

ARMENIA'S VELVET REVOLUTION: AUTHORITARIAN DECLINE AND CIVIL RESISTANCE IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD, EDITED BY BROERS LAURENCE, AND ANNA OHANYAN.
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Abstract

The collection was written originally in English and published in 2021. It analyzes the problems of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia in terms of the decline of authoritarianism and civil resistance in the transformation of a multipolar world. The authors of the collection comparatively analyze the internal and external political problems of modern Armenia, the policy of democratization of the political regime, the cycles of political power, the transit of the elite and the leadership of the parties in power, certain aspects of its economic and social development.

The team of authors prepared this collection and a comprehensive study of the entire system of public regulation of the political life of Armenia, the nature and forms of relations between the public authorities and civil society organizations. The main trends in the foreign policy development of post-Soviet Armenia, primarily in the regional conflict environment and in the European direction, and in connection with the Velvet Revolution, are explored.

The authors of the chapters highlight the main stages and tasks of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia and civil resistance: when, how and how it was built and with what degree of effectiveness the system of public regulation operated, how its main administrative institutions operated in the center and locally.

The appeal to this problem is caused by the relevance of studying the subject of the Velvet Revolution in the modern life of Armenia, the need to more fully comprehend the processes taking place in the Armenian environment inside and outside the country.

The book contains many interesting facts and points of view. Therefore, it will be interesting and useful not only for scientists, but also for everyone interested in the problems of revolution, democratization and civil resistance. It may serve as practical handbook for political scientists, sociologists, journalists as well as students and specialists from the field of human rights, democratization and international relations, interested in modern revolutions, political technologies, diaspora and civil society studies, etc.

Keywords: *Velvet Revolution, democratic transition, civic protests, competitive authoritarian system, Armenian civil society, non-violent resistance, political patriarchy, diaspora, democratic state.*

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The South Caucasus is a region that has been in the center of attention of the entire world community for many decades. And not only because it is restless and conflicting, but because here it constantly presents such turns that are tangibly reflected in the whole world. This is not surprising, because the geopolitical interests of world and regional powers are closely intertwined here. If we add to this unresolved conflicts, questions of the creation of nation-states, unformed nations, the diversity of the ethnic and religious composition of the population, then the picture appears even more alarming.

Obviously, this book will be indispensable for those who are engaged in a comparative analysis of the prospects for democratic transformations in the post-Soviet space, and are also interested in the development of the prerequisites for civil society, the protection of human rights and the rule of law. Although this book analyzes the democratic transition of Armenia in a global context, the transit and drastic changes that have taken place in the post-Soviet space in recent years, it is nevertheless worth dwelling on some more issues, especially since many of them confirm the concept we have put forward that the events of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, as well as the events that followed it, are the beginning of the reconfiguration of the World-System (Wallerstein 2004, 23-24).

The victory of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia was made possible thanks to a large-scale civil movement and a popular protest movement calling for democratic reforms. This collection analyzes the civil protest movement in April-May 2018 in Armenia, under the influence of which the protest leader Nikol Pashinyan was elected Prime Minister by the National Assembly of Armenia. In this context, a comparative analysis of the national, regional and global dimensions of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia is of great importance. Therefore, the collection assesses the main reasons for the democratic turn of the Armenian regime, as well as the reasons for the vulnerability of the political order and the factors for reforming the political system.

The structure of the book is determined by the goals and objectives of the study of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia and is as follows: Foreword, Introduction, 9 Chapters and Conclusion, each of which contains an interesting list of sources and literature.

The first chapter of the work is devoted to the analysis of the democratic transition of Armenia in a global context (Ohanyan 2021, 25-49), as well as to the definition of the place and role of Armenia in the region, the historical patterns of the formation and development of Armenia as a special political actor in the international relations of the Caucasus region. The analysis of these problems allows us to analyze the dynamics and features of the process of the formation of Armenia's national interests.

The second chapter is devoted to the Armenian legacy of political and civic protests, as well as the specifics of the Velvet Revolution (Zolayan 2021, 51-71). This information allows us to highlight the characteristic features of the civic culture and the problems of the protest movement that exist today, as well as put forward paradigms for their resolution.

The third chapter contains information about the competitive authoritarian system, focusing on how Serzh Sargsyan and the Republican Party of Armenia lost control of a competitive authoritarian system (Laurence 2021, 73-99).

The fourth chapter tells about the achievements and problem areas of the Armenian civil society (Paturyan 2021, 101-118). More and more attention is being paid to the

issues of civil society in the political life of our days. This topic is relevant both in the post-Soviet space and in modern Armenia, where since the early 1990s there has been a rise in civic activity, hundreds of thousands of NGOs have been created. The multilateral activity of NGOs awakens a natural desire to better understand the nature of civil society, to understand the relationship between civil society and public authorities. The relevance of the study of the role and place of the Armenian civil society is also related to the fact that not only the EU as one of the largest regional integration associations, but also leading international organizations link the issues of improving governance in the modern world with the participation of civil society in this process. At the same time, international structures agree that in order to increase the effectiveness of their activities, it is extremely important to pay significant attention to establishing and expanding dialogue with civil society.

The fifth chapter analyzes the non-violent resistance to the 2018 Armenian Revolution (Pinckney 2021, 119-139). The relevance of the problem of non-violence is determined not only by the expansion of the space of conflict, the fierce conflicts of our time, but also by the eternal dilemma that every person who thinks about violence and non-violence faces. The analysis carried out proved that it was the non-violence in the Velvet Revolution in Armenia and various social relations that contributed to the unification of the protesting people and led to dialogue and cooperation.

The sixth chapter outlines Armenia's transition in terms of the challenges of geography, geopolitics, and multipolarity, as well as US and Russian geopolitical interests in the Caucasus and Armenia (Giragosian 2021, 141-159). Of particular interest to the author is the prospects for the development of relations between the US and Armenia in the context of globalization. In this regard, the author analyzed the features of the strategic partnership between Russia and Armenia in the military, political and economic spheres, and also considered the possibility of Armenia pursuing a truly pro-Western foreign policy. The relationship between post-revolutionary Armenia and the United States, post-revolutionary Armenia and Russia is one of the urgent and complex problems of modern geopolitics, national and political processes. In view of the dynamic development of geostrategic realities and the gradual change in the geopolitical position of the key political players in the South Caucasus, it becomes necessary to study national, geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic processes.

The seventh chapter analyzes the tasks of maintaining the alliance, taking into account that the Velvet Revolution in Armenia is a challenge to Russia (Baev 2021, 161-180). In the post-revolutionary period of Armenia, in scientific publications devoted to the region, many new directions for its development, possible scenarios, and factors that determine the nature of relations between the countries of the South Caucasus appeared. There was an urgent need for a deep rethinking of the situation, conducting a comprehensive analysis, studying the political mechanisms and means of struggle of the countries of the South Caucasus when taking domestic and foreign political steps. Russia is one of the Caucasian countries, and, of course, the South Caucasus is an important area of its strategic military, political and economic interests. The existence of zones of military conflicts in the region makes political and social issues particularly acute. The South Caucasus has always been at the center of the dominant geopolitical currents. In addition, the ethnic and religious pluralism of the region created favorable conditions for

the activities of major powers. Because of this, spontaneous wars often broke out in the South Caucasus region, and large-scale wars were often caused by small local conflicts. In this context, it is important to analyze the evolution of the foreign policy and national interests of the United States and Russia in the post-Soviet space, taking into account the interests not only of the countries of the South Caucasus, but also of new geopolitical players.

The eighth chapter analyzes the issues of political patriarchy, gender hierarchies and public space in the Velvet Revolution in Armenia (Shirinian 2021, 181-199). Under the conditions of gender inequality, relations turn out to be due to the differentiation of people according to the gender hierarchy. Gender hierarchy relations form a system of patriarchal gender control over reproductive behavior and reproduction.

Public authority as a system of discursive practices is the key to understanding gender equality, which allows us to consider gender identity as a constructed product of power relations. During and after the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, women play an increasingly important role in political practice. They are the dominant segment in the system of the modern Armenian electorate. This requires researchers to take into account the influence of the gender factor on the political perception of Armenian power. The main gender factor that influences the process of hierarchization of political actors by women and men is the intensity of their conformity to the male stereotype. Ideas about masculinity or femininity in the images of political parties, leaders are associated with ideas about their strength or weakness, and, accordingly, with the conviction of what place they should occupy in the hierarchy of power.

The ninth chapter analyzes comparatively the relationship between democratization and the diaspora, taking into account the support of the Velvet Revolution by the Armenian people abroad (Cavoukian 2021, 201-230). The study of the relationship between democratization and the diaspora contributes to the development of target directions for the state national policy of Armenia, regional paradigms of national relations. Consideration of the Armenian diaspora in the social and political space and time of democratization, in the system of internal and external relations of the Armenian statehood determines a certain level of consolidation. Considering the Armenian diaspora with democratic interests and goals contributes to the development of diaspora management strategies and tactics at the national and local levels. In this context, the information support of the interaction of the Armenian diaspora and relevant associations with the authorities, local government, other public organizations and movements is of civilizational importance. At the same time, it is important to understand the mechanism of the impact of the Armenian diasporas on the democratization of political structures, which has a very complex structure.

The Velvet Revolution in Armenia was an attempt to democratize public authority and society. There is every reason to believe that all attempts will not be entirely successful and will not lead to the results that the democratic reformers thought. The Velvet Revolution was a response precisely to the fact that, compared with the early 1990s, our elections to government bodies are becoming less free and fair, the rights and freedoms of the individual are provided to a much lesser extent, the courts have become significantly more dependent, the system of separation of powers dominated by the executive power becomes illusory. With such results of the modernization of Armenia,

it becomes important to analyze the events that have taken place. In this context, the discussion of problems regarding authoritarian reserves and risks in a democratic state is very reasonable (Ohanyan 2021b, 231-252). At the same time, asking and trying to answer the question: What's next? (Ohanyan 2021b, 231). As Ohanyan stated in the chapter, "Armenia's Velvet, with its geographical location in a fractured region, signals the need for fresh thinking in Western capitals at a time of strategic uncertainty and rising power of illiberal actors in world politics. It underlines the importance of understanding how competitive authoritarian/hybrid regimes evolve or decline in order to devise constructive strategies for engaging with them." (Ohanyan 2021b, 248).

To understand the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, the processes characteristic of the Armenian society, it will be useful to refer to the transit/consolidation paradigm. Modern transitology has accumulated experience in studying the transition from authoritarian rule to democracies on the example of the countries of Southern Europe and South America. With all the existing disagreements, which are based on Eastern European exceptionalism and the difficulties of transition from totalitarianism to democracy than, in comparison, from authoritarianism, agreement can be found on some dimensions. Democratic transition is not a single evolutionary process, but a multitude of alternative and indirect paths, fraught with difficulties. A comparative study of issues of civil resistance, revolution and regime transformation faces the problem of identifying individual phases of transition and ways or forms of transit.

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