



Groundings Undergraduate Academic Journal

University of Glasgow | Glasgow University Union

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**Source:** Groundings Undergraduate, June 2019, Vol. 12, pp. 38-53

**Published by:** University of Glasgow, Glasgow University Union Publications

**ISSNs:** 1754-7474 (Print) | 1755-2702 (Online)

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# Velvet or Roses – Towards a Democratic Armenia? A comparative analysis of post-Soviet Armenia in the context of its 2018 revolution

*By Nikolas Schuster*

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This essay takes a first look at Armenia's 2018 'velvet revolution' by analysing its political system since independence and comparing it to the circumstances of the 2003 Georgian Rose Revolution. By considering parameters such as protection of civil liberties and freedom of elections, it characterises the regimes in Armenia since 1991 as competitive authoritarian according to Levitsky and Way's definition. Low levels of influence from the West and prevailing informal structures made caused this state of affairs to persist. A first look at the events of 2018 reveals that Nikol Pashinyan, the new prime minister, acts more democratically than his predecessors. However, having established that the Rose Revolution happened under similar circumstances with similar goals, its failure to directly advance democratisation shows that systemic reasons for authoritarian structures are prone to persist even if the political leadership has democratising ambitions.

On 14 January 2019 the Armenian parliament elected Nikol Pashinyan prime minister for the second time – upon which he declared, 'power has been returned to the people and democracy has been established in Armenia.'<sup>1</sup> Pashinyan's first election on 7 May 2018 was the culmination of what he called Armenia's 'velvet revolution', which had caused two-term president Serzh Sargsyan to resign.<sup>2</sup> This essay will, in a first step, analyse the regimes formerly ruling Armenia and, in a second step, make a first attempt to classify this change

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Nikolas Schuster would like to be a student of Physics and Central and East European Studies. Since the university did not allow this, he is currently in his third year of the Theoretical Physics programme, having previously taken CEES and Russian courses. After graduation, he is planning to continue his education in the social sciences.

<sup>1</sup> RFE/RL's Armenian Service, 'Pashinian Reappointed Armenian PM After Securing Parliament Majority'.

<sup>2</sup> Aslanian and Lazarian, 'Pashinian Vows To Keep Up Protests'.

in power and determine to which extent it constitutes a step towards liberal democracy. It will use Georgia's Rose Revolution and the political system in which it occurred as a comparison. Due to the recent nature of these events and a 'gap in the scholarly literature on Armenia's post-Soviet political leadership'<sup>3</sup>, this article will employ journalistic sources to complement academic ones.

In a first part, it is necessary to characterise the existing regimes in order to not only understand the origins of the protest movements, but also because the pre-existing system has a large influence on whether protest movements will achieve democratisation. In fact Levitsky and Way posit that the latter is particularly influential in post-Soviet states.<sup>4</sup> This essay will employ Georgia as a comparison to Armenia. Formerly part of the Soviet Union as autonomous republics of a similar population size, both gained their independence in 1991 in a 'Third-Wave revolution'. As this essay will argue, both countries stopped short of full democratisation in a state which Levitsky and Way describe as competitive authoritarianism. As Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution had similar democratising ambitions to Armenia's 2018 'velvet revolution', this essay will use this example to analyse the events of 2018 in Armenia in a second part. While this essay makes no claim to predict a trajectory for Armenia, a comparative analysis is useful to highlight what factors are influential to democratisation.

To judge whether a revolution constitutes a step towards liberal democracy, it is clearly necessary to first analyse the state of democracy in the existing system. The ambiguous situation of post-Soviet Armenia and Georgia somewhere between democracy and authoritarianism requires that one pay close attention to the definition of democracy. Samuel Huntington and Robert Dahl mainly define democracy around the quality of elections.<sup>5</sup> Larry Diamond argues that their criteria may define an electoral democracy, but not a liberal one, which he defines as extending 'freedom, fairness, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law from the electoral process into all other major aspects of governance and interest articulation, competition, and representation'.<sup>6</sup> In the following, this

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<sup>3</sup> Ghaplanyan, *Post-Soviet Armenia: The New National Elite and the New National Narrative*, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 235.

<sup>5</sup> Dahl, *On Democracy*, 85; Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Diamond, 'Thinking About Hybrid Regimes', 25.

essay will use ‘democratisation’ as the process towards this liberal democracy as an operational definition.

How then can we define an intermediate regime? Levitsky and Way introduce a category called competitive authoritarianism: under a competitive authoritarian regime, the contest of power is carried out using democratic institutions, but in such a way that the incumbent is heavily advantaged. Under competitive authoritarianism, ‘the state violates at least one of three defining attributes of democracy: (1) free elections, (2) broad protection of civil liberties, and (3) a reasonably level playing field’, the latter of which is mainly defined by an opponent’s ability to access resources, media and the law.<sup>7</sup> In their democratisation processes, Levitsky and Way emphasise the ‘linkage and leverage’ of (usually) Western democracies and their institutions. Linkage refers to how densely tied a competitive authoritarian country is to the West, be those ties political, cultural or economical. Leverage refers to how much influence the West is able to wield in those countries, e.g. through economic pressure or the prospect of EU membership.<sup>8</sup> In short, the higher the leverage, the more is the West able to compel democratisation; the higher the linkage, the more is the West likely to.

Henry Hale focuses rather on domestic structures as a systemic reason for a stagnation of democratisation in many post-Soviet states. He identifies the prevalence of patronalism aided by systems of presidentialism. In essence, ‘highly patronalistic societies are those in which connections not only matter [...], but matter overwhelmingly’, featuring characteristics such as ‘strong personal friendships and family ties, weak rule of law [and] pervasive corruption.’<sup>9</sup> He explains the persistence of such a social state by pointing out that for politicians, faced with a situation where they believe competitors are likely to use tactics such as nepotism and corruption, abstaining from them not only puts them at a competitive disadvantage, but will also likely make them unpopular in the long run as they can operate less effectively – a dynamic which

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<sup>7</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 7, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Levitsky and Way, 40–44.

<sup>9</sup> Hale, ‘25 Years After the USSR: What’s Gone Wrong?’, 28.

extends beyond politics into all parts of society.<sup>10</sup> Presidentialism serves to entrench this dynamic as it makes it easier for one patron – the president – to protect and sustain their network.<sup>11</sup>

In the following, this essay will argue that, before their revolutions, democratisation in Armenia and Georgia stopped short of a liberal democracy and rather gave rise to competitive authoritarian regimes. Let us first consider the freedom of elections. Post-Soviet Armenia has seen three major leadership figures – Levon Ter-Petrosyan (1991-1998), Robert Kocharyan (1998-2008) and Serzh Sargsyan (2008-2018). The freedom of elections has been subject to criticism throughout its history. This is particularly true under the presidencies of Ter-Petrosyan and Kocharyan. The OECD did not observe Ter-Petrosyan's first election in 1992, but his widespread popularity then suggests he did in fact have the support of a majority of the population.<sup>12</sup> This is however much less clear in the 1996 election he won narrowly – the OECD criticises that it did not meet international standards due to serious irregularities and legal breaches.<sup>13</sup> The elections of 1998 and 2003 won by Kocharyan did not fare much better: the allegations of ballot-box stuffing as well as the support of the incumbent by local officials cast serious doubt on the electoral process.<sup>14</sup> While the elections of 2008 and 2013 were 'generally well-administered' with 'respect for fundamental freedoms', but some 'bad' and 'very bad' violations in the voting process nonetheless occurred.<sup>15</sup> One must conclude that, while there is a viable democratic process to change the government, none of Armenia's post-Soviet elections can be considered free and fair – a typical characteristic of competitive authoritarian regimes.

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<sup>10</sup> Hale, 28.

<sup>11</sup> Hale, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Ghaplanyan, *Post-Soviet Armenia: The New National Elite and the New National Narrative*, 42.

<sup>13</sup> Osborn, 'Armenian Presidential Elections – September 24, 1996, Final Report'.

<sup>14</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, 'Republic of Armenia – Presidential Election, March 16 and 30, 1998, Final Report'; OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, 'Republic of Armenia – Presidential Election, 19 February and 5 March 2003, Final Report'.

<sup>15</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, 'Republic of Armenia – Presidential Election, 19 February 2008, Final Report'; OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, 'Republic of Armenia – Presidential Election, 18 February 2013, Final Report'.

Limitations on civil liberties manifest themselves prominently in restrictions on the media. Ter-Petrosyan's government took clear steps to limit media freedom by requiring their registration and shutting several major outlets down.<sup>16</sup> Under Kocharyan and Sargsyan, these restrictions were not necessarily of an official nature; rather, many 'journalists practice self-censorship to avoid harassment by government or business figures.'<sup>17</sup> Examples include a fire-bombing targeting Nikol Pashinyan, who would later lead the 'velvet revolution' and was then the editor of an oppositional newspaper, in 2004 and police specifically attacking journalists during protests in 2015.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, while political opposition is usually allowed to exist and express their views, mass protests often triggered clampdowns by police – most prominently after the 2008 election, where during a state of emergency declared by Kocharyan (who was still in power), eight protesters were killed.<sup>19</sup>

An 'uneven playing field' is also easily identified: media access is further limited as most print media and television channels are affiliated to political interests – independent journalism persists, but predominantly online, which limits its outreach.<sup>20</sup> The government is also known to abuse state funding for election campaigns, limiting opponents' access to resources.<sup>21</sup> Freedom House particularly criticise Armenia's judiciary, noting 'extremely low' acquittal rates, political pressure on judges and selective application of the law.<sup>22</sup>

One can observe much the same tendencies in pre-2003 Georgia. In terms of elections, not only did Eduard Shevardnadze, who also appointed the State Chancellery charged with day-to-day governance, not face a significant

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<sup>16</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 209; 'Freedom in the World 1998 – Armenia'.

<sup>17</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2018 – Armenia'.

<sup>18</sup> Khachatryan, 'Newspaper Editor's Car Blown Up'; Synovitz, 'Armenian Riot Police Deployed Near "Electric Yerevan" Protest'.

<sup>19</sup> 'Armenia: Skewed Prosecution Over 2008 Clashes'.

<sup>20</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2018 – Armenia'.

<sup>21</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, 'Republic of Armenia – Presidential Election, 18 February 2013, Final Report'.

<sup>22</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2018 – Armenia'.

challenger in 1995 and 2000, but electoral fraud further assured his victory.<sup>23</sup> In terms of civil liberties, an independent press and political opposition were largely allowed to operate, but faced attacks and destruction of property by police and groups suspected to be related to the government. A 'level playing field' was further impeded by lack of funds for independent media as well as a judiciary which is frequently subjected to pressure by the executive, with reports of corruption, abuse of inmates and planting of evidence.<sup>24</sup> While Levitsky and Way emphasise that, compared to Armenia, Georgia's regime was significantly less stable and disposed of less 'coercive capacity', it is also an example of competitive authoritarianism.<sup>25</sup>

There is no indication that this type of regime is purely transitional. The Freedom House Index has consistently ranked Armenia and pre-2003 Georgia as 'partly free', with slightly fluctuating scores that show no particular trend.<sup>26</sup> Democratisation thus stagnated. The case of Armenia is particularly notable: it did not just develop under one ruler, but the type of regime remained the same despite Kocharyan's takeover of power against Ter-Petrosyan. This suggests a systemic reason, which this essay will seek using the theories of Levitsky and Way and Hale.

Levitsky and Way identify both Armenia and Georgia as cases of high leverage, mainly due to their dependence on US aid in the face of regional isolation (a blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan in the case of Armenia and Russian hostility in the case of Georgia). Linkage however is far lower in the face of weak economic, political and technocratic ties despite a substantial Armenian diaspora in the West.<sup>27</sup> Following their framework, it is this low linkage which causes decreased Western influence and, in consequence, allows a form of authoritarianism to persist.

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<sup>23</sup> Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union*, 95, 160.

<sup>24</sup> 'Freedom in the World 2003 – Georgia'.

<sup>25</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 221.

<sup>26</sup> 'Freedom in the World Data and Resources – Past Year's Ratings'.

<sup>27</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 207–8, 221; Masih and Krikorian, *Armenia – at the Crossroads*, 12–13.

Aside from international influence, there are also domestic reasons for the stagnation of democratisation, which this essay will analyse using Hale's theory of patronalism. Armenia clearly displays features of patronalism. Ter-Petrosyan, despite his history as a democratic dissident during Soviet times, built a strong network with emerging oligarchs using the wave of privatisation of the 1990s, during which he gave significant influence to his two brothers, exemplifying the use of family in these networks.<sup>28</sup> Reforms in 1995 and 1996 changed the Armenian political system such that it can be described as 'super-presidential', thus solidifying Ter-Petrosyan's institutional power.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Kocharyan's and Sargsyan's influential 'Karabakh clan' included family members and important figures in the oil industry.<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically at first sight, Sargsyan oversaw a referendum in 2015 which turned the presidency into a mostly ceremonial role and Armenia into a parliamentary republic, with most political power vested in the prime minister. This was however in no way a relinquishment of power on Sargsyan's part: he was rather faced with the two-term limit of the presidency, whereas he would be able to stay in power as prime minister.<sup>31</sup> In Georgia, perhaps an even more extreme case of pervasive patronalism, Shevardnadze disposed of such a powerful informal network that he could 'bypass parliament and the courts', turning 'state offices [into] a form of private property'.<sup>32</sup>

It would be an overstatement to declare the political situation in both countries completely alike. Due to the complex and often clandestine power structures in competitive authoritarian regimes, a more detailed comparison is difficult in general and certainly outwith the scope of this essay. Nonetheless, the first part of this essay argues that democratic deficits existed in both countries to a reasonably similar extent. If the two self-declared 'democratic revolutions' occurred in similar circumstances, it is then useful to compare the two, which is what follows in the second part of this essay.

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<sup>28</sup> Hale, *Patronal Politics*, 136.

<sup>29</sup> Ghaplanyan, *Post-Soviet Armenia: The New National Elite and the New National Narrative*, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Ghaplanyan, 49.

<sup>31</sup> AFP, 'Armenia Votes to Curb Presidential Powers in Disputed Referendum'.

<sup>32</sup> Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence*, 135.



Armenia's 'velvet revolution' certainly constitutes a major disruption, whose direction hitherto seems to be a democratic one. Sargsyan had in principle successfully maintained his power by becoming the new prime minister. Yet the popular protest led by Pashinyan was extraordinarily large – the New York Times reported 250,000 people, constituting 8% of the entire Armenian population, protesting in Yerevan on 23 April.<sup>33</sup> Sargsyan was forced to resign and Pashinyan became prime minister only weeks after. It must however be noted that the label 'velvet revolution' for the events of April/May 2018 is questionable. Pashinyan used it before Sargsyan had even lost power,<sup>34</sup> which indicates that the term is prescriptive rather than descriptive, specifically designed to allude to the success and peaceful nature of Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution. It is however hardly an apt comparison considering the totalitarian nature of the Czechoslovak regime that outlawed opposition and all but destroyed civil society.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, if one uses Hannah Arendt's definition of revolution as 'not just mere changes' but 'the idea of freedom and the experience of a new beginning', it is obvious that the mere election of a prime minister from an oppositional party within an unchanged system does not make this shift an power a revolution.<sup>36</sup>

There are strong similarities between the sequence of events of 2003 in Georgia and of 2018 in Armenia. Like in Armenia, there was a clear personal leader of the protests rather than an institution in Mikhail Saakashvili.<sup>37</sup> The protests had the support of a large part of the population through differing social classes,

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<sup>33</sup> MacFarquhar, 'He Was a Protester a Month Ago. Now, Nikol Pashinyan Leads Armenia.'; World Bank Data, 'Armenia Population, Total'.

<sup>34</sup> RFE/RL's Armenian Service, 'Tens Of Thousands Protest In Yerevan, Other Armenian Cities Against Sarkisian As New Prime Minister'.

<sup>35</sup> Shepherd, *Czechoslovakia: The Velvet Revolution and Beyond*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 13, 21f.

<sup>37</sup> Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union*, 185.

resulting in a ‘broad social base’.<sup>38</sup> Saakashvili and his party also went on to easily win the following presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>39</sup>

Ramishvili and Chergoleishvili state that ‘the Rose revolutionaries wanted a government of the people, by the people and for the people’.<sup>40</sup> But the Rose Revolution first and foremost constituted a regime change that put Mikhail Saakashvili in power and in many ways reproduced the features of competitive authoritarianism. Despite some improvement in the quality of elections, problems such as voter fraud, intimidation and abuse of state resources persisted, casting doubt on the freedom and fairness of the elections.<sup>41</sup> Civil liberties such as freedom of assembly were not always respected, opponents were arrested and charged with treason, there was a strong influence of the executive on the judiciary and the media were frequently targeted by the government.<sup>42</sup> Problems such as a lack of independence of the judiciary and media persist today.<sup>43</sup>

This continuity typifies the persistence of patronalism in Georgian politics. This is not to say that Saakashvili did nothing to fight it: his transformation of the notoriously corrupt traffic police is widely regarded as a success.<sup>44</sup> But accusations persisted that the government enforced anticorruption laws selectively in favour of their supporters.<sup>45</sup> In general, Jones notes that despite a personnel change throughout Saakashvili’s government, “‘who you know’ remains the key’.<sup>46</sup> Levitsky and Way point out that, with only a remote prospect

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<sup>38</sup> Ramishvili and Chergoleishvili, ‘March of the Goblins: Permanent Revolution in Georgie’, 189.

<sup>39</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 227.

<sup>40</sup> Ramishvili and Chergoleishvili, ‘March of the Goblins: Permanent Revolution in Georgie’, 189.

<sup>41</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 226f.; OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, ‘Georgia – Partial Repeat Parliamentary Elections, 28 March 2004, Report Part 2’; OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, ‘Georgia – Extraordinary Presidential Election, 5 January 2008, Final Report’.

<sup>42</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 227.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Freedom in the World 2018 – Georgia’.

<sup>44</sup> Hale, ‘Caucasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective’.

<sup>45</sup> Devdariani, ‘Georgia’s Rose Revolution Grapples with Dilemma: Do Ends Justify Means’.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, *Georgia: A Political History Since Independence*, 135–36.

of EU membership, linkage not only remained low, but the West's 'unconditional support' of Saakashvili in the face of the 2008 Russian invasion inhibited criticism of him.<sup>47</sup> The systemic reasons for competitive authoritarianism thus persisted.

Armenia's situation is more advantageous for democratisation than Georgia's was in several ways. The initial outcomes of the transition of power are positive: the parliamentary elections in December 2018, which served both to build a power base for Pashinyan's My Step Alliance and to legitimise his premiership, were received positively by OSCE observers.<sup>48</sup> Pashinyan is widely popular with approval ratings of over 80%.<sup>49</sup> Unlike Saakashvili, who had previously a minister in Shevardnadze's government, Pashinyan was an outsider to the ruling class and longstanding opponent of Kocharyan and later Sargsyan<sup>50</sup> – meaning that formerly influential informal networks are likely to lose power. As Levitsky and Way point out, Armenia's state is more consolidated than Georgia was – while Pashinyan could use his thus increased power to strengthen his own informal network, he might also be better able to reduce corruption.<sup>51</sup> Finally, while Georgia was faced with hostility and outright invasion by Russia, Pashinyan has so far stayed committed to Armenia's alliance with Russia.<sup>52</sup> Way argues that, so long as geopolitical stability is guaranteed, Putin does not care particularly about the style of government and is unlikely to interfere – in which case an alliance with Russia as the major regional power is a significant economic and security benefit.<sup>53</sup> It is however likely to hinder linkage with the West.

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<sup>47</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 228.

<sup>48</sup> International Election Observation Mission, 'Republic of Armenia – Early Parliamentary Elections, 9 December 2018, Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions'.

<sup>49</sup> Center for Insight in Survey Research, 'Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Armenia'.

<sup>50</sup> Goncharenko and Gasajan, 'Armeniens Rebell Mit Ausdauerqualitäten'; Khachatryan, 'Newspaper Editor's Car Blown Up'.

<sup>51</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 213; Edwards, 'Armenia's Post-Revolution Party Is Over'.

<sup>52</sup> 'Pashinyan and Putin Meet in Moscow; Promise to Work Towards Greater Bilateral Cooperation'.

<sup>53</sup> Way, 'Why Didn't Putin Interfere in Armenia's Velvet Revolution?'

Yet the limited success of Georgia's 'democratic revolution' must be considered a check on the optimism about Armenia's. Concern has been voiced about the overwhelming majority that Pashinyan now commands, emphasising the importance of opposition for the democratic process.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the elections were held using electoral law which had previously been alleged of favouring the ruling party.<sup>55</sup> Much will depend on how Pashinyan uses his now extensive power, for Hale notes, 'Disruptions are often temporary while the practice of networking is remarkably resilient. Thus periods of open political and even electoral competition tend to fade once a winner emerges and power networks coordinate themselves around the new patron'.<sup>56</sup> And indeed, there are serious questions to be asked about Pashinyan. His political direction, other than a disdain for the ancien régime, is difficult to make out: described as a 'radical centrist' similar to Emmanuel Macron, Pashinyan himself has refused to align himself with any sort of ideology.<sup>57</sup> His longstanding support of former president Ter-Petrosyan, who as noted above is hardly an example to follow for democratisation, calls into question how principled Pashinyan will be about playing by democratic rules.<sup>58</sup> This issue has already been raised in the context of the arrest of Kocharyan on charges related to quelled protests in 2008. Kocharyan's actions were certainly questionable, but given Pashinyan's personal involvement – he spent two years in prison on charges related to these protests<sup>59</sup> – and a so far unreformed and oft-criticised judiciary, the arrest only months after Pashinyan's taking power has caused a suspicion of victor's justice.<sup>60</sup> None of the outlined factors will necessarily impede democratisation, but they do have the potential to.

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<sup>54</sup> Edwards, 'Armenia's Revolution Will Not Be Monopolized'.

<sup>55</sup> RFE/RL's Armenian Service, 'In Setback For Pashinian, Armenian Parliament Again Fails To Pass Election Bill'.

<sup>56</sup> Hale, '25 Years After the USSR: What's Gone Wrong?', 34.

<sup>57</sup> Kopalyan, 'Aggressive Centrism: Navigating the Contours of Nikol Pashinyan's Political Ideology'.

<sup>58</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Who Is Armenian Opposition Leader Nikol Pashinyan?'

<sup>59</sup> Al Jazeera.

<sup>60</sup> Wesolowsky, 'Kocharyan's Arrest: "Velvet" Victory Or Vendetta?'

To conclude, the democratic deficit in Armenia is more than the product of one government, but an ingrained political dynamic with authoritarian features. An absence of incentives by Western democracies as well as extensive informal structures within Armenia support the persistence of this dynamic regardless of who specifically is the person in power. The disruption of Armenian politics constituted by Pashinyan's unexpected accession to power is likely a necessary condition for democratisation to progress: in 2010, Levitsky and Way classified Armenia as a case of 'stable authoritarianism' due to little linkage with the West and a 'coercive apparatus' that was powerful enough to suppress opposition.<sup>61</sup> Pashinyan's accession to power is then by no means a negative development.

Yet the transition of power dubbed 'velvet revolution' is not in itself sufficient for democratisation. The experience of post-2003 Georgia shows that, despite seemingly sincere democratic intentions of the revolutionaries, a regime change does not necessarily change underlying reasons for democratic deficits such as patronalism. Pashinyan now disposes of much the same means to rule as his predecessors. So far, he does appear a more democratic ruler, but as he has never been in power before, it is difficult to predict to what extent he will continue this way. Armenia's democracy is then far from consolidated. Mentioned in the beginning of this essay is a statement by Pashinyan: 'Democracy is now established in Armenia.'<sup>62</sup> His seeming unawareness of the long road to democratisation still ahead is a rather discouraging thought.

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<sup>61</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, 213.

<sup>62</sup> RFE/RL's Armenian Service, 'Pashinian Reappointed Armenian PM After Securing Parliament Majority'.

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