

**PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN ARMENIA
(1991-2019)**

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ABSTRACT

PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN ARMENIA (1991-2019)

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This thesis analyses problems of democratization in post-Soviet Armenia. In this context, I will examine the progresses and problems of the Republic of Armenia within the framework of democratization from declaration of independence to current day. The democratization steps are evaluated within the scope of economy and corruption, civil society, media, foreign and domestic politics, electoral processes and the rule of law. This is done through a historical analysis of the rule of each president since independence. The aim of this study is to find out to what extent the Republic of Armenia has made progress in terms of democratization until today and what have the obstacles been within this scope.

In this study, the literature and media analysis are used alongside historical analysis. Additionally, it is benefited from quantitative data and statistics for some issues like the results of electoral processes, the scope of corruption, Armenia's democracy score. Finally, how the developments in Armenia have a broad repercussion in the international arena, primarily in Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, United States and Europe, is explained with the method of media analysis.

In the end of the study, I find out that there are so many major problems in terms of democratization in Armenia such as corruption in the elections, state oppression over media and civil society and unfair and unfree jurisdiction. Further, it is concluded that the foreign policy of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are affecting domestic policy and so democratization process of Armenia, adversely. On the other hand, with the realization of the Velvet Revolution in 2018, positive developments in the way of democratization are observed in Armenia. The time will show what will happen in Armenia with the new government within the scope of democratization.

KeyWords: Armenia, post-Soviet Armenia, democratization, the Velvet Revolution, problems of democratization

ÖZ

ERMENİSTAN'DA DEMOKRATİKLEŞME PROBLEMLERİ (1991-2019)

KIYAK, Figen

Yüksek Lisans, Avrasya Çalışmaları

Tez Yöneticisi: Doçent Doktor Işık KUŞÇU BONNENFANT

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Bu tez, Sovyet Sonrası Ermenistan'da demokratikleşme problemlerini incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda, Ermenistan'da demokratikleşme adımları bağımsızlığını ilan ettiği günden bugüne dek tarihsel olarak dönemin cumhurbaşkanına göre bir sınıflandırma gerçekleştirilerek, ekonomi ve yolsuzluk, sivil toplum, medya, dış ve iç politika, seçim süreçleri ve hukukun üstünlüğü kapsamında değerlendirilmiştir. Son olarak, 2018 yılında toplumsal bir hareket olan Kadife Devrim'i doğuran nedenler ve yol açtığı sonuçlar ele alınmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bağımsızlığını ilan ettiği günden bu yana Ermenistan'ın demokratikleşme anlamında ne denli bir gelişme gösterdiğini ve bu kapsamda engellerin neler olduğunu saptamaktır.

Bu tezde literatür ve medya analizi kullanılmış ve bu yanında tarihsel analize de yer verilmiştir. İlk olarak Ermenistan'ın Sovyet sonrası dönemine dair kısa bir tarihsel bilgi verilmiş ve ardından literatüre taraması ile birlikte Ermenistan'da demokratikleşme analizi ortaya koyulmaya çalışılmıştır. Buna ek olarak, seçim sonuçları, yapılan yolsuzlukların kapsamı, Ermenistan'ın demokrasi puanı gibi konularda nicel verilerden ve istatistiklerden de faydalanılmıştır. Ayrıca, Rusya, Türkiye, Ermenistan, Azerbaycan, Amerika ve Avrupa başta olmak üzere Ermenistan'da meydana gelen gelişmelerin uluslararası arenada nasıl yankı bulduğu sorunsalı medya analizi yöntemiyle aktarılmıştır.

Çalışmanın sonucunda Ermenistan'da demokratikleşme anlamında seçimlerde yolsuzluk, medya ve sivil toplum üzerinde devlet baskısı, yargının adil ve özgür olmaması gibi birçok temel problem saptanmıştır. Bunun yanında, Ermenistan'ın dış politikasının ve Nagorno-Karabağ sorununun iç politikayı ve dolayısıyla demokratikleşme sürecini olumsuz olarak etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ancak Kadife Devrim ile birlikte Ermenistan'da demokratikleşme yolunda olumlu gelişmeler olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Yeni hükümetle birlikte Ermenistan'da demokratikleşme sürecinde gelecekte neler olacağını zaman gösterecektir.

AnahtarKelimeler: Ermenistan, Sovyet sonrası Ermenistan, demokratikleşme, Kadife Devrim, demokratikleşme problemleri,

To my father

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARF	Armenian Revolutionary Federation
BSEC	Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEPA	Comprehensive and Extended Partnership Agreement
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSCE	Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ENA	Electric Networks of Armenia
ENEMO	European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
ESI	European Stability Initiative
EU	European Union
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
IAI	Istituto Affari Internazionali
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

PFA	Policy Forum Armenia
PKK	Kurdistan Worker’s Party
RFS	Reporters Seans Frontieres
RPA	Republican Party of Armenia
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
TARC	Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission
TEPAV	The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USA	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VAD	Voter Authentication Devices
VOV	Voice of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Armenia is a landlocked country in the Caucasus region. Geographically, it has borders with Turkey on the west, Azerbaijan and the independent Nagorno Karabakh Republic on the east, Iran on the south and Georgia on the north. Additionally, Nakhichevan as an Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan is the enclave region within the borders of Armenia. Armenian population is estimated as around 2.96 million people in 2019 and most of the population (around 1.2 million people) are living in Yerevan, which is the largest and capital city of Armenia (World Population Review, 2019). Armenia is not ethnically diversified since Armenians form 98% of the total population; the rest of the population are primarily Russians and Yazidis. Accordingly, Armenian state has a considerably homogenous ethnic composition. Furthermore, a clear majority of the Armenian population is Christian part of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which is the national church of Armenia. According to the 2011 data taken from Moody's Analytics that 92, 6% of Armenian population is Apostolic, 1% is Evangelical and 2,4% other religions. To this respect, it is apparent that like the ethnic composition, as religiously Armenia has also a homogenous structure with the dominance of the Armenian Apostolic church.

This study aims to analyze the problems of democratization in post-Soviet Armenia and discusses Velvet Revolution within the framework of these problems. With this goal in mind, I will analyze the country's social, economic and political structure to conduct a solid analysis of the Post-Soviet transition and its democratization problems. Besides, I will also discuss the important foreign policy issues such as Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Four Days War and Khojaly Massacre as they have a direct influence on the domestic politics and often used as an excuse for the legitimization of democratic rights violations.

Armenia became a part of the Soviet Union in 1920 and gained its independence on 23 August 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As of this date, Armenia has established its own state in the name of the Republic of Armenia and started its nation-state building process together with transition to democracy. On the other hand, it should be stated that this independence is not the only one in the history of Armenia. Briefly, after the collapse of the Czarist Russia, with the October Revolution, the Soviet Russia was established. The nations evaluated this as an opportunity to declare their own independence. The gathering of the Armenian National Assembly in Tbilisi on September 1917 is one the examples of those attempts for independence (Bozkuş, n.d.). However, the Bolsheviks intervened in the situation

and eventually, a short-lived federation, which is Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, was established in 1918, dependent on the Soviet Union and it comprised Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Nevertheless, due to a major disagreement among the three countries, this federative republic collapsed and consequently, Armenia declared its independence on the date of 28 May 1918 with the name of Democratic Armenian Republic. Even though this period lasted only 2 years until the occupation of Armenia by the Soviet forces in 1920, this short period of independence has great importance in the history of Armenia.

Until 1991, Armenia remained under the Soviet rule as one of the 15 Soviet Socialist Republics. Towards the end of the 1980s, Armenian national movement started resisting the Soviet rule. In 1990, Armenia took a step to gain its freedom and agreed to “Armenian Declaration of Independence” that has announced the name of Armenia as Armenia Republic by changing from Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (Movsisyan, 2017). On 21 September 1991, a referendum was conducted for the public consent of independence and more than 94% of the population voted positively. On the 23rd of September 1991, Armenia officially declared its independence from the Soviet Union. The process was finalized with the dissolution of Soviet Union in the end of 1991 (Movsisyan, 2017). Subsequently, Levon Ter Petrosyan became the first president while Vazgen Manukyan became the prime minister after the first elections of the independent republic.

Armenia initiated the process of state and nation building under the leadership of Levon Ter Petrosyan. The country adopted a democratic form of governance and free market economy. Like other post-Soviet countries, Western values and practices such as civil society development, democratic initiative process, ballot proposition and freedom in the social, economic and political life became more pronounced. However, the country could still not achieve a full-scale transition. Malakyan (2013) defines the country’s current position as such: “after more than 20 years of independence, Armenia continues to be a transitional country with massive economic and political problems”. Armenian Republic had faced with many difficult and crucial issues since independence. In the same year, post-Soviet Armenia announced to accept the presidential government as a new system.

In order to analyze the problems of democratization in post-Soviet Armenia, it is surely necessary to have deeper information about Armenia’s social, economic and political structure. Those details will help us to examine and discuss Armenia’s transition to democracy.

First of all, I will first discuss the Armenian social structure in terms of ethnicity and religion. Firstly, Armenia is ethnically a homogenous country. While the 98% of the population are

Armenian, the rest are mostly Russians and Yazidis. However, this was not always the case. Armenian state has been pursuing demographic policies to create a mono-ethnic state since the Soviet times and this process continued until the end of the 1980s and today Armenia is largely an ethnically homogenous state. Furthermore, Armenia is religiously homogenous too. Most of the Armenian population is Christian and members of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the national church of Armenia. Only a very small percent of them belong to other religions. On the other hand, it should be stated that faith-based discrimination is quite explicit against the religious minorities living in Armenia, especially against the Jehovah's Witnesses. This situation could be clearly observed in the state-funded schools and the mass media, by the way of which the hate speech is being declared with the discourse of "one nation, one religion, one culture" (Hovhannisyanyan, Sargsyan & Mkrtchyan, 2014). In addition to this, Cabbarlı (2014) states that the religious and ethnic groups in Armenia could pray only in the places specified by the government and cannot disseminate their religion or publish their holy scriptures. Secondly, Armenia adopted a free market economic system after independence following the Soviet-type centralized economy or command economy (Ericson, 2006). By the end of the 1980s, the Soviet economy was in collapse and the Soviet citizens were living under the poverty line. There are various ideas and arguments to explain the reasons behind the decline of the Soviet economy. One major argument is the problem related to the nature of the command economy that is finding out the optimal degree of centralization in line with the existing structure. Another line of argument is that the Soviet economy had to dissolve eventually because its nature was repressive and coercive (Harrison, 2002). For some others, Gorbachev's politics, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, led the worsening of the Soviet economy. According to Sen (1991), for the short run such as war or emergency periods, the command economy is a better choice; on the other hand, for the long run, the market economy gives us better results. All former Soviet countries chose to implement liberal or free market economic model since the liberal economic model essentially promotes the development of the economy by using the market, competition and price mechanism (Zhang & Zhao, 2011). Consequently, like the other former Soviet countries, Armenia has also put the market economy into practice. However, in the initial years of independence, Armenia was not economically in a stable condition due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan and Spitak earthquake in 1988, which caused a massive loss of life. Nevertheless, this unfortunate disaster has become the starting point for dependence on diaspora's economic support (Göksel, 2012), which is still an important economic source for the Armenian economy. Moreover, the economic recovery period was not completed in a short time. People living in Armenia had to deal with

severe economic conditions and unemployment; they even had lived below the poverty level for a while (Malakyan, 2013).

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was also considerably effective factor on the Armenian's economic condition. Karabakh war has been affecting the Armenian economy negatively due to massive military expenses for the army, and also as a result of occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenians, Turkey sealed its borders with Armenia. Turkey declared that unless Armenia retreats from those lands, there would be no economic and political interaction. While this situation has affected the Armenian economy adversely, Armenian economic condition has continued to improve thanks to the support of the Armenian diaspora and other countries, especially Russia. To illustrate, in the period of 2003- 2008, the Armenian economy had a growth in the ratio of 13% (Göksel, 2012). Armenian economy is partly in the hands of Russia since some institutions such as telecommunication and railroads were given to the Russian companies in exchange for debt (Göksel, 2012), which increases Armenia's dependency on Russia. Moreover, international financial institutions have been supporting Armenian economic transformation. For instance, Europe has been offering financial assistance to Armenia within the scope of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) since 2004; and also, the Millennium Challenge Account program was started by the USA in 2006 (Göksel, 2012). However, it should be stated that in spite of the very generous supports of foreign countries, the economic situation and also transformation to liberal economy in the country are still problematic in many ways. For example, economy is in the hands of oligarchs or minority group mostly. Consequently, although Armenia has accepted the free market economy in the early days of its independence, it is still trying to establish its structural necessities. Finally, since independence Armenia has also started the dual process of the nation and the state building. While the nation building process was not so painful thanks to its homogeneous ethnic structure, in terms of state building many problems were encountered. As the administrative units, Armenia consists of 11 regions and is governed in accordance with the principals of republican administration, which is close to a presidential system. Stacey and Choudhry (2014) define it as a system of government in which the executive power is shared among the president, the prime minister and the parliament. However, the president has considerable power in this system. In the official sense, this new polity type is based on parliamentary democracy which could be defined as "historically, parliament has been a symbol agent of Demos, the basis of legitimizing political authority and legislation, and accountable to "the people" for laws and regulation" (Stagiaire, 2000). The parliament is an instrument for citizens to exercise their democratic rights through their representatives (Huda, 2005). In Armenia the president of the republic, members of the national assembly and the

local administrations are elected, while the prime minister and the other ministers are appointed by the president of the republic. The terms of office for the president is 5 years and an elected person as a president could not take on the same task more than two consecutive terms according to the constitution. The most authorized person in Armenia is the president himself and so Armenian administrative system is semi-presidentialism which is defined by Duverger (1980) as:

A political regime is considered as semi-presidentialism if the constitution which established it combines three elements: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them (Cited in Elgie & Moestrup, 2016).

The semi-presidentialism is a system, which refers to strong presidency with a subordinate parliament, as stated by Markarov (2016). Furthermore, he argues that while de jure semi-presidential system had been founded in Armenia with the 1995 Constitution; it was actually a super-presidential system in practice. Hille (2010) claims that the president in Armenia has a broad authority such as assigning or dismissing high state officials, commanding armed forces or designing foreign policy. This situation prevents the consolidation of democracy since the president has the supreme power and there is no control mechanism over. Armenia changed this course through accepting transition to the parliamentary system with a referendum held in 2015. Thus, the authority of the parliament and the prime minister has increased while the president's scope of authority has been restricted. This system is valid since the election in 2018. This improvement has paved the way for the consolidation of democracy.

In addition to Armenia's social, political and economic structure, the other important issues is its foreign policy in general and the details of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. As stated, I am intended to analyze the problems of democratization in post-Soviet Armenia. Consequently, I should pay attention to its foreign policy since Armenia's domestic policy is deeply affected from its foreign policy and so Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The general tendency in the country is the understanding that the main issue is Karabakh conflict for Armenia; therefore, consolidation of democracy is of a secondary importance. For this reason, the details about Armenia's foreign policy and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict are going to be presented.

The Republic of Armenia pursued a foreign policy in accordance with its own national interests in the independence period as a sovereign state. Even though the foreign policy practices of each president are different from each other, it is possible to talk about common features and vital issues regarding the country's foreign policy. Geopolitically, Armenia is a

landlocked country surrounded by Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Georgia, which causes substantial problems, especially with regards to its economy. Additionally, although Armenia has always desired to establish close links with Europe, because of its economic and security concerns, pursued pro-Russian policies generally. After independence in 1991, the relations between Russia and Armenia initially weakened. On the other hand, when Armenia realized that it is not rational to break ties with regional powers, Armenian government adopted a new policy in 1992 and started to normalize its relations with Russia (Petros, 2003). Besides that, there are also other reasons for Armenian dependency on Russia and those are mainly security issues and economic problems. That is why, even though Armenia has tried to develop its relations with the European world, its pro-Russian standing is indispensable in some ways.

Additionally, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan and diplomatic problems with Turkey have affected the foreign policy of Armenia adversely. It is a fact that Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a long-standing dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Therefore, not only economic but also political relations between the two countries have been poor for a very long time. Moreover, due to this conflict, relations between Turkey and Armenia are also intense. Turkey has sealed the land border because of the occupation of Armenia to Karabakh lands. Turkey declared that only if Armenia retreats from Karabakh, political and economic relations can be established between two countries. However, Armenia's point of view to this issue is uncompromising. Armenia thinks that Turkey should have established relations with Armenia without any prerequisite. Furthermore, genocide issue is also another reason explaining why the relations between two countries are not improved sufficiently until today. Consequently, those two important issues are the main causes behind weak relations.

Armenia's relations with Iran and Georgia are generally positive since there is no disagreement among those countries. In fact, the president of Armenia and Iran stated after 1991 that the "two states consider their common borders to be borders of peace" (Hovhannisyan, 1998). Since Armenia's relation with Turkey and Azerbaijan are weak and negative, Georgia and Iran has become important economic partners. Thus, the relation among those countries are generally economy oriented and Iran and Georgia are crucial for Armenia's economic interests.

Armenian foreign policy aims to develop good relations with Russia and Europe whenever circumstances allow. Its standing against Turkey and Azerbaijan have not changed for decades and does not seem to change in the short run. In order to strengthen its cooperation with other countries in the region, Armenia became a member to many regional organizations such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Commonwealth of Independent States, the Organization of

Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO's Partnership for Peace program, the Council of Europe and the World Trade Organization.

In addition to Armenia's social, economic and politic structures, I will explain briefly Nagorno-Karabakh conflict because it has great importance for Armenians. The region of Nagorno-Karabakh is located within the borders of Azerbaijan as seen in the map given in Appendix-A. It is located in the southwestern of Azerbaijan and connected with Armenia via the Lachin corridor. Under the Soviet rule, Karabakh had an autonomous status within Azerbaijani Soviet Republic. On the other hand, Armenians living in Karabakh demanded to be part of Soviet Armenia due to the discrimination policies of Azerbaijani authorities (Zolyan, 2010). Correspondingly, Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia began to emerge during the 1980s. A massive demonstration occurred on 13 February 1988 in the capital city of Karabakh. Four days after Azerbaijan's declaration of independence from Soviet Union, Karabakh declared its independence from Azerbaijan on 2 September 1991 and this declaration was affirmed with the referendum held on 10 December 1991 (Panossian, 2001). After independence was accepted with the 99% of the votes, Karabakh declared itself as an independent 'Republic of Karabakh' on 6 January 1992 (Panossian, 2001). On the other hand, no country including Azerbaijan and Armenia has not recognized the independence of Karabakh until today. Further, the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the lands of Nagorno-Karabakh started in this time course. In accordance with the argumentations, both countries have tight historical link with those lands. Wilson, Law and others (1998) state that for Armenians, Karabakh is their historical homeland and the symbol of their unity and consolidation as Armenians fleeing from Persia and Ottoman Empire took shelter in those lands. On the other hand, for Azerbaijanis Karabakh has a significant role in their identity as the first Azerbaijani national revival emerged in Karabakh (Wilson, Law and others, 1998). Furthermore, 75% of the population are ethnic Armenians (Herzig & Kurkchiyan, 2005); which strengthens the claims that Karabakh should be part of Armenia, not Azerbaijan. Besides that, Armenia claims that the national self-determination is a constitutional right; thus, if Karabakh people want to be part of Armenia, Azerbaijan must accept this. Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, think that Karabakh is within their border and the ethnic composition is not a sufficient argument to change the borders. Also contrary to what Armenians claim, there is no discrimination against the Armenian people in Karabakh, according to Azerbaijan (Herzig & Kurkchiyan, 2005). The geographic location of Karabakh is another reason as to why this region is so significant for both sides; in fact, Karabakh could control Azerbaijan, Armenia and Iran thanks to its location (Gözlek, 2008). Consequently, there has been no solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Owing to all those reasons mentioned above, Karabakh region

has been under the conditions of warfare since the collapse of the USSR. Until today, many tragic events occurred; Khojaly massacre and the 4 Days War are the most outstanding events worth to pay attention. Khojaly massacre happened on 26 February 1992 in a region known as Khojaly within the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenian military attacked the region and destroyed all region in one day. According to Mustafayev, Armenians killed 613 Azerbaijanis with intent to realize the “Big Armenia” dream (2011). After this tragic incident, many Azerbaijanis had to leave the region. Shooting war had lasted until 1994 when international actors attempted a cease-fire agreement between these two countries. During the war, Armenia occupied Lachin region, which has strategic importance for Armenians since in this way they could have direct land connection with the Karabakh region. Since 1994, the conflict is a frozen status only with the exception of the 4 Days War on 2-5 April 2016. As a result, 20% of the Azerbaijani lands (Karabakh and *rayons* around it) are still under the occupation of Armenia. Several attempts to solve this conflict have been realized in international arena; however, by now no progress achieved. Even in order to finalize this war, a negotiation team, the Minsk Group, under the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) was created. This group involves Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Belarus, USA, France and Russia as member countries. Based on that it is clear how Karabakh conflict has become an international issue. Even many meetings have been conducted about the situation of Karabakh, decisions taken by the OSCE Minsk Group are non-binding; therefore, the failure of this attempt is accepted by whole diplomatic channels (Zengin, 2017). While the Nagorno- Karabakh conflict still maintains its importance for Azerbaijan and Armenia; it is not an immediate threat for the international community (Waal, 2010). Yet, it is clear-cut fact that Karabakh region is quite important for both sides; thus, neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan is willing to take steps backward. In other words, in spite of the existence of cease-fire agreement, Nagorno-Karabakh will continue to be the region in the shadow of the war as Aliyev defines it (cited in Mustafayev, 2013).

1.1. Review of Literature

In 20th century, two types of states have been drawn the attention and those are the democratic ones and the totalitarian ones such as Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. Totalitarianism is defined by Heywood (2013) in the book of *Politics* as an open terror based on an official ideology, one-party state and state control over every aspect of life. Heywood (2013) makes a classification or division to describe the political world in that period and asserts three blocks which were the capitalist (first) world, the communist (second) world and the developing (third) world. According to this categorization, the capitalist-first world referred to industrialized and economically in a better condition Western regime; second or the

communist world was largely industrialized and could meet the basic needs of people and finally third or the developing world were less-developed countries living in poverty such as Africa or Latin America. In other words, Soviet Union as one of the communist world was quite totalitarian and so not only economy but also media and civil society were under the control of state and so *nomenklatura* who were the people of Communist Party. On the other hand, the first or capitalist world regime is based on liberal democracy. In order to provide a clear understanding for the sake of the study, I will explain firstly the concepts of democracy and liberal democracy. The lexical meaning of democracy originated in Greek history is principally the combination of two different terms being (people) *demos* and (rule) *kratos* (Giddens, 2001). While there is not one and fixed democracy definition in the world today since its meaning is changeable in compliance with the specific cultural, social or political environment; the general meaning of the democracy might be identified as a political system which aims to protect freedom or liberty, ensure political equality, meet the needs of citizens and create an environment where different interests are considered to create a consensus (Held, 1996). Similar to democracy, the meaning of liberalism is free polity from any religious control and the creation of civil society without any political interference (Held, 2006). It is possible to presume three different features of liberal democracy according to Heywood (2013) which are competitive elections to specify who is going to rule, the protection of minority rights and the existence of a constitution, finally the essence of civil society including private or free economy and free press. In general, Schmitter and Karl (1991) say that “modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives” and this attitude distinguishes non-democratic regimes from democratic ones. Together with the collapse of Soviet Union, the countries under the hegemony of Soviet Russia for a long time gained their independence and adopted liberal democracy instead of communist regime. Consequently, the transition process to democracy started in former Soviet countries in the beginning of 1990s. Armenia was also one of the autonomous republics under the rule of USSR and declared its independence on 21 September 1991. As of such date, transition process started in Armenia, too. Accordingly, as a theoretical framework of the study, I will explain the transition and democratization theories in order to analyze Armenia’s democratization problems more properly.

Heywood (2013) asserts that three ways of classification (as capitalist, communist and developing worlds) has lost its validity dating from 1970s and thus, he has described five regime types in modern world which are western polyarchies, new democracies, East Asian regimes, Islamic regimes and military regimes. In relation to this study, the first two of them

are going to be explained and discussed. The first one, Polyarchy, is identified for the first time by Dahl (1971) in his book *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* basically meaning liberal democracies. According to him, some degree of democratization could be possible; on the other hand, the fully democratized system could not be accomplished in the real world. Therefore, Dahl (1971) defines polyarchies as the regimes popularized and liberalized significantly and also having characteristics of inclusiveness and open to public contestation. In addition, what Dahl says, Heywood (2013) emphasizes the importance of regular competitive elections in Western Polyarchies. In other words, Polyarchy is the system applied in Western countries and could be defined as the most democratic system in the world until today since it embraces all the necessities that should be within such a body. These requirements could be specified as pluralism, individualism, freedom of social and political life, fair and free elections and free-market economy, for instance. The second term related with this study is new democracies which is a concept determining adoption of free-market economy and multi-party election. In fact, democratization process is analyzed under three waves. The first wave of democratization occurred between 1828-1926 and involved countries such as the USA, France and UK; the second wave of democratization involving countries like Germany, India, Italy and Japan occurred between 1943 and 1962; and the last and third wave of democratization has been started in 1974 and its influence has been still valid in the entire world (Huntington, 1991). Based on this argumentation, polyarchies are the product of the first and second wave of democratization whereas new democracies are regarded as the third one. Therefore, post-Soviet countries are considered in the third wave of democratization. Those countries which have changed their regime from totalitarian to the democracy, are named as transition countries as well besides new democracies. Nevertheless, the conformation of new government or regime is not a painless process since new democracies are lacking in political culture by comparison with Western polyarchies. Additionally, the globalization and rapid changes happening all over the world do not pave the way for countries interiorizing this crucial regime transition. With this transition, post-Soviet countries started democratization and marketization process as well as their nation-state building at the same time. Therefore, this transition process is labelled as “triple” and “quadruple” transition by scholars. According to Kuzio (2001), the transition in post-Soviet countries is a quadruple transition which includes democratization, marketization, state-building or stateness and civic nation-building or nationhood. And also, he thinks that transition countries should follow the sequence of state and nation building, establishment of market economy and finally democracy, respectively. Like many post-Soviet countries, Armenia also has tried to deal with all of those necessities at the same time and so still it could not complete its democratization process. In Armenia,

nation-building was a painless process since most of its population was Armenian; consequently, Armenia could create its mono-ethnic structure easily. On the other hand, state-building and marketization process was quite problematic because new ruling groups in post-Soviet countries consisted of previous nomenklatura, generally (White, 2003). For instance, as of the first years of independence, it was started to transfer of property from state ownership to private ownership in order to establish liberal market economy. However, because ruling elite or oligarchs were same people with politicians, the structure of ownership was not clear in most post-Soviet countries (White, 2003). The situation was not different in Armenia, also. In general, there was not “capitalist class” in post-Soviet countries and “crony capitalism” has risen instead of free-market economy. In addition to them, Carothers (2002) mentions about the elections as an indicator of democratization. He says that democracy promoters believe to elections as equal to democracy. In other words, regular, free and fair elections are seen as the main criteria to complete democratization process. Indeed, when looked at the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, it could be seen that the election result was the main reason behind the protests. In a word, elections are estimated as cornerstone and key generator of democratic reforms; only after realization of free and fair election, a country could move forward to consolidate democracy (Carothers, 2002). After took a step toward democracy, the second step is its consolidation. However, only a few countries has achieved to consolidate democracy and created well-functioning democracies (Carothers, 2002). Further, White (2003) states that “many of post-communist regimes are not (any longer) going anywhere, they have reached the point they wished to reach – at least as far as their governing elites are concerned.” Based on that he defines those countries as semi-authoritarian regimes, hybrid regimes or competitive authoritarianism. In other words, third-wave countries or new democracies could not achieve to consolidate democracy and so those transitional counties are neither dictatorial nor democratic, in reality (Carothers, 2002). The situation is also not different in Armenia since it could not arrived a consolidated democracy. There are many reasons behind this situation. Failure of state-building process, the existence of oligarchs, and the absence of strong civil society might be said as some of the reasons. However, the main reason is the Nagorno-Karabakh war. As mentioned, Karabakh issue is more important than the formation of consolidated democracy. That is why, Armenia has pushed to create a consolidated democracy on the back burner for a long time. Even though with the realization of Velvet Revolution this standpoint has started to change, anybody could imagine what will happen in the future. Moreover, it should be stated that Armenia has made progress to democratize itself since its independence despite of the frozen conflict with Azerbaijan. However, the efforts made were not enough to consolidate democracy. Within this framework, now I will try to explain how

consolidated democracy could be achieved, what its characteristics are and what the completion of democratic transition means. In order to find answers for those questions, I will get benefit from the book of “*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*” written by Linz and Stepan in 1996.

First of all, Linz and Stepan (1996) explains the completion of democratic transition as following:

A democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies de jure. (p. 3)

In other words, transitional countries should be successful in the nation-state building and marketization processes if they aim to complete their democratization processes. On the other hand, most of them have not accomplished yet to complete their own transition. Yet this transformation process might be much more troublesome for post-Soviet countries since post-communist world has had much more drastic difficulties when compared to polyarchies.

As it is referred earlier, there are many primary reasons of why post-Soviet countries could not have established consolidated democracy until today. Some of them are Soviet political legacy, transition to free market economy from state ownership and the weakness of state power. Related with these issues, the various conflicts such as ethnic and nationalist tensions, language problems, political equality, corruption or black-market economy has started to emerge in the post-Soviet countries. For instance, according to the survey conducted by the Freedom House, between 2006 and 2012, the rise of democracy has slowed down because of the reasons above (Moller & Skaaning, 2013). Consequently, hybrid regimes (like Armenia) come into view. In that case, what are the necessary conditions to consolidate democracy and so complete the democratization process or what are the features of consolidated democracy? Even if there are many discussions and valuable opinions about this issue, I will examine Linz and Stepan (1996)’s arguments and analyze Armenia in this respect.

Linz and Stepan (1996) say that “democracy has become the only game in town”. What they are trying to say with this phrase is that there is no opposite movement aiming overthrown democratic regimes; all political changes and decisions are taken in accordance with the democratic understanding; and finally, democracy is internalized by all social, political, institutional life. In addition to that the main issues which should be paid attention to create a consolidated democracy are strong free or liberal market mechanism and the existence of fair

and free elections. Firstly, none or restricted interference of government to the market should be inferred from the former expressions. Even if in order to create fully democratic state the capital market must be completely free, the restricted one could be count also sufficient to create a consolidated democratic state since transformation from communism to democracy is not smooth process. The latter issue, free and fair election, is considerably crucial since the free elections as the first step are the signs of democratizations, which shows that the era of new regime has been started and old regime had been destroyed (Rose & Shin, 2001). Moreover, Rose and Munro (2002) argue in their book, *Elections without Order: Russia's Challenge to Vladimir Putin*, the elections must be realized in conformity with law of rule so that they could be free and fair; yet this is not adequate to be democratic state, but the winner must also be restricted by rule of law. However, the establishment of free and fair election system is not easy to realize for former-Soviet countries; after all, considering their present circumstances, it is valid for most that there has been almost no such free and fair election since they gained their independence. As a result of this situation, color revolutions have come into view in so many countries such as Rose Revolution in Georgia, Orange Revolution in Ukraine and Velvet Revolution in Armenia. On the other hand, it should be stated that the manipulative elections are not the only reasons of color revolution but according to Lucan Way (2008), for many scholars it is the focal point and related with that he also states that

... that the post-communist movements chose to use elections and protests -as opposed to armed rebellion- to overthrow dictators less because they had recently witnessed the use of such tactics in nearby countries and more because elections and protest have arguably been easiest, most effective, and most internationally acceptable mechanisms for bringing down incumbents (pp.57-58).

According to Shin and Rose (2001), free elections are naturally crucial for democratization; but not sufficient. In that point they highlight the basic institutions of the modern state and says that this is what is absent in many third-wave democracies. Additionally, besides problematic election process, many other crucial problems could be asserted as the obstacles for the realization of a consolidated democracy. For instance, ethnic and religious discrimination and conflict, corruption, authoritarian state understanding, repression and restriction of individualism, freedom and equality, non-existence of civil society, nepotism and patronage could be introduced as some of the indicators. Similar to this argumentation, Munck (2016) points out that democracy is not just composed of elections, but the quality of democracy becomes perceptible in pursuant of whether it consists of political freedom and equality and has political standards related with two spheres: government decision-making and the social environment of politics.

Juan L. Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) explain five arenas of a consolidated democracy in their book “*Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*”. These five arenas are free civil society, autonomous and valued political society, the rule of law, state apparatus and institutionalized economic society. According to their argumentation, without existence of them, it is not possible to talk about a consolidated democracy. In order to make clear comprehension, I will examine those subjects in detail.

Civil society as a first requirement for a democratic state is defined by Linz and Stepan (1996) as such:

By civil society, we refer to that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities and advance their interest. Civil society can include manifold social movements (women’s groups, neighborhood associations, religious groupings, and intellectual organizations) and civic associations from all social strata (such as trade unions, entrepreneurial groups, journalists or lawyers). (p. 7)

Additionally, trust for political institutions and interpersonal relations are required for a civil society; however, in the period of the Soviet Union, Communist regime had took charge of all major institutions of the society in order to strengthen its power and the party-state understanding and also control or repress people (Rose & Shin, 2001). On the other hand, against this suppression acts, people had started to be organized to defend their opinion, values, and express their grievance. For instance, in Czechoslovakia, a Civic Forum was established because of, as how Vaclav Havel says, the understanding of ‘parties are for the party (in communist regime) but Civic Forum is for all’ (Olson, 1993). Thus, the existence of civil society without any interference of government is essential for the realization of the democratic state understanding since in which way, civilians can protect their rights and freedoms in case of undemocratic movements of the state. In point of the fact that civil society means political community in origin; on the other hand, it has started to become independent from the state. Conformably, Morlino (2004) states that institutions could be evaluated as democratic if they support civil society and which is one of the basis of good democracy described as a structure realizing equality and liberty of all citizens through legitimate and correct institutions and mechanisms. In fact, Morlino’s good democracy conceptualization has the closest or even the same meaning with consolidated democracy. Further, civil society could be portrayed as effective control over political institutions; and stands between the individual and the state. As a matter of the fact that civil society is an instrument to enable not only freedoms and equality (e.g. gender equality, human rights) but also overcoming the problems of the election process. In other words, a prepotent civil society and free media could block

electoral malpractice by creating awareness for the attempts of the leaders (Birch, 2011) and also becomes a tool to challenge the totalitarian actions (Howard, 2002). To conclude, civil society must be free and out of state interference; and which kind of civil society underpins one necessity for the existence of the real consolidated democracy.

The second requirement to be a democratic state, according to Linz and Stephan (1996), is the autonomous and valued political society. A democratic political society involves various actions, institutions and thoughts such as political parties, electoral rules, legislatures, elections and political leadership. Linz and Stepan (1996) define this conceptualization as “... the polity specifically arranges itself to contest the legitimate right to exercise control over public power and the state apparatus” (p.8). They argue that a fully democratic transition and consolidation depend upon the existence of a political society, which is responsible for the exercise of the political power. Political society, indeed, is made up of political parties and which mission is to represent differences or varied opinions among democrats. By this way, the diverse and essential regulations, rules, procedures and norms are developed to enable conflict resolution within the community; they responsible for based on rule of law. Moreover, it consists of the electoral contestations between the political parties; however, these should be inclusive, free and fair in accordance with democratic necessities. Political society is also needed legitimacy and legal grounds to prove that its actions and practices are exercised in democratic way, in the eye of civil society. Therefore, civil society and political society are not totally separate arenas from each other. In point of the fact that for actualization of modern democracy, their complementarity is crucial as much as their distinctiveness because civil society, especially important in transition countries, could help political society to consolidate and realize democracy. In other words, even if the political and civil society are different institutions and act independently from each other, their aims for a specific issue could gather them under the same roof. However, opposite of this situation is also possible since the policies of the government are undemocratic, civil society could stand against it and help to be created deepen democracy. Consequently, the consolidated democracy is needed autonomous and independence political and civil society but surely based on the rule of law.

Third requirement of consolidated democracy is the rule of law, which means constitutionalism in general. It's meaning in a broader sense, is the principle that the supremacy of law is valid for everyone in a state. In liberal-democratic societies, the rule of law is one of the core principles (Heywood, 2013). Law is over politics and people even if they are financially strong or wealth, and also it has neutral character. Therefore, laws are necessary instruments to protect the rights of everyone such as minorities and poor people

without making any discrimination. In other words, all actors (civil society and political society) must respect and act in accordance with rule of law which is essentially the legal basis to protect citizens' rights and freedoms and also to form a control mechanism over political society. Related with that Schmitter and Karl (1991) argue that "Any polity that fails to impose such restrictions upon itself, that fails to follow 'the rule of law' with regard to its own procedures, should not be considered democratic" (p.81). Likewise, Ferrajoli says "there cannot be democracy without the rule of law" (Quoted in Munck, 2016). In the communist Russia, the superiority of law had no importance in the eyes of Soviet politicians; related with that Leonid Brezhnev who was General Secretary of Soviet Union Communist Party in the years of between 1964 and 1982, says "In our society whatever serves the interest of communism is moral" (quoted in Heller, 1988). In a word, the rule of law and so a structured and functioning bureaucratic practice are some of the core requirements for achieving democracy properly. Otherwise, such malpractices like corruption, unpredictability, clientelism and nepotism start to exist as public nuisance. Rule of law must be institutionalized at least a century before to be practiced complete free and fair competitive elections with universal suffrage (Rose, 2009), which indicates, without any doubt, to what extent proper practiced rule of law is important. However, as known fact that the electoral process is not performed in the correct way in many transition countries including Armenia.

The fourth necessity of consolidated democracy is state apparatus, according to Linz and Stephan (1996). What they mean with state apparatus is actually institutional framework of the government such as police or army force, courts, bureaucracy and social security system. State is also itself an apparatus of sovereign government and all of them are public institutions in general (its opposite is private institutions like civil society). As it is well-known fact that the state apparatus is responsible for maintaining of decision-making processes, orders and regulations in a specific society and also, they determine and apply national and international policies, take care of foreign and diplomatic relations. Put it differently, the collective organizations of the social existence are in charge to create a livable society. Even if the sovereign government should use its institutional power to keep order by treating equally to every citizen in a specific society to be democratic; nevertheless, it is not the case all the time. In such a way that in states which are undemocratic or not completed their transitions, governors might use power in their hand for interest of a certain group of people. Levin (1989) argues that in capitalist societies, the most powerful class, bourgeoisie, monopolizes state apparatus to strengthen its power and use it for its interests and purposes. The coercive usage of power by the state is also considerably wide spread in new democracies or third wave democratization countries and particularly, it can be seen in electoral processes. For instance,

Way (2008) argues that in Armenia, the powerful coercive apparatus has been used to suppress opposition movements as in 2005 referendum which was pronounced as undemocratic and political parties were accused of fraud. In brief, the state apparatus can be used to actualize democracy or suppress it. Eventually, consolidation of the democracy depends upon how to operate power or use the state apparatus to some extent.

The fifth and final requirement of a consolidated democracy is institutionalized economic society. Basically, economic society is an intermediary instrument to systematize relations between the state and the market and to achieve this sort of accepted rules, regulations and norms needed. Linz and Stepan (1996) claim that to some extent state intervention to market and state ownership should be prevalent in consolidated democracies. There are three reasons of why they consider this; first one is that the market economies should pursue their businesses with regard to a degree of state regulations because the market requires some identified standards, rules and regulations to maintain and protect its existence. The second one is to provide certain public services and institutions to everyone without allowing any discrimination. The last reason is to make possible free public contestation regarding governmental issues or for the sake of public goods. Therefore, it is believed that a certain degree of market intervention is essential in a consolidated democracy in order to prevent a set of activities like exclusion or inequality. For instance, only with state intervention to market, some activities such as sale of human organs or sale of children for sexual services could be prohibited in functioning modern democracies. Similar to this argumentation, Dahl (1993) draws attention to mixed economies and says that government intervention to economy has been historically developed in all democratic countries because the strict free economy has caused harms and destruction of economic order; on the other hand, this is not true only for complete free market economy but also for socialist command economy. As proof for this argumentation Dahl (1993) gives an example in his article, *Why All Democratic Countries Have Mixed Economies*, that Lenin had also introduced New Economic Program (NEP) in Soviet Russia and this could be evaluated as reflection of the market economy under the dominance of the socialist command economy. From his point of view, Dahl (1993) says:

..... Every democratic country has rejected the practice, if not always the ideology, of unregulated competitive markets. Although it is true that a market economy exists in all democratic countries, it is also true that what exists in every democratic country is a market economy modified by government intervention.

Based on all of these argumentations, it might be argued that to create a healthy democratic society, the market economy should be restricted or regulated by the state on behalf of citizens and also market itself. Even if 'free' market economy is one of necessities for consolidated

democracies that does not mean a completely free market economy. Consequently, a well-organized and partly rule-bound economic society is inevitable for the realization of the consolidated democracy.

The achievement of fully democratic state is practically impossible for almost every country, especially for transitional countries. Therefore, in this study I focused on the fundamental requirements of a consolidated democracy. Linz and Stepan (1996) gather them under five main headings which are free civil society, autonomous and valued political society, rule of law, state apparatus and institutionalized economic society. Since in this thesis I will analyze the problems of democratization in Armenia, I will discuss and examine the consolidation of democracy in Armenia by referring those main titles. Thus, the subtitles will be economy and corruption, foreign policy and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, civil society, independent media and the rule of law, respectively. As I stated before, since Nagorno-Karabakh conflict affects Armenian domestic policy and the process of democratization, it is essential title to be analyzed.

1.2. Research Question and the Method of the Study

After independence in 1991, Armenia adopted a presidential system. Democratization process also started in this period. While successful democratization has not been accomplished completely up until today, many positive steps have been taken in this respect. Especially, the recent change from the presidential system to the parliamentary system, is a very crucial progress with respect to the consolidation of democracy. In this study, I will analyze the problems that Armenia has faced during its democratization process to find out the factors contributing and preventing the development of a full-fledged democracy in the country. I will also focus on, the Velvet Revolution in this context. This study has the following research question: what are the problems of democratization in post- Soviet Armenia. I aim to respond to this question by analyzing the country's economy and corruption levels, civil society development, independent media, and the rule of law, the foreign policy issues and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Under these titles, I will analyze each presidential term.

In this thesis I will use literature analysis and the media analysis to examine the democratization problems of post-Soviet Armenia. Armenia's democratization problems will be discussed within the scope of democratization and transition theories. Various academic sources like books, academic journal articles, master's theses or doctoral dissertations and the reports of the research institutes are used in this respect. I will, also use a historical analysis method to retrospectively evaluate the developments in Armenia's history since independence.

I will use statistical data to reflect Armenian economic development, election results, civil society development and democratic indicators such as Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) data. In addition to all these, I will conduct a media analysis as well. The media analyses not only include Armenian but also Russian, Turkish, European and American media to better able to stress the relevancy of these issues in the world media.

1.3.Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is composed of five chapters. The first chapter clarifies the research question and methodology, the review of literature while introducing the reader Armenia briefly. The second chapter of the study discusses Armenian democratization problems between 1991 and 2018 under the presidencies of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan. The third chapter examines the Velvet Revolution, its reasons and outcomes, and also, analyzes the period of Nicol Pashinyan in terms of democratization process. The last chapter of the study is conclusion where I will make an overall analysis of the study.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN ARMENIA (1991-2018)

In this chapter of the study, I will examine the problems of democratization in Armenia between the years of 1991 and 2018. In other words, Armenia's democratization process is going to be presented under each president's rule since, as is known, the most powerful figure in Armenia is the president himself until 2018. In this respect, I will analyze and explain what the progressive and nonprogressive steps are in terms of consolidation of democracy under the subtitles of economy and corruption, foreign policy and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, civil society, independent media and the rule of law. Consequently, my main titles are going to be three presidents of the country taken office between 1991 and 2018 who are Levon Ter-Petrosyan, Robert Kocharyan, and Serzh Sargsyan.

2.1. Levon Ter-Petrosyan (1991-1998)

When Ter-Petrosyan came to power, Armenia as newly independent country had so many problems in many respects since its regime type was changed totally. As a result of this, not only governmentally or institutionally but also socially and economically, remarkable structural problems had come to light. As mentioned before, Armenia was part of the Soviet Union before independence and so Western values like democracy and market economy have been adopted after that period.

Levon Ter Petrosyan is one of the important political actors in Armenia. He is the first president of Armenia and held office between 1991 and 1998. He had involved in politics since 1960s and taken active roles in politics since then. In 1988, Petrosyan had become a member of Karabakh Committee of Armenia and because of his actions about Karabakh issue, he arrested together with other Committee members and had been in jail for six months in Moscow's Matroska Prison. In 1989, he was elected as a deputy to Supreme Soviet of Armenian SSR and next year he was re-elected as Chairman of Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR. Eventually, after disintegration of Soviet Union when Armenia has gained its independence, Levon Ter Petrosyan had been chosen as the first president of Armenian Republic with 83% of the votes on 16 October 1991 (Örtlek, 2014). However, this election was evaluated as unfair by three US election observers because of many reasons; for instance, according to the reports, some people voted more than ones (Rutland, 1994).

As a member of Armenian National Movement Party, Levon Ter-Petrosyan focused on especially four main points, which were development of the market economy,

democratization, independent foreign policy by avoiding Russian dependency and resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Astourian, 2001). These four topics still are the most important issues for Armenia. Therefore, while analyzing the period of Ter-Petrosyan presidency, I will also address these issues until related subtitles.

2.1.1. Economy and Corruption

As could be imagined, when Petrosyan came to power in 1991, Armenia was not in the stable condition economically due to earthquake occurred in 1988, Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, closed borders with Turkey and energy crises. As the matter of fact that almost a quarter of the population (approximately 3,283,000) was homeless and the victims of earthquake (Suny, 1993). Additionally, because the Republic of Armenia was in transition from command economy to market economy, there were crucial institutional and structural problems. Because of those reasons, Armenia adopted a radical program of economic reform executed by then Prime Minister Hrand Bagratian in 1992 for the marketization of Armenian economy (Astourian, 2001). Further, Armenia started the process of privatization of the state properties in the first years of its independence (Grigoryan, 2013). With this economic reform and privatization which were indispensable step toward realizing a market economy, Armenia aimed to develop an understanding of the market economy in the entire country. Furthermore, Armenian government in this period had started the industrialization process and improvement of trading and services. On the other hand, owing to economic crises and inflation in the country, lack of diplomatic and economic relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, effects of Russia, Armenian economic situation could not improve. In fact, because of the hyperinflation, in 1993, the budget deficit reached 55% of GDP (Tashjian, EVN Report, 2018). Privatization could not also be of help to enliven and enhance Armenian economic situation; on the contrary as a result of the malpractice of the distribution of wealth and foundations, while rich became richer, the poor poorer. Nevertheless, it also did not meet the expectation of the government. Freedom House Report in 1988 could be alleged as the proof of this situation; according to that while the expectation from privatization was 3.5 billion drams, the state revenues were only around 342 million drams in the end of 1997. (Freedom House: Nations in Transit, 1998). Due to the failure of the privatization process, factionalism and clientelism, economic life in Armenia had even become more unbearable for people. As a consequence, the opposition movements and resistance against privatization had begun. Associated with that issue, Freedom House points out in its Nation and Transit: 1998 report that both state and private-sector workers had gone to strike for not only their unpaid wages but also the closure of the union administrations in 1996. In 1994, the price of bread increased by eleven times and Petrosyan said that he assumed full responsibility for social unrest because of this price

increase (Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 1994). As a result of this price increase, in 1998 just before the resignation of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, thousands of people held a demonstration against government economic policies in the capital city of the country; the demand of protestors was the end of the privatization process and price increases mainly along with the restoration of the free social benefits (BBC News, 1998). The sovereign government's policy of price increase for basic needs like bread or electricity were labelled as "immoral" by Sergey Badalyan who was the Communist Party First Secretary (BBC News, 1998). As mentioned, the problem was not only about unpaid salaries but also restrictions in the unions whereas the freedom of associations and the right of forming or joining the trade unions were protected in 1995 Constitution. That is why, as specified in the same report, the numbers of workers joining the unions had started to decrease because otherwise, workers might come up against dismissal. Besides them, unemployment was one of the significant economic problems in the period of Petrosyan's presidency. While the official rate of unemployment was 12%, according to unofficial sources this rate was 20% (Hürriyet Newspaper, 1998). Wherefore all of these unfair and undemocratic practices, naturally, informal and second economy had become a crucial source of income for people. In 1994, UNDP indicated that the size of the shadow economy in Armenia was 52.1% averagely (Astoruiian, 2001) and when the date came to 1997, the size of the shadow economy was in between 50% - 70% of all Armenian economic activities, stated by Artashes Tumanian who was the head of the tax department in the Ministry of Finance and Economy (Danielyan, 1997). Nonetheless, the people rising to wealth were not the rank and file, but ruling elites and people connected with them thanks to the informal economy. For instance, according to data of Freedom House in 1998, the informal economy driven by private entrepreneurs and businessmen may have been almost equal in size to the formal economy.

Besides shadow or black-market economy, official corruption was also quiet important issue which should be discussed. In the period of Levon Ter-Petrosyan presidency, reaching civil services without giving bribes had become almost impossible and this situation was valid more or less for every agency in Armenia. Additionally, although the elected government administrations had been criticized for this extensive corruption acts, high-ranking officials had never been prosecuted. (Freedom House: Nations in Transit, 1998). Thereafter, the distrust towards the government and the president began to increase naturally. According to the research conducted in 1995, the rate of distrust to the government, the president and people in the political offices were 62%, 54% and 42% respectively (Dudwick, 1997). This raising public distrust to the government was indeed not an indiscreet concern since the effects of the newly emerged Armenian ruling elite or oligarchs was undeniable for this catastrophic

consequence. The crucial question here which should be asked is who those oligarchs are and to what extent they could affect Armenian economy. Petrosyan (2013) defines oligarchs as “Oligarchs in Armenia are individuals who live in the country and hold exceptional financial power (in comparison with the majority of inhabitants) and quite often a monopoly of power over a particular economic sphere”. And also, he states that those people had started to taken part in government since mid-1990 to preserve their power. In other words, it might be better to present the statement of David Petrosyan (2000) in the article “*Oligarchs in Armenia and Their Role in the Political Life of Country*” to make this argumentation clear and which is:

By the mid-90s, the leaders of the main oligarchic structures of Armenia were: now late Thaelmann Ter-Petrosyan (the brother of the first president of Armenia), who controlled manufacturers and industrialists, the construction business, part of the local market in oil products, part of the incomes generated from transport junctions, and who was a kind of umpire in inter-oligarchic disputes; Vano Siradeghyan (interior minister), who controlled part of the local market in oil products, part of the incomes generated from transport junctions, the greater part of the food market, the smaller part of bread production, and the woodwork and timber industry; Vazgen Sargsyan (defense minister), who controlled part of the local market in oil products, part of the incomes generated from transport junctions and the greater part of bread production. (quoted by Astourian, 2001)

As seen in this explanation given above, it is quite apparent that almost the entire Armenian economy was in the hands of oligarchs or government officials. And also based on this declaration, it is not inaccurate to say that blood-related ties and relative clientelism were and maybe still have been prevailing in Armenia. This situation refers to “clan” understanding which is rather wide-spread phenomena in the Caucasus region, and so in Armenia.

Furthermore, in the period of Ter-Petrosyan’s presidency, corruption in the electoral processes was quite widespread. As known fact that Petrosyan was elected as the president of the country in 1991 for the first time and re-elected in 1996 for the second time. However, frauds and irregularities were considerably common in the second election. Election of the presidency in 1996 created social unrest to a great extent. If details should be given about the process of election, Petrosyan participated in it as a candidate from the Republican Block; yet his opponent Vazgen Manukyan was supported by five different opposition parties (Örtlek, 2014). In the end of the election, Levon Ter-Petrosyan won victory for the second time. According to official figures, while Petrosyan won 51.70% of valid ballots cast, Vazgen Manukyan took 41% (OSCE, 1996). However, after the election, opposition voices made allegations of vote-rigging. Consequently, counteraction against Ter-Petrosyan had become wider and so gangs entered to parliament by force and injured some people (OSCE, 1996). Consequently, Petrosyan had to take power in his hands to keep order in the country and therefore, many demonstrations and opposition activities were arrested. Those events took place in Washington

Post with the title of “False Piety on Armenian Democracy; according to news, Ter-Petrosyan condoned the irregularities and fraud in his re-election in 1996 and also Manukyan’s supporters were arrested with police beatings and shut-down of oppositional parties (Way: Washington Post, 2008). In the final case, second term presidency of Petrosyan was not seen as legitimate by not only Armenian people or diaspora but also by international actors. Vazgen Manukyan, also, argued that Petrosyan’s victory was not valid due to late-night fraud in the vote tallying; additionally, according to both the US government and ODIHR, Ter-Petrosyan had rigged the elections (Kiesling, 2004). Furthermore, 1996 presidency elections in Armenia was evaluated as unfair by many international institutions which might be named as guardian of democracy. In conclusion, Petrosyan had put his own head in a noose with his soft acts for Karabakh issue, his foreign policy and finally elections held in 1996. In the year of 1998, Petrosyan had to resign his presidency and Robert Kocharyan who had been prime minister since 1997, was elected as president. His resignation was mentioned with headlines of “Time to Cure Armenia from Levon the Virus” in Armenian Weekly (2016); “Armenia: President Falls Victim to Nagorno Karabakh Dispute” in BBC News (1998); “Farewell to Peace in Armenia” in Hürriyet (1998), Turkish media; “Ter-Petrosyan period is closing in Armenia” in Agos (2013); “Armenian Left for the Hawks” in Cumhuriyet Newspaper (1998).

2.1.2. Foreign Policy and the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the crucial issues for Armenia since independence. When Petrosyan came to power, Karabakh was a newly emerged conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. One of the most important problems for Levon Ter-Petrosyan was his foreign policy and attitude toward Nagorno Karabakh war with Azerbaijan. As mentioned in the introduction part, the Nagorno Karabakh as a historical conflict is rather sensitive issue for all Armenian people. Therefore, when Ter-Petrosyan came to power, he shaped his foreign policy based on two principles, which were the normalization of relations with neighboring countries and the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Together with finding solutions for these crucial troubles, the economic corporation will establish inevitably and so one of the Armenian main problems, economic troubles, would be solved according to Levon Ter-Petrosyan. In the first years of his presidency, he tried to improve relations with Turkey and even Petrosyan and Volkan Vural who was the Moscow ambassador of Turkey signed an agreement to establish good neighboring relations; in addition to that, Turkey invited Armenia to Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) as a founding member (Görgülü, 2008). It could also be given as example for the positive relation between Turkey and Armenia that in 1992, Levon Ter-Petrosyan discharged the then Foreign Minister Raffi Hovanessian from his position because of his anti-Turkey discourse. This improvement took place in Turkish media with the

title of “Guarantee from Petrosyan to Turkey” (Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 1992). According to news, Armenia will not let any kind of provocation against Turkey and Hovanesian was relieved of his duty because of his invitation to the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) to Armenia. This politic move of Levon Ter-Petrosyan was indeed a proof for Turkish politicians for his sincere opinion to reinforce relations with Turkey. It should also be stated that Hovanesian was an important name for Armenia in that period since Armenia had faced to West for its foreign policy at the first stage and so Petrosyan selected him as Foreign Minister because he was a US citizen. On the other hand, according to news of even date in Cumhuriyet Newspaper (1992) entitled as “Armenian diplomacy is turning towards Middle East”, Armenia changed direction of its foreign policy from West to Middle East with this move. Based upon all of those cases, it is apparent that Petrosyan had made risky moves for the sake of better diplomatic relations with Turkey. On the other hand, all of those efforts were unfortunately locked at one point which was Nagorno Karabakh conflict. As well-known fact that Turkey’s precondition to establish relation with Armenia is the providing of Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity by ending war in between. In addition to that due to the 1915 events, called as Armenian Genocide in Armenia and most parts of the world, Armenia had demand of land from Turkey. For all of those reasons, although Turkey identified its ambassador to Armenia in 1992, without signing a protocol specifying abandonment of land demand from Turkey diplomatic relation was never started. As a matter of fact, Tansu Çiller, Turkey’s prime minister in that period, and Bülent Ecevit, leader of the opposition, were mentioned about war possibility with Armenia (Görgülü, 2008). In spite of the all those negative developments, Turkey sold wheat and provided energy to Armenia in order to weaken Azerbaijan’s embargo over Armenia; however, after Nagorno Karabakh war had been intense, Deputy Prime Minister Erdal İnönü had to announce to cease energy source to Armenia and land border between two countries had been closed in 1993 (Görgülü, 2008). As could be understand, Levon Ter-Petrosyan could not reach its aim despite of his vigorous efforts. He even accepted the proposal of Minsk Group in 1997 which recognizes territorial integrity of Azerbaijan (Petros, 2003). In addition to them, Ter-Petrosyan aimed to heal relations with Russia. For this reason, in 1992 diplomatic relations were started to establish between two countries and also Armenia joined Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the same year (Petros, 2003). On the other hand, this interconnection was based mostly on military and economic characteristics. To the extent that an agreement was signed in 1994 and according to that Russia could have two military bases in Gyumri and Yerevan and additionally, in 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance has been entered into an agreement guaranteeing that if any countries being contracting parties are exposed to a danger of armed attack, they would

help each other in many ways including military support (Şihaliyev & Yılmaz, 2015). Finally, foreign policy of Armenia in the period of Levon Ter-Petrosyan was rather complex from the aspect of Western countries since even if Armenia had desire to bring into close connection with Western world, it had become a hard mission to accomplish due to the existence of some high-level problems or issues which were and still are Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and close relations of Armenia with Russia. The attitude of Western world for war with Azerbaijan was relatively impartial in spite of some solution-oriented acts like formation of the OSCE Minsk Group. Furthermore, it should be stated that the most important progress in the presidency of Ter-Petrosyan was the ceasefire agreement in 1994 with Azerbaijan in order to take a step for the solution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. While Karabakh was one of the most important issue in Armenian domestic politics, after ceasefire agreement the situation changed. In 1997, international actors started to put pressure to both Armenia and Azerbaijan for the agreement over Karabakh (Panossian, 2001). Accordingly, Ter-Petrosyan said that in order to improve economy, Karabakh issue had to be solved soon and therefore, we will adopt step-by-step approach proposed as the best solution by OSCE Minsk Group (Panossian, 2001). On the other hand, Ter-Petrosyan's this politic decision was not welcomed by his opponents and they even accused him to sell out Karabakh. Eventually, Karabakh issue could not be solved in the period of Ter-Petrosyan's presidency. As a matter of fact that frozen conflict could not have been sold until today and also from time to time shooting-war was also occurred between two sides. Ultimately, Ter-Petrosyan's acts and politics were not responded positively by Armenian people. His approach to Nagorno Karabakh conflict, wish to establish close relations with Turkey were the main headlines for his resignation from presidency in 1998. About that issue, Petrosyan stated that Karabakh is just a pretext for his resignation and said that

I have been presented with a demand for my resignation from bodies of power which are well-known to you. Given that in the prevailing situation executing the constitutional powers of the president is fraught with serious risk of destabilizing the country, I accept this demand and announce my resignation. (BBC News, 1998)

Petrosyan was always thinking that the independency of Armenian Republic is possible with good relations with Turkey rather than Russia; however, diaspora and Armenian people in general did not want to reconciliation with Turkey but their desire was based on "revenge" (Ergin; Hürriyet Newspaper, 2018). On the other hand, the reasons behind the resignation of Ter-Petrosyan, along with Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, another issue was highly effective, and which was presidency election held in 1996. A known fact that first election process was realized in 1991 for the first time in the history of newly independent Armenia. Before second presidency election, prime ministry election was held in 1995 together with a referendum for

the acceptance of Armenian Constitution. Any kind of discontent was not risen in consequence of those elections. Furthermore, 1995 Constitution was accepted at the rate of 68% and Bagratyan was chosen as the Prime Minister (Örtlek, 2014). However, the presidential election held in 1996 was quite problematic since there were many fraud claims in that electoral process; even this election was criticized by OSCE because of the allegation of corruption (BBC News, 1998). Consequently, after the massive protest against the presidency of Levon Ter-petrosyan, he had to retire from his office.

2.1.3. Civil Society

The other important topic which should be discussed within the frame of democratization is the existence of civil society and its scope of influence. According to research conducted by Freedom House in 1998, the number of non-governmental organizations (NGO) had increased in the period of Ter-Petrosyan's presidency over one thousands; which could be evaluated as great start to improve the impact of civil society in Armenia. However, it is quite normal that their sphere of influence was narrow scoped as such kind of institutionalism had just begun to be existent. According to the Armenian law, NGOs could be political, public and religious in nature; moreover, NGOs financially depend on state assistance and Western donors. One of the major NGOs in Armenia in the period of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, were labor and trade unions. In addition to them, because of Nagorno Karabakh war and Spitak earthquake in 1988, NGOs focused on generally humanitarian efforts instead of the political issues. On the other hand, this tendency changed in 1996 with the Law on Civil Society Organization and hereunder, activities of NGOs started to focus on mostly steps necessary for the realization of democratization, such as the protection of human rights (Asian Development Bank, 2011). This progression should be evaluated as one of the crucial steps to create an understanding of civil society in Armenia though it was a very young country at that time. From that perspective, it is possible to split those organizations into two parts in Armenia with respects to their focuses as civil society organizations (CSO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Accordingly, while CSOs in Armenia were focusing on the development of social issues like education, economy and health, NGOs were interested in the political issues mostly like anticorruption programs and legislative and political reforms (Asian Development Bank, 2011). And also, as indicated in the same report; along with the formation of national and local civil society organizations in Armenia, some important international organizations and NGOs such as CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, and Save the Children also started to make contributions to Armenia in terms of not only the humanitarian aid but also to the development of civil society organizations. In spite of all of those positive progresses for civil society in Armenia, it is the predictable fact for the first years of Armenia that adaptation to

civil society understanding was not indeed efficient enough to argue that Armenia had come through one of the requirements for democracy. On the other hand, saying opposite of this could not be also true. Since in the period of the presidency of Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the sovereign government tried to support the formation and development of CSOs and NGOs in Armenia by giving monetary assistance and protecting them with law, it might be better explanation that the sovereign government in that period had successful steps for improvement of civil society in Armenia.

2.1.4. Independent Media

Besides civil society, the existence of independent and free media is another prominent subject, which should be discussed. The first law of Mass Communication was accepted in 1991 for the first time and accordingly, free and independent press, freedom of access to information and freedom of speech were protected under the law (Budak, 2015). This is quite an impressive act for a newly independent country. The other important law related with the freedom of press was the law of Radio and Television in 1996; according to this law, the members of this institution were assigned by president of the republic (Budak, 2015). Even such kind of appointment arouses suspicion for freedom of press; this power was shared between the president and the parliament, in other words, between just political actors. This also caused many problems for the protection of free press. However, even there were legal remedies institutionally for the structure of independent media, it is not possible to talk about freedom of speech or press in the first years of Armenia since there were many governmental censorships, bans and oppression towards especially journalists. Related with that in the report of Freedom House in 1998, it is specified that Ministry of Justice closed many oppositional and independent newspapers and many of them, associated with ARF, were banned in 1995. Although laws were protecting the rights of media supposedly, many journalist were fired from their jobs, or sued against them due to what they wrote. To illustrate, the publication of *Lragir*, one of the independent newspapers in Armenia, was banned for three months in 1996 because of an article related with the annexation of the Armenian-populated regions in Georgia and for a while was forcible closed completely (Freedom House: Nations in Transit, 1998). In addition to them, the immense influence of the political actors and also people having financial power could not be ignored. Based on all of those mentioned, it is clear that in the period of Levon Ter-Petrosyan presidency, some legal progresses could had been realized for freedom of press; on the other hand, in practice or reality, so many restrictions and forceful implications were imposed towards all kinds of press.

2.1.5. Rule of Law

To begin with, Armenia started studies to establish a new Constitution as a new country and finalized this purpose in 1995. The statement of “The Republic of Armenia is a sovereign, democratic, social state governed by rule of law” is written or taken place in the first Article of the Constitution. As the second step, separation of powers has been realized meaning that the legislative, executive and judiciary powers are not practiced by one institution. According to that those three kinds of powers belong to the National Assembly or Parliament, Government and Judiciary, respectively. It is a well-known fact that the separation of power is sine quo non condition for the democratic regimes and only in which way, fair and correct use of the power could be recognized. However, the execution of the rules is not as easy as written in Constitution. Grigoryan (2013) argues that “Though formally the separation exists on constitutional level but in practice Parliament and the Courts depend on the Government. And there is a lack of trust towards judges as well”. This argument shows us that the democratization efforts of Armenia were just performed in institutional level or perfunctorily. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that creating a democratic country is not easy process especially for countries like Armenia when considered its historical background. However, one of the main problems in that period was the limit of recognized power to the president of the country. At the first years of the Republic of Armenia, the president was the most powerful figure in the country and this situation was a big threat for the realization of democracy. Although this problem will be solved in the future, in the period of Ter-Petrosyan’s presidency, this obstacle in terms of democratization had become stable. In addition to that even though the principle of separation of powers was accepted in the Constitution, especially judiciary was in the hands of powerful oligarchs, ruling elites and politicians. Consequently, it is not possible to talk about the realization of rule of law in period of Levon Ter-Petrosyan.

2.2. Robert Kocharyan (1998-2008)

Robert Kocharyan is the second president of Armenia elected on 30 March 1998 as a result of the resignation of Levon Ter-Petrosyan. His presidency term lasted until 2008 since he was re-elected for the second time on 5 March 2003. Before starting to talk about his political acts as the president of Armenia, first of all, his early life experiences should be mentioned as because there are important details that could help us to analyze his political rhetoric and actions within the scope of the democratization process.

Kocharyan was born in Stepanakert, Karabakh; which means he was born as a citizen of Azerbaijan in the first place. On the other hand, since he is ethnically Armenian, later on he took active mission on the Nagorno Karabakh issue. In between 1989 and 1990, Kocharyan

served as a deputy of Armenia's Supreme Soviet and in 1991, was elected as a deputy of Nagorno Karabakh Republic's Supreme Soviet. Additionally, he was one of the leaders for the Karabakh Movement since he had made so much endeavor to ensure the security of Karabakh region. Based on all of those reasons, he had become the Prime Minister in 1992 and in 1994 elected as the first President of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. After that in 1997 he was elected as Prime Minister of Armenian Republic and finally became president of Armenia in 1998 by taking 60% of votes as a result of election race with Demirciyan who was candidate of Communists (Örtlek, 2014). International observers claimed that there were many improvements in the process of the election when compared with the 1996 elections even though opponent side argued the presence of vote-rigging (Doğru, 2015). However, according to Kiesling (2004), in 1998 election over 100.000 fraud votes were used on behalf of winner Robert Kocharyan. That is, while he was questioning legitimacy of Petrosyan depending upon the election held in 1996, it could not be argued that his legitimacy and understanding of democracy were seen loud and clear by everyone from the very beginning. Now, under the light of the requirements for the realization of democracy, politics and acts of Robert Kocharyan are going to be indicated in the fields of economy and corruption, civil society, freedom of the media, foreign politics and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict together with the crucial events which occurred in the period of his presidency.

2.2.1. Economy and Corruption

Firstly, the economic condition of Armenia was not stable before Kocharyan and the existence of the shadow economy was killing the possibility of recovery of economy. Yet it might be easily said that the contemporary situation of the economy in Armenia could not change for the better. Since as mentioned before, the extreme power of oligarchies was considerably effective in the Armenian economy. In the first instance, the clan understanding, effective in Armenia, destroyed Armenian economic condition because particularly people from Karabakh clan of Kocharyan had started to have high level positions in the government offices. As a result of this factionalism, corruption also started to increase in the government. For instance, corruption and bribery incidents in the army had started to raise after Seyran Ohanyan known as Kocharyan's right arm became Defense Minister; in addition to that he is one of the richest persons in Armenia and also according to data of Ankakh newspaper, he has gained 15-20 million per year from bribery and payoff (Cabbarlı, n.d.). Furthermore, foreign investment is crucial for the economic development of newly established countries. However, it should be remembered that it could become possible only if the country is transparent, reliable and stable both economically and politically. However, while the rate of the foreign investment in 1997 was 55, 3%, this rate decreased to 25, 9% in 1998 and the reason of which might be assessed

as Kocharyan did not give confidence to international markets with his rigid policies and undemocratic acts (Eren, 2006). Further, the purchasing power of Armenian people had decreased tenfold in 1998 in contrast with 1990, as stated in the article “Effects of Globalization Process on Armenia” written by Oya Eren (2006). In spite of all those unfavorable facts, some important improvements had been also accomplished to establish liberal economy understanding. In fact, Kocharyan had continued what Ter-Petrosyan started in terms of an economic recovery program. To illustrate, the share of the private sector had been raised successfully when the time was 1998; if it should be expressed more clearly, the share of the private sector had increased to 98% in agriculture, %97 in commercial and 45% in industry (Eren, 2006). In relation to that, the Armenian economy had started to grow since the year of 2000 at the rate of 10.1 percent (Eren, 2006); on the other hand, this positive development lasted only until the economic crisis in 2008. Furthermore, likewise in the case of the Petrosyan period, the economy was in the hands of particular people, oligarchs or ruling elite and which situation had created unfair distribution of wealth as an undemocratic practice. Tüysüzoğlu (2014), for example, specifies the Armenian economy in the period of Kocharyan with the increase of mafia power over it and adds that even if direct evidence could not be found, the existence of relation between those mafias and Kocharyan was apparent. According to another claim, important names from government including Robert Kocharyan were exploiting natural resources in Armenia and even the name behind German company operating a mine in Armenia was Kocharyan himself, all of which shows that Kocharyan controlled half of the shadow economy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2016). Depending on those reasons such as schism, corruption, clientelism or bribery, the shadow economy had continued to grow in the Kocharyan period, too.

As you can see below that the corruption level of Armenia at all levels of the government had been 5.75 from 1999 to 2007 (Walker: Freedom House, 2007) which means the whole period of Kocharyan presidency.

Table 1: Corruption Rate in Armenia (Walker: Freedom House, 2007)

1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75

Note: The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest.

This assessment is related with not only political but also economic corruption since these two are indeed associated with each other. This table indicates that the corruption in Armenia had been deepened in the period of the Kocharyan presidency. In order to prevent this infection

from the governmental offices, judiciary and economy, the government had taken some measurements like an anticorruption policy in 2006 and The Council for Combating Corruption in 2004 (Freedom House, 2017). Despite all efforts, unimportant progress could have been achieved and as a matter of fact Armenian people worried about this issue on a large scale. According to a survey conducted by Center for Regional Development / Transparency International Armenia in 2006, 89% of Armenian people participated in the survey thought that corruption was a major problem in Armenia. In short, the economic development in a liberal way and blocking of corruption in many respects could not have been resolved by the Kocharyan government; might be considered that Kocharyan had failed to consolidate democracy from those points of view.

In addition to all of those, the important subject, which should be mentioned, is an attack on parliament in 1999 and the electoral process in 2003. In addition to them, as a final point on the Kocharyan period, the election held in 2008 when Serzh Sarkisyan had become president of Armenia should be mentioned. To begin with, in 1999 an unfortunate incident occurred. On 27 October 1999, a group of armed men attacked the Armenian parliament. As a result of this, Vazgen Sarkisian (the former Defense Minister and Prime Minister since June 1999), Karen Demirchian (Speaker of Parliament), Yuri Bakhsyan, Ruben Miroyan and Minister Leonard Ter-Petrosyan were killed (Cabbarlı, 2013). The causes behind this terrorist action were controversial because even if Nairi Unanyan who was the leader of this attack said at first that they did not want to kill anyone; their attack was a reaction to corruption, economic and social problems in Armenia and it was realized individually, then argued that he took direction from parliament member Museg Movsesyan (Cabbarlı, n.d.). On the other hand, the truth behind this attack has not still come to light even today since the murder of Vazgen Sargsian and Karen Demircihan were very suspicious since they were preparing to sit around the table with Azerbaijan in AGIT summit for the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh and also it is quite thought-provoking that the leader of the attack was an ex-member of Dashnaksutyun (Gül & Ekici, 2001). This event had been named as the bloodiest assault to have occurred after independence. So much so that the case of the leader being a member of Dashnaksutyun was rather interesting because, as is known, Kocharyan led to re-opening of this organization although Ter-Petrosyan closed it. That's why, this act was seen as a struggle for power. There is also another attention-grabbing point that this incident occurred after 1999 parliamentary elections in which Vazgen Sarkisian was newly elected as Prime Minister of Armenia, but he had just carried out this duty for four-five months. Whenas, this election was assessed as more democratic than previous one held in 1998. It was even titled as "Commitment to Democracy Confirmed" in the report of the Council of Europe (1999). Nonetheless, it should be added that

this election was also not completely democratic; there were still some regularities and deficits. Therefore, when Vazgen Sargsian was killed in this attack and relation of the leader of attack with Dashnaks; it was thought that Kocharyan might be the name behind this incident. In fact, after the death of Karen Demircihan, Robert Kocharyan had become more powerful since he lost his most powerful competitor in the electoral process. On the other hand, in order to avoid those arguments, Kocharyan announced that the new prime minister would be Aram Sarkisian who was the brother of Vazgen Sarkisian. However, Kocharyan dismissed him at short notice by claiming that he attempted to sell Karabakh and appointed Andranik Markarian as new prime minister of Armenia (Doğru, 2015). Consequently, the legitimacy of Kocharyan had become a more inquirable position because of his all undemocratic and unrestful acts. Thence, Armenian people had started to become uncomfortable and disturbed from Kocharyan's governance and before the presidential election in 2003, demonstrations against Kocharyan had started in the Yerevan streets. Depending upon those opposition movements, the president of opposition parties began to hope for victory; except that still having concern for vote fraud. This brings us election held in 2003. As is known to all, the fourth presidential election was realized in 2003 and Kocharyan was elected as president for one more time. Yet those elections were significantly problematic according to not only Armenian people but also international actors. The situation is that election was held as two rounds since in the first round no one could not gain an advantage over their opponents. That was the first for Armenia, which meaning for the first time a president could not be elected in the first round. According to the data given by the Central Election Commission (CEC) that Kocharyan had won %49.8 while Demirchian and Geghamian had won 28,2% and 17,7% respectively (CSCE,2004). The name of Demirchian here is striking actually since the full name is Stepan Demirchian who is the son of Karen Demircihan, one of the people killed in the 1999 parliament attack. The participation of Stepan Demirchian in the presidential election against Kocharyan might be evaluated as reflection of his thoughts about this terrorist act. Eventually, the election could not result with one round and so the second tour had been arranged in two weeks. On the other hand, it should be paid attention that before the second tour, so many people who were opponent of Kocharyan had been imprisoned and this act of sovereign government had been criticized by many international organizations such as OSCE/ODIHR and PACE; as a result of which some of them were released prior to the second round of president election (CSCE, 2004). At the end of the second round, while Demirchian took 32.48% of the votes, Kocharyan won 67,52% and Kocharyan had been chosen as the president one more time, according to a report of ODIHR & OSCE (2003). However, it is critically important that during and before the election process, there had been many violations. Related with that Bravo (2007) remarks

so many different kinds of violations during the process of the 2003 presidency election like incomplete or inaccurate voting lists, carousel voting, intimidation and oppression against media. If an example should be given about pressure against media, Noyan Tapan and A1+ which were the most critical television stations were taken off the air just before election (Herzig & Kurkchian, 2005) Besides Armenian people, international actors also evaluated the elections as unfair and not free owing to violations and fraud except Russia. Russian delegates concluded that elections held in 2003 were fair and democratic; the reason behind such kind of evaluation might be the visiting of Kocharyan to Russia in 2002 (Cabbarlı, n.d.). However, ODIHR/PACE, for instance, criticized the election because of not meeting international standards; that being the case, related with that Serzh Sarkissian who was Defense Minister and campaign manager in those times, said “People who have grown up and lived in Europe cannot understand our mentality. They have their rules and views on democracy, and we have ours” (CSCE, 2004). It should be stated here that Serzh Sarkissian was Kocharyan’s right hand and the one will be the next president of Armenia. As a final point, Kocharyan acquired the presidency status one more than in spite of all criticisms. In addition to that Cabbarlı (n.d.) mentions about that changing election results is not possible because Armenian democracy understanding was not developed to achieve this and also Armenian people accepted the results of the elections; on the other hand, trust to Kocharyan had been weakened as a result of not only unfair election results but also actions of Kocharyan during his first presidency period. Therefore, Kocharyan continued to hold his power and oppressed the opposite noises. Moreover, the final electoral process in the period of Kocharyan presidency was parliament elections held in 2007. In consequence of this election, Republican Party of Armenia (Serzh Sarkissian’s party), Prosperous Armenian Party and Dashnaksutyun Party were the three parties getting the more votes as 32,8%, 14,7% and 12,7%, respectively; though, those results were also questionable and associated with this, Dashink party claimed that observers seemed like eating and drinking at the restaurants (Cabbarlı, n.d.). Shortly, this election was not also realized within fair and free conditions. As can be seen clearly, almost all elections in the period of Kocharyan were dubious and illegitimate; on the other hand, as could be remembered, he came to power by questioning the legitimacy of Ter-Petrosyan. In other words, consolidation of democracy could not be achieved in the Kocharyan period, either.

2.2.2. Foreign Policy and Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Apart from economic condition and corruption, the other most important issues are Kocharyan’s foreign policy and his approach to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The main aim of Kocharyan in foreign policy could be ordered as the integration of Armenia to the global

system except for Turkey, technical and economic cooperation with neighboring countries, the institutionalization of diaspora Armenians and resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict for the benefit of Armenia. It is a matter of fact that Kocharyan was not willing to solve Karabakh conflict in peace since he has never accepted the idea of the integrity of Azerbaijan territory including the Nagorno Karabakh region. In other words, he acted in accordance with the principle of “solutionlessness is also a solution” (Cakova, 2013). That is why, he presented sets of negotiation ways in relation with this dispute and which were the right of Karabakh people for self-determination, providing security of Karabakh region but most of the role will be held by Armenia, possession of Lachin Corridor by Armenians (Quoted by Petros, 2003); on the other hand, none of them were accepted simultaneously by both sides. Kocharyan and Aliyev who was the president of Azerbaijan had established diplomatic relations so many times since 1999 to come up with a solution. For instance, in May 2005, İlham Aliyev and Robert Kocharyan assembled a meeting to determine the status of Nagorno Karabakh (Ural & Çaykiran, 2011). Besides that, those two leaders held many meetings under the Chairmanship of AGİT Minsk Group and leader of other countries. However, owing to Armenian’s uncompromising attitude and approach, any solution could not be produced about this issue. Yet granted that because Armenia has no open door for resolution of the conflict and also Ter Petrosyan’s soft attitude caused his resignation, Kocharyan interiorized obdurate stance and made no concessions to that. Otherwise, he would have to take Armenian people and diaspora on himself. Related with that Kocharyan said “There is no solution that will make all parties happy in the Karabakh conflict” as stated in Azg Newspaper (Ural & Caykiran, 2011).

In addition to the Karabakh conflict, the other important subject in the period of Kocharyan was bilateral relations with Turkey. The reasons why diplomatic relations between two countries could not be put in order are genocide claims of Armenians and the diplomatic note of Turkey for Karabakh conflict. As a known fact that the land border of the two countries has been closed for a long time. In that matter, no progress could be achieved in the period of Kocharyan as a result of the mentioned reasons. On the other hand, the genocide claims of Armenia were and still has been the second major problem between the two nations. Although in the declaration of independence the article related to the recognition of the 1915 genocide is expressed, until Kocharyan period this subject had never come into light. However, when Kocharyan came to power, genocide claims formed an important part of his foreign policy. For this purpose, Kocharyan accused of Turkey to carry out genocide and not to accept that in United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit in 2000; additionally, Vartan Oskanyan who was the Foreign Minister of Armenia in that period, blamed Turkey to deny 1915 genocide in 55th term UN Annual Meeting in 2000 (Örtlek, 2014). Furthermore, Kocharyan used the words of

“Genocide is not only the fight of diaspora, but also the fight of all Armenians as a state and nation” in the conference of Armenian diaspora in 1999 (Yılmaz, 2009). It should not be forgotten that Kocharyan had been supported by diaspora Armenians unbelievably because of his susceptibility to genocide and Karabakh issues. Moreover, Kocharyan had also aimed to spread genocide problem in the international arena whose reason might be put pressure on Turkey with the support of powerful international actors. This act resulted in success relatively since European Parliament recognized genocide in 1987 and imposed this a condition to Turkey for EU membership (Görgülü, 2008); yet for a while EP changed its stance about this complicated issue. However, Turkey has never taken steps backward in relation with the genocide claims of Armenia; but also, not neglected to offer a solution. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the then prime minister of Turkey sent a letter to Robert Kocharyan when he was prime minister of Turkey to offer the formation of International Common History Committee. Erdoğan argued that in that way the historical facts about this problem could be brought to light and bilateral relation between two countries could be normalized. Nevertheless, the constructive dialogue of the then Prime Minister Erdoğan, Kocharyan did not agree with him and said that normal relations between the two countries should be established without any pre-conditions. Turkey’s proposition was not also welcomed by Armenian people. For instance, the title of Ohannes Kılıçdağı’s (2005) article was ‘Archive and commission as a distraction tool’ published in Agos newspaper. In spite of all those negative situations, limited positive steps had been also taken. To give an example, Armenia sent a diplomat to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Office in İstanbul and as a result of this, Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) was formed in 2001 (Migdalovitz, 2003). To conclude, any improvement in bilateral relations could have not been realized between the two countries in the period of Kocharyan’s presidency because of his attacker attitude. Different from policy towards Turkey, Kocharyan’s approach to West and Russia was constructive and complementary. For example, in the period of Kocharyan’s presidency, Collective Security Organization was found by many former-Soviet countries including Russia and Armenia; further, Kocharyan signed a military-technic cooperation agreement with Russia in 2003 (Sönmez, 2011). On the other hand, Kocharyan tried to close relations with USA also to decrease the influence of Russia by creating balance. To conclude, Kocharyan had behaved in accordance with bringing identity and collective memory into the forefront instead of solving problems swiftly within the context of foreign policy (Terzyan, 2016).

2.2.3. Civil Society

Civil society is also an inevitable requirements of a consolidated democracy. The influence of NGOs in Armenia had started to somewhat increase in the period of Kocharyan; on the other

hand, owing to financial inadequacy, its development was not on the level which should be. Besides that, the financial dependency to particularly diaspora caused irregular funding and because of that NGOs could not have the chance to improve themselves at the desired level. That is why the impact of those institutions had remained limited especially in terms of the political issues. Albeit, their number had shown an increase; according to data taken by State Registers there were 2585 registered NGOs in 2001 (Asian Development Bank, 2011). In addition to this positive acceleration, to regulate activities of civil society organizations, a second law was adopted in 2001, as you may recall the first one was put into practice in 1996 in the period of Ter-Petrosyan presidency, and this law pints out that NGOs unite individuals to perform its own activities and protect human rights, basically (Asian Development Bank, 2011). Further, some other statements were made within the scope of this law about organization of NGOs. Effort to regulate the structure of civil society organizations by law could be assumed as crucial steps in the way of creating consolidated democracy for third-wave democracies like Armenia. Except for NGOs or civil society organizations, within the scope of civil society a new establishment has begun to form in the year 2007, and which is civil initiatives. This entities are based on voluntarism and also non-partisan and grassroots organizations attaching importance to public and environmental issues in particular (Ishkanian, 2013). Those initiatives have been more active and influent more than NGOs and gained countless important victories. The mining sector has become the main sector in Armenia and even if this recently developed sector has made many contributions to the Armenian economy, it also has a negative impact with regard to the environment, public healthy exclusively. Thus, civil initiatives had drowned out protests to avert those destructive activities and also protect historical buildings and green spaces. For instance, thanks to those initiatives, the destruction of open-air cinema amphitheater and the construction of hydropower stations over an amazing waterfall have been blocked (Quoted in Paturyan, 2015). Into the bargain, those initiatives have defended the rights of people; to illustrate, they had created a respectable impact on maternity payments and retirement pensions. Based on all of those progressive movements in the field of civil society, it could be said that Armenia had taken a step forwardly for the creation of the consolidated democracy by enabling civil society more efficient. On the other hand, it should not be still forgotten that the point which civil society had arrived in the period of Kocharyan presidency is not sufficient for the realization of fully consolidated democracy since there had little impact of those organizations or initiatives over political field. Yet still this was a starting point and which situation will change within ten years.

2.2.4. Independent Media

By contrast with improvements in the field of civil society understanding, freedom of media could not be secured in Kocharyan period in spite of promulgated laws related to freedom of press. In 2004, censorship to media has been forbidden with a media law; however, even if freedom of media has been protected by law; what's more, another law about media is freedom of information enacted in 2003; which law states that freedom of press and expression is under protection, access to information is free but state secrets are not within the scope of this freedom. (Budak, 2015). Despite all those legal progress for the freedom of press or media, Armenian journalists have been still under the tendency of censor themselves by reason of attacks and oppression. For instance, according to a report of FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) (n.d.), Gagik Shamshian who is a reporter of Chorrord Ishkhanutiun and Aravot newspapers, and Hovhannes Galajian who is editor in chief in Iravunk newspaper came under attack in 2006 shortly after they published a political article. Consequently, it is stated in Freedom House: Nations in Transit report (2007) that because of the increasing attacks and physical assaults to a journalist in 2006, concerns of people about governmental harassment towards independent media affected parliamentary election held in 2007. Depending upon all of those mentioned, while Armenia was ranked as the 83rd in 2004 according to freedom of the press in the world assessed by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RFS) annual index, its ranking declined to 102 in 2006 (FIDH, n.d.). Similarly, in 2007 Armenia's rating for independent media was determined as 5.75 (according to a scale of 1 to 7; 1 is the highest level of democratic progress and 7 is the lowest) by Freedom House in 2007. Finally, it is clear that there was remarkable repression against the media and press in the Kocharyan period. The meaning of this is Kocharyan could not make progress in the field of the freedom of speech, which is one of the crucial requirements of the consolidated democracy.

2.2.5. The Rule of Law

A constitutional amendment was made in 2005. It is a well-known fact that the first constitution of Armenia established in 1995 could not be interpreted as fully democratic but still not totally in a bad condition when thought that Armenia was a newborn country in those times. With amendments in 2005, Armenian government had aimed to form a constitution in accordance with European standards and to do so improve constitutional balance of powers which are government, parliament and judiciary and for this purpose, some certain issues and changes like reaffirmation of separation of powers, presidential immunity, creation of a justice council to ensure independence and neutrality of judiciary, election of ombudsman and broadcasting council by parliament (so far they were elected only by president) and freedom of media were focused on in amendment (OSCE/ODIHR, 2005). As a matter of the fact that

for this constitutional amendment a referendum was held in 2003 together with the presidential election; but it failed because of insufficient voter turnout. Thence, in 2005 it was held forth again. This amendment is so important for the history of Armenia because with this change, Armenia had adopted semi-presidentialism by leaving the fully presidentialism system. That was a huge step forward for Armenia since in this way ultimate power of the president was comparatively restricted, at least in appearance. Notwithstanding, in the reality most of the things remained the same as the implementation of the law could not be realized totally; the existence of corruption had continued to be; violence against human rights was not punished; and the judiciary had behaved arbitrarily (FIDH, n.d.). About the 2005 amendment Simon Payaslian (2011) said that “rather than promote democracy and human rights, themselves (he means new post-Soviet leader in Armenia) became the architects of an authoritarian regime”. To conclude, the rule of law could not be provided under the presidency of Kocharyan, either. Even if some important alterations have been made real on paper, in practical terms there was not so much difference. Consequently, it might be evaluated as Kocharyan failed a certain extent to consolidate democracy in Armenia.

To conclude, Kocharyan failed to meet the expectations of the Armenian people to consolidate democracy. This result could be potently seen in Table 2 given below (Walker; National Transits, 2007). According to this data, from 1999 to 2007, Armenia could not achieve to consolidate and establish a better democratic structure. On the contrary, the situation in the electoral process, independent media, governance, judicial framework and independence went from bad to worse. Besides that, the development of civil society, local democratic governance and corruption remained stable. When looked at the total, the democratic score of Armenia had decreased from 4,79 to 5,21 in the period of Kocharyan presidency. According to Tüysüzoğlu (2014), Kocharyan had adopted “manageable democracy” like Vladimir Putin and watched his opponents like a hawk. Finally, his method of governance could not be assessed in the line of the democratic path since results are quite apparent in the table.

Table 2: Armenian Democracy Score Between 1999 and 2007 (Walker, 2007)

	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Electoral Process	5,25	5,50	5,50	5,50	5,75	5,75	5,75	5,75
Civil Society	3,50	3,50	3,50	3,50	3,50	3,50	3,50	3,50
Independent Media	4,75	4,75	4,75	5,00	5,25	5,50	5,50	5,75
Governance	4,50	4,50	4,50	4,75	4,75	n/a	n/a	n/a
Local Democratic Governance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,50	5,50	5,50
Judicial Framework And Independence	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,00	5,25	5,00	5,00
Corruption	5,75	5,75	5,75	5,75	5,75	5,75	5,75	5,75
Democracy Score	4,79	4,83	4,83	4,92	5,00	5,18	5,14	5,21

Note: The ratings are from 1 to 7. Rating 1 represent highest level of democracy whereas rating 7 is the lowest.

2.3. Serzh Sargsyan (2008-2018)

Serzh Sargsyan was the third president of Armenia and had held office between 2008 and 2018. Before being president or in the period of Kocharyan, he was the Defense Minister of Armenia between 2000 and 2007. Additionally, after the death of Andranik Makaryan, he was chosen as the Prime Minister by Kocharyan. Like Kocharyan, he is also from Karabakh region or clan and he also managed Nagorno-Karabakh Army between 1991 and 1994. For this reason, Sargsyan was deemed worthy to take National Hero Medal. The party which Sargsyan is the president of, is Republican Party of Armenia.

In this part of the study, I will examine the democratization process in the period of Sargsyan presidency. In this context, important issues like electoral process, condition of civil society, media, foreign policy and corruption are going to be tried to explain.

2.3.1. Economy and Corruption

First of all, details about the election held in 2008 are going to be given because it is notably significant for that Sargsyan won the elections and became the third president of post-Soviet Armenia. According to data from the Central Election Commission, Serzh Sargsyan won the election with 55,7% of the votes while Ter-Petrosyan who was the first president of Armenia took only 18,9% (Cabbarlı, n.d.). It is an important detail that after Ter-Petrosyan was forced to resign from his presidency, the 2008 election was the first one that he participated in as an opponent. Furthermore, even if Sargsyan outraced, not only Armenian people but also

opponent candidates, particularly Levon Ter-Petrosyan, did not accept the results and claimed the existence of irregularities and fraud in the election. Along with other common frauds and irregularities, the Armenian press, besides all these, even argued that voters were tried to be manipulated in exchange for money and also asserted that the amount was approximately 2, 5 million dollars (Lütem, 2012). On the other hand, observers from the European Council reported that the election held in 2008 was completed in compliance with international standards. Lütem (2012) also remarks that even Catherine Ashton who was in charge of Foreign Policy of USA and also Speaker of Foreign Affairs Minister, specified that there is an improvement in the electoral process in Armenia in comparison with the election realized in previous years. The contradiction between opinion of Armenian people and international authorities could be apparently shown in this case. Consequently, people around Ter-Petrosyan seemed to have found the solution to take the streets and began a protest against the Sargsyan government. On the other hand, the protest started on 20 February 2008 had become pure chaos on 1 March because Sargsyan decided to disperse people on the streets by using police and army forces. As a result of this unfortunate incident, according to FIDH's report (2010), ten people were killed while more than two hundred people were injured; however, anyone has still been officially accused or charged as responsible for deaths. Additionally, in accordance with the data given in the same report, more than a hundred protestors were arrested and convicted. It should be stated that Nicol Pashinyan who was the chief editor of Haykakan Jamanak newspaper in those times and as explained later will be the prime minister in 2018, was also one of the arrested protestors. On the other hand, the interpretations of Serzh Sargsyan and Arthur Baghdasaryan who was an opponent of Sargsyan in February election about what happened on 1 March were fabulously interesting, actually. In an article published in Washington Post on 17 March 2008, they remarked Ter-Petrosyan's dangerous and undemocratic populism and to protect citizens, the state of emergency as an only choice. They also mentioned about violence as an undemocratic act and the necessity of mutual dialog to solve problems. This is indeed a rather distinctive argumentation because even Sargsyan and Baghdasaryan criticized Petrosyan to gather people in the streets and create violent social problems; in point of fact that they were the ones who resorted to the violence and government's law enforcement officers killed and injured their own people. Moreover, Kocharyan had will be held responsible for the 2008 incident by demolishing constitutional order and got arrested for this reason for three times. As a result of the 1 March incident, Ter-Petrosyan even applied the European Court of Human Rights; however, the election was not annulled and Sargsyan had become president of the country. Based on all of these facts, it is clear that Sargsyan came to power by using force, repressing people and according to opinions

of some, undemocratic ways. That is so, the legitimacy of the third president of Armenia had started to be questioned since the very beginning. Nevertheless, there were many other factors causing to think his acts as undemocratic. The attitude of government against the arrested people because of the 1 March incident was not reflecting the democratic and humanist way of acting. According to data presented in FIDH report in 2010, there were many other incorrect manners undermining democracy such as biased judiciaries, ill-treatments against convicted people, such as the treatment against Arshaluys Hakobyan who is a member of Armenian Helsinki Association, and illegal testimonies. Moreover, discussion about electoral processes in the period of Sargsyan could be seen also in parliament elections realized in 2012 and 2017 and finally the next presidential election in 2013 when Sargsyan elected as the president one more time. Additionally, the 2018 election led to a state of chaos in Armenia because of Sargsyan's irregular act to be prime minister. If necessary to start with the 2012 parliament elections, this one was also interrogable owing to the existence of many irregularities based on claims. For example, Cabbarlı (n.d.) indicates that the number of voters was exaggerated and did not overlap with Armenian actual demographic data, according to some researchers. In addition to that according to the report of Policy Forum Armenia (PFA) (2012), the proportion of violations were significant as you can see in the table below:

Table 3: 2012 Parliamentary Election Violations (PFA, 2012)

Categories of Violations	Number of Violations	Percent of Total
Bribing and Intimidation	284	21,9
Of which, bribing and charitable giving	247	19,0
Voter Lists	151	11,6
Pre-election campaigning	175	13,5
Procedural violations	182	14,0
Election day falsifications	78	6,0
Of which, ballot stuffing	11	0,8
Public order	161	12,4
Of which, violence and harassment	53	4,1
Other	266	20,5

Source: The iDitord election fraud reporting platform.

Despite all, to prevent fraud in the election, many local and international observers were charged; according to data taken from Istituto Affari Internazionali, 31,451 people from local and 647 ones from international organizations monitored the election; and the latter evaluated

the election legitimate in general sense (Lorusso, 2012). To illustrate, the CIS Observation Mission said “The Parliamentary election was held in free, open and competitive according to the democratic norms. In regard to violations, we can mention the fact of stamps disappearing from passports.” (Andreasyan, 2012). Additionally, according to report of OSCE (2012), the parliamentary election held in 2012 was a largely competitive, vibrant and peaceful campaign; besides this, the media offered opponents equal opportunities meaning there were any media-related violations during the entire election process. However, The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly said that “The preconditions of real elections are the accuracy of the voter lists and the absence of pressure toward the voters. The election of 6 May 2012 failed to guarantee the above preconditions” (Andreasyan, 2012). Depending upon all of those statements, it is possible to conclude that many conflicting perspectives were valid for the 2012 parliament election; yet it is not totally possible to know which one reflects the correct condition of the election. On the other hand, it might be argued that in spite of many irregularities and fraud problems, the 2012 election was an improvement for Armenia’s elections by comparison with previous ones. Though, opposite to which inference, Freedom House states in its Nations in Transit 2012 report that any progress could not be provided, and rating of Armenia’s electoral process remained unchanged as 5.75 (Iskandaryan, 2012). Moreover, the official result was like that Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) won 44.02 of the votes and based on this, it had achieved to get majority of parliament by obtaining 69 seats from 131 (Navasardian, n.d.). Consequently, Sargsyan guaranteed his position in the next presidential elections. As in the year 2012, the parliamentary election held in 2017 was also quite debatable in many ways. To illustrate, there were many fictitious voters who were needed to protect the victory of the political ruling party (Hoktanyan, Khachatryan, Margaryan & Martirsoyan, 2017). In fact, Armenia had accepted a New Electoral Code a while ago to gain the trust of the public; and which code includes many recommendations of OSCE to be more democratic; but its effective implementation was probably not at the desired level. This is actually an improvement to consolidate democracy and soothe the atmosphere. The government even took measures by controlling all voters with fingerprint and identification cards and also scanned and stored them to avoid any doubt. However, in spite of all those positive alterations, repressive attitude to media and journalists had been still visible in this election. Besides all of those, the parliament election in 2017 is an unbelievably crucial step for post-Soviet Armenia because the structure of government has been officially transformed from semi-presidentialism to a parliamentary system. It should be remembered that the decision of transformation was actually accepted in a referendum in 2015; on the other hand, its implication could be realized in the 2018 elections. Based on that power of president will

be restricted dating from 2018 and the powers of parliament will increase. This is a great step in the way of consolidated democracy, which is why this election has incredible importance for Armenian history. According to the new system, while presidential power is restricted, a political party having the majority of the seats in the parliament would have the most intense voice. Furthermore, according to new decisions, not only the president of the republic but also the prime minister have been chosen by parliament. This situation created many discussions on those times as a matter of fact since it was thought that Sargsyan was planning to be prime minister after the presidency. On the other hand, he denied these argumentations and claimed that he did not have such a plan. Furthermore, it should be added that according to Armenia's Constitution, one could not be president more than two consecutive terms and when the 2017 parliamentary election had been realized, Sargsyan was in his second term as the president (as mentioned later, he was chosen as president one more time in 2013). At the end of the election, according to data indicated in the report of Helsinki Committee of Armenia in 2017, the results were such that while Republican Party of Armenia took 49,08% of votes, Tsarukyan Alliance won 27,3%. Its meaning, RPA or party of Serzh Sargsyan won the majority of seats in parliament. Additionally, there will be 105 members of parliament in total and while 101 of them are going to be Armenian ethnically, the rest is going to be chosen from minorities like Kurds, Yezidi or Russian. This is also a favorable improvement in terms of providing equal opportunities and paying regard to minorities' desires. The other significant election which should be mentioned is presidency election held in 2013. As known fact that Sargsyan had been chosen president of the country one more time with this election. However, like others, this one was also notably problematic in many ways. Results of that were not surprising for Armenian people since Sargsyan won 58,64% of the votes while Raffi Hovannisian who was Minister of Foreign Affairs in the period of Levon Ter-Petrosyan and fired by him, took only 36,75% (Lorusso, 2013). That result was a disappointment for Hovannisian since he was sure about himself due to his successful election campaign which was called BaRevolution. The reason for which is related with Armenian language because the word "Barev" in Armenian means "Hello". In the period of pre-election campaigns, Hovannisian visited all over the country, listened to the problems of Armenian people. Until that time, no one had ever made that and so he had become an important name for the people. That is why, the result of the election did not sound believable for him and based on that he claimed the existence of fraud in the election. On the other hand, 2013 presidency election was monitored by almost 7.000 local and international observers and most of those evaluated the election as "free and fair"; for example, IEOM declared that Election Day and pre-election period were calm, peaceful and orderly, media was not exposed to any repression (Lorusso, 2013). However, the situation

was different for domestic observers who argued that there were so many irregularities and vote-rigging in the election. For instance, administrative resources included state educational institutions were used on behalf of Serzh Sargsyan although such kind of campaign strategy is prohibited by the law; in addition to that there were many observed problems in the election such as vote-buying, multiple voting and ballot stuffing (Sakunts, Grigoryan & Hambaryan, 2015). According to Armen Grigoryan (2016), Serzh Sargsyan's votes were increased by 500-550 thousand but his actual votes were only 300 thousands. Based on all of these, Hovannisian had started a demonstration against the election results and so Sargsyan government. This occurrence received widespread media coverage in the international arena. According to news of Hasmik Mkrtchyan (2013) published in Reuters, Hovannisian said that "The constitution should win over fraud". Additionally, James Brooke (2013) gave place to Moscow assessment of the election in Voice of America (VOV) and according to that Sergei Lebedev, headed a team of observers, confirmed the existence of some minor irregularities; yet it was not excessive as could affect the results. However, Armenian people did not think that way and numerous people had supported the protest. Hovannisian had even started a hunger strike in Liberty Square. After that Hovannisian organized an oath-taking ceremony in the middle of Liberty Square at the same time with Sargsyan's inauguration ceremony (Lorusso, 2013). In spite of all efforts, Hovannisian could not achieve to annul the elections. However, this should not be labeled as a failure since this act and disobedience enabled a social awakening in Armenia. The results of these protests will be seen clearly in the next presidential election in 2018, mentioned in the next chapter. Besides the resistance of Hovannisian and fraud claims in the election, there are some other important issues in relation to this process. One of them was the attack against Paruyr Hairikian who was one of the candidates in the presidential election. According to news, he was shot by his chest on the street; yet the one who was responsible for this act could not be found. That was quite a suspicious incident but did not create any problem among candidates and even Sargsyan visited him in the hospital. The other issue was the hunger strike of Andreas Ghukasyan who was another presidential candidate in the 2013 election. He staged the hunger strike during the whole election campaign to revoke Sargsyan's candidacy; yet he also failed to accomplish. It is apparent that in the presidential election held in 2013, there were too many opposite sides against Sargsyan and this countermovement will come to a head in the presidential election held in 2018. On the other hand, details and consequences of which election are going to be explained in the next chapter. But it should be noted that all electoral process in the period of Sargsyan was polemical and questionable in terms of eligibility to democratic standards. Grigoryan (2016) says that the Sargsyan's government had been in a crisis since 1 March incident because of the falsification

of the elections and he always chose to solve this crises through weapons; the only way avoding from this crises is to organize free and fair elections but Sargsyan missed this opportunity. Consequently, the rating of Armenia's electoral process was determined as 5, 75 in 2013 (as known 7 was the lowest rate) (Iskandaryan, n.d.). To conclude, Armenia could not achieve to consolidate democracy with regard to electoral processes in the period of Sargsyan.

The second issue which will be discussed to asses democracy score is the economic situation and dimensions of shadow economy and corruption in the period of Sargsyan's presidency. It might be said that Sargsyan came to power in a dark period in terms of the economy since in his period, the 2009 global economic crises and the war between Russia and Georgia appeared. While the Armenian economy had been increasing until 2008, beginning from this date it started to get worse because of external conditions. First of all, because the border between Turkey and Armenia has been closed, Armenia had taken advantage of Georgia to realize commercial dealings. On the other hand, because of the war realized in 2008 between Russia and Georgia, Armenia had lost this advantage and started to hard times economically. In addition to that, the entire world had affected from global economic crises occurred in 2009, was naturally affected in Armenia. Serzh Sargsyan coming in power in this ill-fated time immediately started to make economic reforms in the country. Firstly, he appointed Tigran Sarkisyan who was the former head of the Central Bank, as Prime Minister and also Nerses Yeritsian who was also former employee in Central Bank, as Minister of Economy (Göksel, 2012). The second step of Sargsyan was to make alterations in the tax system and create a program to fight with corruption. In spite of all those improvements, the Armenian economy continued to get worse because of the reasons mentioned above. For instance, since Russian construction sector had affected from economic crises, the amount of money sent by seasonal workers in Russia had decreased and people started to come back to Armenia; also, due to Black Tuesday, Armenian currency had lost value in proportion to 20% and consequently, gross domestic product had reduced by 18% (Göksel, 2012). Not only the private sector but also the government had influenced from those crises negatively. The former started to lay off staff, compulsorily and government had to resort to different alternatives. As a result of those, Armenian people had started to live in poverty. According to report of World Bank Group (2015), the economic growth rate of Armenia had decreased to approximately 7% in 2008 and -14% in 2009; yet in between 2012 and 2014, it started to increase again at the rate of 4,2% a year. Additionally, it is stated in the same report that owing to economic crises in the world, the poverty rate had heightened to over 30% (World Bank, 2015). Further, when we look at the report of the World Bank in 2017, it can be seen that the percentage of the poor living in Armenia was almost 70% of all population in 2015. Additionally, state debt had increased by

\$ 5 million in the period of Sargsyan's presidency (Grigoryan, 2018). If stated more clearly, while the foreign debt of the country was 1.9 billion USD in 2009, it rose to 5.9 billion USD in 2016 (Grigoryan, 2017). However, global economic crises were not the only cause behind economic downturn in Armenia but there was also another reason which was the existence of powerful oligarchs. Armenia is a country which had suffered always from the ruling elite who dominated the economic and political life of the country. It is normally forbidden by law that member of parliament could not have any enterprises or being a part of any economic organization; however, that is not the case in Armenia. Consequently, there is probability that any reform in the field of economic activity might encounter an opposition by politicians in order to protect their interests. Hereat, when government tried to make any progressive alteration, it might be exposed to repression of oligarchs. For instance, in the report of Policy Forum Armenia (2013), it is stated that top-level public officials are a part of business activities and so they provide unfair advantage over competition to their enterprises. Haldun Solmaztürk (2018) mentions about Karabakh clan including President Serzh Sargsyan and says that not only parliament but also jurisdiction and government are in their hands and also their main sources of revenues government tenders. That is to say, the level of corruption had been incredibly high in almost every sector in Armenia, particularly in the economy. Unfortunately, size of corruption is greatly wide consisting of healthcare, education, military, governmental offices, economy and so on. Almost all institutions have been serving the interest of the government and ruling elites and after all, any improvement could not be accomplished to preclude corruption. Including banking and energy many economy-based sectors are controlled by informal alliances between the political commercial elites; so, Armenia has still needed transparency. For instance, while public procurement is over 60% of public expenditure in Armenia, it is impossible to talk about competitive procurement methods (PFA, 2013). Additionally, healthcare and education has been under very bad conditions and since salary of officials are so low, they have to appeal to bribe-taking. To exemplify, according to the report of the Center for International Higher Education conducted in 2012, among 28 countries, Armenian professors are the ones getting the poorest paid; therefore, those people might be open to taking bribes during university admission or exams to fix grades (PFA, 2013). According to Marianna Grigoryan's article (2008) published in Euroasianet, Sargsyan says "Bribe-takers in the country number in the thousands". On the other hand, to deal with this problem many moves were realized; to illustrate, great numbers of government officials such as some police officers, Stepan Misakyan who was employee in Minister of Justice and Aram Hovsepyan who was one of the top tax officers were arrested for bribery in 2015 (Iskandaryan, n.d.). Another problem in terms of corruption is money laundering. According to The U.S.

State Department Money Laundering Report (2012), in Armenia it is considerably widespread in government, organized crime, shadow economy (PFA, 2013). According to data taken by Trading Economics (n.d.), Corruption Rank in Armenia was reached its highest point as 129 among 175 countries in 2011 while it was averagely 99,84 from 1999 until 2018. Besides all of those, it is possible to see also some positive improvements in the period of Sargsyan presidency. To illustrate, after a while, living conditions had started to get better in the last years of Sargsyan thanks to economic growth. According to the the World Bank report (2017-18), while the national poverty rate was 29,4% in 2016, it regressed to 25,7% in 2017. Additionally, some new applications such as e-government services had reduced corruption, especially bribery, realized in governmental offices. However, in general sense economic reforms had not been effective enough to ensure economic stability or to prevent corruption. Finally, whereas 27% of Armenian people thought corruption as a normal aspect of daily life in Armenia, this rate had reached 39% in 2010 (PFA, 2013). Consequently, Armenia could not get better in the way to consolidate democracy owing to existence of high corruption rates, interest and influence of oligarchs in economic and political life and poor economic conditions.

2.3.2. Foreign Policy and the Nagorno Karabakh Conflict

The other crucial subject to measure Sargsyan's democratic acts is foreign policy and attitude for the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Sargsyan followed the political standing of Kocharyan for two issues and so Nagorno-Karabakh war not only remained unsolved but also became more intense. Consequently, in spite of some important steps, relations between Turkey and Armenia were not also improved. Generally, Sargsyan's foreign policy is labeled as a trial and error period (Öztarsu, 2018). The foreign policy of Armenia in this period is going to be examined into four different aspects. The first one of them is relations with Turkey. Sargsyan had already proclaimed his perspective by saying before election that Armenia is ready to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey without any precondition, and when Turkey recognizes "Armenian genocide", it will be real reconciliation (Örtlek, 2014). On the other hand, when Sargsyan came to power, the existence of protests against him, Armenian poor economic condition and war in Georgia forced him to try the establishment of positive relations with Turkey. That is why, Armenia and Turkey took a step and "football diplomacy" showed up. In 2008, Sargsyan took the first step and invited Abdullah Gül, President of Turkish Republic, to Armenia in order to watch football game together. That was the first visit of a Turkish President to Armenia in the history; thus, it was of capital importance for two countries. On the other hand, this meeting could not be welcomed not only in Turkey but also in Armenia. Deniz Baykal who was the President of Republican People's Party as an opposition party in Turkey said that Armenia have not recognized Turkey borders, not

retreated from Karabakh or not renounced from genocide claims and then what is the reason of this visit; similarly, Devlet Bahçeli who is the president of Nationalist Movement Party argued that this visiting tarnishes Turkey's honor and is a historical blindness, stated in the report of European Stability Initiative (ESI) (2009). Similar reaction was also observed in Armenia; protests were organized by Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and Dashnaksutyun Party. Despite of all, counter-reactions in two countries, the Turkish government also invited Serzh Sargsyan to Turkey for a football match and he welcomed this invitation warmly and visited to Turkey on October 2009. According to news published in Milliyet Newspaper, Sargsyan and Gül evaluated the present situation as a good beginning and also Gül said that a better future is possible for two countries (Cemal, 2008). It is clear that both countries leaned towards normalization of relations and this establishment of relations were evaluated as democratic and positive by not only Western countries but United States, too. After road map was drawn to reach this purpose, the parties came together in Zurich on 10 October 2009 with the peacemaking of Switzerland and two protocols which are "The establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Republic of Armenia and Republic of Turkey" and "The Development of Relations between Republic of Armenia and Republic of Turkey" were signed (Öztarsu, 2018). According to this protocol, the land border between the two countries was going to be open within two months. However, especially signed protocols created social unrest in Armenia and diaspora. Further, because of the genocide issue between Armenia and Turkey, Sargsyan's efforts to normalize relations with Turkey were criticized by the diaspora associations. In general, it was thought that because the diplomatic relations started with Turkey, American president Obama uses the word "Meds Yeghern" instead of genocide in his speech (An, 2013). Consequently, these protocols have not put into practice ever due to the intense reactions of the Armenians and diaspora. Sargsyan could not resist discussions in domestic politics and repressions; consequently, protocols were suspended in 2010 by Armenia; then withdrawn from the Armenian parliament in 2015 and finally declared as void in 2018 (Öztarsu, 2018). In other words, Armenia imposed the condition of recognition of genocide by Turkey to actualize protocols. And even Sargsyan said in the interview with Novosti Newspaper in 2011 that Turkey has to accept the "Armenian genocide" to normalize relations (Wakizaka, 2014). As a final point, although Europe and U.S. made so many efforts for normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey, unfortunately no improvement could not be achieved in the period of Sargsyan even if everything was positive in the beginning. Though the attitude of Sargsyan to develop relation with Turkey was constructive, Armenian people and also diaspora blamed him to be concessive and challenged all those bilateral relations. Additionally, hundredth anniversary of 1915 "genocide" in Armenia on 24

April 2015 had created an adverse impact for the normalization of relations in two countries. This anniversary had repercussions in not only Armenia and Turkey but also in the whole world. One year before this anniversary, Turkey was aware of what is going to encounter with; therefore, the then Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said in relation with that next year will be the centenary of Armenian incidents and Armenian diaspora will start to black propaganda for this; so we should be well-prepared (Akşam Newspaper, 2014). The hundredth anniversary of 1915 “genocide” attracted considerable interest in media. For instance, in the news published in The New York Times by Arango (2013), an Armenian newspaper editor says that only if Turkey faces with this genocide claims, democracy could be possible. Further, the headline of the news in Agos (2015) related with the anniversary of the genocide was “church bells are not going to ring only in Turkey” referring İstanbul Armenian Church and also according to a news published in the same website (2014), Sargsyan officially invited President of Turkish Republic to 1915 genocide anniversary to face reality. Besides in Turkish media, many opposite opinions were seen; Nuray Mert, a columnist in Cumhuriyet Newspaper, wrote in 2015 that genocide, deportation or massacre, whatever you say, the existence of Armenians was come to an end so let’s face it and be more respectful country, for example. On the other hand, Taha Akyol, columnist in Hürriyet Newspaper wrote in 2015 that Sargsyan could say “genocide” but at the time I say Armenian chauvinism exploits this concept against Turkey. To conclude, not only in Europe or the U.S. but in Turkey too, there are many different and opposite opinions about Armenian “genocide” issue and because of the existence of this claim besides Nagorno-Karabakh war, relations between Turkey and Armenia could not have been normalized in the period of Sargsyan presidency. Moreover, in the presidency of Sargsyan, any positive step for Karabakh conflict could not be taken, unfortunately. On the contrary, the situation had got worst and the “Four Days War” had taken place between 2 April and 5 April 2016. It should be reminded that after ceasefire agreement in 1994, any large-scaled infight had not happened until that time. On 5 April 2016, with the repression of Russia, Chiefs of Defense from two countries met in Moscow and signed a ceasefire. On the other hand, right after that according to some news sources of Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia attacked Nakhichevan (Tuncel, 2016). The result of the war was devastating for Armenia since, according to Dr. Nazim Caferov who is academician in Azerbaijan State University of Economics, financial burden of the war made worse the socio-economic conditions in Armenia even more than before and also social unrest in Armenia had begun to increase; all of those results might rise the counter-movement against Sargsyan or a political crises causing governmental changeover might become a current issue (Deutsche Welle, 2016). Consequently, Armenia had received a blow with this war in terms of not only

economically or military but also socially. After that life in Armenia had been split two parts as before April and after April, according to Balyan (2018). Additionally, another blow came from international actors since Western world, U.S. and Russia either remained impartial or defended the integration of Azerbaijan territory. The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe said that Armenia should retreat from Azerbaijan territory, for instance (Tuncel, 2016). Similarly, Warlick who is the American co-president of the Minsk group, emphasized the same point; on the other hand, while Russia did not get involved in the war in the beginning, in time demanded from Azerbaijan to cease military operation (Ismayil, 2016). Eventually, although shooting-war between the two countries had been ended in a short time, the frozen conflict has been continuing even today. In the period of Sargsyan, any resolution could not be realized about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; contrary, Armenia had lost some of its lands in Armenia besides many soldiers. Therefore, along with many other important discontent, this was one of the root causes behind the disapprobation of Armenian people. Depending upon all those reasons, Sargsyan had headed towards the Western World and Russia in foreign policy; on the other hand, he could not attain a total successful. Armenia in the period of Sargsyan presidency had become more dependent on Russia. In 2014, Armenia had become a member of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with support of 57% of public opinion (Mutlu, 2014). Additionally, defense pact between two countries has been extended from 2020 to 2044 and Eduard Sharmazanov who was one of spokesman for Sargsyan's party interpreted this pact as beneficial for Armenia with regards to not only protect Armenian border but also Karabakh war with Azerbaijan (O'Rourke: RadioFreeEurope, 2010) published in. Furthermore, the dependency of Armenia to Russia has not only been on a military base but also economic. Russia is one the biggest investment of the Armenian economy with a share of 45% (Mutlu, 2014). As a known fact that Armenia has always been in pro-Russian direction; however, Sargsyan had followed a new path and tried to enable balance in foreign policy by being closer with both Russia and EU. Related with that in 2013 he emphasized the importance of the strategic partnership between Armenia and Russia and membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Terzyan, 2016). Besides that, Armenia adopted a foreign policy towards EU relations in the period of Sargsyan's presidency. In relation with the decision, Sargsyan stated in 2011 that "The people of Armenia have made their historical and irreversible choice. Our road to becoming closer to Europe has been unique in an organic way..." (Quoted in Terzyan, 2016). In this respect, the Eastern Partnership program had been welcomed by Armenia and evaluated as an important step for European integration process. Additionally, most of the government officials stated the significance of reaching European standards. Furthermore, not only the European Union but also the United States tried to make

contributions the relations of Turkey and Armenia. For instance, the EU had conducted a program for two terms between 2014 and 2015 which was “Support for Normalization Process of Turkish and Armenian Relations” and with this, EU aimed to provide and increase interaction between Armenian and Turkish civil society organizations to achieve regional peace and democracy (Şir, 2019). Besides that, there were so many important relations and agreement between Europe and Armenia; on the other hand, one is more crucial and should be detailed. Armenia had decided to be part of US Eastern Partnership to become closer to Europe and decline the dependency degree of Russia. However, when Armenia hoped to sign this agreement in the summit realized in Vilnius in 2013, Moscow blocked that by so-called putting embargo to Armenia; in other words, Russia raised the price of gas from 189\$ to 270\$ (Mutlu, 2014). As a result of this reaction, Armenia had to give up this agreement and instead of that be a part of the Eurasian Economic Union established with the initiative of Russia. Shortly, while Sargsyan tried to conduct a balanced policy with the EU and Russia, in final point he failed and pursued the path of dependency of Russia. To conclude, even though many efforts and steps were taken to become closer European and its values, Sargsyan’s foreign policy could not create a big impact to change the way. In fact, even if Armenia tried to foster democratic values and norms in the period of Sargsyan presidency, it could not break away from Russia.

2.3.3. Civil Society

The other issue which should be evaluated within the scope of democracy is the development of civil society in the period of Sargsyan presidency. The most important development in that period might be the expanded influence of civil society in the election processes. For instance, Citizen Observer initiative had representatives in 526 polling station in the Constitutional referendum held in 2015 (Grigoryan, 2017). Moreover, as a well-known that the election held in 2008 and 2013, people took to the streets by claiming election fraud. In those protests, many civil society organizations were also taken place. After demonstrations in 2008, Sargsyan tried to establish a dialog with NGOs and created a Public Council by taking Russia as an example to solve this domestic conflict. Though, while this council should serve to solve problems of Armenian conflict and establish democracy, for a while it just started to act in accordance with the government’s pleasure. If stated clearly, Boris Navasardyan who is president of Yerevan Press Club, says that the council acts according to what president wants; if acts differently, it is dead (Borshchevskaya, n.d.). From this statement, it is clear that there was a huge pressure over civil society organizations; therefore, it is hard to mention about their independency. However, along with political-based civil society movements, any others could be seen, also. For instance, there was a public movement against the decision of destruction of *Mashtots*

park in order to construct a mall in 2012 (Grigoryan, 2013). In the end of this movement, government had to recede this decision. Moreover, the government was also disposed to create an environment for the improvement of civil society organizations with the support of the EU. As mentioned before, EU developed a program for normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia within the scope of civil society organizations in both countries. And this way, it aimed to foster peace and democratic way of understanding and the effectiveness of civil society organizations. According to data taken by Civilitas Foundation (2011), there were 3300 registered NGOs in Armenia until that time. Even though this number might be seen large for Armenian population, their spheres of influence had not been very wide, in real sense. Their existence was also generally valid on the paper, actually. That is why, 1/5 of Armenian population do not trust NGOs, according to Caucasus Barometer (Paturyan, 2015). Further, independency of NGOs or CSOs were questionable in the Sargsyan period since in 2010 a new law was amended and according to that activities of NGOs were regulated by government; however, because of this decision the government was criticized by many NGOs by accusing to violate their independency (Asian Development Bank, 2011). In spite of all repressive policies against civil society organizations, Armenian government failed to suppress them since after 2009, a new type of civil society has emerged in Armenia. People, generally young, urban and educated people, had started to participate in protest via online networking. “Electric Yerevan” movement might be shown as an example for this situation. In 2015, Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA) announced to increase consumer tariffs by over 40%; therefore, a massive protests had been started over Facebook at first and then Armenian people took the streets with slogan of “No to Plunder” (Iskandaryan, n.d.). Related with this protest, Mayissian (2015) states in Armenian Weekly that this protest should not be a surprise for the government because the number of activists has been increasing and they are fighting for their rights, socio-economic and environmental issues. Against this protest, the reaction of the government was severe. After police intervention, 230 people were detained and 20 people were injured; but in spite of the government’s brutal response, the protests achieved its aim (Iskandaryan, n.d.). Based on this outcome, it might be argued that public movements and civil society had begun to be more influential before; on the other hand, there was no support on this from government. The rise of those events could be clearly seen in 2018 as a result of the presidential election results. In those events, almost all Armenian people took the streets and with the support of civil society organizations they formed their organization which is Civil Contract. And despite of all repressive and deterrent intervention of the government and police, Armenian people have brought in something new and become successful against Sargsyan. I will discuss this issue in detail in Chapter 3. Depending upon all of those, it is apparent that Armenian people

has started to realize the problems in their country and react against them. Even if Armenia as a government did not come a long way in terms of civil society within the scope of democracy, civilians have improved themselves in the democratic ways and took down Sargsyan from his position. When looked at the rating of Armenia in terms of civil society, it could be seen that its score is not good enough; 3, 75 in 2016 (Iskandaryan, n.d.).

2.3.4. Independent Media

With respect to independency of media, also, it could not be argued that Armenia was in a good position in the period of the Sargsyan's presidency. In this period, particularly the internet usage and the use of social media had effectively increased. In 2011, the number of users in Facebook had increased from 110.000 to 170.000; the reason behind this was because people, especially the young, see social media as a free space to share their ideas without any repression (Budak, 2015). Those people even organized protests through internet. On the other side, attacks and repressions against journalists had continued in this period. For example, at least 17 journalists were exposed to violence or attack in 2017 and also while Armenia was ranked as the 74th out of 180 countries in World Press Freedom Index, its ranking had decreased to 180 in 2017 (Reporters Without Borders, 2018). This result is actually quite normal when thought cruel treatment, oppression of the government, violence and attacks against the media personnel and journalists. For instance, as mentioned before, in electric protest in 2015, polices injured 13 journalist and also broke journalists' technical equipment; additionally, in another event, police attacked 23 media personnel intentionally and as a result of them, none of them were convicted or charged (Barseghyan, 2016). Although there is an article in constitution of Armenia mentioning that hindrance of journalist to perform their job is forbidden, no one obeys this rule in Armenia and even violence of polices started to be more intense under the Sargsyan's governance. That is why, Barseghyan (2016), the council chairman of the Journalists' Club Asparez in 2000 and 2016, says that Armenia had become a police state. As another example, Narine Avetisyan, the chief editor of Lori television station, was attacked in 2017 when she was trying to film the asphaltting of a road in a heavy rain; related with even though she applied to court, no one again charged (Council of Europe, 2018). The more tragic event in this respect was indeed the death of Mher Yeghiazaryan who was responsible for Haynews.am news website and also vice president of a political party in Armenia. He was accused of doing corruption or fraud; on the other hand, he claimed to be innocent. But after convicted, he started hunger strike and after 44 days, unfortunately he lost his life. This event had created reactions in whole world; according to news published in AzerNews in 2019, European Union expected full-scale investigation about this traumatic event. Many examples could be given related with the attacks, convictions, violence, unfair

accusation against media personnel and journalist in Armenia. As a last example, Nicol Pashinyan who is Armenian current Prime Minister, was exposed to violence and arrested in the 2008 protests. Freedom House evaluated the press freedom in Armenia as “not free” in 2016 and also the rating of Armenia in terms of the independent media was determined as 5,75 in 2016 (Iskandaryan, n.d.). To conclude, the period of Sargsyan was insufficient to create an environment for freedom of speech and press. Consequently, it could be argued that no democratic improvement could be achieved in this period in this respect.

2.3.5. The Rule of Law

In the period of the Sargsyan’s presidency, the situation in terms of the rule of law does not look good, also. As known fact that Sargsyan’s presidency was problematic from the very beginning since he came to power with the claims of fraud and irregularities in the election. Because of this reason, Armenian people took the street in 2008 under the leadership of Levon Ter-Petrosyan and in this event, many people were killed as a result of the usage of army and police forces. On the other hand, no one officially accused or charged as responsible for those deaths. Armenian judiciary was in the hands of oligarchs and politicians. That is why, until the new government in 2018, it is not possible to talk about free and fair judicial system in post-Soviet Armenia. Even though many Constitutional changes and judicial reform had been realized, those were valid only on paper, in practice everything depended upon the ones who had power. In the period of the Sargsyan’s presidency, many important events, protests and elections realized and all of them were quite problematic in accordance with democratization. In the protests, many people, journalists, politicians were arrested and convicted; besides that, they got ill treatment in the prison. It might be argued that the most important positive step in line with democratization was the transformation from semi-presidential system to the parliamentary system, which was accepted with the referendum held in 2015. According to new system, while the power of the president is restricted, the power of parliament is increased. This is a great step in the history of post-Soviet Armenia, indeed. After Armenia gained independence, it accepted the presidential system and the president had massive powers. Such kind of system was not proper to consolidate democracy. On the other hand, in 2015 the Republic of Armenia took a great step in terms of democratization. However, it should be stated that Sargsyan’s aim here was not to consolidate democracy but to have power one more time. A person could not be president more than two consecutive terms according to the Armenian Constitution. That is why, Sargsyan presented the Constitutional change and the prime minister has become much more powerful than the president with this change. Armenian public evaluated this change as Sargsyan wants to be the prime minister in the next elections. On the other hand, Sargsyan promised that he does not have such a plan. However, in the next

elections held in 2018, Sargsyan became the prime minister of the country. To conclude, Sargsyan's purpose actually was not the consolidation of democracy with this improvement; yet this is still the great development for the realization of the democracy in post-Soviet Armenia. Overall however, the rule of law in the period of the Sargsyan's presidency could not be established sufficiently.

To conclude, Sargsyan failed to provide requirements of democracy in general sense. The degree of corruption was considerably high, and the existence of oligarchs who held the power in economic and politic way. In addition to that in this period while some businessmen had become richer, Armenian people were living in poverty; which indicates unequal and unfair distribution of wealth. Moreover, when looked at electoral processes, it is possible to see many fraud incidents and irregularities in the elections. Almost every election process was troublesome under the Sargsyan presidency. So many demonstrations and protests were come to light and every time law enforcement officers quelled them by using violence. For instance, in the protest occurred in 2008, many people died and injured; on the other hand, no one accused for those crimes. Violence was an instrument used not only for Armenian public but also civil society organizations and journalists. A great number of media personnel were arrested or assault to practice their own profession. However, because jurisdiction was under the control of the government, no one had arrested or been found guilty for his/her attitude. Since justice was biased, it is not possible to talk about the rule of law generally. While corruption in the electoral processes and economic activities as well was realized with the support of ruling elite or the government itself, jurisdiction had done nothing to reveal the real truths behind events. Even Sargsyan tried to make some development when he came to power at first, as time progressed it is understood that all positive changes and new laws were nothing more than cosmetics since many laws were violated and countless illegitimate acts were taken place. Consequently, the rule of law was not valid principle in the period of Sargsyan's presidency. Furthermore, Sargsyan did not also conducted a proper foreign policy and could not solve the Karabakh movement. Even if he tried to construct close relations with Turkey, "genocide" claims, Karabakh war and 100th anniversary of 1915 genocide created a tension between two countries. Further, even Sargsyan tried to adopt a balance policy between EU and Russia, because of Russia's oppression, Armenia had continued to be pro-Russian also in that period. Depending on all those reasons, Sargsyan's governance could not be evaluated as democratic or his acts and attitudes were not aiming to consolidate democracy in Armenian territory. His final act also shows this clearly. As seen in the next chapter, the resignation of Sargsyan was also quite problematic; so many incidents had been occurred in 2018 and a revolution has arisen. Details about this issue will be explained in the next chapter within the

scope of “Velvet Revolution”. However, based on this final protest and previous ones it might be claimed that the time of Sargsyan was wakening or awareness time for Armenian public. Because of the undemocratic acts of the former, the latter had to create and consolidate democracy by itself.

CHAPTER 3

VELVET REVOLUTION

In this chapter, firstly I will analyze the presidential election held in 2018 and the Velvet Revolution with its reasons and consequences. After that the democratization process of Armenia from 2018 to until today is going to be presented in the period of Armen Sarkissian who is the current president of the country and Nicol Pashinyan who has been prime minister of Armenia since 2018. On the other hand, in this chapter democratization steps of Armenia are going to be explained under the title of Nicol Pashinyan by contrast with the previous chapter. The reason behind that is because the prime minister of the country has wider power than the president together with the transformation to the parliamentary system. Finally, the democratization process in the period of Pashinyan is going to be presented until the same subtitles: economy and corruption, foreign policy and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, civil society, independent media and the rule of law.

3.1. Electoral Process in 2018 and the Velvet Revolution

In the period of Sargsyan's presidency, almost all electoral processes led to many problems, as mentioned before. There was always suspicious for the regularity and legitimacy for elections. While many international institutions argued that not excessive fraud and irregularity problems were detected in electoral processes, local actors were thinking differently. Therefore, many protests, hunger strikes, unfortunate incidents had happened in this period. For example, in the election process held in 2008 when Sargsyan had become the president of the country for the first time, a great number of people took the streets and started the protest under the leadership of Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Ten people were killed by law enforcers in those events. Similarly, in the presidential election held in 2013, a group of people protested elections in the leadership of Raffi Hovannisian who was the ex-Defense Minister of Armenia. However, not any protest restrained Sargsyan to get a Presidential seat. Yet, Sargsyan stated after the presidential election in 2013 that he is not going to be candidate either as the president or the prime minister. This is a significant point, actually, since together with the 2017 Parliamentary elections Armenia has changed its regime from the presidential government to the parliamentary. Even this change is notably crucial for Armenian history, because the power of the president is restricted in this way, another contradictive issue has broken out. In fact, with the alteration of the regime, power of the prime minister has been extended and increased. That is why, Armenian people had started to think that Sargsyan is planning to be the prime minister with the next election. When actions against him had started

to explode, he had to make an explanation and said that he does not have any plan to be prime minister and even he promised not to participate in the election. It should also be stated that with the change in the constitution, the election procedure has been changed as anymore the parliament is going to choose to the prime minister and president, instead of public. Prime minister has been always chosen by parliament from the very beginning but the situation for president was different at first. Consequently, the presidential election had been realized on 2nd of March 2018 and Armen Sarkissian who was the former ambassador of the United Kingdom, has been elected as the president of Armenia by parliament and was sworn on 9 April 2018 (Council of Europe, 2018). This election has importance for Armenia in many aspects. Firstly, with this election, for the first time, a person not from Karabakh region has become president of Armenia. Secondly, the president has been chosen by the parliament for the first time. And finally, the regime of the country has transformed from presidential to parliamentary. According to data given by the Turkish Center for International Relations and Strategic Analysis (2018), his presidency has been supported by the Republican Party of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan's party, and Dashnaksutyun party. Yet, it should be stated that because the regime has changed and the president's power is restricted, his presidency has actually a symbolic character. Thus, the actual question is who is going to be the prime minister of the country. Serzh Sargsyan has come to forefront as a candidate. Even if he promised not to be a prime minister, the change of that prime minister will have extensive power and authority, is a clue for Armenian people for the aim of Sargsyan. The reality of this aim could be seen in the interview, which Sargsyan gave on 19 March 2018; in this interview he states that he might participate in the electoral process to be prime minister (Tuncel, 2018). It might be argued that he was not honest in his first declaration, actually and also it should be remembered that most of the seats in parliament had belonged to Republican Party of Armenia in this period. The meaning of which situation is that if Sargsyan decides to be candidate for prime minister, his chance to be selected is considerably high. Depending upon this concern and doubt, Armenian people had started to protest the candidacy of Serzh Sargsyan for the seat of prime minister under the leadership of Nicol Pashinyan and YELK coalition. However, in spite of those massive protests, Sargsyan had been chosen as prime minister on 17 April 2018 with votes of 77 to 17 by parliamentary, according to data taken by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (2018). This result was not surprising, certainly since most parliament members were from Sargsyan's party. However, because of Sargsyan's victory, the extensiveness of protest was begun to increase suddenly with the slogan of "My Step"; thousands of people took the streets with the demand of his resignation from prime ministry seat. However, the response of government against protestors was brutal; on 20 April, many protestors, over one

hundred, were detained as a result of conflict between those and riot police, according to news published in Radio Free Europe (2018). In spite of countless warnings to not use violence, law enforcement officers were cruel or cold-blooded against demonstrators. To exemplify, the U.S. Embassy in Armenia, Human Rights Watch, the director of OSCE office warns the Armenian government not to use violence, to protect freedom of peaceful assembly (Yayloyan, 2018). On the other hand, those remarks were not paid attention at first, unfortunately. In return, protestors tried to be calm and stayed focused on the target despite deterrent acts of government. Herewith, a democratic movements or a civil disobedience act had come into existence in Armenian's street; which will be called later as "Velvet Revolution". This movement proves that "the window for democratic progress has not closed" in Armenia yet (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019). Velvet Revolution is qualified as the most substantial political change in Armenia since independence (Delcour & Hoffmann, 2018). Though, even this social movement is named as "revolution", actually it is not since there is no aim here to change whole governmental system or regime totally. Its aim was to democratize the government by eliminating corrupt semi-authoritarian regimes and by enabling free and fair elections (Lanskoy & Suthers, 2019). In other words, because of the depth dissatisfaction, fragility of the system, instability and illegitimacy in the country, people started the protest sovereign government (Markarov & Davtyan, 2018). In addition to that Velvet Revolution could not be classified within Color Revolutions which are the social movements arisen in former Soviet countries against foreign, especially Russian, intervention to the country. The main aim of Color Revolutions was to avoid hegemony and oppression of Russia and become closer to the Western world. For this reason, people in Ukraine used pro-EU and anti-Kremlin slogans, for example; however, this was not the case in Armenia. The actual reason behind Velvet Revolution was the corruption of the Armenian government; not to be closed to the EU by withdrawing relations with Russia. Russia was also aware of this situation and so Fyodor Lukyanov who is the editor of journal *Russia in Global Affairs*, said "it is not a color revolution. Everybody understands that the roots of this crises in Armenia are domestic – unlike several previous cases in post-Soviet space where international presence was very clear." (Demytrie; BBC News, 2018). This news actually draws attention with its heading, also, which is "Why Armenia 'Velvet Revolution' won without a bullet fired". Eventually, Velvet Revolution is not actually a revolutionary act despite of its name because of so many reasons mentioned above. Moreover, as a result of protests named "My Step" under the leadership of Pashinyan, has gained a victory and Sargsyan had to resign from his position. Before triumph over Sargsyan, Pashinyan and Sargsyan had a meeting; however, in the middle of this meeting, Pashinyan had been arrested or detained. A day later, he was released and

Sargsyan resigned from the position of Prime Minister and said that “Nicol Pashinyan is right, and I was wrong” (Borshchevskaya, n.d.). Besides he also remarked that the reason behind his decision of resignation is to prevent violence and repetition of events in 2008 and to ensure the stability of the country (Council of Europe, 2018). After the resignation of Sargsyan, Karen Karapetyan was chosen as the interim prime minister and then on 1 May 2018, the election for the prime minister was realized. On the other hand, while Pashinyan should get 53 votes to be the prime minister, he could not take votes he needs; thus, on 8 May 2018, the second round was held for the position of the prime minister. Pashinyan had supports of Dashnaksutyun or Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Tsarukyan Blog and Yelq from the parliamentary; however, he needed for some votes from the Republican Party of Armenia, the party of Serzh Sargsyan, to be chosen as prime minister since otherwise, he could not take a majority of votes. Finally, RPA decided to support Pashinyan because of the protests, the fear of the possibility to lose the majority in the parliament (Tuncel, 2018). Eventually, he had become prime minister of Armenia on 8 May 2018. There are many reasons behind this victory, indeed. Those reasons are specified by Kubiak (2018) as firstly, thanks to a well-organized and experienced civil society; secondly, the presence of a real, charismatic leader and the civicness of the movement, finally legacy of previous movements which in history of post-Soviet Armenia many social movements were taken place. However, he describes Velvet Revolution as a “*creeping revolution*” since, according to him, the Armenian revolution has evolutionary character meaning this process has started long since and Velvet Revolution is actually a product of this legacy.

The reflection of Velvet Revolution has been seen not only in local areas but also in the international arena. Several arguments and interpretations have been addressed in relation with this issue. For instance, Stepan Grigoryan, one of the prominent Armenian political scientists, said:

Even in a sick dream, I could not have dreamt six months ago that laws in Armenia would begin to work for everyone... There are no people outside the law. Robert Kocharyan was summoned as part of investigative actions, tomorrow they can call Serzh Sargsyan! And this is very important (Quoted in Borshchevskaya, n.d.).

While Pashinyan’s victory has been welcomed for some Armenian people, for some others the situation was different. Paul and Sammut (2018), in the report of European Policy Centre, interpret the Velvet Revolution as ‘Time is Pashinyan’s worst enemy’ and state that some people including corrupt oligarchs, bureaucrats and military offices see Pashinyan as an aberration which will be ended, eventually. On the other hand, ordinary Armenian citizens have regained their self-respect and embrace government as like ‘theirs’ as a result of Velvet

Revolution (Lansky & Suthers, 2019). That is, opinion of the public from different classes is different from each other in this respect. However, in international arena this revolution is evaluated as an important step for the consolidation of democracy, mostly. While Shirinyan (2019) indicates in the report of the Royal Institute of International Affairs that non-violent Velvet Revolution has caused the generation of fresh hopes for the future of the country, Yayloyan (2018) states in the article published in The Economy Policy Research Foundation of Turkey by labeling it as soft revolution that as a bottom-up democratic movement Velvet Revolution is a chance for Armenia to create free and open democracy. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the Velvet Revolution successfully was greeted with astonishment within the international area, actually. Even the existence of Colored Revolutions and Arab Spring Armenia, as like Azerbaijan, had immunity to those kinds of movements, it was thought. For that matter, although many protests had been realized until the Velvet Revolution, no radical change and so color revolution had not been achieved in Armenia; therefore, it is even argued that Armenia is de-democratizing (Kostanyan, 2011). Now, the similar opinion is ascribed to Azerbaijan, indeed but it should be signified that no such social movements as like in Armenia has not still been performed in Azerbaijan. Even though Arab revolts have contagion effects; the Velvet Revolution in Armenia does not have such an influence because Azerbaijan has not been affected by it; on the other hand, this result could be associated with Azerbaijan's structural constraints for collective action, also (Guliyev, 2018). However, the Velvet Revolution has just actualized; it is soon to assess its influence and contagion effects at present. When examined all color revolutions and Arab revolts, it will be seen that none come into existence in the same year and although all of those countries had specific issues and problems as its causes, more or less all had affected from each other. That is why, it might be more accurate to analyze situation in Azerbaijan later on.

Furthermore, the Velvet Revolution has not been ended at this point, actually. After Pashinyan had been elected as prime minister on 8 May 2018, he resigned from his position in mid-October 2018 since as known he had become prime minister not with the election but protests. During his temporary appointment, he mentioned several times to be organized pre-term elections but also added that it will be organized when all conditions are regulated in accordance with democratic necessities. According to the Armenian constitution, a snap election could be held in case of resignation of the prime minister and that parliament fails to replace this position (Hautala, 2018). Pashinyan's main aim here was actually to acquire a majority in the parliament. Moreover, he was aware of that Armenian people took his side. However, since National Assembly, not public, has the right to elect Prime Minister, after Pashinyan's resignation demonstrations had continued in Armenian streets. Further, according

to survey conducted by TEPAV, 41% of the Armenian public was pleased to changes realized by Pashinyan between April and October 2018 (Yayloyan, 2019). Depending upon that it looks like Pashinyan has gained the public's trust in this period. Even before this period, Pashinyan had gained the public trust actually. About that Armen Grigoryan said that before protests began, many people were criticizing him; on the other hand, after a while, citizens understood that "he was the best character among us" (Seddon; Civilnet, 2018). Finally, Armenian people under the leadership of Pashinyan won another victory and parliamentary election had to be held once again. So, snap or pre-term elections were held on 9 December 2018 and My Step coalition has won a great victory with 70% of the votes (Welt, 2019). More specifically, three political party could pass the election threshold and those are My Step coalition with 70, 43% of the votes, Prosperous Armenia Party with 8, 27% of the votes and Bright Armenia Party with 6, 37% of the votes; besides that Republican Party of Armenia, Sargsyan's party, with 4, 70% of the votes and Dashnaksutyun party could not pass the election threshold (Kılıç, 2019). This victory was not surprise for Pashinyan, indeed because My Step Coalition has won the municipal elections held in October 2018 with 81% of the votes (Akhiyadov, 2019). Shortly, he has won the majority in the parliament and guaranteed his re-election as the prime minister and then on 14 January 2019, he was elected as prime minister with the decision of presidency. According to data taken from European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity in 2018, while My Step Alliance has won 88 seats in the parliament, Prosperous and Bright Armenia Party have got 26 and 18, respectively. In this way, Pashinyan has paved the way for democratizing Armenia without facing any obstacle. Referring to that, he expressed, the election held on December has provided a high-level legitimacy to the parliament (Sputnik, 2019). The parliamentary election held in 2018 is important also in terms of one more reason. As could be estimated, this election was observed by many national and international actors and general evaluation for pre- and post-period of election was notably positive. While ENEMO (2018) declared that the election was realized in peaceful environment and also in compliance with the international standards and national legislation. Additionally, according to its report, whereas Voter Authentication Devices (VAD) system make serious contributions to increase public trust, the pre-election or election campaign period was also free and no major restrictions were observed. Further, ODIHR EOM indicated that public television gave equal and balanced place to the campaigns of all electoral contestants (OSCE, 2018). Finally, OSCE also stated that there was no irregularity in election such as vote-buying, repression to voters and there was a real competition environment (BBC, 2018). In other words, Pashinyan has made a democratic election possible which improvement is fabulously important for Armenia. Many leader from all over the world congratulated him for his success in the election. To

illustrate, while Donald Trump, president of United States since 2016, said that we as United States celebrate you and support Armenia which is prosperous and democratic; Emmanuel Macron, president of France since 2017, told that this election process showed the commitment of Armenian people to the democratic values and the rule of law, according to news published in Armenia News Agency (2018-2019). Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, was the only one who did not celebrate Pashinyan but a Russian spokesman said related with that this is because of the protocol rules (Kılıç, 2019). Additionally, besides numerous support of celebration message, there were also some criticisms. For instance, Armenian Revolutionary Federation said that “A National Assembly is being developed that does not have a succinct ideological or national character” in *Asbarez* newspaper which is American-Armenian bilingual newspaper published by Central Committee of Armenian Revolutionary Federation, in 2018. Victory of Armenian people has wide media coverage, inevitably, since Velvet Revolution has been completed with the victory of parliamentary election. For instance, headline of BBC news (2018) was that there are revolutionist majority in the parliament; Washington Post defined Armenia as one of the countries where democracy has won a victory in 2018, according to news published in Armenia News Agency (2018). Additionally, Arto Vaun (2018) described Velvet Revolution as a masterclass in socialism, in his article published in Aljazeera, Qatar News Agency. Besides them, Nicol Pashinyan has been chosen as “Politician of the Year” as a result of readers’ voting of *Vedomosti* newspaper, a Russian newspaper (Armenia News Agency, 2018). Pashinyan was also the most mentioned name in Armenian press on November 2018 according to research conducted by Mediamax which is one of Armenian centered news agency (Armenia News Agency, 2018). Based on this data, his name was mentioned positively for 987 times and negatively for 257 times in the Armenian press. That is, Pashinyan has earned a reputation not only in Armenia but also in the world.

To conclude, Armenia has taken a great step in the way of consolidating democracy in 2018. Under the leadership of Nicol Pashinyan, Armenian people had taken the streets and achieved to overthrow Sargsyan from his position. Notwithstanding Serzh Sargsyan broke his promise not to be a candidate for the prime minister position, Armenian people have written their own history and protected the existence of democracy belief. As mentioned, together with the referendum held in 2015, Armenian government has changed its regime and accepted parliamentary system. Accordingly, while the prime minister’s scope of authority and power has been increased, the president’s has been restricted. For this reason, Sargsyan whose right to be president ended since according to Armenian law, a person could only be president for two terms, had become candidate for the position of prime minister and won the elections because his party had majority in the parliamentary. However, a social movement against

Sargsyan had started and reached the success. This is named as Velvet Revolution. This revolutionary act did not actually take place suddenly, but it contains the discomfort of Armenian people for a long time. Under the leadership of Nicol Pashinyan, this movement had resulted with victory and Sargsyan had to resign. Pashinyan and so Armenian people preserved their victory with the parliamentary election held in December 2018. Consequently, a new and democratic period has started in Armenia thanks to the Velvet Revolution. It is welcomed by many international and national actors; but also, there are some groups who have been disturbed from Pashinyan's victory. With this movement, Armenian people have taken a big step to consolidate democracy. The Velvet Revolution might be signified as the most crucial improvement and movement since independence from the Soviet Union.

However, what is most important at this point is Pashinyan's acts and politics after this achievement, indeed. Even though procuring this success is rather difficult, protecting it is more difficult. That is why, the main question here is what happened after Pashinyan has become the prime minister of Armenia. Therefore, in the next title, I will explain these questions. Although in the third chapter of the study, democratization problems and improvement were explained with regard to presidents, here those issues are going to be discussed by focusing on Nicol Pashinyan instead of president, Armen Sargsyan. The reasons of which are; firstly, after changing in constitution prime minister has attained wider power and authority than the president; secondly, Pashinyan is prominent name together with the Velvet Revolution. However, in necessary points, the current president of Armenia, Armen Sargsyan, is going to be mentioned.

3.2. Nicol Pashinyan

In this part of the study, democratization problems and improvements are going to be explained in the period of the prime ministry of Nicol Pashinyan. As like other chapter, the democratization process will be examined over some particular issues such as foreign policy, Nagorno-Karabakh war conflict, economy, civil society, media and corruption. Before starting our analysis, first of all, it is better to introduce Pashinyan briefly to resolve and explain his policies and acts. He was a student in Yerevan State University in the department of journalism; however, he could not graduate due to his article about corruption. No matter how he has continued his journalist career and has become one of the important dissident journalists in Armenia, he especially has criticized Serzh Sargsyan and Robert Kocharyan. He had been the editor of Armenian Times for a long time. Pashinyan was put on trial for many times because of insult and slanders to many people. Additionally, in the protests occurring in 2008, he had been in jail for two years and then released with general amnesty. His active political

life has started actually after that. He was chosen as a member of parliament in 2012 from the party of Civil Contract. Eventually, with the occurrence of the Velvet Revolution, Pashinyan has become the most known name in Armenia and been chosen as prime minister in 2018.

3.2.1. Economy and Corruption

Nicol Pashinyan has come into office with a great victory. He is the man of Armenian people, indeed and so everyone was hopeful for the future. While Pashinyan was determining his agenda, he chose to give privileged importance to the economic situation since the condition had not been very good for a very long time. However, it should be stated that the only ones suffering from poverty and unemployment were ordinary Armenian citizens since oligarchs were living well. Therefore, according to a survey conducted in October 2018, general opinion about what new government must achieve in the next six months is related completely to the economy; the major answers are the creation of jobs, solution for socio-economic problems and increasing in wages and pensions (Yayloyan, 2019). That is why, Armenian government has found the solution in “economic revolution” and so adopted a five-year plan. In relation to that he said “I am announcing the start of the nationwide economic revolution in the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian people won in the fight against corruption, impunity and clan management, and the Armenian people will win the fight against poverty and unemployment.” (Mejlumyan; Eurasia.net, 2019). The main aim of this five-year development plan is to decrease the rate of unemployment and poverty in serious degrees by 2023, naturally. Besides that, some other goals are determined within the context of this plan. Some of them are; average economic growth will be 5%, annually, better conditions will be created for investment causing emergency of new jobs and increase in export, micro-businesses will not give tax (Jam News, 2019). However, his proposal to improve the economic condition of Armenia has been criticized by many people by blaming to be impracticable. For instance, Bright Armenia Party has interpreted this plan as “abstract” whereas Gagik Tsarukyan, head of Prosperous Armenia Party, said that it is not revolutionary but also added that some provisions could change people’s life positively (Jam News, 2019). He also said that national solidarity, commitment and spirit are necessary for the political revolution, but money, resources and concrete targets are necessary for economic revolution (Bars; Agos, 2019). Moreover, as a known fact that in the period of Velvet Revolution, foreign investments in Armenia had decreased suddenly. According to data from Armenia’s National Statistical Service, foreign investments had decreased 43,5% in the second quarter of 2018 by comparison with data of last year (Mejlumyan; Eurasianet, 2018). Therefore, the new economic packet has been offering new opportunities and conveniences for international companies who might want to make investment in Armenia. However, it should be

remembered that this decrease had happened in the period of temporary government; that is, after the prime minister election held in December 2018, this situation might become reversed. Further, according to Pashinyan, a free and competitive market economy is the next topic to heal the Armenian economy. He even stated this priority in his government program on 7 June 2018 when he was chosen as prime minister temporarily. After snap elections, he declared the same issues in February 2019. According to this program, to deal with the economic downturn, there are some steps to be taken; which are the disintegration of monopolies, protection of economic competition, creation of jobs and elimination of poverty together with inclusive growth in the economy (Neljas, n.d.). In addition to them, his economic plan involves some other topics which are rapid developments of high technologies, development of military-based industries providing not only economic balance but also security, the advancement of the agricultural sector, development of tourism sector (Eurasia Partnership Foundation, 2018). As a result of all those economic reforms, the new government has aimed to ameliorate the Armenian economic condition. In spite of many discussions and criticism against Pashinyan's economic revolution package, his proposal was accepted by parliament with a majority of votes. On the other hand, this program is evaluated as wish bundle by Ercümen C. Bars who is economist examining Armenian economy closely; according to him, the plan is not realistic and in the absence of a concrete plan, economic growth will decrease to 2% (Bars; Agos, 2019). Additionally, this economic plan is likened to 'Reagonomics' which is an economic policy promoted by U.S. president Ronald Reagan in 1980s. Accordingly, as a result of this economic policy, increased inequality and social stratification in America and a similar result might be observed in Armenia in the near future (Liakhov; Eurasianet, 2019). That is to say, while Armenian people have hopes for the future of Armenia under the leadership of Pashinyan, it is an important fact that most of the new members of the parliament are inexperienced, young and first-time politicians (Yayloyan, 2019). The other issue which should be mentioned in this context is to fight against corruption. It is a known fact that political and economic corruption in Armenia has been at high level; the economy is mostly in the hands of oligarchs. As mentioned above, Pashinyan's aim is to create a free market by breaking monopolies. However, this is an uphill struggle to fight. To deal with this problem, he firstly changed all ministers and then has started an investigation in companies, political and economic figures including former president Sargsyan and his family, Manvel Grigoryan who is blamed for the misuse of donations (Delcour & Hoffmann, 2018). Pashinyan has specified this issue, "finding the stolen money" as one of the priorities and started prosecution to corrupt officials; as a result of this, he has achieved the return of their assets to the state (Lanskoy & Suthers, n.d.). He has begun to fight with corruption since when was chosen as

prime minister temporarily and until today got many accomplishment in this scope. For instance, on 14 June 2018 two senior officials from Yerevan city government and on 16 June 2018, Manvel Grigoryan who was parliamentary member of Republican Party and mob-boss Artur Asatryan were arrested within the scope of anti-corruption campaigns (Eurasia Partnership Foundation, 2018). His attitude against any act of corruption has been strict and solid; that is why, it seems that he could reach the success. How much he is sensitive about corruption could be understood from his words given below:

...All businesspeople in Armenia are now exempt from all kinds of corrupt obligations... Any prosecutor, police, chief, tax inspector or minister who will try to grab a share in a business or impose 'a duty' on any business owner will be my personal enemy... The system of economic monopolies is living its last days in Armenia... Everyone will be taxed in the same way and by the same laws. (Armenian Weekly, 2018).

In addition to that Pashinyan said in his interview with Euronews that we have made Comprehensive and Extended Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with EU; which means that an institutional mechanism has been constructing in Armenia to fight with and protection from corruption and realization of the independent legal system (Küçük; Euronews, 2019). In this passage, two expressions might be called attention; those are bribery and taxation. As you may recall, bribery was one of the biggest problems in Armenia; however, with the new government, this problem has started to be handled. Additionally, some changes have been performed in the Tax Code since prior one was open to the realization of corruption, easily. Furthermore, many criticisms exist against Pashinyan in relation to his discourses. For instance, when he had been temporarily prime minister for six months in 2018, although he had many statements to fight with corruption, no lawsuit had not been brought to anyone; so, he could not go into action (Anatolian Agency, 2018). However, after he won the election and has become the prime minister in December 2018, acts against corruption have been started strongly and which situation shows that political analysts judged beforehand. Another criticism related with this issue is that Paşinyan will not only grab state institutions but also become integrated with the business world and this is bad news for people who desire democracy and to fight with corruption since if people determining the rules, exercising and also benefiting from them is same, how could corruption be fought? (Cheterian; Agos, 2019). However, until today Armenian people seem contented from Pashinyan's anti-corruption policies. It also should be mentioned that Pashinyan's most powerful method to fight with corruption is social media since Armenian public could write his social media wall any problem they face in this scope (Ametbek, n.d.). To conclude, Pashinyan has been conducted a successful policy in terms of the economy until now. Even there are some criticisms, when

compared with the prior periods of Armenia, the current situation could not be labeled as not improving. Some crucial steps have been taken against corrupt oligarchs, rules and laws; there is an effort to create a free and competitive market; there are some important changes in the law. And all of them are significant points to democratize the Armenian economy.

3.2.2. Foreign Policy and Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

The second issue that we should discuss is Pashinyan's foreign policy. This issue is going to be analyzed within the framework of Armenia-Russian relations, relations with the U.S. and the E.U., Nagorno Karabakh issue and Armenia-Turkish relations, basically. However, in necessary points, other issues are going to be included. First of all, before gaining victory, Pashinyan stated that there will be no change in foreign policy; from this passage it might be understood that Pashinyan is concerned about putting wind-up Russia and its interference to Armenia (Tuncel, 2018). Armenia is still member of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and has no plan to secede from it; moreover, Pashinyan thinks that being a member of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is necessary for Armenia and also that Russian's military base in Armenia is a right choice against Azerbaijan and Turkey (Tüysüzoğlu, 2018). In other words, the new government is not considering to be distant from Russia even though Pashinyan had strict discourses for it before being prime minister. Conversely, he specified when met with Putin on 14 May 2018 that Armenia desires to develop the military relations with Russia since the strategic ties between the two countries are very important for Armenia; also, he said to Putin that "I can assure you that in Armenia there is a consensus and nobody has ever doubted the importance of strategic nature of Armenian-Russian relation." (Moscow Times, 2018). He even expressed that Armenia is not in a struggle for NATO membership, to protect relations with Russia; furthermore, by referring biologic laboratories founded in Armenia by the USA, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin said that in consideration of radical changes in Armenia, Washington's interference to domestic and foreign affairs of this country is increasing (Kılıç, 2019). With this statement, Russia actually reveals its stance for the relations with EU- USA and Armenia; on the other hand, it might be argued that in this point Pashinyan has been trying to adopt a balanced policy between Russia and EU since the former one controls keys sectors in the Armenian economy, has great effects on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and military base within Armenian territory. Further, Russia has started to develop relations with Azerbaijan, which situation has created worries in Armenian government since in such a case balance for Karabakh conflict might change on behalf of Azerbaijan. On 1 July when Pashinyan was temporal Prime Minister, a conference was organized in Azerbaijan entitled "Azerbaijan. Russian's only ally in the Caucasus" and Nagorno-Karabakh was signified as a part of Azerbaijan in this conference (Borshchevskaya,

n.d.). Certainly, such a meeting was well-received by Azerbaijan; for example, the relations between Russian and Azerbaijan were named as fraternal and Alexander Dugin who is the leader of the International Eurasian Movement, said “The unions of the peoples of Russia and Azerbaijan is complete, real. We want to express our solidarity with Azerbaijan for its right to peaceful coexistence”. (Gasimov; Trend News Agency, 2018). Such an act might be estimated as a clear threat to Armenia since the Russian attitude to Velvet Revolution was not positive. About that Valeriy Korovin, Russian political scientist, said that “pro-Russian Armenia became a “bone in the throat of the West” and the Velvet Revolution is just an American-prepared maidan (Borshchevskaya, n.d.). Owing to all of those reasons, although Pashinyan was against establishing close relations with Russia at first, he has changed his attitude and continued in the pro-Russian line. However, he also desires to be close with the western world, has adopted balance policy in foreign affairs.

Pashinyan when came to power started to visit Western countries to establish close relations. For instance, he met with Angela Merkel, prime minister of Germany, in six months and by hosting the 17th summit of La Francophonie which is an international organization representing countries where French language is lingua franca, on October 2018, Armenia has strengthened relations with Paris (Shirinyan, 2019). Moreover, the Congressional Armenian Caucus leadership proposed to USA that United States-Armenia Joint Economic Task Force (USATF) is transformed to sustained strategic dialogue by developing bilateral relations in the political, cultural, economic and military arenas (Aravot, 2018). The aim of new government is to enhance political and economic relations with not only Europe but also United States; thus, many steps have been recorded until now. For instance, EU has planned to give 7.5 million euro to Armenia as support of Armenian economic reforms (Armenia News Agency, 2018); also, EU and World Bank are going to endow 730 million euro for Armenian’s transportation infrastructure within the scope of Trans-Europe Transportation Network (Kılıç, 2019). In addition to them, Velvet Revolution is seen as a chance to implement CEPA effectively. Pashinyan’s main aims by trying to develop relations with the EU are, firstly, promotion of democracy in Armenia, economic cooperation and expanding trade with EU and protecting stability and cooperation in the South Caucasus region by supporting its regional initiatives (Markarov & Davtyan 2018).

Beside the EU, the USA and Russia, Pashinyan has started to establish constructive relations with neighboring countries like China, Iran and Georgia. For this reason, on 15 January 2019, prime ministers of Georgia and Armenia had an informal meeting; also, on 27 February 2019, Pashinyan made an official visit to Iran and Religious Leader Hamaney and prime minister

Ruhani emphasized the necessity to establish strong, permanent and friendly relations with Armenia in despite of prevention of USA (Kılıç, 2019). In this direction, on 17 May 2018 free trade agreement has been signed between Islamic Republic of Iran and member states of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) including Armenia for 3 years; related with this development, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Foreign Affair Minister of Armenia, told that economic and political relations between Armenia and Iran has opened the doors of the near east for EEU states (Armenia News Agency, 2019). To conclude, Armenia adopting multi-vector foreign policy aims to establish constructive relations with the neighboring countries to increase its options in foreign policy. Pashinyan visited many countries after chosen as the prime minister and uttered his desire to constitute economic, politic and diplomatic relations with Georgia, China and Iran besides Western countries, USA and Russia. Such an act might be analyzed as creation and finding new solutions and doors to stabilize Armenian economic situation, especially.

In addition to them, the main issue of Armenia in foreign policy is indeed Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and relations with Turkey within this framework and also genocide. As known that increasing security level in Nagorno Karabakh or Artsakh is one of the priorities in the program of the new government. Like most Armenian politicians and former presidents, Pashinyan is also strict about Karabakh issue and thinks that Karabakh should be separated from Azerbaijan. His attitude for the Karabakh conflict has never changed since he said in 2016 in a radio interview that there is no land to be given to Azerbaijan and those lands are important for Armenia to be alive (Shiralizade, 2018). When Pashinyan came to power, Azerbaijan was hopeful for the solution of Karabakh and İlham Aliev, the president of Azerbaijan, even expressed that he is hopeful that the new government not to be repeated the same mistakes; however, Pashinyan has stood in the same line with the former presidents. After his election, he visited Stepanakert on May 2018 and met with Bako Sahakyan who is the president of the Karabakh Republic; in this meeting, Pashinyan stated that Karabakh conflict should be resolved peacefully under the guidance of OSCE Minsk Group (Markarov & Davtyan, 2018). While he said he is ready to sit the same table with Azerbaijan to solve this conflict, he imposed a condition, which is the participation of Karabakh Republic to negotiations as a third party. As a reason of this precondition, he argued that because he is not from Karabagh by comparison with the former presidents, he does not have any right to negotiate on behalf of Karabakh; Karabakh people have their own government so only their own delegates have legal and legitimate right in the negotiations (Shiralizade, 2018). On the other hand, as it is expected, Azerbaijan is against this proposal. Johannes Hahn, responsible person from European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, asserted in relation with this issue that

Pashinyan's precondition would cause a difficulty instead of breaking new ground (Dilaver, 2019). Similarly, Thomas de Waal said that Pashinyan is behaving like an ordinary people rather than a politician or diplomat in his explanations about Karabakh (Shiralizade, 2018). The first official meeting between Armenia and Azerbaijan was realized in Vienna on 29 March 2019 and in this meeting while Pashinyan stated again that Karabakh should be participator in the negotiations, Azerbaijan is strongly against this idea (Ozinian; Agos, 2019). Related with this, Hikmet Hacıyev, department head of Foreign Affairs of the Presidency of Azerbaijan, said that Azerbaijan's patience has a limit; Armenian army should withdraw from Azerbaijan's territory in accordance with demands of United Nations Security Council, otherwise, Azerbaijan has to use its all legal rights specified in articles of United Nations (Yeni Akit, 2019). As could be seen, the tension between the two countries has increased. Even if Armenia stated later that Azerbaijan interprets what Pashinyan says wrongly, any solution could not be produced until today. Additionally, relations between Karabakh and Pashinyan are not very-well. According to Pashinyan's argumentation, there are some powers provoking Karabakh against the Armenian government and based on this he said that even some people tries to transform Karabakh to anti-revolution center, Karabakh people will transform this place to a revolutionary center (Akhiyadov, 2019). In conclusion, Karabakh conflict is still quite problematic for all parties. Any positive improvement could not be achieved for the resolution of the conflict. Besides that, this situation has tightened the relations between Turkey and Armenia, also. Whereas Pashinyan declared that relations between Armenia and Turkey should be restarted without any preconditions, he also gathered demonstrators into genocide monument on 24 April 2018 which shows that there is no change in this respect even after the Velvet Revolution (Veliyev, 2018). The other reason why the relations between the two countries do not exist except Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the so-called genocide issue, as well-known. For Turkish government, establishing relations with Armenia without solving those problems could not come into question. Based on that Pashinyan stated on the interview with EURACTIV (2019) that

... If Turkey considers itself a democratic country, it should welcome the triumph of democracy in its neighboring state and start a dialogue... We confirm our determination to restore the relations without any preconditions. Should we put on our agenda the Cyprus issue and human rights problems in Turkey...? Would this kind of politics bring stability to our region?

As it is seen, Pashinyan's reaction is rather harsh and strict and also even threatening. Additionally, the Foreign Affairs Minister of Armenia labeled Turkey as a security threat for Armenia (Armenia News Agency, 2019). Soever Putin also states that it is important to start Karabakh negotiations (Sputnik, 2019); under these conditions, any improvement in these

issues do not seem likely. However, Karabakh is not the only problem; there is also genocide problematic. Semyon Baghdasarov, director of Middle East and Central Asia Research Center, believes that without recognition of genocide by Ankara, normalization of the relations between the two countries and establishment of dialogue between Armenian and Turkish people are impossible (HyeTert, 2019). Moreover, the genocide issue has started to create a tremendous impression in the world. France has declared 24 April as a day of remembrance for Armenian genocide on 10 April 2019 and for the first time, the organization within this scope was realized (Armenia News Agency, 2019). As a response, Ankara censured France's decision and related with that Hami Aksoy, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Ministry, said that there is no history lecture which will be taken from France's arrogant politicians whereas İbrahim Kalın, Secretary of Presidency, said that we condemn Mr. Macron who experiencing political problems in his country because he is trying to save the day by making historical events into political material (Yazıcıoğlu; Voice of America, 2019). Furthermore, a motion was given to the Italian government for the recognition of Armenian genocide; which is also condemned by Turkey. Related with that Foreign Affairs Ministry of Turkey said that as like all attempts politicizing history, this motion also has no force for Turkey (NTV, 2019). Consequently, while Armenia has been trying the recognition of the Armenian genocide globally, Turkey has not been accepting this claim. Therefore, not only the Karabakh conflict but also the Armenian genocide issue have been standing as obstacles for the normalization of relations between the two countries.

In conclusion, it might not be argued based on those facts that Pashinyan's foreign policy is successful. His standing in this respect is not so different than the former presidents. While he has been continuing to be pro-Russian, also trying to be close with the EU and the USA. Moreover, Pashinyan is trying to develop economic and political relations with other neighboring countries. On the other hand, like prior periods, he also could not produce a constructive and different solution for Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the normalization of the relations with Turkey. His foreign policy could be named as balance policy, eventually.

3.2.3. Civil Society

It is a well-known fact that during the Velvet Revolution, civil society organizations were considerably active and influential. The new government's one of the main aims is to support civil society organizations as an important step to provide democracy in Armenia. For this reason, within the scope of CEPA, creation of a more empowered civil society was discussed and states that an independent civil society platform including Armenian and EU organizations is going to be established (Neljas, n.d.). Moreover, according to Ishkanian (n.d.), together with

the Velvet Revolution, space for civil society has not been shrinking anymore by comparison with former governments; additionally, after the revolution, some civil society activists have become politicians, which situation could influence government policy from inside. For example, Artak Zejnalyan who was the former CSO representative, right defender a lawyer was appointed as Minister of Justice and this is welcomed by civil society organizations (Andreasyan, Ishkanian, Manusyan, Manusyan & Zhamakochyan, 2018). Further, as of the end of 2018, thousands NGOs, foundations and associations are registered in Armenia, meaning that civic activism is on the rise in Armenia (European Commission, 2018). Consequently, there are countless CSOs and NGOs in Armenia, working on such as women's rights, the rights of LGBTI people and prisoners, disadvantaged and marginalized groups and environmental issues. On the other hand, most of those organizations are not active enough and do not have so much impact. In addition to that for some specific issues, especially the rights of LGBTI people, civil activists are exposed to so much pressure, hate-speech and attacks. However, together with the establishment of the new government, those people are hopeful that everything is going to change in a positive way. From this point of view, the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation in 2019 is evidence that some problems are tried to be dealt with. However, in the period of interim government, Pashinyan did not mention gender equality and take no action in this regard; similarly, even though environmental issues are in its agenda, Pashinyan did not respond any influential reaction about Amulsar mine project to which so many civil activists are against (Andresyan et al, 2018). In spite of those negations, some positive improvements could also be seen since Pashinyan came to power. The new government is in close relations with the EU to develop and support civil society in Armenia. To illustrate, EU4HumanRights project, European Endowment for Democracy are the ones supporting CSOs in Armenia (European Partnership for Democracy, 2019). Moreover, regular Human Rights Dialogue was held in Brussels with the participation on European Union and Armenia on 8 April 2019 and besides many important issues like freedom of expression, anti-discrimination policy and labor right, two parties talked about the preparation of a draft about gender equality for the years of 2019-2023 as National Strategy (EEAS, 2019). EU Delegation also has the intention to foster relations with CSOs in Armenia between 2019 and 2020 (European Commission, 2018). Meaning that the Armenian new government is open to spend the effort to increase the influence of civil society. In this period of time, many steps have been taken; for instance, a new law for the violence in the family has been accepted on January and Council on Prevention of Violence in Family has been established on June, within the scope of protection of human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Consequently, even civil society has taken a big step until now; it is undeniable that

there are some positive improvements in that respect. With the support of the Western world and efforts of Armenia, the condition of civil society will be better in the near future. Armenian people have hope and also the new government has been trying to include CSOs into political debates.

3.2.4. Independent Media

After the Velvet Revolution, many positive changes have been realized also in the field of media. Especially, as known fact that during campaigns for the election held in December 2018, all competitors could have appeared on media without any restriction. Media has begun to be more independent ever. Pashinyan said in 2018 about that

You can sure that the Government of the Republic of Armenia will do everything in its power to protect and promote freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and, of course, we expect to be able to effectively cooperate with the media in this regard.

Since the revolution, public television services have become freer and blacklists have been removed and everyone has started to state their opinion on public televisions (IREX, 2019). On 1 November 2019, Freedom House (2018) evaluated Armenian media as partly free and also mentioned the existence of some misinformation problem. For the great achievement in media, Ishkhanyan said that “I can’t remember a time when the public service was free as it is now”; however, according to OSCE/ODIHR, public television has been continuing pro-government broadcast, still (IREX, 2019). Furthermore, Pashinyan met with OSCE representatives on Freedom of the Media on 25 October 2018 for legal expertise and assistance in this regard and in this meeting, Harlem Desir stated media freedom as necessary for democracy and the need for reform in Armenia in this respect (OSCE, 2018). Additionally, Pashinyan has taken an important step for the realization of media freedom. In order to provide freedom of speech and media, it is decided to found “Media Assistance Fund” meaning media will not finance from stated budget anymore; in this way, Pashinyan aims to eliminate state influence over media organizations (Badalian; ArmInfo, 2019). In spite of them, it should be stated that disinformation is one of the major problems in Armenia today and Pashinyan’s attitude in this respect is notably strict. Recently, the author of anti-Pashinyan was arrested because of his shares on Facebook and also Pashinyan has ordered to remove “fake news”; on the other hand, his acts are labeled as a threat for the freedom of speech by Shushan Doydoyan who is head of the Freedom of Information Center of Armenia (Kucera; Eurasinet, 2019).

To conclude, it is a fact that Armenia has progressed in terms of freedom of speech and media. On the other hand, the existence of some deficiencies could not be denied. According to survey conducted by Center for Insights in Survey Research (2018), 61% of Armenian people think that media independence has progressed for last six months (the period of interim

government); additionally, while 31% of Armenians think that media is totally free to express different political views, 49% of them think it is somewhat free. Consequently, the Armenian public has expectations from the new government in this respect and also today's sovereign government has been spending effort to develop media independency. Although nobody knows what will be in the future, right now the situation looks promising.

3.2.5. The Rule of Law

The rule of law is one of necessary conditions for the realization of democracy. However, as could be estimated, the rule of law has been violated in Armenia substantially. Corruption, bribery on state institutions, nepotism, fraud and manipulations in elections and particularly nonexistence of independent judiciary could be given as evidence for the absence of the rule of law. On the other hand, the realization of the rule of law is one of the aims and claims of the new government in Armenia. As it is remembered that in many events such as 1 March incident, people who are responsible for deaths and injuries, were not punished or many businessmen, politicians and oligarchs were not even interrogated because of their corrupt acts. However, when Pashinyan came to power, he promised to provide the rule of law in the country. He also took the first step with the election held in December 2018 since the electoral process was fair and free by comparison with former elections in Armenia. Journalist Sedat Ergin interpreted this achievement as that such a result is a maturity exam for a country desiring to provide the rule of law (Balancar; Agos, 2018). Furthermore, Foreign Affairs Minister Mnatsakayan told that our first priority will be democratization and the restoration of juridical system and the rule of law; a program for the fight with corruption and the rule of law will enter into force (Payzın; T24, 2018). As mentioned in previous parts, Pashinyan has overcome so many problems until now; for instance, he achieved to reduce corruption rate, make independent media possible even if partly, spend effort to revive civil society activities, partially take shadow economy, nepotism and bribery under control. Moreover, European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) which was signed in former government, has started to be applied on June 2018 and within the scope of this policy, EU will support Armenia to reinforce democracy with reforms in specific areas like the rule of law and human rights (Tulun, 2018). The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) realized a competition to support Armenia for the consolidation of the rule of law and justice system reforms, as well. Depending upon all those facts, it is clear that Armenia has so many supporters to empower the rule of law in its territory. On the other hand, judicial system is the major problem for the realization of the rule of law; that is why, Pashinyan said on 20 May 2019 that he did his best not to interfere jurisdiction, but it is not possible anymore, it is time for surgical intervention to judiciary (Akhiyadov, 2019). The actual reason behind this

decision actually was release of Robert Kocharyan on bail. As a result of that Pashinyan called out all Armenian people to close all entrances and exists of court houses and that way, protest started in Armenia again. The situation even became serious and he said that all judges should be prosecuted, and they should inform the public about their assets, political connections, educational background and also all judges thinking that they could decide independently should resign (Akhiyadov, 2019). However, Pashinyan's this act was criticized in terms of violating the rule of law. To exemplify, it is said that Pashinyan is boycotting judicial system by violating the presumption of innocence instead of reforming which is a paradoxical reality (Muradyan; Speak Freely, 2019). Additionally, Robert Kocharyan told about that Armenian prime minister is a threat for the rule of law and also claimed to be held in prison unlawfully just because of being opposition politician and based on that called the Council of Europe and European Union to be his side (EURACTIV, 2019). Consequently, many judges resigned from their positions after declaration of Pashinyan and protest. Related with this issue, prime minister stated that

The people perceive the judiciary as a remnant of the former corrupt system, where conspiracies against people were constantly developed and carried out. Obviously, the public does not trust the court decisions. And I say this not only as a prime minister, but also as a representative of the Armenian people, who has right to speak on its behalf. (Istrate; Emerging Europe, 2019).

Shortly, even if Armenian new government has given a promise to enable the rule of law in the country, there is more to be achieved in this respect. Yet, Armenia has an advantage that European countries are ready to give support for the consolidation of democracy. Within the scope of the Council of European Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022, the key areas for rule of law such as supporting to criminal reform, fight against corruption, money-laundering and cyber-crime, strengthening the justice system and independence, were determined along with other issues and plan budget is assigned as 18, 9 million euro for this action plan (Council of Europe, n.d.). Even there are some problems with regard to rule of law, it is clear that some positive and constructive improvements have started to be carried out. Even nobody images what will be happened in the future, Armenian public trusts Pashinyan and so new government generally.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Armenia was under the hegemony of Soviet Union for a long time and finally declared its independence on 31 September 1991. After independence, Armenia started its nation and state building process. Additionally, it adopted a democratic and liberal state understanding and began its transition to democracy and market economy. Nation-building process of Armenia was the least painful process because the Armenian society was quite homogenous in terms of both ethnically and religiously. Therefore, the process of identity creation in post-Soviet Armenia was smooth and uncomplicated. On the other hand, state-building process and transformation to market economy and democracy were and have still been problematic and difficult in many respects. In this process, Armenian government has taken many steps to improve itself in some arenas such as the establishment of civil society or the creation of an independent media. On the other hand, even though so many positive steps have been taken until today, it is possible to see many violations in respect to democracy, also. The aim of this study is to analyze the problems of democratization in post-Soviet Armenia and examine the Velvet Revolution in this respect. In order to examine Armenia's achievements and failures in terms of democratization, I discussed the democratic transition of the country under each presidential term since 1991. Besides, in order to present concrete results, the democratization problems of the country were analyzed under five major arenas which are economy and corruption, foreign policy and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, civil society, independent media and the rule of law as these are strong indicators of a country's democratization level. There are important reasons of why foreign policy and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were examined within the scope of democratization. Firstly, Karabakh conflict is evaluated as the national problem in Armenia and even victory in the Karabakh war in 1994 is a major part of Armenians national identity (Panossian, 2002). In other words, this issue is considerably crucial for all Armenians; that is why, the issues of Karabakh conflict affect the domestic policy of Armenia to a large extent. Secondly, it is possible to see so many violations of democracy during the Karabakh conflict until today. Thus, Armenia's foreign policy tendencies and Karabakh conflict were taken into account as one of the major arenas for the realization of consolidated democracy.

In the thesis, the literature review and media analysis were used mainly as a method of the study. In order to theoretically ground the research, democracy and transitional theories were reviewed. This allowed me to define what democracy is and what its necessities are. In the

beginning of the study, there were three assumptions and those are; firstly, Armenia could not finish its democratization process and still has many problems in this respect; secondly, Velvet Revolution is the result of violation of democracy and finally, the future of Armenia is uncertain in the way of democratization.

As a well-known fact that the Republic of Armenia could not complete its democratization process until today and has still many problems in that respect. Linz and Stepan (1996) argue that there are major five arenas of the consolidated democracy which are free civil society, autonomous and valued political society, the rule of law, state apparatus and institutionalized economic society. In this thesis, I tried to analyze democratization process of Armenia by paying attention to those arenas under the five subtitles as mentioned above. In this respect, I found that even if there are so many positive changes within the scope of the consolidated democracy, there are also major problems. To begin with, Armenian economy is the most highly monopolized economy among post-Soviet and Eastern European Republics, according to a 2013 World Bank report (Quoted in Grigoryan, 2017). In other words, it is not possible to talk about the existence of a free market economy in Armenia since powerful oligarchs are controlling the economy in general. Additionally, the preservation of independence and democracy is possible with free and fair elections (Grigoryan, 2016); on the other hand, the existence of irregularities and vote-fraud in the elections were quite common in the history of post-Soviet Armenia, unfortunately. For instance, both Levon Ter-Petrosyan and Serzh Sargsyan were forced to resign their office with the claim that they won the elections through undemocratic ways. However, Armenian public took a stand against the corruption in the elections and gained victory in the way of democratization with the Velvet Revolution. Further, in terms of independent civil society and media, the situation in Armenia still has not been favorable. In the early times of post-Soviet Armenia, as is expected, there was not enough civil society organizations. After a while, although the number of registered CSOs and NGOs increased, they had no impact or activity especially on politics. Those institutions are generally interested in secondary social problems because of their dependency to international organizations (Aslanyan et al, 2007). On the other hand, in the social movements realized in 2008 and 2018, it is possible to see the broad influence of civil society organizations. Especially after Velvet Revolution, the new government has started to give importance to the activities and thoughts of CSOs. This could be understood from the assignment of Artak Zeynalyan, the former CSO representative, as Minister of Justice. In the light of these facts, it might be said that even though Armenia could not make major improvement in terms of the creation of independent civil society, the new elected government looks promising for the

creation of independent and politicized civil society. Similarly, the media is also not free and independent.

Until today, many journalists were arrested or physically injured. However, after the Velvet Revolution the situation seems better than before. In fact, it is undeniable that the new government looks promising right now in terms of consolidation of the democracy, yet time will show what will happen in the future. For instance, according to the report of Freedom House (2002), journalists generally practice self-censorship because of the repressive policies of the government especially about Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, national security and corruption; therefore, freedom of press in Armenia was determined as ‘partly free’ in 2002. On the other hand, in 2016 the status of press freedom was labelled as ‘not free’ (Freedom House, 2016). For example, Kristine Khanumyan, the editor of the online news portal Ilur.am, faced with criminal charge because of her story about police misconduct (Freedom House, 2016). As could be seen, the situation about freedom of press had got worse as time progresses in Armenia. Many journalist were injured or arrested; many TV station or newspaper were closed because of critical articles about the government policies. Even though the freedom of press is protected by the Constitution, in practice the situation is different. In other words, there is no such official censorship on paper; however, the media outlets, especially the ones which criticize government, are faced with unofficial restrictions on their freedom of speech (Aslanyan, Adibekian, Ajabyan & Coe, 2007). That is why, it is not possible to talk about a complete independent media in Armenia. On the other hand, as you may recall, media was very effective in the realization of the Velvet Revolution in 2018. After the resignation of Sargsyan, Nicol Pashinyan has become the prime minister of the country and it might be argued that since then, the condition of media will be better than before. Particularly the usage of social media increased during protests and Nouneh Sarkissian even stated that journalists were the heroes of Velvet Revolution since they played an important role for the solution of existing problems especially related with media (Maguire, 2019). Further, Pashinyan took crucial steps for the creation of the independent media and had a meeting with OSCE representatives to strengthen freedom of media as a cornerstone of democracy (OSCE, 2018). Consequently, while Armenian score for freedom of press was ‘not free’ in 2018, this situation changed and become ‘partly free’ in 2019 thanks to the new sovereign government (Freedom House, 2019). With respect to the rule of law, Armenia has almost many critical problems, also. Unfortunately, the violation of the laws is prevalent and also the impartiality of jurisdiction is widely questionable. Even though until today so many positive changes have been realized within the scope of democratization, those are generally nothing than cosmetics. For instance, the freedom of media is protected by the Constitution; on the other hand, it is

possible to see many violations in that respect. One of the most important development is the transition from a presidential system to a parliamentary system with a referendum held in 2015. With this admission, the power of the president is restricted and so the parliament has become more powerful position. Even if this change is a big step for the consolidation of democracy in Armenia, there are still many problems in terms of the implementation of the Constitution. However, after the Velvet Revolution, the Pashinyan government has started to take significant steps to provide the independence of judiciary and he called on some judges to resign. At the present time, it seems that there are positive development in terms of the realization of the rule of law in Armenia; on the other hand, we will see together to what extent the new elected government will achieve successful within the scope of democratization. Shortly, the first assumption is true in many ways since Armenia could not complete its democratization process or create a consolidated democracy until today. It is also true that it has many crucial problems in that respect.

Our second assumption is that the Velvet Revolution is the result of violation of democracy. As well-known that the main source of the social movements in Armenia is unfair and unfree elections. Certainly, there are some other reasons like arbitrary decisions of the government and jurisdiction, oppression against media and civil society; on the other hand, the elections are generally the tipping points of the Armenian public. The Velvet Revolution could be given as example for this. On the other hand, the fraud problem in the election held in 2018 was not the encountered problem for the first time in the history of post-Soviet Armenia. The similar protest raised in the election held in 2008 but this protest could not be successful. However, the protests held in 2018 reached its goal and Serzh Sargsyan had to resign from his office. The reason behind this event is definitely an uprising against the violation of the democracy. As mentioned before, a person could not take the presidential office more than two consecutive terms. Because Sargsyan knows this fact, he tried to be the prime minister in the 2018 election even though he promised before not to do that. In the election held in 2018, there were so many irregularities and many international observers assessed even this election as not in compliance with democratic necessities. Consequently, the Armenian people did not want the Sargsyan to have the power again and started a protest under the leadership of Nicol Pashinyan. Consequently, Serzh Sargsyan had to resign from his office and as an interim prime minister Nicol Pashinyan came to power. After a while when the election was realized again, Pashinyan won the election and took the office. Consequently, our fourth assumption is proven true since the Velvet Revolution is a counteract against undemocratic way of governance.

The final assumption of the study is that the future of Armenia is uncertain in the way of democratization. While no one knows what is going to happen in the future, it is partly true. Armenian people seems contend right now; on the other hand, you never know what the future brings. Eduard Aghajanyan who is a city council member from Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party, said that “You can absolutely compare him with historical figures like Gandhi and Nelson Mandela” (Roth; The Guardian, 2018); however, the question of whether Pashinyan could create such a big change or transformation in the history of post-Soviet Armenia in the way of democracy or not does not have an exact answer. It is possible to see so many positive comments about Nicol Pashinyan. For instance, he was labelled as “Saint Nick of Armenia” by the Open Democracy Institute and that Pashinyan is seen as a warrior like Santa and he will rescue Armenia from the corrupt regime (Sanamyan, 2018). As mentioned before, Pashinyan is trying to conduct a balance policy, especially in terms of foreign policy. Even though Armenia wants to be pro-Western, it could not escape from Russian influence until today. Right now, he is trying to fight with corruption, establish the rule of law, in other words, democratize the country by creating ‘a new Armenia’. On the other hand, by doing that he does not want to lose any supporters and that is why, he is conducting a multi-vector foreign policy. While he is improving the relations with the EU and the US, he is protecting country’s existing relations with Russia. At this stage is not easy to define Pashinyan’s place in the political spectrum of Armenia (Zolyan; Carnegie Moscow Center, 2018). To conclude, it is true that Armenia’s future in the way of democracy is not exact yet. No one knows whether Armenia could accomplish to reach a democratic state or not although there is a big hope for Armenia’s new leader, Nicol Pashinyan.

Table 4: Democracy Score of Armenia

Years	Electoral Process	Civil Society	Independent Media	Corruption	Democracy Score
2003	5.50	3.50	5.00	5.75	4.92
2004	5.75	3.50	5.25	5.75	5.00
2005	5.75	3.50	5.50	5.75	5.18
2006	5.75	3.50	5.50	5.75	5.14
2007	5.75	3.50	5.75	5.75	5.21
2008	5.50	3.50	5.75	5.75	5.21
2009	5.75	3.75	6.00	5.50	5.39
2010	5.75	3.75	6.00	5.50	5.39
2011	5.75	3.75	6.00	5.50	5.43
2012	5.75	3.75	6.00	5.25	5.39
2013	5.75	3.75	5.75	5.25	5.36
2014	5.75	3.75	5.75	5.25	5.36
2015	5.75	3.75	5.75	5.25	5.36
2016	5.75	3.75	5.75	5.25	5.36

2017	6.00	3.75	5.50	5.25	5.39
2018	6.00	3.75	5.50	5.50	5.43

*This table is compiled from the data of Freedom House

In conclusion, Armenia as a newly independent country has started its transition process to democratic way of governance. Since independence, Armenia took many important steps in accordance with democratization. However, it has still many crucial problems. In the first years of independence (1991-93), Armenian democracy score was determined as 4.3 by Freedom House (White, 2003). Based on that Armenia was a partly-free country in those years. On the other hand, this situation has not changed until today. When we look that table 4 given above, the scores of Armenia in terms of electoral process, civil society, independent media, corruption and democracy could be seen clearly. This table consists of the periods of two sovereign government which are the presidency period of Kocharyan (1998-2008) and Sargsyan (2008-2018). It is clear in the table that Armenia failed to democratize itself in this period since all scores went down (the scale is from 1 to 7; 1 is the highest and 7 is the lowest scores). Even the difference is not so great, it is explicit in the table that Armenia could not make progress within the scope of democratization. In 2019, Armenia is also classified as ‘partly free’ like the previous years. Although the new government has taken progressive steps in order to democratize Armenia, the time will show what will happen in the future.

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APPENDICES

A. MAP OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH



Source: <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/nagorno-karabakh.gif>

B. TURKISH SUMMARY – TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti, Kafkasya bölgesinde denize kıyısı olmayan bir ülkedir. Coğrafik olarak Türkiye, Azerbaycan, İran, Gürcistan ve bağımsız Artsah veya eski adıyla Dağlık Karabağ Cumhuriyeti ile sınır komşusudur. Ayrıca, Azerbaycan'ın özerk bölgesi olan Nahcivan Ermenistan'ın sınırları içerisinde yer almaktadır. 2019 yılı verilerine göre Ermenistan'ın toplam nüfusu 2.96 milyondur ve nüfusun büyük bir çoğunluğu Ermenistan'ın en büyük şehri ve ayrıca başkenti olan Erivan'da yaşamaktadır. Ermenistan nüfusunun %98'ini Ermeniler oluşturmaktadır. Bu nedenle Ermenistan oldukça homojen bir etnik yapıya sahiptir. Aynı zamanda Ermenistan nüfusunun büyük bir çoğunluğu Ermenistan'ın ulusal kilisesi olan Ermeni Apostolik kilisesine bağlıdır. Buna dayanarak Ermenistan'ın dini açıdan da homojen bir yapıya sahip olduğu söylenilebilir. Bilindiği üzere Ermenistan 1920 yılında Sovyetler Birliği'nin egemenliği altına girmiş ve 1990 yılında bağımsızlık bildirgesini yayınlamıştır. 21 Eylül 1991 tarihinde bağımsızlığın kabulü için bir referandum gerçekleştiren Ermenistan, %94 evet oyu ile 23 Eylül tarihinde resmi olarak bağımsızlığını ilan etmiştir. Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk başkanı Levon Ter-Petrosyan ve ilk başbakanı Vazgen Manukyan'dır.

Bu tezin amacı Sovyet sonrası Ermenistan'da demokratikleşme problemlerini ve bu kapsamda 2018 yılında meydana gelen Kadife Devrim'i analiz etmektedir. Yöntem olarak literatür taraması ve medya analizi yapılmış ve bunun yanı sıra gerektiği noktalardan tarihsel analizden faydalanılmıştır. Literatür taraması kapsamında demokratikleşme ve geçiş teorileri; medya analizi kapsamında ise Türkiye, Ermenistan, Azerbaycan, Avrupa, Amerika ve Rusya başta olmak üzere dünya basını incelenmeye çalışılmıştır.

Heywood (2013), egemen politik dünyayı üçe ayırmaktadır ve bunlar kapitalist (birinci) dünya, komünist (ikinci) dünya ve gelişmekte olan (üçüncü) dünyadır. Bu ayrıma göre, kapitalist dünya Batı Avrupa ülkelerinde hâkim olan endüstrileşmiş ve ekonomik anlamda daha iyi bir durumda olan dünyadır. Komünist dünya ise büyük ölçüde endüstrileşmiş ve halkının temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilen ikinci dünya ve son olarak gelişmekte olan dünya ise Afrika veya Latin Amerika gibi açlık içerisinde yaşayan üçüncü dünyadır. Bu kapsamda, Sovyet Rusya'da oldukça totaliter olan yapısıyla birlikte komünist rejim hakimken, kapitalist dünyada liberal demokrasi geçerlidir. En basit haliyle demokrasi bireylerin özgürlüğünün korunduğu, politik eşitliğin sağlandığı ve vatandaşların temel ihtiyaçlarının karşılandığı bir sistemdir. Liberal demokrasi ise tüm bunların yanında ekonomide serbest piyasa ekonomisinin benimsendiği sistemdir. Sovyetler Birliği'nin çökmesi ile birlikte üye devletler bağımsızlığını

kazanmış ve liberal demokrasiye geçiş yapmaya başlamışlardır. Ancak Heywood (2013) 1970'li yıllara gelindiğinde bu sınıflandırmanın geçerliliğini kaybettiğini söylemiş ve dünyadaki egemen duruma uygun olarak yeni bir sınıflandırma yapmıştır. Buna göre modern dünyada beş rejim tipinin olduğunu ileri sürmüştür. Bunlar batı poliyarşileri, yeni demokrasiler, Doğu Asya rejimleri, İslami ve askeri rejimlerdir. Bu çalışma kapsamında batı poliyarşileri ve yeni demokrasiler incelenecektir. İlk olarak, poliyarşi en sade anlatımıyla liberal demokrasilerdir. Dahl (1971)'e göre belirli bir derecede demokratikleşme gerçekleştirilebilirken tamamen demokratik bir ülkenin varlığı söz konusu değildir. Bu nedenle poliyarşiler önemli ölçüde demokratikleşmiş ve serbest piyasa ekonomisini benimsemiş rejimlerdir. Batı poliyarşilerinin en önemli özellikleri seçimlerin özgür ve adil olması ve rekabete dayanan serbest piyasa ekonomisinin varlığıdır. Yeni demokrasiler ise demokrasiye ve liberal ekonomiye yeni geçiş yapmış rejimlerdir. Buna en iyi örnek, 1991 yılında sonra bağımsızlığını kazanmış Sovyet sonrası ülkelerdir. Tüm bunlara ek olarak demokratikleşme süreçleri tarihsel olarak da bir sınıflandırmaya tabi tutulmuştur ve buna göre 1828-1926 yılları birinci dalga demokratikleşme, 1943-1962 yılları ikinci dalga demokratikleşme ve son olarak 1974 yılından başlayarak günümüzde de devam eden süreçte üçüncü dalga demokratikleşme adı verilmiştir. O halde yeni demokrasiler, üçüncü dalga demokratikleşme hareketlerini oluşturmaktadır. Bu ülkeler rejimlerini ve ekonomik sistemlerini tamamen değiştirdikleri için geçiş ülkeleri olarak da anılmaktadırlar. Ancak bu ülkeler demokrasi ve liberal ekonomiye geçişin yanında bağımsızlıklarını ilan ettikten sonra ulus-devlet inşasını da beraber yürüttüklerinden dolayı üçlü bir geçiş süreci söz konusudur. Ermenistan' da ulus inşası diğer süreçlere nazaran en az acılı geçen süreçtir. Bunda Ermenistan'ın etnik ve dini yapısının homojen olmasının payı büyüktür. Ancak devlet inşası ve liberal ekonomiye geçiş için aynı şey söz konusu değildir. Bağımsızlığının ilk yıllarında sosyalist ekonomiyi terk etmeye başlayan Ermenistan özel mülkiyet anlayışını benimsemeye çalışmıştır. Ancak ülkede ekonomik açıdan güçlü olan kesim sadece politikacılardan oluştuğundan dolayı mülkiyet aslında el değiştirmemiştir. Bunun yanında demokratikleşmenin en büyük adımı özgür ve adil seçimler gerçekleştirilebilmektir. Ancak çoğu Sovyet sonrası ülkede olduğu gibi Ermenistan'da da seçim süreçleri oldukça sıkıntılı süreçlerdir. Sonuç olarak, bu ülkeler demokratikleşme süreçlerini tamamlayamadıkları gibi bunlar dikta yönetimi ile demokrasi arasında sıkışmış rejimlerdir. Linz ve Stepan (1996) bu tip ülkelerde güçlü bir demokrasinin anahtarı olan beş ana alandan bahsetmektedirler. Bunlar: özgür sivil toplum, özerk politik toplum, hukukun üstünlüğü, devlet aygıtlarının doğru kullanımı ve kurumsallaşmış ekonomik toplumdur. Kısaca açıklamak gerekirse, sivil toplum devletten bağımsız olarak özgür olan bireylerin veya grupların toplumsal veya kendi çıkarları

doğrultusunda bir araya gelerek oluşturdukları kuruluşlardır. Sivil toplum kuruluşları demokrasinin kalbi olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu kuruluşlar devletten bağımsız ve özgür olmalıdır; çünkü ancak bu şekilde hak ve özgürlükler güvence altına alınabilir. Özerk politik toplum çeşitli politik partilerin, seçim kurallarının, parlamentonun ve seçimlerin bütününe verilen isimdir. Demokratik bir ülkenin inşası ancak toplumdaki farklı kesimlerin mecliste temsil edilmesi ile mümkündür. Bu nedenle, bir toplumda yaşayan tüm vatandaşlar seçme ve seçilme hakkına sahip olmalı ve ayrıca seçimler özgür ve adil bir ortamda gerçekleşmelidir. Demokrasinin güçlendirilmesinin gereksinimlerinden bir diğeri ise hukukun üstünlüğü ilkesidir. Buna göre, yargı özgür ve bağımsız olmalı, herkese eşit davranmalı ve belirli bir kesimin çıkarlarını gözetmemelidir. Hukukun üstünlüğünün sağlanması için güçler ayrılığı ilkesi de sağlanması gereken şartlardan bir diğeridir. Linz ve Stepan (1996)'a göre dördüncü olan devlet aygıtlarının doğru kullanımınıdır. Burada devlet aygıtlarından kastedilen devlet kurumlarıdır. Buna örnek olarak polis, asker ve mahkemeler verilebilir. Burada anlatılmak istenen egemen hükümetin devlet aygıtlarını kendi çıkarları doğrultusundan ziyade halkın çıkarları doğrultusunda kullanmasıdır. Bu kurumların amacı yaşanabilir bir toplum yaratarak, vatandaşlara en iyi hizmeti sunmak olmalıdır. Son olarak, demokratik toplumlarda ekonomi serbest, rekabetçi ve tekelleşmemiş olmalıdır. Liberal ekonomik model herkese eşit fırsatlar sunarak, bir rekabet ortamı yaratmayı ve bu şekilde ekonomik gelişimi teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasıyla bağımsızlığını kazanmış olan Ermenistan bu değerleri benimsemiş ve kendi sınırları içerisinde demokrasiyi güçlendirmeye çalışmıştır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmada bağımsızlığını ilan ettiğini tarihten günümüze kadar olan süreçte Ermenistan'da meydana gelmiş önemli tarihsel olayların yanı sıra Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti'nin demokratikleşme adımları dönemin ülke başkanına göre incelenecektir. Somut bir analiz gerçekleştirmek adına, demokratikleşme kapsamındaki gelişmeler ve problemler beş alt başlık altında incelenmiştir. Bunlar; ekonomi ve yozlaşma, dış politika ve Dağlık Karabağ sorunu, sivil toplum, bağımsız medya ve hukukun üstünlüğüdür. Bu alt başlıkların belirlenmesinde Linz ve Stepan'ın çalışmasından faydalanılmış ve bunları da kendi kapsayan alt başlıklar belirlenmiştir. Dış politika ve Dağlık Karabağ sorununun incelenmesinin nedeni Karabağ sorununun Ermenistan için ulusal bir mesela haline gelmiş olması ve Ermenistan'ın bu konuyu kendi demokratikleşme sürecinin önünde tutmasıdır. Karabağ, Azerbaycan'a bağlı özerk bir bölge olmakla birlikte 1992 yılında bağımsızlığını ilan etmiş ve Artsah Cumhuriyeti adını almıştır. Ancak Ermenistan ve Azerbaycan'da dahil olmak üzere hiçbir ülke bu cumhuriyeti tanımamıştır. Ermenistan ve Azerbaycan bağımsızlıklarını kazandıkları günden bu yana Karabağ toprakları için birbirleriyle savaş halindedirler. Her ne kadar iki ülke arasında 1994

yılında ateşkes anlaşması yapılmış olsa da dönem dönem sıcak savaş hali devam etmiştir. Karabağ sorununun barışçıl bir şekilde çözülmesi için 1992 yılında Avrupa Güvenlik ve İşbirliği Teşkilatı tarafından AGİT Minsk grubu kurulmuş olmasına karşın Karabağ sorunu hala çözüme kavuşturulamamıştır. Ermenistan'ın dış politikasını belirleyen en önemli unsurlardan biri olan Karabağ sorunu Türkiye ile Ermenistan arasında diplomatik ilişkilerin durdurulmasına ve iki ülke arasındaki kara sınırının kapatılmasına da sebebiyet vermiştir. Tüm bu sebeplerden dolayı, Ermenistan' da demokratikleşme analizini Karabağ sorununa değinmeden gerçekleştirmek imkansızdır.

Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk başkanı Levon Ter-Petrosyan seçilmiştir. 1991 ve 1998 yılları arasında devlet başkanı olarak görev yapmış olan Petrosyan ilk kez 16 Ekim 1991 tarihinde %83 evet oyuyla başa geçmiştir. Petrosyan başkanlığı süresince dört ana konuya odaklanmıştır. Bunlar: pazar ekonomisinin geliştirilmesi, demokratikleşme, Rusya'ya olan bağımlılığın azaltılmasıyla dış politikanın bağımsız olması ve Dağlık Karabağ sorununun çözümlenmesidir. Ancak Petrosyan başa geldiğinde ülke, 1988 yılında meydana gelen Spitak depremi ve Karabağ savaşı yüzünden ekonomik olarak zor günler yaşamaktadır. Ayrıca sosyalist ekonomi terk edilerek liberal ekonomiye geçilmesinden dolayı birçok yapısal problem de söz konusudur. Bu nedenle Petrosyan, radikal bir ekonomi reform programı başlatmıştır. Bu kapsamda ilk adım olarak devlet mülkiyetinin özelleştirilmesine karar verilmiştir. Ancak Karabağ savaşının neden olduğu zorluklar, Türkiye ile Ermenistan arasındaki gergin diplomatik ilişkiler, ekonomik kriz ve enflasyon sonucunda Ermenistan'ın ekonomik durumu gitgide kötüleşmiştir. Her ne kadar özelleştirme ile Petrosyan'ın amacı ülkede pazar ekonomisini geliştirmek olsa da bu uygulama sonucunda zenginler ve fakirler arasındaki uçurum derinleşmiştir. Aynı zamanda ülkede gruplaşma, adam kayırma, torpil ve rüşvet gibi ortaya çıkan yanlış uygulamalar sonucu ülke içerisinde huzursuzluk ve memnuniyetsizlik seviyesi artmıştır. Tüm bunların sonucunda ülkede kayıtdışı, gölge ekonomi artmaya başlamıştır. Ekonominin yanında politik alanda da büyük oranda yolsuzluk söz konusudur. Rüşvet vermeksizin sosyal bir hizmete ulaşmak neredeyse imkânsız hale gelmiştir. Bunun yanında seçim süreçlerinde oy çalma gibi birçok usulsüzlük olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Özellikle Ter-Petrosyan'ın ikinci kez devlet başkanı olarak seçildiği 1996 başkanlık seçimleri yolsuzluk bakımından çok ses getirmiştir. Hatta bu seçim uluslararası aktörler tarafından da kanunsuz ve usulsüz olarak nitelendirilmiştir. Dağlık-Karabağ sorunu açısından Petrosyan döneminde meydana gelen en önemli olay 1994 yılında Azerbaycan ile imzalanan ateşkes anlaşmasıdır. Ter-Petrosyan Karabağ sorununun çözümü konusunda oldukça yapıcı olmasına karşın onun başkanlığı döneminde bu konuda herhangi bir ilerleme kaydedilememiştir. Türkiye ile politik ilişkileri normalleştirmeye çalışarak iki ülke arasında ticaretin yeniden

canlanmasını hedefleyen Petrosyan, en son Karabağ'ı satmakla suçlanmış ve istifa etmek zorunda kalmıştır. Ter-Petrosyan'ın başkanlığı döneminde Ermenistan daha yeni bağımsızlığını kazanmış bir ülke olmasından dolayı sivil toplum açısından oldukça eksiktir. Ancak sivil toplum kuruluşlarının (STK) sayısı Freedom House verilerine göre binin üstüne çıkmıştır. Fakat bu kuruluşların etki alanı oldukça dar ve sınırlıdır. Bu dönemde özellikle Spitak depreminin yarattığı sosyal ve ekonomik problemlerden ötürü, STK'lar genellikle insani yardımlara odaklanmışlardır. Bu dönemde medyanın bağımsızlığı açısından da durum çok parlak değildir. Kitle iletişimine ilişkin ilk yasa 1991 yılında kabul edilmiştir ve basın ve ifade özgürlüğü yasa ile koruma altına alınmıştır. Ancak aynı zamanda 1996 yılında kabul edilen bir yasa ile Radyo ve Televizyon kurulunun üyelerinin başkan tarafından atanmasına karar verilmiştir. Her ne kadar medyanın özgürlüğü anayasa ile güvence altına alınmış olsa da bağımsız Ermenistan'ın ilk yıllarında basın veya düşünce özgürlüğünün varlığından bahsetmek söz konusu değildir. Bu dönemde birçok medya kuruluşu kapatılmış, gazetecilere baskı yapılmıştır. Son olarak, 1995 yılında Ermenistan ilk anayasasını kabul etmiştir. Bu anayasasının ilk maddesine göre Ermenistan hukukun üstünlüğü ilkesi ile yönetilen bağımsız ve demokratik bir ülkedir. Aynı zamanda bununla beraber güçler ayrılığı ilkesi benimsenmiş ve hukukun üstünlüğü garanti altına alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Ancak genel itibarıyla Ermenistan'da yargının bağımsızlığı konusunda sıkıntılar söz konusudur. Yargı ülkeyi yöneten elit kesimin çıkarlarına hizmet etmektedir ve dolayısıyla bağımsızlığı kuşkuludur.

Ermenistan'ın ikinci başkanı 1998 ve 2008 yılları arasında görev almış olan Robert Koçaryan'dır. Koçaryan, Ter-Petrosyan'ın istifası üzerine başa gelmiş ve 2003 yılında bir kez daha başkan olarak seçilmiştir. Aslen Karabağ'lı olan Koçaryan, Ter-Petrosyan'ın son döneminde başbakan olarak görev almıştır.

Koçaryan göreve geldikten sonra öncelikle kendi klanından yani Karabağ'dan olan kişileri devletin üst kademelerine yerleştirmiştir. Böylece Ermenistan'da politik ve ekonomik anlamda Koçaryan'ın klanı güç kazanmaya başlamıştır. Bu kayırmacılık ile birlikte politikada yolsuzluk artmaya başlamıştır. Ayrıca bu dönemde gölge ekonomi inanılmaz derecede büyümüş ve hatta bazıları Koçaryan'ın gölge ekonominin yarısını kontrol ettiğini iddia etmiştir. Koçaryan, Petrosyan'ın başlattığı ekonomik reform programını devam ettirmiş ancak en başta ekonomi büyümeye başlamasına rağmen bu süreç yalnızca 2008 ekonomik krizine kadar sürmüştür. Freedom House verilerine göre Ermenistan'da yolsuzluk oranları Koçaryan dönemi boyunca 5.75 ile aynı kalmıştır (7 en düşük – 1 en yüksek). Politik yolsuzluk açısından da durum farklı değildir. 2006 yılında Yolsuzlukla Mücadele Politikası kabul edilmesine ve 2004 yılında Yolsuzlukla Mücadele Konseyi kurulmasına karşın herhangi bir ilerleme

kaydedilememiştir. Tüm bunlara ek olarak, 1999 yılında meclise yapılan silahlı saldırıdan Koçaryan sorumlu tutulmuştur. Bunun en büyük nedeni ise bu saldırı sonucunda Koçaryan'ın en güçlü rakibi olan Karen Demirciyan yaşamını kaybetmesidir. Koçaryan döneminde gerçekleştirilen seçimlerde özgür ve adil olarak nitelendirilemeyecek kadar problemlidir. 2003 yılında yapılan başkanlık seçimlerinde Koçaryan bir kez daha başkan olarak seçilmiştir. Fakat sadece Ermenistan halkı değil aynı zamanda uluslararası aktörler de bu seçimde yolsuzluk yapıldığını, seçimin demokratik olmadığını ileri sürmüşlerdir. Seçimden önce muhalif medya kuruluşlarının egemen hükümetin baskısıyla kapatılması da bunu doğrular niteliktedir. Bu süreçte Karabağ sorununa ilişkin Koçaryan'ın sert tutumundan dolayı herhangi bir ilerleme kaydedilememiştir. Bunun yanında Koçaryan dış politika anlamında da bu tutumunu sürdürmüş ve Türkiye'nin soykırım iddialarını kabul etmesini talep etmiş ve soykırımın uluslararası arenada tanınması için politikalar yürütmüştür. Koçaryan döneminde sivil toplum kuruluşlarının etkisi artmaya başlamış olsa da yetersiz fon nedeniyle istenilen düzeyde gelişme gösterememişlerdir. Bu dönemde STK'ların yanı sıra sivil inisiyatif grupları ortaya çıkmış ve genellikle sosyal ve çevresel sorunlara odaklanmışlardır. Bu dönemde egemen hükümetin sivil toplumun gelişmesine yönelik çok fazla katkı sunduğunu söylemek zordur. Sonuç olarak demokratikleşmenin bir gereği olan sivil toplum Koçaryan döneminde yeterince gelişme gösterememiştir. Medya özgürlüğü açısından da durum çok farklı değildir. Her ne kadar Koçaryan hükümeti 2004 yılında medya yasağının kaldırılmasına yönelik yasayı kabul etmiş olsa da devletin uyguladığı baskı yüzünden özellikle gazeteciler kendilerini sansürlemeye başlamışlardır. Freedom House, 2007 yılında basın özgürlüğünü skorunu 5.7 olarak belirlemiştir. Koçaryan döneminde hukukun üstünlüğünün sağlanması açısından Avrupa standartlarında birçok değişiklik yapılmasına karşın yargı keyfi olarak davranmaya devam etmiştir. Bu dönemde gerçekleşen en önemli gelişme başkanlık sisteminden yarı-başkanlık sistemine geçilmesidir. Ancak bu sadece kâğıt üzerinde bir değişimdir; ülke totaliter bir rejimle yönetilmeye devam etmiştir.

Serj Sarkisyan, Koçaryan'dan sonra ülke başkanı olarak seçilmiş ve 2008 ile 2018 yılları arasında görev yapmıştır. Sarkisyan'ın başkan olarak seçildiği 2008 seçiminde çok fazla usulsüzlük olduğunu iddia eden Ter-Petrosyan liderliğindeki Ermeni halkı Sarkisyan'ı protesto etmiş ve bu olayların sonucunda 1 Mart olayları meydana gelmiştir. Bu olayları Sarkisyan polis gücüyle bastırmaya çalışmış ve bu esnada 10 kişi yaşamını kaybetmiştir. Ancak yaşanan can kayıplarından hiç kimse sorumlu tutulmamış ve kimseye soruşturma açılmamıştır. Ayrıca bu olaylarda çok fazla insan tutuklanmış ve bu insanlar hapisanede kötü muameleye maruz kalmışlardır. Bu nedenle, Sarkisyan'ın meşruluğu Ermeni halkı tarafından en baştan itibaren sorgulanmaya başlanmıştır. Sarkisyan döneminde gerçekleşen tüm

seçimlerde usulsüzlük iddiaları ortaya atılmış ancak hiçbir seçim iptal edilmemiştir. Ancak Ermeni halkı Sarkisyan'a karşı tavrını 2018 yılında gerçekleştirecek olan seçimde gösterecek ve Kadife Devrim meydana gelecektir. Dolayısıyla, Sarkisyan'ın başkanlığı boyunca seçim süreçlerinde demokratikleşme açısından herhangi bir iyileşme meydana gelmemiştir. Ayrıca ekonomik olarak da bir gelişme kaydedemeyen Sarkisyan döneminde, ekonomide yolsuzluk oranları aynı kalmıştır. Ermenistan ile Türkiye arasında bu dönemde futbol diplomasisi başlamış ve iki ülke arasındaki ilişkileri normalleştirmek adına iki protokol imzalanmıştır. Ancak Karabağ sorunu ve soykırım iddiaları nedeniyle bu protokoller uygulanamamıştır. Ayrıca 2-5 Nisan 2016 tarihleri arasında 4 gün savaşı meydana gelmiş ve Azerbaycan ile olan Karabağ sorunu derinleşmiştir. Sarkisyan döneminde sivil toplum kuruluşları politikada daha etkili olmaya başlamıştır ve birçok kez yapılan seçimleri protesto etmişlerdir. 1 Mart olaylarından sonra iç politikadaki sorunları çözmek için Sarkisyan bir Halk Konseyi oluşturmuş ancak daha sonra bu konsey hükümete hizmet etmeye başlamıştır. Bu dönemde STK'ların üzerinde devlet baskısı oldukça fazladır ve dolayısıyla bu kuruluşların bağımsız ve özgür olduğunu iddia etmek oldukça zordur. Basın özgürlüğü de açısından da durum aynıdır. Sarkisyan hükümeti sürecinde birçok gazeteci saldırıya uğramış ve tutuklanmıştır. Ermenistan'ın basın özgürlüğü açısından sıralaması 180 ülke içinden 74 iken 2017 yılında 180.sıraya gerilemiştir. Ancak Ermeni halkının interneti ve sosyal medyayı daha fazla kullanmaya başlamasıyla birlikte bilgiye erişim daha kolay bir hale gelmiştir. Son olarak Sarkisyan kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda yasaları değiştirmiştir. 2015 yılında bir referandum düzenlenmiş ve başkanlık sisteminden parlamenter sisteme geçiş yapılmıştır. Kuşkusuz bu Sovyet sonrası Ermenistan için demokratikleşme anlamında çok önemli bir adımdır. Ancak Sarkisyan'ın buradaki amacı gücü elinde tutmaya devam etmektir. Ermenistan anayasasına göre bir kişi en fazla üst üste iki dönem başkanlık görevini üstlenebilmektedir. 2015 yılında yapılan değişiklik ile birlikte ülke başkanının yetkileri büyük oranda kısıtlanmış ve ülkedeki en yetkili kişi başbakan haline gelmiştir. Bu nedenle Ermenistan halkı Sarkisyan'ın sonraki seçimlerde başbakan olarak seçilmek istediğini düşünerek tepki göstermeye başlamışlardır. Buna karşın Sarkisyan sonraki seçimlerde başbakan olarak aday olmayacağını belirtmiş olsa da 2018 yılında başbakan seçilmiş ve gücü elinde tutmaya devam etmiştir. Ermenistan'da anayasaya göre başbakanı parlamento seçmektedir ve Sarkisyan parlamentoda çoğunluğa sahip olduğundan dolayı seçimi 17'ye karşı 77 oy alarak kazanmıştır. Ancak bu ülkede geniş çaplı protestoların ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Birçok uluslararası kuruluş seçimde çok fazla usulsüzlüğün olmadığını düşünürken Ermenistan halkı seçimin adil olmadığını ileri sürmüştür. Bunun sonucunda gazeteci kimliğiyle tanınan Nikol Paşinyan liderliğinde "Benim Adımım" sloganıyla binlerce insan sokaklara dökülmüş ve Sarkisyan'ın istifa etmesini talep

etmişlerdir. Ancak Sarkisyan'ın bu protestolara tepkisi yine oldukça sert olmuştur ve halkı bastırmaya çalışmıştır. Protestoya katılan birçok kişi tutuklanmış ve çok sayıda kişi yaralanmıştır. Ancak 2008 yılında ortaya çıkan toplumsal hareketin aksine Ermenistan halkı bu sefer teslim olmamış ve böylelikle Kadife Devrim başarıyla gerçekleşmiştir. Sarkisyan, Paşinyan'ın haklı olduğunu kendisinin hata yaptığını söyleyerek görevinden istifa etmiştir. Kadife Devrim, Ermenistan'ın bağımsızlığından bu yana ortaya çıkan en büyük toplumsal harekettir ve Kadife Devrim ile birlikte Ermenistan demokratikleşme yolunda çok büyük bir adım atmıştır. Sarkisyan'ın istifa etmesinin ardından Paşinyan başbakan olarak göreve başlamış ve ülkede yolsuzluğa son vermek adına yoğun çalışmalara başlamıştır. Seçimlerin adil ve özgür olması için gerekli düzenlemeleri yaptıktan sonra görevinden istifa etmiştir. Parlamentoda çoğunluğu elde etmeyi amaçlayan Paşinyan 9 Aralık 2018 tarihinde gerçekleşen seçimde %70 oy alarak amacına ulaşmış ve 14 Aralık 2019 tarihinde yeniden başbakan olarak seçilmiştir. Çok büyük bir zafer kazanan Paşinyan'a karşı halkın çoğu büyük bir güven duymaktadır. Paşinyan seçimden sonra ülkedeki demokratikleşme problemlerini çözmek adına başlattığı girişimler ile kendine duyulan güveni daha da artırmayı başarmıştır. Paşinyan öncelikle ekonomiye odaklanmış ve "ekonomik devrim" planıyla beş yıllık bir kalkınma planı oluşturmuştur. Bazı kesimler bu planın gerçekçi olmadığını ileri sürerek eleştirmesine karşın bu planın Ermenistan'daki işsizlik ve yoksulluk sorunlarını 2023 yılına kadar büyük ölçüde azaltması beklenmektedir. Ayrıca Paşinyan bu planıyla ekonomide tekelleşmenin önüne geçmeyi ve ekonomik alanda rekabeti artırmayı da amaçlamaktadır. Paşinyan ekonomide ve politikada yolsuzlukla mücadele etmek için öncelikle birçok şirkete, politikacıya ve hatta Sarkisyan'a ve onun ailesine karşı soruşturma başlatmıştır. Bu soruşturma kapsamında bazı politik isimler tutuklanmıştır. Buna ek olarak, Paşinyan hükümeti yolsuzlukla mücadele etmek için Avrupa Birliği ile Kapsamlı ve Geliştirilmiş Ortaklık Anlaşmasını (CEPA) imzalamıştır. Vergilendirmeyi düzenlemek için yeni bir vergi kanunu çıkartan yeni hükümet ayrıca rüşvetle baş edebilmek için sosyal medyadan faydalanmaya başlamıştır. Paşinyan Ermenistan halkına rüşvete tanık olduklarında veya maruz kaldıklarında ve bunun dışında herhangi bir sorunu kendisinin Facebook duvarında paylaşabileceklerini belirtmiştir. Bu sayede Paşinyan yolsuzlukla mücadele kapsamında yapıcı adımlar atmıştır. Dış politikada önceki hükümetlerin yolundan giden Paşinyan Ermenistan'ın Rusya-yanlısı çizgisini korumuştur. Bunun yanında Karabağ sorununa ilişkin barışçıl bir yol arayışında olmayan Paşinyan, Karabağ hükümetinin görüşmelere üçüncü parti olarak katılması gerektiğini, önceki başkanların aksine kendisinin Karabağ kökenli olmadığını ve bu nedenle onlar adına karar veremeyeceğini belirtmiştir. Ancak Azerbaycan bu teklife şiddetle karşı çıkmış; bu nedenle henüz herhangi bir sonuca varılamamıştır. Denge politikası güden Paşinyan aynı zamanda göreve başladıktan sonra

Avrupa ülkelerine birçok ziyaret gerçekleştirmiştir ve özellikle ekonomik anlamda ilişkileri geliştirmeye yönelik adımlar atmıştır. Türkiye ile ilişkilerin normalleşmesi kapsamında ise önceki hükümetlerle aynı politikayı benimsemiş ve Türkiye'nin Ermenistan ile herhangi bir ön koşul olmadan diplomatik ilişkiler kurması gerektiğini söylemiştir. Sivil toplum açısından değerlendirildiğinde Sovyet sonrası Ermenistan'da sivil toplumun en aktif olduğu dönemin Kadife Devrim ile başladığı söylenebilir. Paşinyan sivil toplum kuruluşlarını güçlendirmek için Avrupa Birliği ile işbirliği içerisinde çalışmaktadır. Ayrıca Paşinyan başbakan seçildikten sonra bazı sivil toplum eylemcilerini politikaya dahil etmiştir. Örnek vermek gerekirse, insan hakları savunucusu Avukat Artak Zeynalyan adalet bakanı olarak atanmıştır. Kısacası Paşinyan hükümeti Ermenistan'da sivil toplum anlayışının gelişmesi adına birçok pozitif adım atmıştır. Bağımsızlıktan bu yana sivil toplumun gelişmesini sağlamak adına somut adımlar atan belki de ilk hükümet olan Paşinyan hükümeti demokratikleşme anlamında umut vadetmektedir. Basının özgürlüğü anlamında da durum oldukça benzerdir. Kadife Devrim'den sonra medya kuruluşları daha özgür hale gelmiş ve kara listeler kaldırılmıştır. Her ne kadar devlet televizyonu hala daha hükümetin propagandasını yapmaya devam etse de düşünce ve basın özgürlüğü adına sağlam adımlar atılmıştır. Yeni hükümet, ifade ve medya özgürlüğünü sağlamak için medya kuruluşlarının devlet bütçesinden finanse edilmemesi adına yeni bir fon yaratma girişiminde bulunmuştur. Buradaki amaç egemen hükümetin medya kuruluşları üzerinde baskı kurmasını engellemektir. 2018 yılında yapılan araştırmaya göre Ermenistan halkının %61'i, altı ay içinde medyanın bağımsızlığı kapsamında olumlu gelişmeler meydana geldiğini düşünmektedir. Ayrıca Paşinyan hukukun üstünlüğünün sağlanması adına yargıda bir reform olması gerektiğini düşünmektedir. 2008 yılında gerçekleşen 1 Mart olayından sorumlu tutulan Robert Koçaryan'ın kefaletle salıverilmesi üzerine Paşinyan Ermenistan halkını yeniden protestoya çağırmış ve tüm adliyelerin giriş ve çıkışını kapattırılmıştır. Tüm hakimlerin soruşturulması gerektiğini ayrıca hakimlerin mal varlıkları, politik bağlantıları ve eğitim geçmişleri hakkında halkı bilgilendirmeleri gerektiğini ifade eden Paşinyan bunları yapamayacak olanların istifa etmesini söylemiştir. Buna binaen çok sayıda hâkim ve yargıç görevinden istifa etmiştir. Paşinyan'ın bu hareketini hukuku ihlal etmek olarak nitelendirenlerin yanında bu durumdan memnun olan büyük bir kesim de vardır. Avrupa Birliği ile hukukun üstünlüğünü sağlamak için işbirliği yapan Paşinyan Hükümeti, Avrupa Eylem Planı Konseyi kapsamında 2019-2022 yılları arasında ceza hukuku, yolsuzluk, kara para aklama, siber suçlar, yargı sisteminin güçlendirilmesi ve bağımsızlığı gibi alanlarda yenilikler yapmayı hedeflemektedir.

Genel itibari ile Ermenistan halkı yeni hükümetin çalışmalarından memnun görünmektedirler. Paşinyan Ermenistan'ın daha demokratik bir ülke olabilmesi için bu kadar kısa bir sürede

başarılı adımlar atmıştır. Ermenistan'ın şu anki hali umut verici görünmektedir ancak Paşinyan hükümetinin başarılı olup olmayacağını, demokratikleşme yolunda atacağı gelecek adımları zaman gösterecektir.

Sonuç olarak, Ermenistan bağımsızlığını kazandığından bu yana demokratikleşme kapsamında birçok önemli adım atmasına karşın halen birçok probleme de sahiptir. Sovyet sonrası Ermenistan'da seçimlerin adil ve özgür olarak gerçekleştirilememesi, seçimler sonucunda ortaya çıkan toplumsal hareketler, gölge ekonominin varlığı, basın özgürlüğünün çok kısıtlı olması, gazetecilere yapılan baskı ve şiddet bu problemlere örnek olarak gösterilebilir. Kadife Devrim ile birlikte 2018 yılında yeni seçilen hükümet demokrasiyi güçlendirmek adına olumlu girişimlerde bulunmasına karşın gelecekte neler olacağını zaman gösterecektir.

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