

**POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS
IN
ARMENIA, 1991-1995**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy.

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TO
MUMMY AND PAPA

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PREFACE

Writing on Armenia has been an educative exercise. Though the topic of my M.Phil dissertation seems restricted in its dimension, in reality it expands a period beginning from the 9th century BC till 1995. To deal with politics is not easy. Practical politics is a shrewd game. Theoretical politics is mind crushing. But even tougher and challenging is an endeavour, which seeks to analytically evaluate both. I have dared to undertake such a venture. I am optimistic that the reader's interest shall remain focussed till the last.

The first chapter deals with political history of Armenia. Centuries of rule, alien to the culture of indigenous people, end up either being assimilated or are rejected completely. The history of Armenian politics is a blend of these two processes – one, accommodative in nature the other, reactionary in attitude.

Gaining independence from foreign yoke, is the most blissful achievement for any nation. But freedom does not begin a smooth journey. The path to future is full of problems and challenges. These have to be overcome in order to lay the foundation of a new and a powerful independent nation. The second chapter is

concerned with highlighting this aspect of Armenian independence.

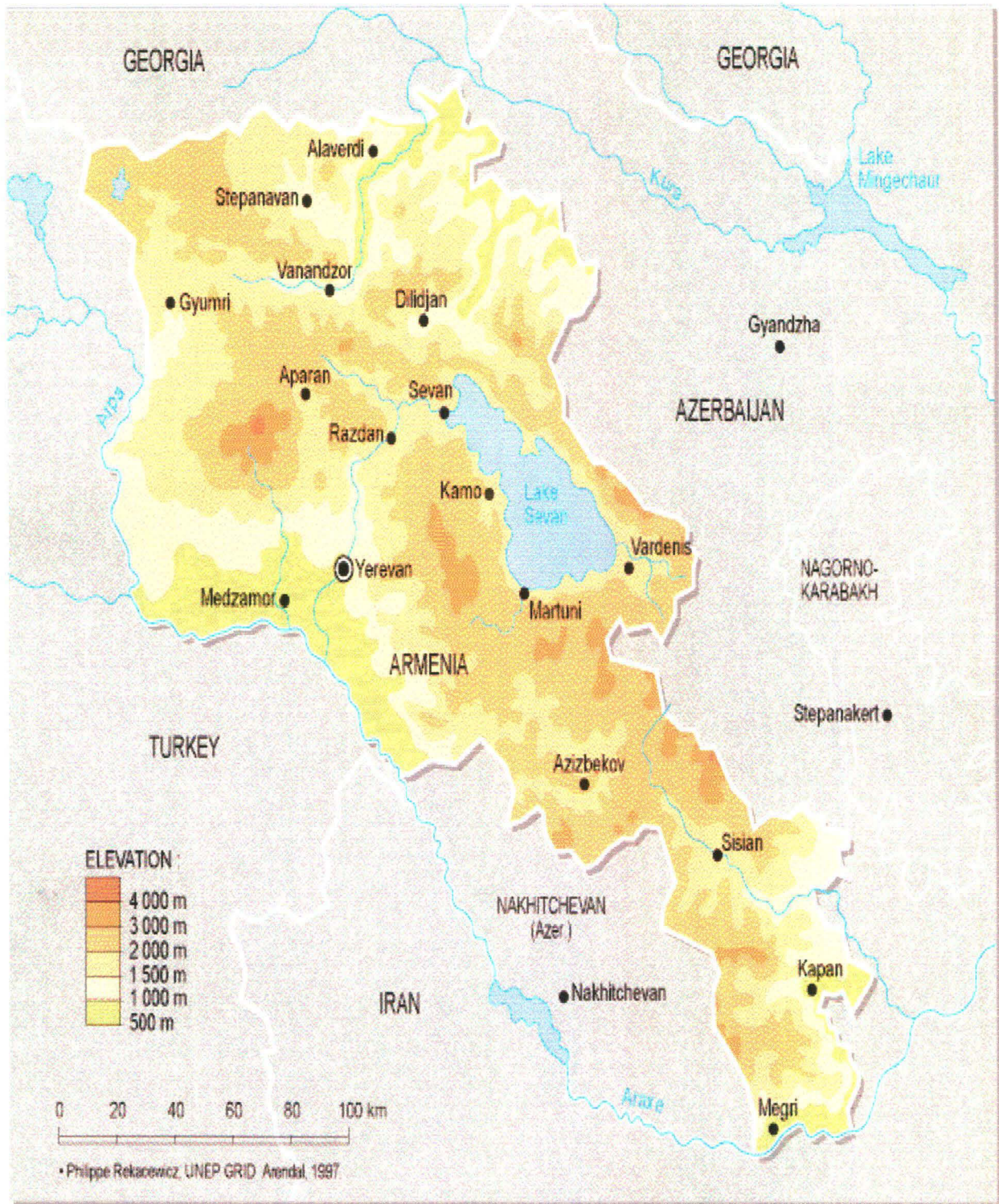
The third chapter provides an insight into the Nagorno-Karabakh tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The territory has been a trouble spot for both the countries. The issue assumes importance as it has guided the domestic policies of both the conflicting nations. The period between 1991 to 1994 is marked by escalation in the conflict. Also during the period, there were a number of events, which affected the course of the conflict and also the Armenian politics. The chapter deals with such developments over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

The fourth chapter draws attention to the 1995 parliamentary elections and the general referendum in Armenia. The process approved a new constitution for the nation. Democracy was established, it is claimed. But how much sincere these claims have been forms the theme of this chapter. Is Armenia heading towards democracy or is on the path to dictatorship? The question finds an answer in the chapter.

Finally, a concluding chapter has been written which recapitulates the essence of my whole M.Phil dissertation.

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ARMENIA

CHAPTER 1

***Historical Background
of
Political Developments in Armenia***

The Soviet Union disintegration followed by the creation of fifteen new states is one of the most important events of the twentieth century. Armenia is one of the new nations which emerged after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991. Though it is a small country, its geographical location in strategic Transcaucasian region undoubtedly has played a key role in the history and culture of the country. For many centuries, the Armenians had been suffering from constant war with invaders and conquerors. The Assyrians, Romans, Byzantines, Parthians, Arabs and Turks continued to invade their homeland for centuries in the past. Throughout these turbulent periods the Armenians successfully asserted their historical identity and protected their national and cultural heritage against great odds.

One of the ancient centres of world civilization, Armenia lacked the existence of a political state until the 9th century BC when the kingdom of **Urartu** was established by Arame, the first king of Armenia. By the following century the state was extensive and prosperous. But soon an invasion by Sargon II of Assyria in 714 BC shattered the expansive and wealthy period of Urartu. A few years later the state was incorporated into his own empire, thus establishing a complete Persian domination. Though in 4th century BC Alexander, the Greek king, annexed a part of Armenia from Persia, it was under the rule of the Selucids that Armenian territories were unified as **Greater Armenia**. This was at the end of the 3rd century BC. After the defeat

of Antiochus III by the Romans in the battle of Magnesia (190 BC), Greater Armenia became an independent kingdom. . Artashes I proclaimed himself the king of Greater Armenia, founding the dynasty of Artashesids. This dynasty lasted from 189 BC to 1 BC.

Artashes I contributed in every way possible to the collapse of the seleucid kingdom. He succeeded in unifying the principle Armenian lands and expanding his own kingdom. He founded a new capital Artashat. Greater Armenia achieved the hight of power under his grandson Tigranes II, who unified the Armenian lands in one state, including Tsopk. He constructed a new capital, Tigranakat and adopted the Parthian title of 'king of kings'. But the absence of economic and ethnic unity, the intensification of class struggle and the presence of the tendency of separatism among he rulers of the out lying provinces, weakened the government of Tigranes II. As a consequence, he was defeated in the war with Rome. He was compelled to submit to Pompeii and accept his suzerainty. This was in 60 BC. By the 1st century AD Rome conquered Armenia. However, the Armenians,along with the Georgians and the people of north Azerbaijan raised stiff resistance and with the alliance of Parthian kingdom, they succeeded in overthrowing the Roman domination. Persian dominance was once again established over Armenia.

During the period of Parthian dominance a new and an important dynasty was established in Armenia. This was the Arshakuni (Arsacid) dynasty, (53-428 AD), which continuously resisted the Parthian involvement and in the 4th century AD Arshak II managed to overthrow the Sassanid yoke. Arshak's successor Pap once again defeated the Sassanid forces in 371 AD thereby, compelling the Parthians to recognize his sovereignty over Armenia. The Arshakuni rulers after Pap were effete and unable to assert their political presence. Taking advantage of this political instability, the Byzantine and the Parthian empire divided the region between them. But the tyrannous rule of the Sassanids forced the Armenians to revolt. In the ensuing struggle the Byzantine supported the Armenians which brought the former into direct conflict with the Sassanids.. The struggle between these two powers over Armenia and Kartli continued for twenty years.

By the end of the sixth century Iran had conceded a considerable portion of Armenia to Byzantium. By this time, Arab invasions had also started and in the middle of the seventh century, the Arabs who had taken possession of Iran, Syria and Mesopotamia made incursions into Transcaucasia against Armenia, Iberia, the Caucasus and Albania. With the beginning of the eighth-century Armenia was captured by the Arabs. The struggle of the Armenians against Arab domination turned into a situation of bitter class struggle between the peasants and the feudal lords. However, at the same time the economy

continued to flourish. The agricultural base kept on expanding. Many new market centres emerged. Painting, sculpture and architecture improved. The continuous growth of trade and industry gave great impetus to fine arts.

At the end of the ninth century, the Caliphate was finally overthrown and this resulted into the passing of power in the hands of the Armenian Bagratid dynasty. In the early eleventh century, Byzantine policy towards Armenia became expansionist and annexationist. Within the first half of the eleventh century, Byzantium gradually took over all of Armenian territory. The Armenian capital of Ani was seized and plundered. This happened in 1045.¹ At the same time Armenia was threatened from other directions as well. The Muslim dynasty from Azerbaijan moved in and the incursions of the Seljuk Turks also began. The latter, were repeatedly able to overrun Armenia. In 1064 they destroyed Ani and by 1065 almost whole of Armenia was conquered by the Seljuks.

The collapse of the seljuk empire began at the end of the eleventh century. At the same time new seljuk feudal states took shape in the Armenian territory. The remnants of the Armenian feudal aristocracy and the Zakharids headed the liberation movement against the seljuks. During the second half of the 12th and the beginning of the

¹ Quoted in S-Der Nersessian, "Armenia and Byzantine Empire", Cambridge, 1945, P. 10.

13th centuries, Georgian and Armenian forces under the command of the Zakharids liberated a large part of Armenia and created an independent feudal principality under the protection of the state of Georgia. The Zakharids began to rule the country. Thus, close political, economic and cultural collaboration and friendship was established between Armenia and Georgia.

From 1236 to 1243, Transcaucasia was ruled by the Mongol and Tatar forces. Armenia was included as part of the Hulaguid state. The decade of Sixties of the thirteenth century saw Armenia becoming a battleground for the war between the Hulaguids and the Khans of the Golden Horde. In 1302, Armenia came under the control of Ghazan Khan, who ruled from Tabriz. In the 14th and the 15th centuries most of the Armenian feudal aristocracy was destroyed. Their lands had been taken by the Mongol, Tatar, Turkmen and Kurdish nomadic military nobility. From the 16th to 18th centuries, Armenia became the object of a bitter struggle between Turkey and the state of the Safavids. In 1639, after the conclusion of the war between them, Armenia was partitioned. Western Armenia went to Turkey and the Safavids of Iran took over the eastern half.

This political, social and religious oppression by the foreign powers, gave rise to a massive freedom movement among the Armenian people. In their endeavour, the Armenians received active help and support

from the Russian empire. By the end of the end of 17th century Russia had become its primary support. This was determined not only by the geographical situation of Russia and its political and strategic interests in the middle and near east but, also by the economic and cultural ties between the Armenian and the Russian people. These ties were further broadened and strengthened under Peter I of Russia. A great role in strengthening Russian - Armenia ties was played by Isvael Ori, a prominent figure in the national liberation movement of the Armenian people.

In 1701, Ori presented to Peter I a plan for the liberation of Armenia.² According to the plan, Russian army was to give support to the Armenian liberation movement. The scheme worked in favour of Armenia. In 1720 a revolt erupted in the Iranian held eastern Armenia. Karabakh and Siunik became the centres of the liberation struggle. A people's militia was created in which Azerbaijani's fought alongside the Armenians. 1722 to 24 was a period of liberation struggle in karabakh and Siunik, where Iranian domination was overthrown and political independence achieved. The success of the Armenian liberation movement was aided by the fall of the Safavid dynasty in Iran, under

² Ian Grey, "Peter the Great", London, 1962, P.422.

the blows of the rebellious Afghans and the campaign undertaken by Peter I of Russia during these years.³

After a period of inactivity, the Armenian liberation movement was again revived after 1750. In 1761, Joseph Emin, a prominent figure in the Armenian liberation movement and a successor to the political line of Isvael Ori conducted negotiations with the Russian government. He wanted to establish a unified Armenian-Georgian state under the leadership of the Georgian Bagratids. Emin sought to include even the western Armenians in the liberation struggle. In 1762, Catherine the great became the Russian Empress. She turned her attention to the Caucasus. In 1768 war broke out between Turkey and Russia, which ended with the signing of a treaty between the two in 1774. This treaty guided the Russo-Turkish relations till 1914.

In 1780's Russia twice proceeded to implement its plan for a campaign in Transcaucasia and the creation of an Armenian-Georgian state. But, on both occasions its failed. The beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by a change in political course of tsarist Russia with respect to Transcaucasia. In 1801, eastern Georgia was annexed into the Russian Empire. The northern areas of eastern Armenia – the Pambak, Shamshadil, Borchalin and Kazakh distantzii which were all then part of Georgia, also went to Russia. In 1805, the Karabakh, Zangezour and Shuragel distantzii were taken over. And by the

³ J. F. Baddeley, "The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus", London, 1908, P.31.

provisions of the Turkmanchai Treaty of 1828, the remaining areas of eastern Armenia – Yerevan and Nakhichevan Khanates became parts of the Russian empire.⁴

In 1828 an Armenian province was carved out from the territories of both Khanates. The creation of the Armenian province was a hope for freedom for the Armenian people, who had started actively participating in the military actions against Iran and Turkey on the Russian side. In the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-29 the Russian army occupied a part of western Armenia, including Kars, Ardagan, Baiazet and Erzurum.⁵ However, according to the Adrianopole peace treaty of 1829, all of these territories were handed over to Turkey. Western Armenia was again left under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

However, the annexation of eastern Armenia to Russia was a sign of progress. The entry of Armenia into the Russian Empire created conditions for the peaceful historical development of Armenia. The administrative and territorial fragmentation of eastern Armenia was eliminated by administrative and judicial reforms carried out by the tsarist government. The centralization of political power contributed to the economic development of Armenia. Furthermore, the enlightened and democratic ideas of Russia and western Europe exerted an

⁴ J. C. Hurewitz (ed.), "Diplomacy in the near and middle east", vol. 1, Princeton, 1956, pp. 96-102.

⁵ Beddley, "Russian Conquest of Caucasus", P.187.

influence on the attitude and activity of the progressive minded Armenian intelligentsia.

In the second half of the 19th century, the national liberation movement grew stronger in western Armenia. An appeal was made to the Russian tsar for protection. In 1862, Zeitun peasant's movement took place in Cilicia against the Turkish government. Against this background the national liberation movement became active during the period of Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78.⁶ The war resulted in the annexation of some parts of western Armenia into the Russian empire.

Let us now consider the formation of political organizations which were directly involved in the Armenian liberation movement.

In 1855 the first Armenian political party, the **ARMENAKAN** was founded on Ottoman soil.⁷ Two years later, a group of emigrants from Russian Transcaucasia founded the first Armenian revolutionary party in Geneva. The party, known as the **HUNCHAKIAN PARTY**, aimed at creating a liberated Socialist Armenian state. In 1890, a **DASHNAKTSUTIUN** or federation of the Armenian revolutionaries was formed including the Hunchaks ⁸ and Within a few years it formed itself into a new distinct organization. The Hunchaks gained more

⁶ A. J. Grant and Harold Temperley, "Europe in 19th Century", London, 1927, pp. 372-374.

⁷ Louis Nalbandian, "The Armenian Revolutionary Movement", Berkeley, 1963, pp. 90-118.

⁸ Ibid, p. 151.

supporters within Turkish Armenia and Anatolia. The Dashnaks gained more support within the Russian Caucasus.

The appearance of the proletariat and the spread of Marxism introduced qualitative change in the national liberation movement of the Armenian people. The first Marxist group was formed in 1898. In 1902 the **UNION OF ARMENIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS** was formed which voiced the positions of the Leninist magazine, Iskra. Between 1902-1905, party organizations rose in a number of Armenian cities. During the period of imperialism and bourgeoisie democratic revolution in Russia, the working people of Armenia came out in support of the entire Russian proletariat against autocracy and bourgeoisie.

During the Revolution of 1905-1907, a strike movement was formed in Armenia. Armenian workers actively participated in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat in Baku, Tiflis and other cities of Transcaucasia. The struggle soon turned into an ethnic clash between the Tatars and the Armenians. The tatars were the least socially advanced of the three main national groups in Russian Transcaucasia. They were loyal to feudal lords and obedient. There was an entrenched feeling of superiority of Muslims over Christians and a jealousy at Armenian material progress. Many people were killed on both sides in the massacre that followed in Baku in 1905. In 1907, the Dashnak

Party adopted socialism at its goal. It had grown more radical as a result of 1905 events. At the same time the party was admitted to the second Socialist International. Its primary aim was still the liberation of Turkish Armenia and the creation of an Armenian autonomous region.

The events that took place during the world war I (1914-1918), left the Armenians surprised. Russia declared themselves the saviour of the Turks and asserted that they were committed to the preservation of the ottoman lands in their present state. Such a change in policy came about due to political considerations. Because Russia had problems in the far east with Japan, it wanted to avoid confusion and entanglement in the middle east. The statement was enough to unleash a reign of terror by the Turks on the Armenians. A massive extermination of Armenian population was carried out. Between 1915-16 more than 1.5 million Armenians were annihilated in Turkey. Thus the tsarist regime in Russia during World War I crushed the Armenian hopes and desires for liberation.. The Russian change of policy towards the Armenian liberation movement was so drastic that even the discussion of Armenian political aims was banned as well.

Soon in February 1917 a revolution in Russia resulted in the abdication of the throne by the tsar. A liberal provisional government took over power and Soviets of workers and soldiers were set up. This

revolution was welcomed in Transcaucasia. Similar establishment of Soviets also took place in Yerevan. A special Transcaucasian committee was set up by the Russian provisional government for the administration of Transcaucasia. For Turkish Armenia that was under the Russian occupation a liberal administration was devised. Armenians were put in positions of authority over the provinces of Van, Erzerum, Bitlis and Tobrizand. This move partially satisfied the dream nurtured by the Armenians for decades.

The Liberation of the Armenian people from social and national oppression began with the great October socialist Revolution. The victory of the socialist revolution in Russia completely changed the political situation in Transcaucasia. In November 1917 the Transcaucasian Commissariat (Sovnarkom) was formed in Tiflis to act as the government for the Caucasus. Turkey was alarmed with the Bolsheviks coming into power in Russia and by their policy in the Transcaucasian region. Azerbaijan and Transcaucasia wanted to take their national fates into their own hands. They came together in Tiflis on 28th November, 1917, where the principle of self-determination for each nation was accepted. The separation of the Caucasian nations from Russia to establish their own states was approved. Privileges on the basis of religion and race were abolished and it was announced that the national development of the minorities would not be obstructed.

But the existing international situation prevented the implementation of the Tiflis pledges. After the Bolshevik revolution, the Caucasus, emerged as the most vital region for the British interests. Germany and Turkey were also interested in the region as well. With the fear of losing the strategic positions and the rich natural resources of the region, the British government encouraged the Christian nations of the Caucasus to erect a firm barrier. At the same time they provided material and logistical assistance to the anti Bolsheviks. Such an act on behalf of the English led Moscow to consider the British involvement in south Russia and the Caucasus as a direct military act. Britain was accused of initiating a well organized and an ideologically motivated war which aimed to destroy the Soviet power.

Although, the Transcaucasian Commissariat declared that it did not recognize the Soviet government, it did not entirely sever its ties with Russia. It regarded itself as a part of the Great Russian Republic. They believed that the Bolsheviks would not remain in power for long. They believed that Russia's fate would be determined jointly in the Constituent Assembly which was to be shortly convened. But all hopes towards this end were shattered when the Bolsheviks disbanded this Assembly. However, the Transcaucasian Commissariat delegates began to function immediately after the dissolution of the Russian constituent assembly on January 1918. A representative assembly, the Seim, was formed with the participation of the representatives from

Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In April 1918, the Seim proclaimed Transcaucasia an independent democratic Federative Republic and a cabinet was formed with executive powers. Moreover, by the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which was finally signed on 3rd March, 1918, Russia paved the way for the Turkish armies to advance into the Caucasus region. Turkey had been claiming the possessions of the Ardahan, Kars and Batum vilayets⁹ which were under Russian control since the Berlin treaty of 1878. By the Brest-Litovsk treaty Russia promised to ensure the immediate evacuation of the vilayets of eastern Anatolia and their lawful return to Turkey.¹⁰ The Armenians were once again lured and left cheated.

The Seim rejected the Brest-Litovsk treaty. It chose to enter into direct negotiations with the Turks in the name of the Transcaucasian Assembly. The Transcaucasian and Turkish delegations met at Trabzon, a Southeastern Black Sea port, to discuss the peace terms. But when the Supplementary Turkish – Russian agreement which had been reached at the Brest- Litovsk conference over the ceding of the districts of Batum Kars and Ardahan by the Russians, was put

⁹ The Vilayets were large administrative divisions. In 1864 the empire had been divided into 27 vilayets. The vilayets were divided into sanjacks, the sanjack into kazas, the kaza into villages.

¹⁰ Peace treaty between Russia, Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey on March 3, 1918.

forward by the Turkish delegation as a pre condition for the talks, the negotiations entered a deadlock.

The Turks invited the Caucasian Republics for a new conference in Batum. The conference started in early may in 1918. A draft treaty was presented by the Turkish delegation which demanded the Akhalkalar and Akhaltsikh uezds from the Erevan gubernia, the entire Surmeti uezd along with part of the Alexanderpool and Etchmiadzin uezds through which the Kars-Julfa railroad passed. They also demanded privileges in trade and navigation, frontier traffic, full Ottoman transit rights through Transcaucasia and a sharp reduction in the armed forces of the Transcaucasian government in the region.

The terms of the treaty were unacceptable to the Transcaucasian government and soon a conflict involving both negotiating parties engulfed the region. The Turks made initial gains but soon the Armenians were able to inflict casualties on their adversary. In the battle of Sardarabad, the Armenians were finally able to overpower the Turks. Despite this most significant victory for the Armenians, the political situation in Transcaucasia remained grim. Georgia declared its independence on 26th May 1918, followed by Azerbaijan on May 27. Finally on 29th May, Armenia too announced its independence, with Yerevan becoming the Capital. The political authority in Armenia passed into the hands of Dashnaktsutiun.

In the First World War, On October 1918, Ottoman Turkey acknowledged her defeat. Turkey withdrew her forces from the areas occupied in Transcaucasia, including Armenia. After the defeat of the German bloc in War the whole area, including Armenia passed into the possession of the British and their allies. Armenia felt that a new opportunity had arisen for them. In January 1919, the Paris peace talks began in which the Allies and especially the British repeated their commitment of 'freeing Armenians from Turkish despotism'. But no settlement could be reached on Armenia's political future. The period between June 1919 till January 1922 was one of intense political uncertainty in Armenia. In the elections held in June 1919, the Dashnaks won. The British pulled out from the Caucasus. Armenian communist organizations were formed.

The first Armenian Congress of Soviets which approved the constitution of the Armenian SSR was held between January 30 to February 4, 1922. In March a treaty concerning the formation of a Federated alliance between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia was concluded. Thence onwards till December 5, 1936 Armenia was a member of the **Tanscaucasian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics** (TSFSR). With the dissolution of TSFSR in 1936, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia became parts of the USSR. On March 23, 1937, a new constitution, which reflected the success of Socialist

Construction, was adopted for Armenia. Armenia was then, referred to as the Armenian SSR.

Thus, after a long dark period, Armenia received its independence under protection of the USSR. The existence of Armenia under Socialist regime continued till 1991 when the USSR finally disintegrated. The collapse of the Socialist bloc was an unhappy event for the Armenians. They, however, declared their separation from the Union. Armenia emerged as an independent nation in the world. Decades of political and socio-economic uncertainties had gripped Armenia. The geographical position of the country had made it vulnerable to attacks from the foreign powers time to time. Infact Armenia had been a playground of 'power politics' since the initial years of its history.

Being independent all of a sudden left Armenia in a bewildered situation. It is not always easy to prove the worth of a nation's existence. This is evident by the state of many nations dotting the world map. Only a few have succeeded in proving their might. This is due to the fact that it takes much to convince the world of a nation's worth in the social, economic and political fields. Such a challenge lies ahead of Armenia, too. As a new nation, Armenia is beset with huge tasks. It has to meet the myriad challenges- both internal and external. These are the questions which will be answered later.

However, in the next chapter, we would be dealing with the question of how Armenia gained its independence from the USSR and how the foundation of a new state was laid down.

CHAPTER 2

***Foundation
of
A New State***

In this chapter an endeavour has been made to construct and present the basic structure of the processes that have contributed into the making of a nation. The history of Armenian nation shows, as briefly outlined in the previous chapter, that the emergence of a state independent in its own spheres – social, political and economic – has not been a smooth affair. Armenia has received a taste of independence very recently. In the pages to follow, we would be probing into those phenomena and historical processes that have shaped the foundation of the Armenian state. Moreover, the use of the expression “ a new state”, in the title of the chapter has been made to emphasize upon the phase wise development of the process of state formation in Armenia. Prior to its independence in 1991, Armenia had been subject to foreign dominations and, later fell under the Soviet rule, which was ruled as one of its principality. It is against this background that I humbly admonish the reader to focus his attention on the chapter.

The Armenian SSR was founded on November 29, 1920. Prior to that it had been subject to the control of various foreign powers. A new beginning was made when from March 12, 1922 till December 5, 1936 it was part of the Transcaucasian Federation. On December 5, 1936 it became a separate constituent Republic of the USSR. After the establishment of Soviet Power in Armenia and the formation of the Armenian SSR, a new era in the history of the Armenian people began.

Being ruled by the USSR, the socialist pattern of governance of Armenia began. Soon Armenia became an industrial republic. The gross agrarian industrial output in 1940's exceeded the level of 1913 by almost nine times. Massive collectivization began in Armenia in 1930's. The gross agricultural output had increased 1.6 times in 1940. A cultural revolution also brought many changes in the republic that eliminated illiteracy, created qualified national cadres of the working class and the national intelligentsia, and established a system of universities, institutions of scientific and cultural enlightenment, national theatres, libraries and academic societies. Soviet Armenian art and literature developed. Drawing women into all areas of socialist construction was the most important achievement of the cultural revolution in Armenia.

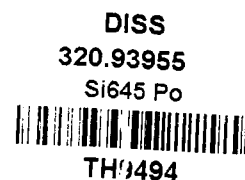
As a result of the socialist transformations, the exploiter class and the exploitation of the working class was eliminated. Unemployment and poverty were drastically checked. A socialist society was created in Armenia. After the second world war the national economy and cultural development of Armenia further attained a high level. To honour this achievement the Armenian SSR was awarded the Order of Lenin on December 29, 1958 for success of agricultural output and for the compliance with the state plans. Thus, under Soviet rule fundamental changes in the structure of Armenia's national economy took place along with its social development. But in the late 1980s the

tremendous changes occurring throughout the Soviet Union affected Armenia as well. The country's entire socio - political and economic fabric were influenced. Let us consider now the changes within the Soviet Union, which affected the Armenian – then, a principality within the USSR.

After becoming the general secretary of the communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev set out to lead the country out of the Stagnation that had characterized the Brezhnev era. He unleashed a set of policies that was to change the pace of soviet Russia's socio-economic progress. He introduced the economic restructuring programme known as 'Perestroika'. The second policy, which he initiated, was 'Glasnost' which meant openness. One of the major results of these reform policies was the re-awakening of the nationality question in the USSR in the late 1980s. On one hand, the allowance of a degree of public debate and openness in the media led to the expression of long simmering grievances among the Soviet Union's numerous ethnic groups. Gorbachev's own explicit criticism of Stalinist nationalist policies seemed to sanction greater debate on the issue.¹ On the other hand, Gorbachev's program of "political democratization" gave impetus to the rise of grass roots political movements in the republics. Numerous informal and unofficial

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¹ Patrick Cockburn, "Dateline USSR: Ethnic Tremors", *Foreign Policy*, no. 74, Spring, 1989, P. 174.



movements devoted to various political and social causes arose, particularly, those committed to environmental issues and common nationality. These two issues served as natural basis for their organization.²

Thus, Gorbachev's reforms set in motion processes that promoted, directly or indirectly, the rise of nationality based movements in the republics, whose goals often clashed with the interests of other national groups. Such was the case, particularly, between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as reawakened nationalism and Irredenta on the part of the former brought the question of Nagorno-Karabakh to the surface of relations between the two republics once again.

In 1987, the Armenian nationalist movement emerged which was related to the republic's terrible environmental condition³ and in the latter part of the year two events occurred which created for Armenia a "Window of opportunity" for a possible unification with Nagorno - Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). First of these events was that in October Heydar Aliyev, the former communist party chief of

² Gail W. Lapidus, "Gorbacherv's nationalities' problem", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 68, no. 4, 1989, pp. 100-102.

³ Primarily a rural agricultural nation prior to its incorporation into the Soviet Union, Armenia was urbanized and industrialized under Stalin at great damage to the environment. With the onset of glasnost, the press exposed these conditions. Numerous grass roots movements grew up around environmental issues. It was in this environment of national awakening in Armenia that irredentism vis-a-vis Nagorno-Karabakh once again surfaced. Barringer and Bill Keller, "A test of change explodes in Soviet", *New York Times*, March 11, 1988 & Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, *The Hidden Nations: The People Challenge The Soviet Union*, William Morrow & Co, New York, 1990, P. 157.

Azerbaijan, was sacked from his politburo post.⁴ And second, several weeks later Abel Aganbegyan, a senior economic advisor to Gorbachev, suggested that Moscow was willing to treat the Armenian demand for unification with Karabakh sympathetically.⁵ Thus, the growing Armenian sentiment for union with Nagorno-Karabakh was given a powerful voice in the emerging nationalist movement. Demonstrations in Yerevan and Stepanakert ,the NKAO Capital in support of peaceful unification became frequent. A petition, signed by thousands of Armenians, was presented before Gorbachev, pleading for the possession of Karabakh.⁶ The sentiments became so much exalted by the statement that when Armenian villagers residing just outside the boarders of the NKAO, were beaten by the Azeris for their opposition to the nomination of an Azerbaijani for the presidentship of the local Kolkhoz, thousands of Armenians took to streets in protest.⁷

The early months of 1988 were crucial in forging the subsequent course of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. Mass rallies had become a common occurrence in Armenia and NKAO capitals. The Azerbaijanis

⁴ As per common Soviet practice, it was reported that Aliyev had been granted a request for "retirement on health grounds". TASS, October 23, 1987, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service -Soviet Union, (FBIS-SOV), # 87-206, 24 October, 1987.

⁵ Cockburn, "Dateline USSR", P. 178.

⁶ "Petition signed by over 75,000 Armenians from mountainous Karabakh and Soviet Armenia to General Secretary Gorbachev", in Gerald J. Libaridian (ed.), *The Karabakh file: Documents and Facts on The Question of Mountainous Karabakh, 1918-88*, The Zoryan Institute, Cambridge, March 1988.

⁷ Claire Mouradian, "The mountainous Karabakh Question: Inter-ethnic Conflict or Decolonization Crisis?", *Armenian Review*, vol. 43, no. 2-3, (summer-Autumn, 1990).

viewed the rallies in apprehension. They viewed them as a threat to the republics territorial integrity. On February 20, 1988, a development further tensed the Armenia – Azerbaijan conflict. The Soviet of people’s deputies of Nagorno-Karabakh passed a resolution for the transfer of Oblast to the Armenia SSR. But Moscow’s response was contradicted the Armenian aspiration. Having examined the information about developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous region, the CPSU central committee held that the actions and demands directed at revising the existing national and territorial structure, juxtaposed the interests of the working people in Soviet Azerbaijan and Armenia and the resolution had the potential of damaging the inter- ethnic relations.⁸

The central committee’s rejection of the union between Armenia and the NKAO and led to mass demonstrations in Yerevan and Stepanakert. Alarmed by the situation, Gorbachev promised to find a ‘just solution’ to the question of Nagorno-Karabakh.⁹ This assurance quelled the Armenian anger for a month.¹⁰

From the outset, Kremlin had based its position on the question of Nagorno-Karabakh on article 78 of the Soviet Constitution. The article

⁸ “Response of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR to the demand by the government of mountainous Karabakh”, in Libaridian (ed.), *The Karabakh file*, P. 98.

⁹ Deutsche Presse Agentur, February 29, 1988, in FBIS – SOV, # 88-139, 29 February 1988.

¹⁰ Agence France Presse, February 29, 1988, P. 67.

read: "The territory of a union republic may not be altered without its consent. The boundaries between union republics may not be altered without its consent. The boundaries between Union republics may be altered by mutual agreement of the republics concerned. Subject to confirmation by the USSR".¹¹ In the case of Nagorno – Karabakh it was clear that such a constitutional mechanism would be incapable of bringing about a solution. Thus, the next two years were marked by continued conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Soviet leadership failed to deal with the situation adequately. The Soviet government first took up the matter of Nagorno-Karabakh in March 1988, when Gorbachev brought the issue before both the USSR supreme Soviet and the CPSU central committee. The result was a pair of resolutions devised apparently to seek time for the Soviet leadership by offering frugal concessions to the Armenians of the NKAO.¹² Among the measures promised were boosted investment in housing, industry and social services and an increase in the broadcast of Armenian language television and books.¹³

Although the proposal for increased economic, Social, and cultural development for the Armenians welcomed Nagorno-Karabakh. In principle, the program for the NKAO was rejected wholly, and for most

¹¹ Quoted in Francis Field, "Nagorno Karabakh: A Constitutional Conundrum", Radio Liberty Research, RL 3/3/88, 15 July, 1988.

¹² Yuri Rost, *Armenian Tragedy*, St. Martin's press, New York, 1990.

¹³ "Party and Government Resolution on Nagorno-Karabakh", B.B.C, April 4, 1988.

Armenians it marked the end of their support for the Soviet leadership and Gorbachev's reforms.¹⁴ Thereafter, the Armenian movement was driven by the "Karabakh committee" which was an informal grouping of eleven nationalist intellectuals formed in early 1988.

The Karabakh committee became a defacto opposition to the Armenian communist party. Its programme included the union between the republic and the NKAO, democratization, economic reform and achieving national Sovereignty within the framework of a new soviet confederation.¹⁵ For Armenian communist party it was the greatest challenge to its authority since 1921. On June 15, 1988, after a long debate, the supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR passed a resolution calling for the USSR supreme Soviet to approve the annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia.

After two days, the supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan passed a rejection of the Oblast's transfer on the grounds that such a move would violate the Soviet constitution¹⁶ and with this issue all eyes turned to Moscow. The congress rejected any change in inter-republican boundaries. This move infuriated Armenia. The Karabakh committee staged violent demonstrations in Yerevan. Already dissatisfied with Kremlin's stand,

¹⁴ Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia and Karabakh: The Struggle for Unity*, Minority Rights Publications, London, pp. 125-126.

¹⁵ Ronald G. Suny, *Looking Towards Ararat: Armenia in modern history*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1993, P. 202.

¹⁶ Marcus Gee and Anthony Wilson Smith, "Enraged Republics", *Maclearis*, vol. 101, no. 27, (June 27, 1988).

the ruthless intervention of the Soviet troops served to fuel Armenian anger, which further alienated them from Moscow. In reaction, on July 12, the NKAO Soviet of people's deputies voted in favour of unilateral secession from Azerbaijan.¹⁷ Though the move was rejected as illegal immediately by the Azerbaijan SSR supreme soviet presidium¹⁸, the Karabakh Committee temporarily halted the general strike to await an ultimate decision from Moscow.¹⁹

With a major crisis building between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Gorbachev convened a special session of the USSR supreme Soviet presidium to consider the matter of Nagorno-Karabakh. The presidium passed a resolution reaffirming the attachment of the NKAO to Azerbaijan. The Karabakh Committee rejected the resolution. Consequently a new wave of ethnic unrest gripped Nagorno-Karabakh in mid September, 1988. Armenia resented the filtration of Azeri refugees in Karabakh.²⁰ Clashes broke out. Fearing the spread of violence to Armenia itself the soviet authorities declared a state of emergency in the region and deployed troops in Yerevan.²¹ As ethnic tensions and violence between Armenians and Azeris grew, a number

¹⁷ Deutsche Presse-Agentur, July 12, 1988 and Agence France Presse, July 13, 1988 in FBIS - SOV, # 88 - 134, 13 July, 1988.

¹⁸ TASS, July 13, 1988, P. 55 and Baku Domestic Service, July 14, 1988, in FBIS - SOV, # 88 - 135, 14 July 1988.

¹⁹ Walker, *Armenia and Karabakh*, P. 127.

²⁰ Bill Keller, "Soviet region hit by a new ethnic unrest and strike", *New York Times*, 16 September, 1988. A8.

²¹ Bill Keller, "Parts of Armenia are blocked off by Soviet troops", *New York Times*, (23 September, 1988). A1& A12.

of important events took place that had decisive impact on inter-communal relations in Armenia and Azerbaijan and their ties with Moscow. Foremost among these was the so-called 'November days' which awoke the Azerbaijani nationalism in a highly visible form. The Azerbaijani people had united in defense of their territorial integrity. This was in response to the Armenian attempts to annex Nagorno-Karabakh. Another major force rallying the Azerbaijanis was the Armenian nationalist movement itself.²² Unable to deal with growing inter-ethnic conflicts in Armenia and Azerbaijan and the growing hostility towards the union, the USSR supreme Soviet presidium declared for the NKAO a 'special administrative status' that placed the region under the direct control of a six – member committee answerable to Moscow.²³ This was on January 12, 1989. Resentment grew and soon the Armenians once again, took to the streets. With the Soviet leadership's decision to continue to strengthen the NKAO's special status, mass demonstrations and violence broke out across Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh²⁴

With the ANM's active support, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh organized and held unauthorized elections on August 10, 1989 to elect

²² Tadeusz Swietochowski, "Azerbaijan Between Ethnic Conflict and Irredentism", *Armenian Review*, vol. 43, no. 2-3, (Summer Autumn, 1990).

²³ Mouradian, *The mountainous Karabakh question*, P. 24.

²⁴ Niall M. Frasher, Keith W. Hipel, John Jaworsky and R. Zuljian, "A Conflict Analysis of the Armenia Azerbaijan Dispute", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 34, no. 4, December 1990.

a 78 member national council intended to replace the Moscow appointed board.²⁵ The same month the Armenian Supreme Soviet passed a resolution recognizing the national council as the sole and legitimate representative of the Armenian population of the NKAO²⁶. These developments were highly resented by the Azerbaijan Popular Front (APF), which was established in March 1989. Reacting unilaterally it blockaded the rail link to Armenia. Moscow had to intervene and in lieu of easing the seize, APF was recognized as a legal organization²⁷. By its new status, the popular front passed a law on the sovereignty of the republic ²⁸, challenging Moscow's sovereignty over Nagorno Karabakh as well as to its system of governance.

Let us now take a look into the developments within Armenia.

The first half of 1990 saw the emergence of a handful of 'unofficial' militias in Armenia. The largest and most active of which was the strong Armenian National Army (ANA)²⁹. The militia laid the foundation for the formation of an independent Armenian Army. On August 5, 1990 the first non-communist Armenian government came to power. Levon Ter Petrosyan, a founding member of the Karabakh

²⁵ Yerevan Domestic Service, August 18, 1989, in FBIS-SOV, # 89-167, 30 August 1989.

²⁶ Armen press International Service, 26 September, 1989, in FBIS - SOV, # 89-189, 2 October 1989.

²⁷ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, P. 206.

²⁸ Pravada, 6 October, 1989, in FBIS - SOV, # 88-194, 10 October 1989.

²⁹ TASS International Service, 29 May, 1990, in FBIS-SOV, # 90-103, 29 May 1990.

committee and leader of the ANM, was elected to the chair of Supreme Soviet. He set out immediately to restore order in the republic³⁰.

Facing threat from the other militia organizations who were reluctant to give up arms, on 29th August, the Armenian Supreme Soviet declared a state of emergency through out the republic and instructed all unauthorized armed formations to hand over their weapons³¹. At the same time, Armenian officials began to prepare for the republic's separation from the USSR. Armenia declared its intention on 23 August, 1990 to become a sovereign and independent state³². The Declaration renamed the Armenian SSR as the Armenian Republic³³.

In late 1990 and early 1991, the efforts of Armenians and Azerbaijani policy makers were focussed not on the issue of Nagorno Karabakh but on the all important question of the future of their republic and of their relation with the Soviet Union it self. Gorbachev declared March 17, 1991 as the date for an all-union referendum, which sought to gather support for a new draft union treaty that promised greater

³⁰ Ter Petrosyan's rise was made possible by: (1) the significant gains of the ANM in the Armenian supreme Soviet elections in the spring and summer of 1990 and (2) by the resignation of the first secretary of the Armenian communist party. Sunny, *Looking Towards Ararat*, P. 239.

³¹ Moscow Television Service, 29 August, 1990, in FBIS - SOV, # 90-170, 31 August 1990.

³² Although entitled as the "Declaration on the Independence of Armenia", the document passed by the Armenia Supreme Soviet declared only "the start of the process of the establishment of statehood". Text of document as ready by all Yerevan Domestic Service, 24 August, 1990, in FBIS - SOV, # 90-166, 27 August 1990.

³³ Moscow Domestic Service, 24 August, 1990, in FBIS - SOV, # 90-165, August 24 1990.

autonomy to the republics. Though on 7 March the Azerbaijani supreme Soviet decided to take part in the referendum.³⁴

Armenia was unsatisfied with the Soviet leader's attempts to redefine the relationship between Moscow and the republics. Consequently the Armenian supreme soviet decided on 31 January to boycott the all-union action.³⁵ Moreover, it went one step further by stating not only that the result of referendum would have no legal force on the future of the republic³⁶ but, also that Armenia was beginning the formal process of session from the USSR.³⁷ Thus, by March 1991 it was clear that Armenia and Azerbaijan were taking fundamentally divergent approaches to the future of their republics and their future course of relation with the soviet union.

The 17 March referendum resulted in a victory for President Gorbachev with a vote of more than 75 percent in favour of the new union treaty.³⁸ In the third week of April 1991, Mulatibov, head of Azerbaijani government, offered the prospect of a combined Soviet - Azerbaijani operations in and around Nagorno - Karabakh. Thus, on

³⁴ TASS International Service, 6 March, 1991.

³⁵ Yerevan Domestic Service, 31 January 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-122, February 1, 1991.

³⁶ TASS International Service, 1 March 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-142, 4 March 1991.

³⁷ Yerevan Domestic Service, 4 March 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-144, 6 March 1991.

³⁸ Francis X clines, "Gorbachev given a partial victory in voting on unity", New York Times, 19 March 1991. A1 and Serge Schimenann, "Gorbachev and the Bear", New York Times, 30 March 1991. A1.

30th April, 1991 Operation Ring was launched. Azerbaijani militia units and soviet forces attacked the Armenian inhabited villages of Getashen and Martunashen ,25 kms. north of Nagorno - Karabakh³⁹.The authorities in Moscow and Baku were unified in justifying their action with the claim that the inhabitants of both towns had been harbouring Armenian militias banned by the July decree⁴⁰.

After the initial action against the villages of Getashen and Martunashen, in late April and early May 1991, the activities of operation Ring expanded in scope and brutality. On 7th May Soviet and Azerbaijani forces backed by tanks and helicopters entered three towns in Armenia proper. Operations continued into the whole summer and many families were encouraged to leave their homes. ⁴¹ Armenian leader Ter-Petrosyan termed the soviet military action as an undeclared war against his republic aimed at punishing it for not taking part in the March all union referendum.⁴² Yerevan continued with its plans to secede from the USSR and following a 99.3 percent

³⁹ Michael Dobbs, "Armenia Azerbaijan clash leaves at least 25 Dead", *Washington Post*, 2 May 1991. A26.

⁴⁰ Helsinki Watch, "Bloodshed in the Caucasus: Escalation of the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh", New York, September 1992.

⁴¹ David E. Murphy, "Operation Ring: The Black Berets in Azerbaijan", *Journal Of Soviet Military Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, March 1992, P. 91.

⁴² David Remnick, "Soviet troops tighten control on villages along Armenian border", *Washington Post*, May 1991. A32.

vote in favour of such a move, Armenia declared its independence as the Republic of Armenia on 23rd September, 1991.

Thus, after seventy years of Soviet rule, Armenia emerged as an independent nation. A new state had been founded. Bitterness and struggle created the foundation of which. There was a period in Armenian history when the Soviet takeover of the republic was hailed and welcomed as a sign of progress and prosperity. But soon the euphoria ended with a feeling of hostility and aversion to the Soviet rule. I think the reason for such a drift lay in the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which can be said to be a blessing and a bane for the Armenian state at the same time. Blessing, as it turned out to be the rallying point for Armenian nationalism and bane, as it severed the Armenian-Soviet bond of trust, faith and expectation.

CHAPTER 3

Political Developments in Armenia and the Nagorno–Karabakh Conflict with Azerbaijan: 1991-1994.

Nagorno-Karabakh



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THE DISPUTED TERRITORY OF NAGORNO KARABAKH

In this chapter I would be dealing with the political developments in Armenia between 1991 and 1994. These developments were much the product of the long-standing dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno – Karabakh. The dispute has influenced the Armenian policy measures, both domestic and international. Political developments in Armenia, therefore, have to be understood in relation to the developments in the Nagorno – Karabakh issue.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are two of the three former Soviet republics that occupy the geographic area known as the Transcaucasus. The Transcaucasus is important geographically, as it is strategically located between Europe and Asia. Over time this geo-strategic location has made the Transcaucasus a crossroads of major human movement and a battleground of clashing empires¹. Finally in 1920 when Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were incorporated into the Soviet Union the struggle for the control of the region came to an end.

The roots of the hostility between the Armenia and Azerbaijan developed during the Czarist Russian rule. In the Russian Empire economic and social developments in the late 19th century led to a sharp division between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. The Armenians were able to rise to key economic and political positions in

¹ Shireen, T. Hunter, *The Transcaucasus In Transition: Nation building and Conflict*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, 1994.

the major cities of Transcaucasus. Among the Azerbaijanis these realities caused feelings of resentment that gradually developed into anti Armenian feelings.² With the growth of Pan-Turkism among the educated classes of Armenians in the late 19th century, these sentiments were given an intellectual basis. The Armenians of the Russian Empire held feelings of animosity and contempt toward the Azerbaijanis as well. The tzarist policy of divide and rule also promoted jealousy and division among them.

In early February 1905, riots broke out in Baku between Armenians and the Azeris. It was the first case of large-scale violence between the two. Historical evidences put forward by the Armenian scholar's claim that Nagorno-Karabakh has for centuries been a heartland of Armenian civilization. They claim that the area encompassing the western region of the modern republic of Azerbaijan including Nagorno-Karabakh belonged to Armenia since the 7th century B.C.³

When the Sassanid rule in Transcaucasia was usurped by that of the Arabs in the 7th century the Armenians of mountainous Karabakh continued to preserve their traditions while the rest of Armenia fell to

² By the early 1870s the Armenians were the top buyers of lands in Baku. At the same time, the Azerbaijanis occupied the lowest paid and least skilled positions in industry. This resulted in an employer-client relationship that subordinated poor muslim workers to wealthy Armenian landholders. Suny, *The revenge of the past*, p. 17, and Audrey L. Altstadt, "The Azerbaijani Turks Response To Russian Conquest", *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol. 19, no. 3-4, (Autumn - winter 1986).

³ H.S. Anassian, "Une Mise Au point Relative À L' Albanie Caucasienne", *Revue des Études Armenians* 6 (1969); 305.

foreign dominations. Not only this Nagorno-Karabakh has been the only part of historic Armenia, it has been claimed that “where a tradition of national sovereignty was preserved unbroken until the late medieval period.”⁴ Thus, the Armenians have emotional and nationalist attachment with the region.

Azerbaijani scholars differ with the Armenian claim that the inhabitants of mountainous Karabakh have been ethnic Armenians since earliest times as compared to the people living on the plains to the east who are considered descendants of Islamic and Turkish Albanians. In contrast they argue that in the eight century immigrating Armenians pushed out the indigenous Albanian population of Karabakh⁵.

In 1805 as a result of first Russo- Iranian war Russia annexed the Nagorno – Karabakh region from Iran. With the creation of the new province of Elisavetpol, the Russians linked the mountainous region of Karabakh with the plains to the east, which were inhabited by Azeris. By this move the Russians brought the economics and transportation networks of both areas closer together, with Nagorno-Karabakh becoming integrated gradually but completely into the economic

⁴ Walker, *Armenia and Karabakh*, p. 79.

⁵ Nora Dudwick, *The Case of Caucasian Albanians: ethno-history and ethnic politics*, 1990.

system of eastern Transcaucasus⁶. Azerbaijan came to develop an emotional and national affinity for the area.

For the Armenians the nationalistic affinity for Nagorno-Karabakh developed over centuries of hardship which was brought about by foreign rule. This region of Nagorno-Karabakh occupies a central place in the national consciousness of both the Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples. For the Armenians Karabakh is a refuge and bastion⁷ the final stronghold where a tradition of national autonomy⁸ was preserved nearly uninterrupted. For Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh is both a key part of the ancient state to which they trace their ancestry and a focal point of their nationalism. The relations had remained good between the two peoples in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but after the violence of 1905 the region became a bone of contention between the two neighboring peoples.

During the First World War when the Turkish Army of Islam invaded eastern Armenia a spark came. The intervention of Britain in the region was an unfortunate event for Armenia. The British motivated by strategic and economic concerns embarked immediately upon a generally pro-Azerbaijani policy, though the Armenians had fought on their side in the war. Also it was believed that a strong and

⁶ Hunter, *The Transcaucasus in Transition*, pp. 97-98.

⁷ Donabedian, *The History of Karabakh: From Antiquity to Twentieth Century*, Zed Books, London, 1944, p. 62.

⁸ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, UCP, Berkeley, p.157.

independent Azerbaijan allied with Britain would provide a valuable barrier against pan Islamic forces. On the other hand the vast oil reserves near Baku would serve the British requirements. Thus the British authorities opined that a policy friendly to Azerbaijan was necessary in the early days of its occupation of Transcaucasia.⁹ This decision led to the attachment of Nagorno-Karabakh with the republic of Azerbaijan.¹⁰

The Armenians were severely shocked. They had fought loyally on the side of the Allies during the war and had expected the British to be sympathetic to their post war claims in return.¹¹ On 12th February 1919 the fourth assembly of Karabakh Armenians held in village of Shusha its goal to reiterate the rejection of Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh and strive for the region's inclusion in the Armenia republic. The Karabakh Armenians promised to resist violently any attempt at the forced establishment of Azerbaijani power on Armenian Karabakh.¹² Such a move prepared the ground for an open conflict between the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. On 5 June 1919, clashes finally erupted between the two sides following

⁹ Akaby Nassibian, *Britain and Armenian Question, 1915-1923*, St. Martin's Press, New York, pp. 154-155.

¹⁰ Hovannisian, "Nationalist ferment in Armenia, p.13.

¹¹ Artin H. Azslanian, "Britain and the question of mountainous Karabakh", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.16, no., January 1980.

¹² G.J. Libaridian, *The Karabakh file: Documents and facts on the Question of mountainous Karabakh, 1918 - 88*, The Zoryan Institute, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 17 - 19.

the pullout of British forces from the Karabakh highlands.¹³ By the middle of 1919 the situation in the region had gradually begun to tilt in favour of Azerbaijan. The British had announced their decision to pull out completely from the Transcaucasus. Thus, by early 1920 both sides began preparations for altering the status quo. On 19 February 1920 Governor General Sultanov sent an ultimatum to the Armenian national council of Karabakh demanding its unconditional agreement to the region's complete incorporation into Azerbaijan. However, Sultanov did not have enough military force to compel Armenian submission when the council's expected rejection came.¹⁴ Taking Advantage of this situation the Armenians began a major uprising in Nagorno-Karabakh on the night of 22 March.¹⁵

In an attempt of combat the Armenian uprising in Nagorno-Karabakh Azerbaijan shifted the bulk of its military forces to the mountainous region in late March 1920. The Eleventh Red Army entered Baku unopposed on 27 April, and Azerbaijan became the first Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) of Transcaucasia the next day. ¹⁶ one of the first acts of the newly established Soviet government in Baku was to

¹³ Mandalian, "The Transcaucasian Armenian Irredenta", *Armenian Review*, vol. 14, no. 2 - 59, summer 1961, p. 10.

¹⁴ Walker, *Armenia and Karabakh: The Struggle for Unity*, London, 1991, P. 98.

¹⁵ Tadeusz Swietochowski "The problem of Nagorno Karabkh: Geography versus Demography under colonialism and in Decolonization", in Hafeez Malik (ed.), *Central Asia : Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993.

¹⁶ R. Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917 - 1923*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1964, pp. 222-223.

convey an ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Karabakh and the surrounding regions. Otherwise the revolutionary committee of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan would consider itself in a state of war with the republic of Armenia. Having no choice but to comply with the demand of the Eleventh Red Army, Armenia pulled out.

On 10 August 1920 an agreement was signed between Armenia and Moscow providing for the soviet occupation of Karabakh and surrounding territories until an equitable and final solution could be reached on their status.¹⁷ However after sometimes Armenia found itself at war with Turkey. The war turned quickly in favour of Turks and the Armenians were forced to sue for peace on 18 November. At the same time Armenia was thrown into a political crisis marked by the fall of its government¹⁸. Seeing a ripe opportunity to gain control of yet another Transcaucasian republic, the Bolshevik's ordered the Eleventh Red Army to march on the Armenia capital of Yerevan, and Armenia became a Soviet Socialist republic. Thus the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh was transformed over night from an interstate dispute to an internal matter of Soviet Union.

Throughout late 1920 and the first half of 1921 a series of events took place that resulted in the incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into

¹⁷ Walker, *Armenia and Korabakh*, p. 103.

¹⁸ Mandalian, "The Transcaucasian Armenian Irredenta", pp. 24-25.

Azerbaijan. Finally on July 4, 1921 Stalin made Nagorno-Karabakh a part of the Azerbaijani SSR. The true motive behind Stalin's intervention in the decision of Nagorno-Karabakh's status was his principle of divide and rule. On 7 July, 1923 Stalin created the Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh (AONK) and drew its borders so as to leave an arrow strip of land separating it physically from Armenia.¹⁹ As an autonomous area under Azerbaijan the AONK was granted the authority to administer its own affairs in the realm of culture and education and parallel party and state organs were created and staffed by Armenians.²⁰ In 1937, the region's name was changed permanently to the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO).²¹

The Sovietization of Armenia and Azerbaijan had a momentous impact on the development of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between the two republics. For the Armenians Stalin's 1923 decision was a tremendous national loss. For the Azerbaijanis it was a great victory. However, in the hearts and minds of the Armenians and Azerbaijanis the question of Nagorno-Karabakh never receded in importance. Thus, when the thaw of the Gorbachev period arrived the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan were resulting in a cycle of violence that outlasted the Soviet Union itself. The Armenia Azerbaijan conflict

¹⁹ Walker, *Armenia and Karabakh*, p. 109.

²⁰ Alstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, p. 126.

occurred in 1988 when the Soviet of people's deputies of Nagorno-Karabakh passed a resolution by a vote of 110-17 requesting the Oblast's transfer to the Armenian SSR. But the central committee rejected it. Gorbachev intervened personally and promised to find a just solution to the question of Nagorno-Karabakh²².

Despite the Central Committee's apparent resolution on the matter, the Armenians and Azerbaijanis turned upon each other once again in violence, which lasted for two years. The Soviet leadership proved ill equipped to deal with it adequately.

A major turning point came in August 1991 when the failed coup in Moscow led to the dissolution of the union of Soviet Socialist Republic. The failed attempt by overthrow Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in August 1991 had a momentous impact on the development in the Armenia - Azerbaijan conflict. The Armenian authorities blamed Gorbachev for many of the unfortunate developments with Azerbaijan in last three years. They welcomed the defeat of the conservative coup plotters and the subsequent route of the Communist Party as a Soviet

²² Deutsche Press Agentur, 29 February 1988, in FBIS - SOV, # 88 - 139.

institution.²³ Yerevan continued with its plans to secede from the USSR and following a 99.3% vote in favour of such a move.²⁴ Armenia declared its independence as the Republic of Armenia on 23 September, 1991.

In contrast the Azerbaijani government supported the August coup. The Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet adopted a declaration of independence on 30 August 1991.²⁵ Despite their secession from the Soviet Union the Azerbaijani leadership continued the military actions associated with

²³ The Armenian government's early portion vis- a -vis the coup was one of caution and vigilance. Although officials made it clear that Armenia would not recognize the authority of the coup leaders and that the republic was continuing its drive for secession, evidence suggests that Armenia leaders were worried about the new active soviet government's potential policy toward the question of Nagorno-Karabakh. According to Armenian prime minister Vazgen Manukyan, setting the clock back on Soviet history would have no serious effect on the republic; "what is most important to us is what attitude the winner will take to the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh". As a further indication of this concern Armenia Supreme Soviet chairman Levon Ter Petrosyan phoned the individual coup leaders in the early stages of the putsch to solicit their views on the issue. The apparent response received by Ter Petrosyan, that direct soviet rule over the NKAO would be reinstated, was taken with great apprehension among the Armenia leadership. However, the coup's collapse made the issue moot. Armenian prime minister quoted by Interfax, 20 August 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-162, 21 August 1991 and Radio Yerevan Network, 21 August 1991; in FBIS- SOV # 91-163, 22 August 1991.

²⁴ Although by the time the referendum was held it was clear that the Soviet union would probably not emerge from the 1991 events in a form similar to that of the past. The Armenians were determined to follow strictly the provisions of Soviet law regarding the process of secession. Shireen T. Hunter, *The Transcaucasus in Transition: Nation building and Conflict* and Elizabeth Fuller, "Armenia Votes Overwhelmingly for Secession", Report on the USSR, vol. 3, no. 39, 27 September 1991.

²⁵ TASS International Service, 30 August 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-169, 30 August 1991.

operation "Ring" through out August 1991.²⁶ Nevertheless the end to direct Soviet participation in combat activities did not mean an end to their role in the Armenia - Azerbaijan conflict.

A major mediation effort was undertaken by the presidents of Russia and Kazakstan in an attempt to calm down the outbreak of open hostilities between the two republics. Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Kazakstani President Noorsultan Nazarbayev tried their hands at finding a solution to the Armenia - Azerbaijan conflict. In a series of shuttle diplomacy which took place in September 1991. Yeltsin and Nazarbayev prompted the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan and a bi-ethnic delegation from Nagorno-Karabakh to meet face to face for the first time.²⁷ Unexpectedly, Armenia renounced all claims to Azerbaijani territory on 22 September²⁸ allowing a communiqué to be signed that

²⁶ The final actions of operation "Ring" were carried out against the Armenian villages of Karachinar and Verishen in a district of Azerbaijan bordering on the NKAO from 24 to 27 August. Five people were killed and many more were injured in the operation and several dozen Armenian homes were burned. The TASS International service, 29 August 1991 and TASS, 27 August 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-168, 29 August 1991.

²⁷ Fred Hiatt, "Armenians Azerbaijanis agree to Talks on Disputed Enclave", Washington Post, 23 September 1991. A13.

²⁸ There are several possible explanations for the Armenian government's decision to give up its claims to Azerbaijani lands. First, it is conceivable that the leadership had come to realize that to continue to insist on unification with Nagorno-Karabakh was utopian and ultimately futile. Thus searching for a suitable compromise solution was a necessary act in order to avert war. The second possible explanation for Armenia's action, which seems to be confirmed by statements of Levon Ter Petrosyan, is that the authorities placed a high degree of trust in Boris Yeltsin as an impartial mediator and as a guarantor of any peace agreement. TASS International Service, 24 September 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-186, 25 September 1991 and Bill Keller "Armenia Yielding Claim On Enclave", New York Times, 23 September 1991, A12.

offered the promise of ending hostilities between the two republics²⁹.

The Main provisions of the agreement were several. First, a prompt cease-fire was to be followed within two days by the unconditional withdrawal of all armed forces (Soviet interior and defense ministry troops excepted) from the combat zone³⁰. Thereafter, a stage by stage restoration of the pre 1989 constitutional bodies of administration in the NKAO was to be carried out under Russian and Kazakstani supervision. Finally both sides were to empower delegations to participate in continuous bilateral talks aimed at achieving a final political resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute³¹.

The September 1991 communiqué was a milestone in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. First time a compromise was acceptable at a minimum to the leaders of both republics and representatives from the NKAO³².

Despite the Russian and Kazakstani mediated negotiations clashes continued in Nagorno-Karabakh. On 24 September, the day after the cease-fire communiqué was signed Azerbaijani militia units attacked

²⁹ Fred Hiatt, " Armenia, Azerbaijani agree to cease - fire," Washington Post, 25 September 1991, A20.

³⁰ Text of Communiqué in printed by TASS, 24 September 1991, In FBIS-SOV, # 91-186, 25 September 1991.

³¹ TASS International Service, 24 September 1991, p. 73.

³² The Armenian leader made it clear from the start that complete mutual understanding did not exist on all points outlined in the agreement. However, he also stressed the necessity both for compromise and for continued work on the details. Radio Rossii Network, 24 September 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-196, 25 September 1991.

the village of Chapar in the NKAO³³. Armenian guerillas also responded by carrying out a large-scale operation against militia bases in Azerbaijani villages. On 25 October the first follow up meeting of delegates from Armenia, Azerbaijan and the NKAO was held³⁴. On 4 November 1991 Azerbaijan shut down a pipeline that supplied Armenia with 1.5 million cubic meters of natural gas per day from Russia³⁵. Within two weeks, life in the capital of Yerevan came to a virtual stand still and Armenia delegates walked out of the ongoing talks mediated by Russian and Kazakstani observers³⁶.

Ter Petrosyan termed the Azerbaijani action as a declaration of war on his republic. Further, the Azerbaijanis blockaded the rail link from Armenia. All transportation and communication links between Stepanakert and its environs were cutoff.³⁷ On 27 November the Azerbaijani supreme Soviet voted to annul the autonomous legal status of the NKAO and instituted direct rule over the Oblast.³⁸ Later

³³ Radio Rossii Network, 24 September 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-186 25 September 1991.

³⁴ quoted by TASS International Service, 25 October 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91 - 208, 28 October 1991.

³⁵ Interfax, 13 November 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-220, 14 November 1991.

³⁶ A third round in the talks had begun on 18 November with agreement in principle being reached on a cease fire withdrawal of forces from the conflict zone, and the exchange of prisoners. The Armenians walked out declaring they would return only after the pipelines reopened. Interfax, 15 November 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91-223, 19 November 1991.

³⁷ Central Television first program Network, 25 November 1991, in FBIS - SOV, # 91 - 227, 25 November 1991.

³⁸ Text of decree read by the radio Baku Network, 5 December 1991, in FBIS-SOV, # 91-235, 6 December 1991.

Mutalibov issued a decree to citizens aged 18 and above for active military service.³⁹

Thus events in the Transcaucasus were leading Armenia and Azerbaijan to open warfare in late 1991. In December the Soviet era came to an end officially on Christmas day with the resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev and the lowering of the Soviet flag from a top the Kremlin.

The disintegration of Soviet Union also had a major impact on the geopolitical landscape of the region. For the first time in more than seventy years the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was not an internal matter of the USSR. The clash instead became an affair between two sovereign members of the international community. On the other hand the major surrounding powers - Turkey, Iran and Russia - Scrambled to assert their geopolitical interests in the region after the retreat of soviet Power. This conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan entered a new and a more deadly phase with the breakup of the Soviet Union. The opening months of 1992 were marked by the explosion of full - scale war in and around Nagorno-Karabakh between forces of Azerbaijani National Army and locally raised units of the so-called Karabakh army. On 18th January the Supreme Soviet of the

³⁹ Serge Schmemmann, "Declaring death of Soviet Union, Russia and 2 republics from new common Wealth", New York Times, 9 December 1991, A1, A4.

former NKAO declared its independence as “Nagorno Karabakh Republic.” (NKR)

In response the Azerbaijan launched a major military operation against Stepanakert from the nearby town of Agdam on 31st January. After several days of fighting Armenia forces took Khojaly on 25th February. For Azerbaijan the fall of Khojaly was a tremendous psychological and military defeat. It also proved to be the last straw for the regime of President Mutalibov. Mutalibov agreed to step down on 3rd March and parliament speaker Yaqub Mamedov was made acting president until elections could be held on 7 June.⁴⁰

Now, the focus of Armenian operations was the city of Shusha, the last remaining Azeri stronghold in Nagorno-Karabakh. After two days of fighting local Armenia units took the city. The fall of Shusha was a major blow to Azerbaijan in both psychological and strategic terms. The city was one of the historic centers of Azeri culture and nationalism in Nagorno-Karabakh. May 1992 saw a series of striking coincidences. First, Azerbaijan refused to sign the Tashkent treaty and suspended its participation in the CIS; within a few days the Armenians launched an offensive in Nagorno - Karabakh which captured Shusha and opened the Lachin corridor⁴¹ to Armenia. A few

⁴⁰ Francis S. Clines, “Angry Azerbaijanis compel chief to quit,” New York Times, 7 March 1992, A3.

⁴¹ Lachin Corridor – a physical link between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh

days later fighting spread to Nakhichevan; this prompted stern warning from Turkey, which, according to the Kars Treaty of 1921, has a role as a guarantor for this enclave. In response, Marshal Shaposhnikov, CIS commander in chief declared that any Turkish intervention could lead to a third world war. In late May newly appointed defense minister Grachev visited Armenia and made a strong effort to defuse the Crisis.⁴²

In the eyes of the Turks, the Armenia action against Nakhichevan was not just an attack on the ethnic Kinsmen in Azerbaijan but it was also a challenge to Turkey's ability to exert influence in the Muslim states of the FSO. For Russians intervention in the Transcaucasus by a third party was also the loss of Moscow's own future ability Iran's effort to build its prestige as the primary peacemaker between Armenia and Azerbaijan too received a set back. In early 1992 it appeared that the first phase of the newly intensified conflict in the Transcaucasus saw the reawakening of old geopolitical rivalries, which had been buried by decades of Soviet rule.

The USA also tried to push for a solution acting both unilaterally and through the CSCE (Conference on security and cooperation in Europe). But this organization was very slow in seizing opportunities. Agreeing

⁴² Les Smolansky, "Russia and Transcaucasia: The case of Nagorno - karabakh", pp. 201-30 in Alvin Rubinstein and Ales Smolavisky (ed.), *Regional power rivalries in the New Eurasia, Russia, Turkey and Iran*, M.E. Sharpe, 1995.

in March 1992 to convene a peace conference in Minsk, the CSCE then proceeded with several rounds of preliminary talks in June 1992 in Rome. The delegation from Nagorno-Karabakh insisted that the Karabakh Armenians be recognized as a separate negotiating entity at the Minsk conference.⁴³ Azerbaijani officials rejected it.

The second major obstacle was the timetable for discussion of the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh. According to Armenia's position the future legal status of karabakh should have been discussed only after the achievement of a permanent cessation of hostilities and the deployment of international peace keeping forces in the conflict zone. According to Baku the dispatch of peacekeepers to Nagorno Karabakh would have diminished Azerbaijani sovereignty over the region. Thus Azerbaijani delegates to the CSCE discussion argued that the status of Nagorno Karabakh must be defined as a prerequisite to formal peace talks in Minsk.⁴⁴ In June however new circumstances arose that caused the military situation to shift back in Azerbaijan's favour. In mid September 1992 Azerbaijani troops captured Lachin and Shusha. On 19 September after an active participation of Russian defense minister Pavel Grachev, the defense chief of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a detailed agreement for a five month cease fire and a phased

⁴³ ANSA, 20 June 1992, in FBIS -SOV, # 92 - 120, 22 June 1992.

⁴⁴ Izvestiya, 19 June 1992, in FBIS - SOV, # 92 - 120, 22 June 1992.

withdrawal of the warring parties and the armed formations from Nagorno-Karabakh.⁴⁵

But heavy fighting along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan marked the closing month of 1992. The conflict was at last threatening to take on the character of a full-scale war between the two Transcaucasian republics. The year 1993 witnessed a major escalation in the hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The fifth year of the Armenia Azerbaijan conflict opened with the onset of a large-scale military operation by Karabakh. Armenian forces aimed at regaining ground lost to Azerbaijan. But soon succeeded in retaking most of northern Nagorno-Karabakh including a strategic road junction linking the area with the Lachin corridor.⁴⁶

After the victory in the north, Karabakh Armenian forces turned to the west and attacked the Kelbajar district of Azerbaijan. After heavy fighting from 31 March to 3 April local Armenian troops succeeded in capturing the regional center of Kelbajar and numerous surrounding villages. The attack of Kelbajar prompted a humanitarian crisis in western Azerbaijan, which prompted the President to declare a state of emergency across the republic.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Krasnaya Zvezda, 23 September 1992, in FBIS - SOV, # 92-185, 23 September 1992.

⁴⁶ Text of State of Emergency decree as read by Radio Baku Network, 2 April 1993, in FBIS - SOV, # 93-063, 5 April 1993.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Elizabeth Fuller, "International Diplomatic Reaction to Fighting Azerbaijan", RFE/RL News Briefs 2 No. 16, April 1993.

The expansion of military operations by local Armenian forces sparked a major outcry among the international community. The UN Security Council released a statement on 6 April expressing serious concern with the capture of Kelbajar and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities.⁴⁸ The most serious reactions came from Turkey and Iran. On 3rd April, Ankara decided that no humanitarian and other aid would be allowed to transit Turkish territory on the way to Armenia.⁴⁹ Four days later the Turkish Third army in eastern Anatolia was put on alert and moved into positions along the Armenian border.⁵⁰ President Ozal claimed that Turkey might consider a military alliance with Baku.⁵¹

The Turkish government's action in April 1993 showed its displeasure and unease with the course of events between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Iran was also unhappy. President Rafsanjani announced that the fighting close to the Iranian border was affecting Iran's security and claimed that a more serious stance would have to be adopted should the situation continue.⁵² The Iranian foreign ministry expressed deep concern over the recent massacre of innocent people

⁴⁸ TRT Television Network, 3 April 1993, in FBIS - WEU, # 93 - 063, 5 April 1993.

⁴⁹ Kanal -6 Television, 8 April 1993, in FBIS-WEU, # 93-067, 9 April 1993.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Fuller, "Ozal Raises Possibility of Turkish Azerbaijani military Alliance", RFE/RL New brief 2, no. 17, 13-16 April 1993.

⁵¹ Quoted in "Iranians deliver a warning to Azerbaijan and Armenia", New York Times, April 1993, A5.

⁵² Excerpt from statement as read by IRIB Television first program network, 5 April 1993, in FBIS - NES, # 93-064, 6 April 1993.

and called upon the Armenia forces to withdraw from the areas of Azerbaijan it had occupied.

As International tensions increased over the Transcaucasus, the UN security council passed resolution number 822 on 30th April 1993. The first security council resolution concerning the Armenia – Azerbaijan conflict, called for an immediate cease fire and the prompt withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Kelbajar district and other occupied areas of Azerbaijan.⁵³ The Resolution was welcomed by all. Both the Armenian government and the self styled NKR administration greeted the act favourably. Yerevan took the warning as a recognition of its claims of non-involvement in the dispute while the Karabakh Armenians interpreted it as an acknowledgement of their status as a party to the conflict.⁵⁴ On the other hand Azerbaijan also supported the resolution 822 for its provision that rejected the forceful alteration of existing borders.⁵⁵

In the wake of the passage of resolution 822 an effort was made to start the stalled CSCE mediation effort. A tripartite peace plan prepared by Turkey, Russia and the US was presented to the warring parties. Its document called for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories outside Nagorno-

⁵³ United nations security council, S/RES/822, 30 April 1993.

⁵⁴ Itar-Tass, 6 May 1993, in FBIS - SOV, # 93-086, 6 May 1993.

⁵⁵ Azertac, 2 May 1993, in FBIS - SOV, # 93-083, 3 May 1995.

Karabakh, and the preparation of a plan for a comprehensive peace settlement.⁵⁶ While the Russo –Turkish plan held out promise for a peaceful resolution of Karabakh clash, events in Transcaucasus in June 1993 once again outpaced the efforts of the mediators and leaders alike. The popularity of President Elchibey and Azerbaijan Popular Front (APF) began to decline in the first half of 1993. On 19 June, Heydar Aliyev became acting President of Baku. Aliyev and Huseinov commenced negotiations on a power sharing arrangement and it was agreed that the latter would become prime minister and head of the military and the internal security ministry.⁵⁷

The Karabakh Armenians took advantage of the June disarray in Baku to expand the scope of their military operations to attack on Agdam, a large Azerbaijani city to the east of Nagorno-Karabakh. After five weeks fighting Agdam fell to Armenian troops on 23 July. The UN Security council adopted resolution 853 on 29 July 1993. It was similar to resolution 822. Resolution 853 called for an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of occupying forces from Azerbaijani territory. With the International community's attention focused on events in the Agdam district, ethnic Armenian forces renewed their offensive in the southwest of Azerbaijan. On 23 July, Fizuli came under heavy attack.

⁵⁶ Izvestiya, 5 May 1993, in FBIS – SOV, # 93-116, 6 May 1993.

⁵⁷ "Veteran Communist Crowns a Comeback in Azerbaijan", New York Times, 1 July 1993, A2.

Jebraïl and Fizuli fell on 20 and 24 August respectively.⁵⁸ This consolidated Armenian control over most of southwestern Azerbaijan.⁵⁹

Continuation of Armenians attacks in southwestern Azerbaijan alarmed Iranian troops, Turkey also reinforced its military units along the frontier of Armenia. Despite the caution demonstrated by Turkey, Russia and Iran during the events of early September 1993, tensions remained high in the Transcaucasus. Despite the caution with which the three powers approached the developments, the very real potential lingered for the explosion of a major regional war in the Transcaucasus. An emerging international awareness of the possible dangers of expanded warfare in Transcaucasia was enshrined in UN security council resolution 874 adopted on 14 October 1993. Similar to the previous two resolutions 874 differed in that it urged all states in the region to refrain from any hostile act and from any interference or intervention which would lead to the widening of the conflict and undermine peace and security in the region.⁶⁰

Unexpectedly, the Azerbaijani forces launched a sudden attack in the Jebraïl region on 21 October. The town of Goradiz fell on 25 October.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Fuller, "Armenia Azerbaijan Update", RFE/RL News Briefs, vol. 2, no. 34, 16-20 August 1993.

⁵⁹ Jebraïl was the location of a key national highway that linked the three southwestern district of Azerbaijan with the eastern two thirds of the country. Agency France Presse, 24 August 1993, in FBIS - SOV, # 93-162, 24 August 1993.

⁶⁰ United Nations Security Council, S/RES/874, 14 October 1993.

The Azerbaijani success in late 1993 and early 1994 had a significant impact on the hostilities. The warring parties agreed to a termination of military operations on 12 May 1994. The achievement of a cease fire in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone in May 1994 set the stage for difficult negotiations mediated by a host of International mediators.

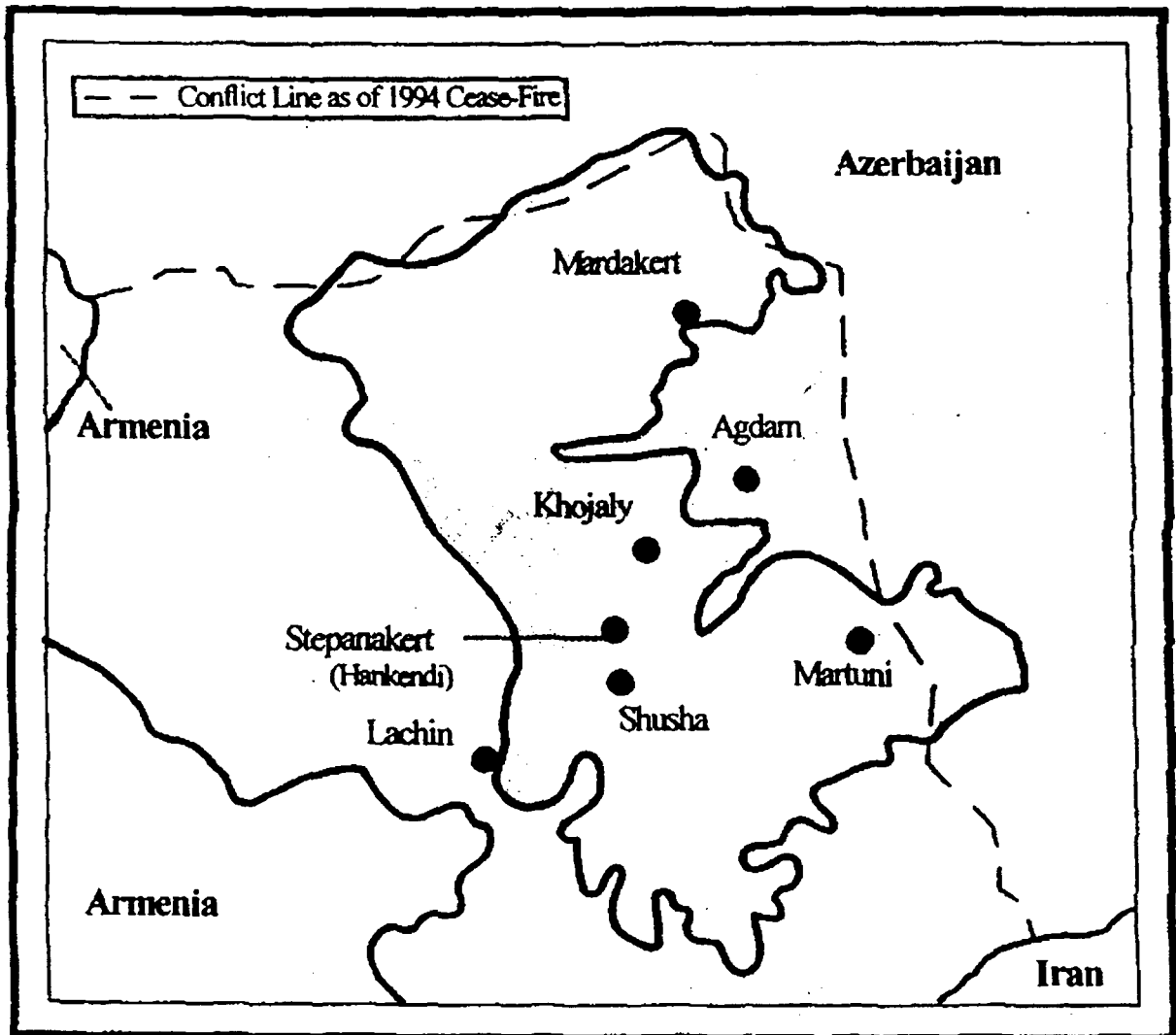
The May 1994 cease – fire had its origin in a Russian drive to become the chief mediator of Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, which began in mid 1993. Baku opened direct Russian mediated talks with representatives of the Karabakh Armenian leadership in July 1993.⁶¹ Russian mediation was to be responded with a summit between President Boris Yeltsin and the three Transcaucasian heads of state. The Russian side proposed the signing of a communiqué envisioning “a significant strengthening of Russia’s position and role in the Transcaucasus region.”⁶²

or Azerbaijan the establishment of Russian military basis in the country would infringe upon its sovereignty and make Baku dependent upon Moscow. Unlike the Azerbaijanis the Armenians looked to Russia as a big brother, a protector from the hostile Turks

⁶¹ Turan, 8 October 1993, in FBIS - SOV, # 93-195 , 12 October 1993.

⁶² Spokesman for Armenian President Ter Petrosyan quoted in Elizabeth Fuller, “The Karabakh Mediation Process: Grachev Versus the CSCE,” RFE/RL Research Report, vol. 3, no. 23, 10 June 1994.

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and Azeris. Thus, Yerevan welcomed Moscow as the only power capable of really playing the role of a mediator in the peace process.⁶³

Russian defense minister Pavel Grachev emphasized upon the establishment of Russian bases in the three states. Where as Georgia and Armenia agreed, Azerbaijan remained reluctant. According to the Azerbaijani President Russian troops could be deployed only within the framework of an international force, under the aegis of the CSCE. Finally on 12 May a cease fire agreement was signed between Russian defense minister, Armenia, Azerbaijan and a representative from Nagorno-Karabakh.

By the middle of 1994 a comprehensive draft plan for a political settlement of the Armenia - Azerbaijan conflict was taking shape in Moscow. The document envisaged a six-part process by which a resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh dispute would be achieved. These were :

- Withdrawal of all military forces to a separating distance of 5 to 20 km within three days of the accord's signing followed by the pull out of Armenian troops from the Agdam and Fizuli district of Azerbaijan and deployment of primarily Russian disengagement forces in the separation strip.

⁶³ Interfax, 15 November 1994, FBIS - SOV, # 94 - 220, 15 November 1994.

- Withdrawal of Armenia units from Jebraïl within 10 days, followed by exchange of prisoners of war, the lifting of all transportation, communication and energy blockades and the return of Aezri refugees, and police units to the Agdam and Fizuli districts.
- Withdrawal of Armenian forces from the Zangelan district within 15 days.
- Withdrawal of Armenian units from Kubatly district within 20 days followed by the commencement of repair and restoration of transportation links in affected areas and return of Azerbaijani police units to Jebraïl and Zanglen.
- Withdrawal of Armenian units from Kelbajar district within 28 days followed by the return there of Azerbaijani police restoration of the all transportation, communication and energy links within one month.
- Discussion of the ultimate legal and administrative status of Nagorno-Karabakh for an undefined period beginning at the time of the accord's signing.

Thus, from the above terms of the drafted treaty provisions it becomes evident that Russia wanted to arrive at a solution to the conflict, but Azerbaijan rejected the Russian dominated accord. The major objection was to the deployment of the Russian dominated forces. The

second major obstacle was the timing of the proposed Azerbaijani withdrawal from Shusha and Lachin. The draft agreement called for the two contentious areas to remain under Armenian control until their status could be determined. Baku insisted that the Armenians agree to pull out completely from Shusha and Lachin.

The Moscow talks ended on 13 August without agreement on the draft plan. Russia's attempt to emerge as the dominant peacemaker made little real headway. While the draft comprehensive political agreement was a creation of Moscow, the conflicting parties continued to adopt stances that precluded compromise and the CSCE took on a more active role in the negotiation process that was welcomed by Russian officials. A further obstacle was erected with the conclusion of the long delayed oil contract between Azerbaijan and western oil companies with the breakup of the USSR. Azerbaijan found itself in control of its own energy resources for the first time in seven decades. Moscow had sought to keep western influence out of the region. This move on part of Azerbaijan blocked the peace efforts. Moreover, Azerbaijan reiterated that only a peace agreement within the framework of CSCE (conference on Security and cooperation in Europe) was acceptable to it.

Heads of state and government from the fifty-three member states of the CSCE met in Budapest from 5 to 6 December 1994 to discuss the

body's role in the resolution of conflicts in Europe and the FSU (Former Soviet Union). Among the issues Nagorno Karabakh took center stage. After many months of resistance to the deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, Russia dropped its insistence on having the dominant responsibility.

Thus, the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan has brought immense destruction and hardship to the region. More than 25,000 lives have been lost and scores of towns and villages have been utterly destroyed. Armenia faces a large refugee burden as well as a devastating blockade that has aggravated the effects of the soviet economic collapse and produced an energy shortage. Whereas the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute was transformed from an internal Soviet problem in 1988 - 1991 to a regional problem in 1992 - 1993, other external powers like Turkey and Iran have also entered the regional scene. With an eye on the huge oil and gas resources of the Caspian sea basin, which could become the west's second most important energy source in the next century, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, UK and the US, have heightened their economic engagements in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia through investments and joint ventures.

Although the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a struggle to the soul for Armenia and Azerbaijan, the separation of Karabakh from

Armenia has been and will continue to be a wound in the Armenian national consciousness. Thus, there is likely to be continued uncertainty as to how to proceed and as time goes on the Karabakh question will increasingly damage the Armenian nation. Also due to the Nagorno - Karabakh conflict many changes have come in Armenian political system from 1991-1994. The fall of communist regime in 1991 was directly related to the Karabakh question. First time a non-communist party- Pan-Armenian National Movement (PANM) came in power and Ter Petrosyan became the President of the republic.

Thus, the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh has brought about many internal as well as external changes in both the conflicting countries. The period between 1991 to 1994 has been a formative one for the Armenian nation. Drastic changes have come about in its polity. In the next chapter we would be looking into these changes in detail.

CHAPTER 4

First General Elections and Constitutional Referendum in Independent Armenia and its Impact on the Emergence of a New Political System

Under the circumstances of the absence of statehood throughout several centuries the Armenian nation adopted mechanisms and institutes of a protective way of living and specific national development. Particularly, the "family" was the "core" of social reproduction and the most solid value of national totality, the church was a center of supra-state governance, and the culture was a code of inheritance and national myths. Being located in a zone of Eurasian contacts, in the cultural sense Armenians was oriented towards the European Christian environment. As opposed to this, the Armenian territory was always located in the zones of Oriental Empires - Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Russian, and i.e., outside of the zones where democratic theory and practice were developed and implemented. Though in contrast with this it should be reiterated that in the traditional Armenian system of governance there was a practice of forming a governing body through elections, e.g., the elections of the Catholics. If we take into account that the Armenian Apostolic Church has also performed some non-spiritual, that is to say national government functions, it is possible to say that the outlook and the living philosophy of the Armenian nation incorporated some democratic components.

The short two-year biography of the First Armenian Republic (1918-1920) does not allow us to make full judgements about the democratic governance, since at that time survival tactics were adopted. Although

the First Republic was Parliamentary, this system did not work as a state governance structure in both time and conceptual terms. The primary objective of the new state was the resistance to the constant changes of the borders and periodic humanitarian disasters.

The case of the Second Republic (1920-1990) was essentially different. During the Soviet period in the framework of the Constitution a legislative body existed. - The Supreme Soviet. However it was of a symbolic nature. The elections to this body were conducted according to a preliminarily established scenario. Moreover, this scenario was preserved throughout the decades. In reality, the Armenian nation did not have an exemplary experience of forming government through elections.

After the declaration of independence, in the beginning of the 1990-s in Armenia as well as in all other parts of the former Soviet Union, mass public movements and the political structures first of all replaced the centralized authoritarian model with a democratic, representational. The implantation of new ideas took place as a result of devaluation of the communist ideology on the one hand, and the struggle to acquire the experiences of Western free markets and democracies with all their social, economic and security aspects, on the other.

The experience in reality has proven that democracy building is not a sequence of some steps and it does not have a direct impact, automatic self evolution, as it was presenting during the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The existence of traditional perceptions, the dominant experience and practices of the autocratic system, as well as the absence of democratic-civic resources in the paradigm of national values are all proportionally opposite to the declared objectives of establishment of democracy. Simultaneous with the adoption of the new electoral systems, new technologies of electoral fraud were being elaborated. The first parliamentary elections of independent Armenia took place in 1995 as formally the 1990 elections of the Supreme Council were under the jurisdiction of the Soviet government. Regardless of the different evaluations, those elections were unique for Armenia: first as a result of a referendum the Constitution was adopted, and second, a new legislative entity was formed - the National Assembly. (According to the Constitution, the National Assembly is a one-chamber parliament and has 131 elected deputies. The laws are adopted by majority vote of the deputies present at the sessions (Chapter 4). The parliament of 1995 was elected for the transition period and had 190 members (150 majority and 40 proportional votes).

A draft resolution expressing a vote of no confidence towards the government may be proposed by not less than one third of the total

number of deputies and be adopted by the majority of the deputies present. The National Assembly may declare war, shall ratify or revoke the international treaties signed by the President of the Republic after the recommendations of the President. The President of the Republic may dissolve the National Assembly and designate extraordinary elections. The Parliament can initiate President impeachment procedure.

The parliamentary elections in 1995 were significant for two important and contradictory realities. Those elections occurred under the cloud of the banning of the principal opposition party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) whose media facilities were also shut down, but on the other hand these were the first multiparty elections. Though the elected National Assembly was characterized by party homogeneity and absence of strong opposition, it was unique for both its positive as well as negative practices: The analytical studies based on several sociological studies illustrate that none of the parties attained complete public confidence. Instead, public apathy and unimportance of the activities of the parties were predominant. Given these data, it can be stated, that the process of filling the seats in the representative body of the country was a competition between the strong and weak elite, as opposed to being a result of the participation of wide layers of the society.

The adoption of the Constitution and the parliamentary elections enhanced the possibility for the rule of law, yet provided strong levers to the President. The constitutional statements on separation of powers, principles of the citizens' participation in governance, and democratic freedoms remained more as norms that politically were inapplicable. After the Constitution came into force, the aim became to establish a centralized governing system. The powers vested to the President were used to centralize the power on the presidential and executive levels as opposed to separation of powers and balance control.

The mass violations that took place during the 1995-1996 electoral processes made the role of the parliament inefficient for society, discredited the presidential power, and weakened the trust in the formation of the government through elections. The operations of the first parliament of independent Armenia illustrated that the ideological, party and social motivations are still secondary in parliamentary activities. After the resignation of the first President the new majority followed his behavior as well as political everlasting mode], which now was headquartered differently. The government structure encouraged business, clannish, party-based and criminal groups to be motivated in participation in the election processes. File interests in the distribution of property, privatization, the deputy immunity was promoted competition for access to the parliament. All

possible legal and illegal means were applied to guarantee the requisite number of votes. The executive government using full capacities was interfering in the election processes in order to establish a legislative body in accordance with their own power concept.

The presidential elections that took place on September 22, 1996 were an imitation of the 1995 parliamentary elections. The amended electoral tools were used during the pre-election period, though during the final stage mass disorders took place and force was applied.

Having discussed the electoral processes in Armenia since independence, it is possible to outline their dynamics.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

An important feature of politics in the Caucasus region, including Armenia, is the weakness of formal structures.

Many political parties are vehicles for advancing personal interests rather than rallying points for ideological positions. The political spectrum is highly fragmented and the parties lack any firm anchorage in society. To evaluate a politician's position, one would need to know his clan or client relations rather than his official function. Because political relations are taken personally, opposition coalitions are weak, while the ruling party can buy loyalty by granting personal favours.

The major Armenian political parties have their origins in three different sources: the national independence movement of the late 1980's; the historic parties which existed before the communist takeover of 1920 and survived communism in the Armenian diaspora; and, the Communist Party.

The national independence movement dates back to the dissident movement of the 1970's. It became politically relevant in 1988 when the Karabakh Committee was formed to coordinate support for the unification of Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia. Most of Armenia's post-communist governing elite originates from the Karabakh Committee. In June 1988 the committee founded the Armenian Pan-National Movement, which obtained a majority in the Armenian Supreme Soviet in May 1990. One of its leaders, Levon Ter Petrosyan, became the Supreme Soviet's new chairman, from which position he led the republic to full independence. The programme of the Armenian Pan-National Movement - which was later to change its name to Armenian National Movement (ANM) - included building an independent national Armenian state on historic Armenian territory, the revival and development of Armenia's national and Christian traditions and values, and the creation of a democratic state, based on the respect for human rights. On 16 October 1991, Levon Ter Petrosyan became President of the republic with 83 per cent of the

vote.¹ Once in power, the ANM modified its original programme. The party, while supporting the Karabakh Armenians, tried to establish good relations with Turkey and the international community, which objected against any infringement on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. After some initial successes, economic reform slowed down and at present the state is still omnipresent in Armenia's economic life. Despite its dominant position, in 1996 the ANM only had an estimated 10,000 members.²

Currently the ANM is the leading member of Republic, the rightist ruling bloc. The other members of the bloc are the Christian Democratic Union, the Social-Democratic Party, Gnchak, the Republican Party and the Intellectual Armenia alliance.³ The Liberal Democratic Party/ Ramkavar-Azatakan left the bloc in 1995 in protest against the measures taken against the Armenian Revolutionary Federation/ Dashnaksutiun (ARF).

Because of conflicting ambitions and Levon Ter Petrosyan's authoritarian style of government, and because of the modification of the originally radical nationalist principles of the ANM, several leading personalities and groups have left the ANM, most importantly Vazgen

¹ Human Rights Watch /Helsinki Watch, *Seven Years of War in Nagorno-Karabakh* New York, 1994, P. 2.

² Luchterhandt, p. 167

³ *Analytica Moscow/CIS Weekly Press Summary*, "Electoral Campaign Begins", vol. 1, no. 4, (10-16 December 1994).

Manukian and Ashot Manucharian. In December 1991, the former founded Armenia's main opposition party, the National Democratic Union (NDU). He had been the coordinator of the Karabakh Committee since 1988 and headed the Government in 1990-91. During the culminating phase of the Karabakh war, Vazgen Manukian was acting Minister of Defense until his dismissal by President Levon Ter Petrosyan in 1993.⁴ The NDU's programme seems to be geared towards ousting President Levon Ter Petrosyan rather than radically changing the country's political course. Its criticism of the Government focuses on four issues: insufficient support from the government for the establishment of an independent Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh; the alleged pilfering and criminalization of the economy under the guise of privatization and democratization; alleged tendencies to rule through the power ministries and to disregard the law, leading to despotism; the refusal to create minimum conditions for the holding of free and fair elections. In brief, the NDU presents itself as a moral rather than a political alternative to the ANM. All major opposition parties support these four criticisms.⁵ Currently, the NDU is Armenia's main opposition party.

⁴ *Monitor*, "Manukian Nominated as Presidential Candidate", vol. 2, no. 116, 13 June 1996.

⁵ *Caucas Bulletin*, "Joint Statement of Armenian Opposition Political Parties", vol. 4, no. 20, 19 October 1994.

Ashot Manucharian, Interior Minister from 1991 to 1992, leads the other main split from the ANM, the Scientific-

Industrial and Civic Union of Armenia (SICUA). Not unlike the NDU, the SICUA proposes a cleaning up of Armenia's politics rather than drastic policy changes.

Another political party to emerge from the national independence movement was the National self-determination Union, led by former dissident Paruir Hairikian. The party depends on the moral authority that its leader has built over the past ten years. Since 1990, it has become increasingly oppositional. Other nationalist parties with similar origins are the militant Republican Party, the Christian-Democratic Union and the Constitutional Rights Union.

A newcomer is the women's party Shamiram, which was surprisingly successful during the 1995 legislative elections. Shamiram is strictly loyal to the ruling majority and can be regarded as an offspring of the national independence movement in the sense that spouses of ministers and high-ranking ANM officials dominate its leadership. The Communist Party of Armenia (CPA) quickly disintegrated after the take-over by the ANM. It lost its assets and most of its 250,000 members. Since then the CPA, led by Sergei Badalian, has objected to the social costs of liberal economic reforms and advocated the restoration of the Soviet Union. Reportedly, the CPA has 45,000

members but their average age is high. In 1991, the pro-reform Democratic Party led by Aram Sarkisian, split from the CPA.⁶ The Armenian Revolutionary Federation/Dashnaksutiun (ARF, also referred to as the Dashnaks) is the historic champion of the struggle for Armenian self-determination. Established in 1890, it ruled Armenia during its 1918-1920 independence period, which was dominated by war with Turkey and Azerbaijan. Combining socialist-revolutionary and radical nationalist ideas, the ARF was severely persecuted by the Soviet regime, while playing a dominant role within the Armenian diaspora. The party is anti-Turkish, pledging to "maintain its commitment to the Armenian people's territorial claims", which dates back to the genocide of 1915. The ARF believes that Armenia's foreign policy should be based on "developing relations particularly with Iran and Russia".⁷ The party's headquarters are in Athens, but to comply with Armenian state regulations it was decided in 1996 to give its Armenian section fully independent status. The ARF has played a crucial role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It has dominated politics inside Nagorno Karabakh for several years and has played a vital role in mobilizing the Armenian diaspora for the secessionist government of Nagorno-Karabakh.

⁶ Luchterhandt, pp. 167-168

⁷ *Monitor*, "Armenian Opposition Movement Relies on Moscow and Tehran Against Turkey", vol. 1, no. 154, 8 December 1995.

From the start, the ARF has been in sharp opposition to the ANM and Levon Ter Petrosyan, whom it accused of trading vital national interests for short term pragmatic considerations and selling out the national economy to criminals and former members of the nomenklatura. The ARF has suffered badly from government obstruction. Due to the Marxist-Leninist characteristics of its organizational structure, membership is modest with only 4,500 in Armenia, compared with its ability to mobilize at least 40,000 people in Yerevan for its demonstrations. One reason for the ARF's modest success in Armenian politics is its lack of internal unity. Many members resent the party's recent departure from socialist-revolutionary principles to a form of social-liberalism. Many non-diaspora members feel that opposition to the ANM should also mean opposition to liberal economic reforms. Another factor obstructing the development of the ARF in Armenia is the differences in mentality and experience between Armenians from the diaspora, who speak "West-Armenian" and are well integrated into western society, and the East-Armenians who have been brought up in the Soviet Union.

The other main historic party is the Liberal Democratic Party/Ramkavar-Azatakan (LDP). Dating back to the 19th century, the LDP has traditionally been the party of Armenian intellectuals and businessmen. In 1993, the party had about 2,000 members in Armenia. It publishes one of Armenia's main newspapers, Azg.

Initially, LDP's relations with the ANM were good. The LDP joined the Republic bloc, but it has severed its relations with the ANM since the crackdown on the ARF in December 1994.⁸

The third historic party is the Social Democratic Party Gnchak. Founded in 1887 and traditionally the moderate alternative to the ARF, Gnchak is one of the parties loyal to the ANM and a member of the Republic bloc, led by ANM.⁹

THE SUPPRESSION OF THE ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION/DASHNAKSUTIUN (ARF)

Despite its professed commitment to democratic pluralism, the ANM quickly utilized its political dominance to neutralize its political rivals. First the Communist Party's structures were destroyed by the banning in November 1990 of activities of political parties in state organs and enterprises. Then, on 26 February 1991, the activities of the ARF were restricted with the adoption of the law On Civic-Political Organizations, which banned political parties with headquarters outside Armenia and prevented Political 1 parties from receiving assistance from abroad or from having foreign citizens as members or within the leadership.¹⁰ The use of legal instruments to fight the political opposition is typical

⁸ Luchterhandt, p. 170-171

⁹ Luchterhandt, p. 171-172

¹⁰ Elizabeth Fuller, "Ruling Party Strengthens Its Hold on Power", *Transition* Prague, vol. 1, no. 19, 20 October 1995, P. 56.

of the President's attitude: democratic in form, authoritarian in content. The ARF is his primary target, which suggests that the ARF be perceived as potentially the strongest opposition force.

On 17 June 1994, the law On the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals was adopted; several provisions of which seemed to be aimed at crippling the ARF, in particular its prohibition of participation by foreign citizens residing in Armenia in the activities of civic-political organizations.¹¹ On 10 October 1995 the National Assembly adopted a new citizenship law which ruled out dual citizenship. This primarily affected diaspora Armenians, who had until then been able to enjoy the rights of Armenian citizenship without renouncing the citizenship of their adoptive country. The law frustrated the wish of many diaspora members to settle in Armenia while preserving the advantages of their foreign passports.

In December 1994 dozens of ARF members were arrested following increasing tension between the ARF and the authorities. On 28 December President Levon Ter Petrosyan issued a decree prohibiting the activities of the ARF. He accused the ARF of having established a secret section, a group called DRO, which was allegedly engaged in political terror, drug trafficking, espionage, illegal commercial activities

¹¹ Human Rights Advocates, *Violations of Civil and Political Rights: Report of the Human Rights Advocates Fact Finding Mission to the Republic of Armenia, 20-26 January 1995, Washington, 31 January 1995.*

and political murders. He also accused the party of having a foreign leadership. Shortly before the action taken against the ARF, which was accompanied by the closing of opposition newspapers, the relaying of Radio Liberty's Armenian broadcasts had been stopped. On 13 January 1996, a panel of three judges of the Supreme Court decided to uphold the ARF ban for six months on the grounds that its leadership included foreign citizens. The ban was later extended and is still valid.¹² Following the ban on the ARF, alleged members of the DRO group were arrested. One DRO suspect, Artavazd Manukian, died in custody on 15 May 1995, while awaiting trial. There were allegations that he died due to extensive loss of blood and inadequate medical attention; the State claims that Manukian died of natural causes. On many occasions, the court neglected the rules of due process and the trial was widely viewed as essentially political.¹³ On 12 November 1996, the Armenian Supreme Court handed down death sentences to three defendants and sentenced the other eight defendants to three to fifteen years prison terms for "banditism", drug trafficking and two assassinations. However, the Court also ruled that there was insufficient evidence that ARF leader and Karabakh liberation movement organizer Hrand Markarian had led the group, thereby rejecting the President's initial charges against the party. The

¹² Human Rights Advocates

¹³ U.S. Department of State, Country Report On Human Rights Practices for 1995.

Courts verdict, however, did not remove all suspicion about direct links between DRO and the ARF. In an interview with Armenpress, the presiding judge at the DRO trial, Eduard Manukian, stated that the evidence presented had been insufficient, but that there remained serious grounds for believing that DRO had indeed been created and led by the ARF.¹⁴

On 29 July 1995 the ARF Bureau member Vahan Hovanesian and 31 others were arrested on charges of terrorism and of planning to overthrow the Government by force. Like the DRO case, the "case against the 31 " has been widely interpreted as a politically inspired legal action. In early 1997, the court proceedings were still going on. The banning of the ARF and related measures have been severely criticized by international human rights organizations. In their 31 January 1995 report, Human Rights Advocates noted a number of violations of Armenia's international human rights obligations in relation to the decision to suspend the ARF under the following headings:

Freedom of political association:

The Supreme Court Decision upholding the suspension allegedly violates Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

¹⁴ Armenpress, "Interview with the Chairman of the Board of Judges of Criminal Cases of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Armenia, the Presiding Person at the 'DRO' Trial, Eduard Manukian", 17 December 1996.

Freedom of expression:

Newspapers, journals, magazines and other news media as well as related organizations were shut down, allegedly in violation of Article 19 of the ICCPR.

Minimum, standards of due process:

Articles 9, 13, 14 and 17 of the ICCPR.

Derogation from or restrictions on human rights obligations :

Article 4 of the ICCPR as well as alleged violation of permissible restrictions.¹⁵

On 11 August 1996 the ARF presented a revised party charter to the Armenian Ministry of Justice, seeking thereby to remove the official reason for its suspension, the presence of foreigners among the members and leadership of the party, but the Government has so far regarded the changes as insufficient.¹⁶

THE 1995 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

On 5 July 1995 a new Armenian constitution was approved by 68 per cent of the voters participating in a national referendum. The document replaced the 1977 Soviet Republic of Armenia

¹⁵ Human Rights Advocates

¹⁶ *Transcaucasus: A Chronology*, vol. 5, no. 9, September 1996.

Constitution.¹⁷ It severely circumscribed the powers of powers of the Legislature relative to the Executive and allocated the President unfettered powers over the government, the judiciary and local authorities.¹⁸ It provides for all basic human rights, but allows most of these rights to be restricted or suspended in times of emergency, the latter in most cases being determined by the President.¹⁹ Article 99 of the Constitution stipulates that the President of the Republic appoints four of the nine justices of the Constitutional Court, and the National Assembly appoints the remaining five. The President of the Republic also appoints the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court from among the total of nine justices. Given the fact that the presidential coalition has an 80 per cent majority in parliament, the Head of State is in a position to control fully the composition of the Constitutional Court.²⁰ As it is the Constitutional Court that has the final decision on complaints about election procedures, present Armenian legislation appears to lack an appropriate set of checks and balances as regards the vital issue of parliamentary and presidential elections.

The parliamentary elections and the constitutional referendum of 5 July 1995 were regulated by the 1977 Soviet Republic of Armenia

¹⁷ *Analytica Moscow/CIS Weekly Press Summary*, "Voting on Constitution and General Elections", vol. 2, no. 26, 8-14 July 1995.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1995* Washington DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996.

¹⁹ International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, *Annual Report, 1996* Vienna, 1996, P. 23.

²⁰ International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, *Annual Report, 1996* Vienna, 1996, P. 23.

Constitution, the changes and additions to constitutional law passed on 27 March 1995, the 2 April 1991 Referendum Law with subsequent changes and additions and the 4 April 1995 National Assembly Election Law. These documents were in many respects contradictory and imprecise and left open ample possibilities for election fraud.²¹ The 1996 Law on the Elections of the President of the Republic of Armenia and the 1996 Law on the Elections of Local Self-Governing Bodies regulated the 22 September 1996 presidential elections. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe expressed the opinion that these laws were much better than those regulating the 1995 election processes, but severely criticized their implementations.²²

Because of the dominant role of the President, most cabinet ministers are colourless bureaucrats rather than politicians, with the exception of the Interior, Security and Defense Ministers. These play a vital role because of the importance of the Karabakh issue and the President's inclination to use security forces for political means.

In the first post-independence general parliamentary elections of 5 July 1995, the Republic bloc, headed by the ruling Armenian National

²¹ Vote Armenia, A Report on the Constitutional Referendum and the National Assembly Elections in the Republic of Armenia on July 5 and July 29, 1995, Yerevan, 1995.

²² Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Armenian Presidential Elections September 22, 1996.. Final Report of the OSCE/ODHIR Observation Mission*, Prague, 23 October 1996.

Movement (ANM), won 20 of the 44 seats allocated under the proportional representation system. The pro-Government women's organization Shamiram took 12 seats while the remaining 12 seats were won by the opposition, including 6 by the Communist Party. The National Democratic Union and National self-determination Union and the Christian Democrats claimed 3 seats each.²³ The ANM also gained the vast majority of the seats contested under constituency voting. Overall, the Republic bloc obtained over 80 per cent of the 190 parliamentary seats.²⁴ The constitutional referendum also became a victory for the Government. The Central Electoral Commission asserted that 68 per cent of voters taking part in the constitutional referendum, held at the same time as the elections, approved the draft constitution.²⁵

Immediately after the elections, Union for Justice, a bloc of opposition parties, accused the Government of unprecedented levels of forgery in the elections and of using brute force to achieve its targets.²⁶ The united opposition forum asserted that the results of both the parliamentary elections and the referendum had been almost entirely

²³ *Analytica Moscow/CIS Weekly Press Summary*, "Voting on Constitution and General Elections, vol. 2, no. 26, 8-14 July 1995.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Analytica Moscow/CIS Weekly Press Summary*, "New Parliament to Commence Work on July 27", vol. 2, no. 27, 15-21 July 1995.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1995*

falsified, claiming that only 21 per cent of the voters had actually approved the draft constitution.²⁷

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ELECTION

International observers were co-ordinated for the first by a joint OSCE/UN mission. They had spent 4 months in the country and with several regional teams had offered assistance to the electoral process. Observers who were only able to spend a short time in Armenia were deployed around the country often having to spend the night in various locations. This seemed unnecessary as Armenia is the smallest ex-Soviet republic with adequate roads _ from one such deployment in Spitak it was possible to return to the capital within two hours. More seriously, observers were driven in cars with a large sign 'election observers in the windscreen announcing their arrival at polling stations. However, for the first time, local NGOs had with the help of the American Democratic Party's National Democratic Institute, NDI, organized a network of observers themselves under the name Vote Armenia. This organization was only registered 24 hours before polling day after much government obstruction and had little time to coordinate its activities: it was required to arrange the documentation of one hundred local groups within twenty-four hours to qualify for registration, for instance. Nevertheless, Vote Armenia had arranged to

²⁷ *Analytica Moscow/CIS Weekly Press Summary*, vol. 2, no. 27, 15-21 July 1995.

place 1770 observers in 12 regions and they had 48 organizing units in cities and regions.

The observers made the following comments:

There was barely manageable chaos both within polling stations (for example, Ashtarak, Talin, Giumri, and Hrazdan) and among those waiting outside. This was caused primarily by an elaborate system of voter registration: once a voter had been identified on the register another member of the electoral commission had to complete a certificate to enable that person to vote. Only then was a ballot paper handed out. This is an unusual procedure not seen before in CIS countries. The rules for the use of the certificate are contained in Chapter VII article 26 of the Electoral Law. Here it is implied that the voter's details - date of birth address etc. have been previously filled in by the electoral commission from the register. However, this did not seem to have been done; commission members were taking down details in a painstaking fashion from each voter and thus creating long queues. Although this group did not witness outright acts of violence, observers for the parties said that clashes had taken place between members of the public and local officials. This seemed all too likely if only because of the poor organization. Pressure was also put on people both inside and

outside the polling stations on which way to vote, particularly 'yes' to the referendum.

The queues, however, did not betoken a high turnout. In many places only 10% of the electorate had voted by mid-morning (it is usual in the FSU for people to vote early in the day). By 5 o'clock, in some places, it had not exceeded 60%. In Yerevan it was lower still (low turnouts are common in capital cities in the FSU). In the course of the evening the CEC extended the voting period to 10 p.m. during which time it was suggested that in some places people were bused in to vote. While the low turnout can be attributed to slow voting procedures there was undoubtedly voter apathy in Armenia. Others were angry at the banning of the Dashnak Party and registered their feelings by staying at home.

Several incidents led observers to conclude that the conduct of these elections had not been free. Surveillance in and around the polling stations was prevalent. This often took the form of a white Niva jeep parked outside the building. After visiting a polling station in Gagarin observers were followed by such a vehicle. There were also groups of men in the polling stations identifying themselves as 'observers'.

It is worth noting that the Electoral Law itself allowed candidates to have proxies. According to Article 24 the proxies "have the right to

represent the interests of the candidate for deputy in the relations with state and public bodies, to be present unhampered at all functions of the respective electoral committee". In that many local officials (usually mayors) stood as candidates and the known advantages held by the party of power in Armenia, the involvement of such people in the electoral process is undesirable. It echoes the work of the agitacni in elections during Soviet times.

Allegations had been made during the period of compiling the electoral register that the number of voters in Armenia had been inflated for the purposes of this election. Since 1988 it is estimated by some that 25% of the population had left the country. Nevertheless, official figures showed that the population had grown in recent years. In the earthquake area, as well, there was, according to some sources, a 25% loss of population. It was noticeable in the polling stations in Giumri that large numbers of people were on the electoral register but without the necessary inclusion of their dates of birth. When enquired about this the observers were told that such people had been born before the revolution and that no documentary evidence existed of when they were born.

The referendum on the constitution was the most urgent issue for the government in this election. Only a small percentage of votes

was needed for it to pass - 30%. Media coverage had all been in favour of the constitution and in many polling stations large posters were prominently displayed indicating a 'yes' vote. The use of the mobile ballot box was restricted to votes in the constitutional referendum and there was an additional list for voters in the referendum. 200,000 copies of the constitutional had been printed and publicly distributed; on the booklet's FrontPage the voter was urged to vote 'yes'. The first editions of Respublika Armenia on Thursday 6th July (printed before the polls closed) announced : "Now we have a constitution.

The OSCE election monitoring group characterized the parliamentary elections as "generally" free, but not fair". It cited deficiencies in the electoral process, including a lack of transparency in vote counting, the suspension of the leading opposition party ARF, and the prevention of 5 opposition parties and over 500 opposition candidates from registering. Manipulation of election procedures by the largely pro-Government Central Election Commission (CEC) allegedly contributed to the victory of the ruling coalition.²⁸ According to the observers there were problems with voter lists, damaged ballots and unsecured ballot

²⁸ *Monitor*, "Armenian Vote Free But Not Fair, Observers Say", vol. 1, no. 46, 6 July 1995.

boxes.²⁹ Russian State Duma election observers were said to have witnessed similar flaws.³⁰

The independent local election observer organization Vote Armenia alleged in its report on the July 1995 elections that the elections had been undemocratic, unbalanced, unfair and not free. The main violations had been the banning of the activity of the ARF, the closing of opposition newspapers, violations of the principle of the secret ballot, and physical disturbance and pressure used on voters as well as on members of the Election Committees. The group concluded that these violations of the law could have had a significant influence on voting results.³¹ The United States Department of State found that the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) and the regional electoral commissions administering the elections and the constitutional referendum were packed with ruling party loyalists and that in addition to the Government's suspension of the ARF, the CEC had used an ambiguous electoral law to deny registration to several other opposition parties or blocs and over 500 opposition candidates on minor technicalities. The CEC ruled on many cases shortly before election day, thereby denying some candidates a fair chance to appeal against the CEC's decision. The Department of State criticized the

²⁹ Vote Armenia

³⁰ U. S. Department of State, *Country Report On Human Rights Practices for 1995*

³¹ *Monitor*, "Armenia Holding Presidential Elections", vol. 2, no. 175, 20 September 1996.

Armenian Government for having used its monopoly of the media to deny sufficient access to dissenting views and opposition parties.³²

THE 1996 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND ITS AFTERMATH

Considering the waning popularity of President Levon Ter Petrosyan it could have been expected that a united opposition would have a fair chance to win 1996 presidential elections. Three years after the last battles in Nagorno Karabakh were won, Armenia's population was weary of its penury and the Government experienced increasing difficulty in countering allegations that the economic difficulties were due to state corruption and incompetence. Initially, all major opposition parties proposed their own presidential candidate. The opposition candidates sounded populist themes, promising substantial wage increases, eradication of poverty and corruption, and the revision of some aspects of privatization.³³ Only in September 1996 did Paruir Hairikian (National self-determination Union), Aram Sarkisian (Democratic Party), and Lenser Aghalovian (Artsakh-Hayastan movement) unite behind Vazgen Manukian (National-Democratic Union, NDU). The ARF also endorsed Vazgen Manukian.³⁴ The other opposition supporters candidates were Sergei Badalian of the

³² *Monitor*, "Armenian Opposition Unites Behind Presidential Candidate", vol. 2, no. 168, 11 September 1996.

³³ *Transcaucasus: A Chronology*

³⁴ *Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 168, 11 September 1996.

Communist Party of Armenia and Ashot Manuchadan of the Scientific Industrial and Civic Union of Armenia.³⁵

Levon Ter Petrosyan's program focussed on law-and-order issues, economic reconstruction through liberal reforms, and regional peace. The NDU-led opposition platform envisaged: full independence for Karabakh; state policies based on Armenian national values; formation of a government of national accord by all parties supporting the joint candidate; new parliamentary elections and the adoption of a new constitution strengthening the legislative and judiciary branches vis-a-vis presidential power; an industrial policy encouraging internal producers; a crackdown on "clan interests" which, the opposition said, had prospered under the Levon Ter Petrosyan Government; and finally a stress on social protection measures to accompany privatization. Vazgen Manukian in his acceptance speech accused the current administration of turning Armenia into "a provincial oriental country of small business, lacking industrial and technological potential".³⁶

The official outcome of the elections was that Levon Ter Petrosyan won in the first round with just over 50 per cent of the vote. This, however, did not remain uncontested. On 24 October 1996, the former

³⁵ *Analytica Moscow/CIS Weekly Press Summary*, "Political Situation in Armenia", vol. 3, no. 37, 26 October – 1 November 1996.

³⁶ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, "Opposition Candidate Says He Has Evidence of Fraud in Presidential Elections", 2 November 1996, quoted in *Interfax News Agency*, 31 October 1996.

presidential candidates Vazgen Manukian and Ashot Manucharian submitted documents to the Constitutional Court, detailing alleged violations of the law committed during the campaign. The President declared that he would obey any decision of the Court.³⁷ On 31 October Vazgen Manukian claimed that he had evidence that Levon Ter Petrosyan had only obtained 35 per cent of the vote against 66 per cent for himself.³⁸

All international monitoring groups and organizations were highly critical about the way the presidential elections were conducted. In its final report, the OSCE/ODHIR Observer Mission listed "numerous irregularities including some very serious breaches of the election law"; collusion among precinct electoral commissions and the incumbent presidents proxies; unlawful presence of the police at voting stations; ballot box stuffing; and refusal by the government controlled electoral commissions to consider opposition complaints. The mission particularly emphasized that more than 22,000 votes could not be traced to any registered voters, and another 21,000 ballots were missing and unaccounted for. Noting that support for President Levon Ter Petrosyan exceeded the 50 per cent threshold by only 22,000 votes, the mission expressed its "lack of confidence in the integrity of

³⁷ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

³⁸ *Monitor*, "OSCE Questions Armenian Election Outcome: Manukian Turns to Court", vol. 2, no. 185, 4 October 1996.

the overall election process" and considered the irregularities sufficiently important to throw Levon Ter Petrosyan's victory into doubt.³⁹ The mission called for legal sanctions against the officials responsible, but stopped short of recommending cancellation of the election results.⁴⁰

The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) published an even more critical report, which also seriously questioned the outcome of the elections. IFES monitors witnessed ballot tampering, voter intimidation and the harassment of domestic election monitors. The report listed serious abuses in the vote-counting process and mentioned that only 2,175 out of hundreds of thousands of diaspora and refugee voters had cast their votes.⁴¹ The Armenian NGO It's Your Choice, which monitored the elections with over 3,000 volunteers, stated in its report: "The official results, published by the CECE pose a serious question as to the validity of the entire electoral process and the outcome of the presidential elections."⁴²

The announcement of Levon Ter Petrosyan's victory and the opposition's refusal to accept the official outcome of the elections were

³⁹ International Foundation for Election Systems, *Flawed Elections in Armenia: September 22, 1996 Presidential Election*, 8 October 1996.

⁴⁰ It's Your Choice, *Summary Report on the Presidential Elections Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, September 22, 1996*.

⁴¹ International Foundation for Election Systems, *Flawed Elections in Armenia: September 22, 1996 Presidential Election*, Yerevan, 8 October 1996.

⁴² It's Your Choice, *Summary Report on the Presidential Elections Republic of Armenia, September 22, 1996*, Yerevan, 1996.

followed by massive peaceful demonstrations in Yerevan's central square on 24 and 25 September. During the evening of the latter day, some of the demonstrators turned violent and broke into the parliament building, where the Speaker and Deputy Speaker were physically attacked.⁴³

A government crackdown on the opposition followed. Seventeen prominent opposition figures and over 100 participants in the 25 September events were detained on charges related to Article 74 of the Criminal Code: 'participation in mass disorder'. Sixteen of the latter group were still being held on this charge at the end of the year. Many detainees were held for 15 days "administrative detention", during which several were reportedly beaten, and access by international humanitarian groups was delayed or denied.⁴⁴ Law enforcement officials closed down offices belonging to the opposition parties, and several prominent opposition figures were arrested. Eight opposition deputies were stripped of their parliamentary immunity and expelled from the chamber, four deputies were detained on accusations of treason, terrorism and attempted seizure of power.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Monitor: Fortnight In Review*, "'Armenia Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996', released by the U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, vol. 1, no. 8, 18 October 1996.

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996*, Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997.

⁴⁵ *Monitor: Fortnight In Review*.

Amnesty International, the U.S. based Human Rights Watch/Helsinki Watch, the Moscow-based Memorial Human Rights Center, and a group of Russian democratic deputies immediately lodged protests with the Government about what they considered to be arbitrary arrests, use of violence, disrespect for due process and abolition of political freedoms.⁴⁶

Already on 26 September the Armenian parliament, by a vote of 155-0 with two abstentions, had removed parliamentary immunity from eight opposition deputies in order to initiate criminal charges of treason, terrorism and the attempted seizure of power. In Yerevan, tanks with escorts of special riot police patrolled the streets and throughout the country security forces arrested hundreds of opposition activists.⁴⁷ The crisis atmosphere was further aggravated by the statement by the former head of Armenia's secret services, the member of parliament David Shakhnazaryan, that "the threat of a coup d'état looms over Armenia...."⁴⁸

The Government's reaction to the disturbances of 25 September caused strong international criticism. On 14 November 1996, the European Parliament labeled the way the 22 September presidential elections had been conducted a "regression", and called for "new

⁴⁶ *Monitor*, "Fallout Continues from Armenia's Presidential Election", vol. 2, no. 192, 15 October 1996.

⁴⁷ *Transcaucasus: A Chronology*

⁴⁸ Itar-Tass News Agency, 30 October 1996.

elections in those areas where serious breaches of electoral law were reported (by the OSCE/ODHIR monitors]", because the recorded violations were severe enough to call into question the legitimacy of the entire elections. The resolution also condemned "the undemocratic treatment to which the Opposition parties and media have been subjected", and was critical of the deployment of the armed forces, the closing of opposition parties' premises and the arrests of opposition leaders in the aftermath of the elections.⁴⁹ Similar reactions came from a group of Russian State Duma members, who argued that the events of 22-26 September did not require the imposition of a state of emergency and the suspension of the rights and freedoms of citizens under the pretext of an attempted *coup*. The group judged that the Armenian law enforcement agencies had exceeded their powers and taken inappropriate measures by resorting to direct violence against those taking part in the disorders and against the opposition in general.⁵⁰

On 18 October 1996, the Scientific-industrial and Civil Union called for a boycott of the imminent local elections, arguing that "violence and falsifications actively supported by Mafia groups and encouraged and condoned by the authorities have taken root in Armenia....."⁵¹ On

⁴⁹ Armenpress, "The European Parliament: Resolutions on the Recent Elections in Armenia , Nov. 14 1996)", 20 November 1996.

⁵⁰ Noyan Tapan News Agency, 10 October 1996.

⁵¹ Noyan Tapan News Agency, 21 October 1996.

25 October, the National Alliance decided not to participate in the local elections; it claimed that a police state had been created and "the tense political climate in the aftermath of the elections has made it impossible to hold fair and democratic elections in Armenia".⁵² Eventually all main opposition parties boycotted the 10 November 1996 local elections.⁵³

Presidential candidates Vazgen Manukian and Ashot Manucharian's request to the Constitutional Court to declare invalid the official outcome of the elections, was rejected on 21 November. According to Article 102, subsection 2, of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, this decision was final, without the right of appeal.⁵⁴ The way the Constitutional Court handled the case was severely criticized by the opposition leaders, who stated that the Constitutional Court "practically covers up the falsification of the presidential election returns".⁵⁵ The unity that the opposition parties showed before the presidential elections quickly disappeared. The National Self-Determination Union of Paruir Hayrikian and Ramkavar immediately dissociated themselves from the 25 September disturbances. The opposition leaders are, however, at one in asserting that the

⁵² Asbarez on Line, "National Alliance Will Not Take Part in local Elections", 25 October 1996.

⁵³ *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, "Foreign Observers Say local Elections Were Free and Fair", 16 November 1996.

⁵⁴ *Armenpress*, "The Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia", 22 November 1996.

⁵⁵ *Monitor*, "Armenia's Constitutional Court Blocking Review of Presidential Election", vol. 2, no. 218, 20 November 1996.

Constitutional Court's verdict does not legitimize the fraudulent presidential election.

Considering the 1995 ban on the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), Armenia's largest opposition party, and the seemingly fraudulent 1995 parliamentary elections, the 1996 crackdown only accentuated the Government's intolerance of any real political opposition.⁵⁶ The elimination of the opposition began to have serious consequences for the Government, mainly because Armenia's foreign sponsors started criticizing the ensuing situation. Aware of the desirability of broadening his support outside the ruling coalition, President Levon Ter Petrosyan looked for support from the left parties, the Communists included, who refused to back Vazgen Manukian in the elections. But the first series of meetings in early January 1997 was unsuccessful and there was not expected to be any follow-up. Shortly after his installation, the new Prime Minister, Armen Sarkisian, also made an effort to open a dialogue with parts of the opposition, whom he invited to submit proposals on social and economic issues. During his visit to the USA, the Prime Minister even arranged meetings with an ARF delegation.⁵⁷ The Prime Minister also made sweeping statements in favour of political freedom, independent media and transparency in government, and promised early corrective

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1996*, New York, 1997, pp. 198-199.

⁵⁷ *Monitor*, 'Is Armenia's Prime Minister Distancing Himself from the President?', vol. 3, no. 11, 16 January 1997.

steps on these issues. In another effort to counter international criticism and internal isolation, the Prime Minister announced the abolition of the Ministry of Information and measures to encourage the revival of an independent press. Meanwhile, the talks between government and opposition led nowhere and the opposition parties continued to face significant restrictions. The two "DRO" and "31" trials of opposition members also continued, and a third trial - that of participants in last September's disturbances - also began.⁵⁸

The fact remained that the balance within the parliament, where the opposition had only 10 per cent of seats, did not reflect the real political situation in Armenia. Even according to official records, about 50 per cent of voters failed to support the parties, which backed Ter Petrosyan. In addition to the European Parliament, the USA also began putting pressure on the Armenian Government to hold fresh elections. A United States Government official said that early elections would be "one way to give the opposition a constructive role and have a more representative and democratic structure". Opposition leader Vazgen Manukian repeatedly said that fresh presidential and parliamentary elections are the only issues the opposition is ready to discuss with the authorities.⁵⁹ both the minor pro-Government parties and the opposition believed that early general elections would relieve

⁵⁸ *Monitor*, 'Armenia's Internal Problems Fester', vol. 3, no. 35, 19 February 1997.

⁵⁹ *Agence France Presse*, 10 January 1997.

tensions, but chairman of the National Assembly, who could be trusted to express the opinion of the President, categorically possibility.⁶⁰

More recently, the Armenian Government took steps to counter external criticism of the state in Armenia. On 24 January 1997, the National Assembly formed a working group to amend the existing Electoral Law in the light of the considerations and suggestions made by the OSCE after the Presidential elections.⁶¹ The following month, a pro-government newspaper with unclear financial sources, Aravot, was closed down and opposition newspapers were given increased means of printing and distribution.

Also in February 1997, a number of opposition groups decided because of their marginalization to form a permanent platform for cooperation, the National Accord. They included: the ARF, NDU, Constitutional Rights Union, Scientific Industrial and Civil Union, Armenian National Party, Intellectual-Armenia Society, Democracy Defense Fund, National Progressive Party, National Unity Chapter, the National Assembly Deputies' Club, Armenian Relief Cross, Gtutyiun

⁶⁰ *Analytica Moscow/CIS Weekly Press Summary*, 'Political Situation in Armenia', vol. 3, no. 37, 26 October – 1 November 1996.

⁶¹ Armenpress, "RA Electoral Code Developed", 27 January 1997.

Benevolent Organization, Syunik-Hayasta Organization, and Yeritasardutiune [Youth] Organization.⁶²

Thus, in Armenia the transition from Soviet rule to independence was a relatively smooth process in which the new elite of triumphant nationalists was able to win over and co-opt a large part of the communist nomenklatura. As a result, at the local level the same people as before independence have often continued occupying positions of power. There is an unhealthy overlap between political, administrative and economic authority, and Armenia's democracy lacks essential checks and balances.

Since 1991, the ANM and its leader, President Levon Ter Petrosyan, have used their political skills and increasingly undemocratic means to out manoeuvre the opposition and to reduce its role in society. Despite its democratic laws and structures, the country functions as if it still had a one-party system. The legislature lacks any substantial representation of opposition forces; the impartiality of the judiciary has been seriously questioned; the ruling party leads all local authorities; and the media are generally docile. Because of the condescending way in which they are treated, leading opposition

⁶² Yerevan News Agency, 18 February 1997.

members usually do not attend parliamentary sessions, making the parliament even more of a mockery.⁶³

Accusations and personalities, rather than policy, dominate the political debate. President Levon Ter Petrosyan is blamed for the prevalent corruption and the industrial collapse, while he himself states that opposition rule will bring tyranny and chaos. The President appears incapable of addressing the main issues that have alienated so many people - corruption, appointments based on clientelism not merit, and a general sense that the Government has lost interest in the welfare of ordinary people.

The Armenian opposition is too amorphous to produce a serious confrontation with President Levon Ter Petrosyan, who has a keen sense for power and can count on the support of the economic elite. The opposition suffers from several important weaknesses. Apart from lack of unity, it does not offer clear policy alternatives to the economic and security policies of the present government, limiting itself to attacks on corruption and dictatorial methods. Moreover, it faces a government, which in practice has monopoly control over the electoral process, including the media and the Central Electoral Committees, and has been ready to abuse the legal system in order to outlaw its

⁶³ The New York Times, Michael Specter, "Drift to Dictatorship Clouds Armenia's Happiness", 3 January 1997.

challengers. In addition, the opposition has failed to put forward a convincing candidate for the presidency.

A majority of the population appears to be indifferent to the political struggles. Most Armenians are busy making ends meet and appear to bear the imperfections of the country's democracy with resignation. A survey conducted by Yerevan University sociologists in 1995 found that 66.5 per cent of Armenians believed the suspension of the ARF in 1995 was simply "another political game by the bosses".⁶⁴ Deep-rooted distrust of politicians appear to be a major obstacle to the maturing of Armenia's democracy. "People believe they live in a country being run by the Mafia" and the opposition is not exempt from such prejudices. There is a widespread belief that politicians - government and opposition - are motivated only by self-interest. Elections, privatization and new legislation are, in the eyes of a disillusioned electorate, merely the covers under which a small corrupt clique can concentrate wealth and power in its own hands, and at the same time present to international observers a picture of transition to democracy and the market economy. Nevertheless, despite the overwhelming evidence of election fraud both in 1995 and in 1996, about half of the population of Armenia appear to have voted for the current President.

⁶⁴ *Monitor*, "Many Armenians Indifferent to Political Struggle", vol., 1, no. 40, 27 June 1995.

The mass demonstrations of 24 and 25 September 1996 were exceptional and such outbursts are not likely to be repeated soon, while the opposition has been temporarily immobilized. The Government has showed its capacity to maintain order, but its resort to force has left a widespread suspicion, also abroad, that Ter Petrosyan owes his position to control over the instruments of power, rather than the number of ballots cast in his favour. Public response to the events combined shame - that "civilized" Armenia could sink so low - with gloom, foreseeing a heavier authoritarian rule.⁶⁵ There is also a widespread sentiment in Armenia that the country's regression from democracy is undermining its international standing and its leverage with regard to the Karabakh problem at a time when Azerbaijan's prospects are being boosted by its oil-producing potential.

⁶⁵ *The World Today*, Edmund Herzig, "Shame and Gloom as Everyone Loses in Armenia", vol. 52, no. 11, November 1996, pp. 293 - 295.

Conclusion

Before beginning the content analysis under this heading it is necessary to have a look at the theoretical perspectives of political development. This literature clusters into at least three types.

- One is associated with the nations of democracy.
- Another focuses on aspects of political development and change.
- And, third examines the crisis and sequences of political development.

I will be discussing these three theoretical perspectives and shall come up with an analysis of the political development that have taken place in Armenia between the period 1991 to 1995.

Seymour Marti Lipset has outlined the requisites of democracy in the context of economic development and political legitimacy. His conditions of democracy included on open class system, economic wealth and a capitalist economy. Industrialization wealth and education are the greater prospects for democracy. Lucian Pye has advocated the second perspective. He has referred to political development as an institution building process, which seeks the development of citizens. According to him, mass mobilization and participation is as essential and necessary to democracy and order as is Political stability, strong government and an ordered authority .

Development is also often referred to as modernization, which is also associated with socialism. But a reassessment of development, together with criticism of capitalism and socialism has been promoted by traumatic upheavals that have taken place around the world in the past few decades, including the overthrow of conservative dictatorship in Southern Europe during the mid 1970s, in South America during the early 1980s as well as the popular uprising that over came the dominance of intransigent socialist and communist regimes in East Europe and Soviet Union in 1989.

The fall of the regimes in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union was accompanied initially by Euphoria over freedom and bourgeoisie democracy. The abandonment of socialism and the adoption of neo-conservative practices in the West and in a push toward the pattern of capitalist market have brought about drastic changes in political structure around the world. With this background of the theories of political development now we can look at Armenian's political developments after its separation from the USSR till 1995 general Elections.

In the first and the second chapters I have dealt with the historical background of political developments in Armenia and the separation of Armenia from the USSR and its emergence as an independent nation. We have seen that before 1991 Armenia had been under some or the

other foreign rule. Thus in 1991 when Soviet Union disintegrated, though Armenia declared its independence it found itself in a situation of complexities. As a consequence, the country's social, political and economic developmental became unbalanced.

It has been observed that after Independence the political scene in Armenia has been remarkably stable and the same political party, the Pan Armenian National Movement (PANM) led by Levon Ter Petrosyan has been in uninterrupted power, despite this stability being acclaimed as the symbol of political development, the economic progress of the country has been worse between 1991 to 1995. GDP underwent a 67% low in 1992-93 and industry was reported to have virtually ceased by early 1993. This led to an estimated two-thirds of the country's youth unemployed. In 1994 there was a political recovery with 5% growth of the GDP. The rate was maintained in 1995 with little tangible improvement in economic and social conditions. The foundation of any state is build upon its sound economic progress. Armenia has been a sufferer in this field which, ultimately, has contributed in weakening the socio-political foundation of the country. A nation is strong if it posses a strong economy. Examples around the word are galore. The Nagorno – Karabakh dispute has been the root cause of problems in Armenia.

In the third chapter, I have provided an insight into the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorno Karabakh. The issue being linked to the economic development of the country, has brought about many changes- both economic and political. The chapter deals with such transformations. The government plan had pushed for a radical reform to install a market economy as quickly as possible. Situation worsened when prime minister Khosrov Haroutiunian sparked the crisis on the budget of 1993. On February 2, 1993 President Ter Petrosyan dismissed the prime minister for his anti-government views on economic policies. Hrand Bagratian was appointed the successor to the sacked prime minister. This led to the opposition demand for holding fresh elections which was turned down by Ter Petrosyan.

Another blow to political reform came when opposition party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak) was banned to contest the upcoming Parliamentary elections. Though Parliamentary elections were held on 5th July, 1995, the International observers criticized it as "free but not fair". This meant that the voters could cast their ballots without hindrance but the equal conditions had not been provided for all contenders – an obvious reference to the Dashnak Party. Other opposition parties too reported harassment and intimidation in their efforts to campaign.

Some observers have held that Armenian is gradually moving towards a dictatorship. This interpretation is based upon the success of the Constitutional referendum, which was voted on the same day of the Parliamentary elections and by which Levon Ter Petrosyan became the President of the country. The July 5, 1995 referendum replaced the existing soviet era text and provided a strong Presidential system of governance, balanced by a separation of powers. Directly elected for 5 years the powers of the President were enhanced. He got the right to appoint the prime minister and other government ministers. The President could also dissolve the assembly and call fresh elections as he desired. But, these victories have not brought applause for the country. The verdict of International observers, plus the negative reportage in the International media has damaged Armenia's reputation.

After Independence from the Soviet Union Armenia became a member of many International Organization. By early 1992 diplomatic relationship had been established with a number of western countries including USA, China and Japan. It also got the membership of the World Bank. For its economic development Armenia signed many pacts with the USA and other Western Countries. Armenia maintained good relations with Russia as well.

But since then Armenia's political development have undergone a sea change. Economic slump, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and refugee problem from Azerbaijan have been the major issues during 1991-95. The fears of dictatorship in Armenia have been based on some concrete foundations yet, it can not be denied that it is the will of the ruled and the ruler which imparts meaning to the political structure of any country. Despite Ter Petrosyan getting elected again and again it can not be held that the country is being ruled by a dictatorship. Democracy in Armenia has not come to an end. This becomes clear with the observation made by the International observation that the 1995 elections in Armenia had been "free" but not "fair". The International community, therefore, does accept this fact.

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