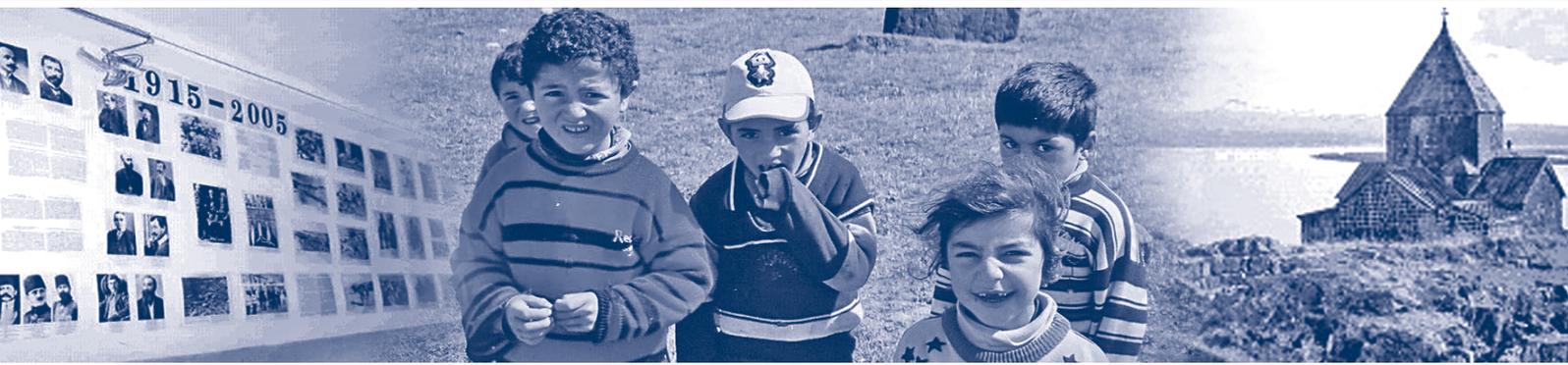




Universität Potsdam



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## Armenia: A Human Rights Perspective for Peace and Democracy

Human Rights, Human Rights Education and Minorities

**Armenia: A Human Rights Perspective  
for Peace and Democracy**

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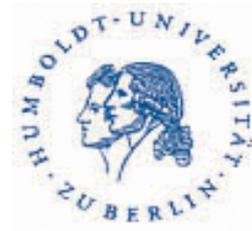
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*Artur Mkrtychyan*

## **Human Rights as an “Attractor”<sup>1</sup> of Europeanization Processes of Transcaucasian “Neither War nor Peace Societies”**

By becoming a member of the Council of Europe in 2001, Armenia officially declared an Europeanization policy and started the process of harmonizing the political mechanisms and legal standards of the Armenian social life with those of other European systems. After the countries of our region being granted a status of “Close Neighbours of the Council of Europe”, Europeanization became the main standard of the further reforms in our society.

It is certain that we have to adopt many socio-economic and legal political principles that guide the organisation of society operations in the West, as well as overcome Armenia’s problems. However, the cultural mechanisms that we possess are not appropriate for the artificial Europeanization policy of the Armenian society. The artificial introduction of neo-liberalist values instead of our national values has already shown its dysfunctional nature, which is conditioned on the fact that modern Armenia lacks necessary prerequisites that correspond to the modern European market economy and the requirements of the neo-liberal democracy. Similarly, this refers to other “transitional” societies of Transcaucasian countries.<sup>2</sup>

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1 The attractor of social systems is the basic principle of coordinating operations of a give system in its gravitational field, where in the long run, all intersystem processes are comprehended. It is a sort of motivation and stimulating system to attract or provoke certain reactions.

2 The methodological use of the term of “transitional society” by specialists is limited in case of sociological analysis of the Armenian society. Formally, the “transition” in Armenia was completed in 1997, with the privatization of most public property, and the legal approval of the RA Constitution that replaced the mono-party Soviet political system with a multiparty parliamentary system and the institute of the RA President. The Armenian society is only “transitional” in terms of obtaining some certainty in its values and the norms. So, the mentioned term has a more ideological than scientific meaning. The use of such terms without justifying them with scientific background is distorting the scientific perception and even damages our thinking process (See Kuteinikov, A. E., *Tolerance and Rights of Minorities in the Problem of Evaluating the Possible Measures of Distinction*, in: *Actual Aspects of Tolerance Problem in the Modern Society*. (Ed. Pervovoy, E. L.), 2004, pp. 46-47 (in Russian).

The concept of a “neither war nor peace society” is the diagnosis of the situation of social life in Transcaucasian countries. This “pathology” causes the democratisation process in Transcaucasian countries to occur in a fundamentally different way than for example in Eastern European countries (with the exception of former Yugoslavian republics where the principle “neither war nor peace” also applies).<sup>3</sup> So here arises a question: How realistic is the European vision for such societies or how should the Europeanization of the country be carried out to achieve the final ultimate goal?<sup>4</sup>

Up to today, the wars in Transcaucasia such as the Karabakh conflict and the Georgian-Abkhazian armed conflict are not over yet, though there has been a long cease-fire. In such conditions, Transcaucasian societies maintain a certain level of militarization on the one hand, while trying to peacefully solve social-economic development and democratisation problems on the other hand. However, in “neither war nor peace societies” both the liberalization of the economy and the democratisation of policy are subject to militarization requirements. Consequently, neither has the privatisation of production sources led to the establishment of a free, competitive and antimonopoly regime, nor the institutionalisation of a democratic form of government eliminated the authoritarian regime.

This is explained by the fact, that in the post-war period the dignity of an individual still has a very low value. The reason is that during war times, i.e. “during systemic assassinations, people have to face the naked fact of human life being irrelevant and insignificance, and that life is not highly valued”.<sup>5</sup> In a “neither war nor peace society”, such an approach continues to characterize the value-norm structure of the society, which is specifically reflected in the underestimation of the human factor as the main source of the society’s prosperity.<sup>6</sup> As a result, a person’s system of

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3 The other reason is that “democracy is perceived in a completely different way by people from the former Soviet Union. For them, democracy first of all means obtaining different civil and individual freedoms”. Human Values and Social Change. Findings from the Values Survey. Ed. Inglehart, Ronald B., Boston: Leiden, 2003, p. 30.

4 Of course, specialists in social sciences should be able to develop the theoretical model of that implementation. The development of such a model will not only have an important applicable meaning, but also a significant theoretical one, as in many Asian, African and South American countries, that are not only essentially “neither war nor peace societies” too, but also solve their development issues under identical conditions (a vivid example is Israel).

5 See Frangyan E., *The Philosopher of Pessimism*. Yerevan, 1911, p. 142 (in Armenian).

6 In our context, the human factor is not significantly sufficient because the Armenian democratic country does not have adequate historical experience and practice in the form of different institutes and traditions of civil society.

views, values, orientations, preferences and behaviour becomes contradictory. The old “war” values and norms are not relevant to the reality, and new ones are not yet completely formed and adopted by the society’s mentality. In this respect, general features of specific “*anomie*” are typical for the public life of Transcaucasian countries.

This “*anomie*”, a term that I use in its sociological context, may be defined as “complete indifference towards any social impulses, regardless of its positive or negative nature”.<sup>7</sup> Old traditions, habits and models therefore lose their practical meaning and influence on the person. Principally invariant behaviours rapidly increase, and with it the structural instability of the society and the ongoing uncertainty of evolving standards. All these are based on the fact that the economic aspect of our life rapidly undergoes changes, while the value/norm-based regulation of the latter lags behind because of the above-mentioned underestimation of the human factor. “*Anomie*” emerges as a result of the contradictions arising between universal goals dictated by cultural implications; legal institutional means of achieving these; current requirements, interests and real possibilities to meet them, and it spreads out into the population, which are especially large in our “neither war nor peace society”. The cultural values system that is required among us is overestimating the goal that is significant for everyone, although the social system limits or completely blocks the institutional ways for achieving these goals. People are seeking personal prosperity, although the threat of restarting the war creates constant instability depriving them from that possibility.

In the past times our totalitarian society was stable, as it was easy to meet human requirements within the traditional social classes, because the individual purposefulness was subjected to a common cause. It was limited by common goals to build communism and coequality principle. The corresponding collective mentality held those requirements at a lower level, impeding the development of “individuality”, or the independence of “a person”, and put strong restrictions on anything that could have been legally reached by an individual in any given social status. The gradual erosion of the totalitarian system, however, caused “individualization” and eliminated the previous moral bounds established through the collective moral control force. Increase of individuality puts people outside the bounds of collective moral control, and undermines the role, stereotypes and traditions of the old social regulatory norms. The financial success has become the principle goal, indicator of self-prosperity. But people are not able to achieve the goal accepted by everyone through officially acceptable means. Even if there is solidarity or

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<sup>7</sup> Toshchenko Zh. T., Paradoxical Person. 2001, p. 373 (in Russian).

common recognition of goals between certain members of the society, lack of ethical norms applied in social life and lack of real possibilities to implement them results in “*anomie*”, and requires getting accustomed to. These two elements of the cultural structure are correlated, and a cultural conflict can occur, when people differ on the goals for, and means of achieving them.<sup>8</sup>

The “anomie-based” state of “neither war nor peace society” is characterized by a great amount of uncertainty about the officially adopted norms of regulation of social processes. For this uncertainty to be limited within a permitted scope, it is necessary to exclude the existence of an abnormal framework. This process is supposed to develop adequate ethical values and legal norms and strengthen this development in the mentality of citizens. In the meantime, the reinforced cultural values and the norm systems should not contradict each other, because by getting rid of our cultural traditional values the individual behaviour becomes invariant, which results in the reduction of spheres of social value activities. The complicated system of new norms and interrelations is still being institutionalised by old mechanisms of social life, like marriage and family, friendship and other institutes through which the society regulates and legitimises the relations of people at the “mechanical solidarity” level. In this situation the values-based regulation of social life is primarily implemented within the close sphere of relatives,<sup>9</sup> and is also coupled by the enforcement measures that have been brought from the battlefield, like since 1988 after the Karabakh conflict. The application of such enforcement measures in solving social problems results in the militarization of social mentality and the formation of a state command system. Therefore, in the conditions of “neither war nor peace society”, the social mentality links the elimination of instability and threat to the myth of “a strong-arm authority”, which causes the formation of an authoritarian system.

The existence of authoritarian systems is also conditioned on the threat of the war restarting. In the arguments brought forward by the constitutional reform debates in Armenia, the proponents of entitling the president with broader powers mainly justify their standpoint with the argument that Armenia must have a “strong” government due to the existing threat of war. However, it is obvious that a “parliamentarian constitution” would promote the better democratisation of the Armenian society, provided though, that our society ends the “neither war, nor peace society”

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<sup>8</sup> See Merton R.K., *Social Theory and Social Structure*. N.Y., 1957, pp. 185-261.

<sup>9</sup> See Poghosyan G. A., *The Armenian Society in the Transition Period*. Yerevan, 2003, p. 358 (in Russian).

situation. The collective solidarity in lack of identifying the individual with the society and the weakening of the national identification of an individual are factors that immediately boost the level of uncertainty in social behaviours, which is also obvious in the government sector.<sup>10</sup>

Conversely, the threat of restarting the war and the possibility of losing is used by the super-powers to influence both our policy and the policy of other Transcaucasian countries, as well as to restrict sovereignty, because all the Transcaucasian countries depend on the military support of super-powers and may incur big losses if the military “neutrality” of these countries is violated. Such conditions may cause huge risks, and the “neither war, nor peace society” therefore becomes a peculiar “society of risks”. The potential risk, which is a threat to the future, dictates the content of current social processes and gives uncertainty to the structure of social expectations. Today, Armenia has to spend most of its limited resources required for the prosperity of its people, on military purposes. As a result, the number of people being deprived of social benefits is increasing.<sup>11</sup> The militarization of social life is expressed not only in the relatively huge military budget, but also in the efforts being made at trying to adjust the economy, science, education, propaganda of mass media, political institutions and practices, etc., according to the military requirements. It turns out that the people’s existence is being sacrificed to an uncertain future, and this time the goal is not to establish a communist society, but to win in a possible war.

Such prospects, can of course, discourage people. Many members of the Armenian society appear in such social situations to have a negative approach to the norms and legal procedures that aim to regulate social life, or are completely indifferent to them. The dissemination of a neo-liberalist vision is causing people to break away from the public control framework, and the life philosophy of the so-called “home is where the heart is” becomes the ethical-psychological basis for emigration.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The basic ethical principles that ensure the productive activity of the public administration sector of our country are not yet formed. Given that there are no common ethical rules and moral obligations, there can’t be a vibrant public administration, as the productivity of the activities of state cabinet depend on the willingness of independent decision making by state officials and moral obligations to implement them.

<sup>11</sup> Lack of employment and the meager, discouraging salaries that our workers are paid for their excessive work prevent the strengthening of our economy, which consequently obstructs the development of all sectors of social life.

<sup>12</sup> See Harutyunyan E., *The Transmission Society as a System of Transformation Activity*. Yerevan: YSU, 2000, pp. 166-167 (in Armenian).

By stressing wealth as a symbol of success in the Armenian social mentality without focusing on the legal ways of achieving it, neo-liberalism undermines our society at all levels, from family life to work life. When neo-liberalism declares the financial success of a person as a significant goal for everyone, it blocks the legitimate institutional ways of achieving these for a significant number of people. Consequently, the deviations in behaviour increase tremendously resulting in “*anomie*”, and an “*anomic*” society is an “*ill society*”. In order to escape that illness, it is necessary to regulate our social relations through linking the Armenian ideology to the idea of human rights, and combining it with the concept of the nation-state. It should be emphasized that a nation-state is one of the real guarantors’ of human right’s protection, and an important tool that coordinates several important leverages in ensuring protection. The need for this combination is caused by the fact that statehood, as a value, doesn’t have its role in our mentality, which is necessary to ensure a successful Europeanization of the Armenian society. The content of our state’s ideology was dehumanised during the Soviet years. There is therefore no cultural mechanism in our mentality that compels people to be responsible for their individual choices, which is a mandatory requirement for every effective European democracy. In the post Soviet period, the first task to be solved is the “humanization of ideology”. This is so to say, taking away the negative connotation of the former communist ideology and transforming it into a positive understanding of ideology in general. It is only when the Armenian society improves it’s perception of citizen-nation-state unity, that it will be possible to instil positive attitudes towards the national sovereignty and to the state, and overcome this “*anomie*” in its social life.

As for external threats, it is only possible to put an end to the instability caused by military conflicts when humanity refuses the politically promoted idea of superiority of nations having a territorial sovereignty, and replaces it with the idea of “*human rights as an attractor for the integrated development of world societies.*” Only then will it be possible to efficiently prevent military conflicts and ensure the establishment of a world order accepted by everyone, with specific mechanisms of human rights protection and new channels of international communication carried out in the “*attractor’s*” gravitational field. This means that human rights should serve as a basis for measuring and evaluating all international processes, and not just the interest of individual states.

In order to implement the above, it would be necessary to review the fundamental principles that help form the existing international political institutions. The activities of international organisations should also be constructed through other individual and national/cultural world commu-

nication channels and not through regional state institutions. Particularly, it should be presumed that there is need for reviewing the OSCE principles. There is an obvious need to review the 1975 Helsinki Treaty focusing on reassessing the decentralization processes.<sup>13</sup> Self-determining entities are struggling to obtain legal guarantees to participate in the world communication process within the framework of the 1948 Declaration on Human Rights. It will be possible to avoid several military conflicts and overcome the illness of being a “neither war nor peace society” by creating and providing those guarantees which are still to be developed by international law.<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

The Armenian “neither war nor peace society” appears to be in the state of “*anomie*”, which is characterized by the existing cultural conflict between socially accepted common goals and the institutional means for achieving them. This is when people are unable to attain goals perceived as acceptable in the society, and therefore try to find different means of achieving them. This means that the cultural values and goals in our present transitional society and the impact of changes occurring in the institutional means of achieving these have a special emphasis on certain goals, without outlining the relative institutional behaviour. We have not yet fully acknowledged the new moral behaviour that focuses on individuality and that is typical of the modern society. In addition, it is also required that people take responsibility in promoting and propagating the merit of individual choice, for the benefit of that choice.

There is no doubt that a collaboration between the government and the people is required to solve this problem, and the solution to overcoming the state of “*anomie*” lies in the rapid development of new ideological-educational procedures, as well as educating citizens on issues of human rights and the ethical values of “moral individualization”. New social institutions, art, mass media, etc, should strengthen and introduce the new values system of social positions to people’s mentality, way of living, their behaviour, and the interrelation of roles in society arising from the human rights.

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<sup>13</sup> Compare: Kriekemeyer, A./ Zagorskij, V.A., (Hrsg.), Rußlands Politik in bewaffneten Konflikten in der GUS. Zwischen Alleingang und kooperativem Engagement, Baden-Baden 1997.p.231.

<sup>14</sup> Compare: Mkrtychyan, A., Die Globalisierung ethno-politischer Konflikte, in: Welttrends, 2003, Nr. 38. pp. 108-119.