impact_of_democracy_assistance.pdf (acessed March 28, 2007), 33.

26   Ibid, 33-34.

27   USAID, *Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story—-Building Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States.* Washington: USAID, 1999, v.

28   Ibid, xi.

29   Joseph R. Biden, "Statement of Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Hearing on Non-Governmental Organizations and Democracy Promotion," US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 8 June 2006. http://www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2006/BidenStatment060608.pdf (March 20, 2007).

30   Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 11.

31   Ibid, 11.

32   Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1968).

33   Ibid, 1968: 9.

34   J. Buchanan, M. R. D. Tollison, and G. Tullock, eds. *Toward a Theory of the Rent-Seeking Society* (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1981).

35   Lester.C. Thurow, *The Zero-Sum Society: Distribution and the Possibilities for Economic Change* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

36   Sherri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49, no.3 (April 1997): 401-29; Nancy Bermeo, and Philip Nord, eds. *Civil Society Before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth Century Europe* (Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000).

37   Jean Francois Bayart, "Civil Society in Africa" in *Political Domination in Africa*, ed. Patrick Chabal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Gordon White. "Civil Society, Democratization and Development: Clearing the Analytical Ground" in *Civil Society in Democratization*, eds. P. Burnell and P. Calvert (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

38   Norberto Bobbio, "Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society," *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives,* ed. J. Keane (London: Verso, 1988), 88.

39   Jean Cohen, "Trust, Voluntary Association and Workable Democracy," in *Democracy*

and Trust, ed. M. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 214.

40   Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 193.

41   Jeffrey C. Isaac, "The Meanings of 1989" in *The Revolutions of 1989: Rewriting Histories,* ed. V. Tismaneanu (London: Routledge, 1999), 144.

42   Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon* (London: Radius, 1988), 1; D. W. Lovell, "Civil Society and Soviet studies: an introductory essay" in *The Transition from Socialism: State and Civil Society in the USSR,* eds. C. Kukathas, David W. Lovell, and William Maley (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1991), 3; Vladimir Tismaneanu and Mark Turner, "Understanding Post-Sovietism: Between Residual Leninism and Uncertain Pluralism," in *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia,* ed. V. Tismaneanu (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 3.

43   Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon.*

44   Ibid, 1.

45   Alfred B. Evans Jr., "Civil Society in the Soviet Union?" in *Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment,* eds. A. B. Evans Jr., L.A. Henry, and L. McIntosh Sundstrom (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe), 28.

46   Ibid, 29.

47   Ibid, 43.

48   H. R. Huttenbach, "Post-Soviet Crisis and Disorder in Transcaucasia: The Search for Regional Stability and Security," *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia,* ed. V. Tismaneanu (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 338.

49   Helsinki Watch Report, *Civil Society in the USSR* (Helsinki Watch Committee, New York, 1990), 3.

50   Boris Kagarlitsky, "Perestroika: The Dialectic of Change," in *The New Détente: Rethinking East-West Relations,eds.* M. Kaldor, G. Holden, and R. Falk (London: Verso., 1989), 337-341.

51   Levon Abrahamian, "Civil Society Born in the Square: The Karabagh Movement in Perspective," in *The Making of Nagorno-Karabagh: From Secession to Republic*, ed. Levon Chorbajian (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Helsinki Watch 1990; Huttenbach 1995; T. H. Rigby, "The USSR: End of a Long, Dark Night?" in *The Developments of Civil Society in Communist Systems,* ed. R. F. Miller (North Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1992).

52   Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 289.

53   Ronald G. Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), 190.

54   Abrahamian, "Civil Society Born in the Square...," 125.

55   Ibid, 242.

56   Ibid, 129.

57   Ibid, 129-130.

58   Levon Abrahamian, *Armenian Identity in a Changing World* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2006), 241.

59   Ibid, 131.

60   According to the 1996 UNDP Armenia Human Development Report, in 1995 nearly one out of five registered residents of Armenia was living abroad temporarily or permanently and every fifth family out of 1,000 families interviewed reported having received assistance from relatives and friends in the previous month. These remittances have helped tens of thousands of Armenian families survive the difficult economic conditions in Armenia. On average, during the 1990s, Armenians living

abroad sent around $350 million (US) annually to family and friends in Armenia. In 1998, that figure represented almost 19 percent of the GDP ($1.85 billion) of Armenia. Armenpress reports, "$350 Million Enters Armenia as Financial Aid to Some Armenian Residents," 1 December 1997 (cited in Astourian 2001: 42). However, because the hundreds of millions of dollars were sent in $100 - $500 increments by over 700,000 people a month, the impact of remittances on the Armenian economy has been negligible. Most recipients have used the remittances to survive from one month to the next; they have not been able to save the remittances in order to invest in business ventures that would provide longer-term earnings. S. Astourian, "From Ter-Petrosian to Kocharian: Leadership Change in Armenia" *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper.* 2001. http://violet.berkely.edu/~bsp/publications/200_04-asto.pdf (accessed June 14, 2007).

61   The Armenian Assembly of America is a US-based nonprofit organization established in 1972 and headquartered in Washington, DC. The Assembly promotes public awareness of Armenian issues, encourages greater Armenian-American participation in the American democratic process, and assists in humanitarian and development programs in Armenia. Armenian Assembly of America, "History of the Armenian Assembly"; available from http://www. aaainc.org/history.htm.

62   Neil Nevitte, and S. Canton, "The Rise of Election Monitoring: The Role of Domestic Observers," (with S. Canton) *Journal of Democracy* 8 (1999): 47.

63   R. A. Pastor, "Mediating Election," *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 1(1998): 154.

64   Nevitte and Canton, 47.

65   Jørgen Elklit and Palle Svensson, "What Makes Elections Free and Fair?" *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 3 (1997): 32.

66   Ibid, 44.

67   "Flawed elections" in this context refer to flaws and problems that occurred during the pre- and post-election periods, including, inter alia, unequal access to media outlets, vote-buying, vote-rigging, and violence toward local election observers.

68   Human Rights Watch (2008) "Armenia: Sargisian Should Restore Rights Swift Action Needed in Post-election Crisis," Available from http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/08/armeni1847.htm (accessed June 2, 2008).

69   Human Rights Defender,. "Ad-hoc Public Report on the 2008 February 19 Presidential Elections and the Post-Electoral Developments," (May 2008), 24. Available from http://www.pf-armenia.org/library/

70   Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center; Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office; "Huys" NGO; Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Armenian Committee; Lawyers for Human Rights; Rights and Freedom Center; "Asparez" Journalists' Club; "Zartonk-89" NGO; "The Soldier's Protection Committee" Initiative Group; National Citizens" Initiative; Youth for Democracy; "Mijnaberd" NGO; and Foundation against Violation of Law Yerevan.

71   The IEOM was a joint undertaking of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament.

72   "Asparez" Journalists' Club; Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression; Helsinki Committee of Armenia; Helsinki Citizens Assembly Vanadzor Branch; "Internews-Armenia" Media Support NGO; Media Diversity Institute; Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation—Armenia; Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center; and Yerevan Press Club.

73   A1+ (2008) "An Appeal to [the] International Community." Available from http://www.a1plus.am/en/?page=issue&iid=58522 (accessed June 2, 2008).

74   The final IEOM report was issued in late May and embraced a more critical stance on the election results and post-election developments.

75   "Youth for Democracy" NGO; Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center NGO; "Asparez" Journalists' Club; "Krtutyan Asparez" NGO; Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Armenian Committee NGO; Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office; "Huys" NGO; "We Plus" NGO; "Victims of State Needs" NGO; and Sksela Youth Movement.

76   Unzipped blog (2008) "Armenia 2008: Return to Stalinism (Statement of NGOs)" Available from http://unzipped.blogspot.com/2008/03/armenia-2008-return-to-stalinism.html(accessed June 2, 2008).

77   Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

78   A. Ishkanian, "En-Gendering Civil Society and Democracy Building: the Anti-Domestic Violence Campaign in Armenia," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 14, no. 4 (2007): 488-525.

79   Vremya Novoye, "If Hastings and Ben Kardin Will Review the Armenian Case," Элси Хастингс и Бен Кардин рассмотрят армянский "кейс," April 15. http://www.nv.am/15aprl/tema.htm (accessed June 2, 2008).

80   Translation by Armenaker Kamilion blog. "The Manifest of Free Armenians" is available at http://eutyun.am/S/X/0806/Y_080609_yAZAT-HAY.htm.

81   The statement can be found at http://www.vernatun.info/(in Armenian). Its authors also demand the reinstatement of all civil liberties, including the removal of obstacles for the return to Armenia of exiled intellectuals.

82   There is also a Wikipedia page dedicated to the 2008 election with updated information on the events. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2008_Armenian_presidential_election_protests.

83   "Samizdat" is a Russian word that refers to self-produced, underground publications.

84   Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6.

85   Mary Kaldor, and Ivan Vejvoda, "Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Affairs* 73, no. 1 (January 1997): 63.

86   Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul, *Popular Choice and Managed Democracy: The Russian Elections of 1999 and* 2000 (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

87   Chris Hann, "In the Church of Civil Society," in *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts*, eds. Marlies Glasius, David Lewis, and Hakan Seckinelgin (London: Routledge, 2004), 46.

88   Kaldor, *Global Civil Society*.

89   Odette Bazil, "Please Tell Us The Truth," an open letter to the Catholicos of All Armenians, sent to the author, 2009.

90   As this article goes to press, on October 10, 2009 Armenia and Turkey had signed the two protocols (i.e., the Protocol on Development of Relations Between the Republic Of Armenia and the Republic Of Turkey and the Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey). As of December 2009, these protocols have not been ratified by the parliaments in Armenia or Turkey. Discussions and debate about the protocols continue in Armenia as well as in Diaspora communities throughout the world.

The Limits and Opportunities of Civil Society in Conflict Resolution
The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh

Irina Ghaplanyan

THE END of the Cold War was like Pandora's Box in that it unleashed inter-ethnic grievances and revived dormant conflicts. The immediate emergence of intrastate wars also revealed the inability of the newly independent governments to effectively and constructively manage and contain conflicts. The violent response of those governments lent a degree of legitimacy to the secessionist states' claim of sovereignty. As a result, the international community was unable to prioritize the two major international legal principles at the core of these post-Soviet conflicts: the right of national self-determination and the principle of territorial integrity.

The various strategies tailored individually and uniquely for each post-Soviet conflict have so far not resulted in successful shifts or outcomes. What these strategies have in common is the failure to effectively engage their respective civil societies in the conflict-resolution processes.

The former Soviet states have largely been unable to build constructive state-society relations and substantially lag behind the Eastern European countries in terms of engaging civil society more deeply in the political and other state decision-making processes.[1] In