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ELECTION SYSTEM IN CONTEXT OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE IN UKRAINE AND ARMENIA (2005-2019: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS) *

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The given paper aims to examine the relationship between electoral systems and democratic development in Armenia and Ukraine from 2005 to 2019. To achieve its goal the study outlines following problems: trace the evolution of respective electoral systems; and describe the interaction of electoral system with the broader institutional environment.

The paper employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics and case study methods are utilized to examine the electoral systems of Armenia and Ukraine. Additionally, a comparative analysis is conducted to identify common features and peculiarities within the institutional context of these electoral systems.

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of electoral systems depends heavily on the institutional context. While both Armenia and Ukraine implemented proportional representation systems, their varying institutional contexts led to different outcomes. In Armenia, the presence of a rating element within the proportional system limited its effectiveness in promoting party competition and inclusivity. In contrast, Ukraine's lower electoral threshold and single national constituency under proportional representation contributed to a more open and inclusive political system.

Key words: electoral system, political parties, effective number of parties, regime change, democratic transit, Armenia, Ukraine, institutional environment.

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Introduction

The electoral process and institutional framework play a pivotal role in shaping the democratic landscapes of nations worldwide. The study of electoral systems and their interaction with the broader institutional environment is a subject of paramount importance in political science and governance studies. This academic paper delves into a comparative analysis of Armenia and Ukraine, two countries situated in the complex geopolitical region, with a particular focus on their electoral systems and institutional dynamics during the period of 2005 to 2019.

Armenia and Ukraine have both undergone significant political transformations in the post-Soviet era, facing challenges and opportunities in their quests for democratic consolidation. Elections, as one of the fundamental pillars of democracy, serve as an essential mechanism for citizen participation, representation, and accountability. However, the effectiveness and integrity of electoral systems largely depend on the institutional environment in which they operate. By closely scrutinizing the evolving electoral systems and their interplay with the broader institutional contexts, we seek to identify patterns, changes, and potential drivers of democratic development in these nations.

In conclusion, this paper endeavors to provide a comprehensive analysis of the electoral systems and institutional environments in Armenia and Ukraine, drawing on empirical data, scholarly sources, and comparative methodologies. By highlighting the critical junctures, challenges, and achievements in their democratic trajectories, we aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on political governance and democratization.

Literature Review and Data Analysis

To successfully conduct data analysis and provide comparative ramifications there is a need to indicate types and structural elements of electoral system. There are generally two types of electoral system with their subdivisions and modifications. First is majoritarian, where there is only one winner and the winner takes it all. The second one is proportional, where the results are distributed proportionally among participants. Still some researchers distinguish third, the mixed system, which is generally synthesis of the first two systems. Arend Lijphart (21) highlights four fundamental components of electoral systems: the electoral formula, district magnitude (M), assembly size (S), and electoral threshold.

For the matter of further implications it is crucial to note that analysis was conducted by using electoral data of Armenia and Ukraine since 2005. In case of Ukraine, the starting point is determined with Orange Revolution as a critical juncture, which shaped the course and logic of transformation of Ukrainian political institutions and political system. As for Armenia, the critical juncture were the constitutional changes of 2005, in spite of the fact that no significant changes happened to electoral system. Also, consideration of electoral data since 2005 is determined by the considerable volume of research of electoral system of post-Soviet countries. Electoral data analysis and comparative research are limited to the year 2019. This decision is based on the understanding that the electoral cycles mentioned in the paper represent pivotal moments in the pursuit of democratic aspirations and change.

As in Armenia, in Ukraine no single electoral system was used in three successive elections (Herron and others 905). The instability of electoral system and its unpredictability for political actors lead to weak party systems, which impaired harmed

process of democratization, as development of stable, coherent representative parties which can shape and channel popular preferences is crucial to successful democratisation in the wake of political transition (Birch 34).

Since 2005 Ukraine has held 5 parliamentary elections, two of which were snap elections, while Armenia had four, with one snap. (Figure 2) We can observe resembling fluctuating patterns in electoral system choice, as it was in its democratization process. During the PR interregnum, there were incentives for political parties to evolve into effective institutions, yet most remained centered around individual leaders without strong ideological or coherent programmatic structures. Notably, despite two nationwide PR-based elections taking place within a condensed timeframe from late March 2006 to late September 2007, parties struggled to transcend personalistic orientations. (Herron and others 112). Transferring from majoritarian system to the mixed, then holding two elections within proportional system, and then again returning to the mixed one. At the same time Armenia experiencing no significant swings in its electoral system adopted proportional system is enshrined in constitution (HH Sahmanadrut'yun art 89), it's worth noting that the rating element of that system resembled majoritarian system, given Armenia's political culture and reality.

	2006	2007	2012	2014/2017	2019/2018
Ukraine	PR	PR	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Armenia		Mixed	Mixed	PR	PR
Ukraine (S)	450	450	450	450	450
Armenia (S)		131	131	min 101	min 101
Uk. treshold	3%	3%	5%	5%	5%
Arm. treshold	5 (7)%	5(7)%	5(7)%	5(7)%	5(7)%

(Figure 2*)

According to S. Birch (37), the mixed electoral system, which was widespread in the early 2000s, facilitated the development of newly forming party systems. Birch argues that in the early stages of party system development, mixed systems tend to increase the number of parties entering parliament. Since they are characterised by the multiplication of modes of access to parliament, they increase the range of types of contestants who are able to gain representation – from independent and non-ideologically-minded political entrepreneurs with very localised and personalised support networks to highly programmatic parties with small and widely dispersed groups of supporters who share a belief system and are committed to a common ideology.

Simultaneously, Jack Bielasiak (427) combines pre-2005 electoral system data with evaluations from "Freedom House" and Polity IV to conclude that regimes undergoing an open transition process and classified as 'democratic' tend to adopt a permissive system of political contestation, specifically a proportional representation (PR) electoral formula. Conversely, regimes facing forced change from a resistant elite and classified as 'authoritarian' are more likely to favor a restrictive process and majoritarian formulas.

By the projection of this statement onto post-2005 electoral data we can observe countinuity of the Bielasiak's logic. Figure 3 demonstrates "Freedom House's" evaluations of Armenia's and Ukraine's regimes in 2004-2019. It is remarkable, that in the same year

of holding 2012 parliamentary elections with mixed system, Ukraine has registered increase of its index in "Freedom House's" scale (The lower the mark, the higher democratic standarts) The same can not be stated about Armenia, because the transition to the proportional system did not bring notable change, which can be attributed to the rating system that helped preserved features of mixed electoral system.

However, the link between regime and electoral system in Armenia can be observed in the proposed and implemented elimination of rating element and fully swing to proportional system.



(Figure 3)

Preference of democratic regimes towards proportional system can be observed in Ukirane's case as well. However, before addressing that, it is important to make a bold statement that presidential elections of Ukraine in 2019 should be categorized as an "electoral revolution". In classical perception, revolution is a support of ideas by masses that starkly differ from hegemon and dominant worldviews and approaches. This support is not mandatory to take forms in Maidans and squares. This kind of support took place in poll stations in Ukraine's 2019 presidential elections. This notion, is methodologicly very crucial, as 2019 Ukraine's presidential elections must be perceived as critical jucnture, that revived Maidan's democratization demands. It becomes evident with the worsening democratic situation in 2019 (Freedom in the world, 2019).

Considering, Ukraine's presidential elections of 2019 as "electoral revolution" and critical juncture for catalyzing democratic processes in the frame of interconnection between political regimes and electoral system, that interconnection verifies once more. That is owing to Volodymyr Zelenski's constitutional proposals that, in this particular case suggest, making Ukraine one single constituency electing 300 deputies, instead of 225, with proportional system. It is remarkable that Zelenski made these suggestions before the elections, which were rejected by the parliament, like in Armenia.

Summing up the abovementioned, we should note that there is connection between regime and electoral system in Ukraine and Armenia, but this does not imply that either of them is less or more democratic. Therefore, the proportional system seems to be more democratic in the perception of politicians.

Coming back to structural components of electoral system we should introduce electoral formula first. Two most common formulas are D'Hondt's and Hare's with their respective modifications of Saint-Lague and Droop. D'Hondt, while a "proportional" allocation formula, tends to favor the largest party (Herron and others 87), whereas Hare quota is impartial as between small and large parties and tends to yield closely proportional results (Liphart, 23).

Ukraine uses Hare quota for mandate allocation, while formula used by Armenia does not belong to any of these two types, although it is quite similar to Hare's quota. This circumstance is odd given constitutional disposition of having sustainable majority in parliament, which would be more effective with D'Hondt's formula. However, data analysis in new democracies shows that competitiveness tends to increase over time under HQLR. Under D'Hondt, parties that fall far short of winning vote majorities can win large seat majorities, particularly when competition in unbalanced. In new democracies, the downside risk of such a result is particularly acute. Under these circumstances, the appeal of HQLR is most pronounced (Herron and others 21).

However, differences in the electoral formula can lead to variations of 1-2 mandates, which may not have a significant impact on the political system. Manipulating the data of parliamentary election results of Armenia in 2018, shows that difference between D'Hondt's and Hare's formula is just one mandate.

The effect is much more considerable from remaing components: district magnitude, assembly size and electoral threshold. Ukraine has not changed its assembly size (450), though Volodymyr Zelenski's proposals (Rada sdelala pervyj shag k sokrashheniju kolichestva deputatov s 450 do 300, 2019) aimed to decrease it down to 300. Electoral system of Armenia has gradually decreased assembly size and the majoritarian component in it. From 260 to 190 then 131 and currently minimum of 101, which can increase with opposition mandates addition. The latter made to guarantee inclusiveness, though taken into account minimum 1/3 of mandates, sustainable parliamentary majority and adopting important normative acts with 3/5, we can state that is inefficient.

Decreasing of assembly size decreases representation of elections et ceterum paribus. This is something which can be said about both countries, although there is important explicit variable, which is district magnitude. This expresses average representation per each district.

If there is one PR list in whole country then M=S, which in case of Ukraine 2006, 2007 equaled 450, and in Armenia in 2018, 2019 equaled 101. Although, there is some complexity concerning mixed electoral system. The complexities inherent in MMM systems mean that it is difficult to know what would be the "real" impact of a given number of seats in each component on overall representation. In academia there is no consensus and precise approach, hence it may be valid for once to employ Rae's approach and to calculate district magnitude simply by dividing the total number of seats (475) by the total number of constituencies (306), giving a district magnitude of 1.6. Likewise, in Russia average district magnitude at the 2016 election equaled the number of seats (450) divided by the number of constituencies (226), that is, 2.0. (Herron and others 37). Frankly speaking, this model is not flawless, but maintains some logic when

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applied at empiric level and compared to other computing models. For this reason, in cases of mixed electoral systems Rae's method will be applied.

mentioned As before. district magnitude ensures representativeness. Representativeness is conformity between gained votes and mandates, which in some cases is limited with legal threshold for the sake of stable party system and omitting political marginalization. Besides, there is category of effective threshold, which is average of upper and lower thresholds, counted with following formula: $T_{eff} = 50\%/(M+1)$ + 50%/ 2M. If a party passes lower threshold, it becomes possible for it to win a seat; when it passes the upper threshold, it is guaranteed to win a seat (Lijphart, 25). In addition, Liphart makes an interesting observation regarding the regression coefficient of 0.42. This implies that for every percentage increase in the effective threshold, disproportionality increased by 0.42 percent (Liiphart, 28). It is remarkable that descending of legal threshold 4% to 3% in Ukraine in 2006 and then ascending to 5% from 2012 corresponds to "Freedom House's" democracy index fluctuation. This interconnection counts 0.6 correlation coefficient. (Figure 2 and 3) It is also remarkable that Ukraine initiated to lower threshold to 3%, and Armenia to 4(6) %. Here as well perception of democratization corresponds with and imply ensuring a more inclusive system for participants.

These four variables are important for computing several significant phenomena, in particular effective number of parties, which is an index that aims to summarize the unequal-sized parties into a single number, which ensures that a large party contributes more to the index than any smaller one contributes, computed $N_s = 1/\sum (S_i)^2$ (Herron and others 42). In addition to that, Seat product model is also computed, which demonstrates the supposed number of parties in given set of institutions, as it is fundamental to predicting the shape of party systems (Herron and others 15). This is calculated with this formula SPM = (MS)^{1/6}, which is not a mere regression result (Herron and others 47). It is also a result of empirical researches and is supposed to be on the same level with N_s.

Figure 4 and Figure 5 present the change of N_s and SPM results, as well as the numbers of election participants and assembly parties respectively in Armenia and Ukraine since 2005. It is important to note that in both countries' cases deputies elected by majoritarian principles were taken into account. Due to peculiarities of Armenia party system, this consideration does not have any effects on number of parliamentary parties and N_s , while in Ukraine number of parliamentary parties without majoritarian deputies is two times less.



(Figure 4)

(Figure 5)



The effective threshold in both cases within PR systems is <1%. While in mixed systems of Ukraine and Armenia effective threshold equals 29% and 20% respectively. In the latter case, arguably flows of Rae's computing method appear.

Figure 4 demonstrates that party system gets smaller from election to election in contracts, becomes more closed and less competitive. It is remarkable, that there is a certain inconsistency between N_s and SPM after implementation of PR system. Moreover, the declared proportional system is "behaving" as mixed one, which is probably due to the rating element.

Lowering of legal threshold and transfer to PR in Ukraine in 2006 created ground for inclusiveness and openness. Tough political liquidity and instability have caused unpredictable and crisis situations in Ukraine's political system. Currently, Ukraine is opting for an electoral system similar to its arguably successful experience in 2006, which includes a 3% threshold and proportional representation (PR). Projecting this calculation for the supposed following elections SPM equals to 6.7 which in addition to 3% threshold means relative increase in representativeness.

Conclusion

Armenia and Ukraine generally face the same challenge of stabilizing and institutionalizing the democratization process and thereafter transforming democracy into welfare. In addition, both of them, at least in the sense of choice of electoral system, share the same perception, namely, implementing of PR and setting average electoral threshold. Among other factors PR helps Ukraine to handle or avoid its territorial integrity issue. Ukraine has never been able to secure full representation from its majoritarian 225 districts. Therefore, considering issues such as Crimea, conflicts in Luhansk and Donetsk, and their diplomatic and legal nuances, proportional representation (PR) serves as a means of coping with these challenges.

Evidence can be provided to suggest that the Polish model of decommunization serves as an ideal type of democratization for post-Soviet countries. This model has a significant implicit influence on the perception of democratization within the post-Soviet dimension. In this model, among other phenomena, the liberalization of political and party systems entails adopting proportional representation (PR) and keeping the threshold as low as possible, even eliminating it entirely. Observation of intentions and initiatives in Ukraine and Armenia enable us to conclude that both countries have chosen the Polish model.

However, it is important to examine every institution and institutional entity in diachrony. Different sequences of the same set of institutions can form various incentives. It is worthy to note, that Armenia and Ukraine have multipartism and pluralism at certain level, and the imposition of PR and low electoral threshold will not have the same effects they had in Poland or are desired. Publicly articulated intentions, initiatives and actions have lost their urgency. The ripe moment was missed, and failing to fathom that greatly impedes mid-term and long-term planning. While this model could have been applicable and justified for the first elections, where it was even possible to set party representation quotas for the sake of swift results and incentives, the issue was to secure inclusiveness, party stability and to increase political inclusion, rather than create incentives that would lead to party formation. This necessarily infers party financing transparency, increase in quality of reports and predictability of game rules. Unpredictability, on the other hand, gives its beneficiaries and enforcers more reasons to breach the rules for the sake of short-term benefits at the expense of strategic advancement.

Thus, the given academic paper has shed light on the vital role of the electoral system within the broader context of democratization. While the electoral process is undoubtedly a crucial component of democratic governance, it represents just one piece of the intricate puzzle that constitutes a stable and robust democratic development.

Our comparative analysis of Armenia and Ukraine from 2005 to 2019 has revealed that a stable course of democratic development requires a conducive institutional environment. This environment must not only foster democratic action from state and local authorities but also encourage proper civic behavior among the populace. The effectiveness of electoral systems in these countries has been deeply intertwined with the institutional context in which they operate.

In both Armenia and Ukraine, the quality of democracy has been shaped not only by the design and functioning of their respective electoral systems but also by the overall strength of their democratic institutions. The degree of political party competition, electoral integrity, rule of law, and the responsiveness of state institutions have all played critical roles in influencing political outcomes and democratic consolidation.

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ԸՆՏՐԱԿԱՆ ጓԱՄԱԿԱՐԳԸ ՈԻԿՐԱԻՆԱՅՈԻՄ ԵՎ ጓԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՈԻՄ ԺՈՂՈՎՐԴԱՎԱՐԱԿԱՆ ՓՈՓՈԽՈԻԹՅՈԻՆՆԵՐԻ ጓԱՄԱՏԵՔՍՏՈԻՄ (2005-2019. ጓԱՄԵՄԱՏԱԿԱՆ ՎԵՐԼՈԻԾՈԻԹՅՈԻՆ)

ՏԻԳՐԱՆ ՄՈԻՂՆԵՑՅԱՆ

Վալերի Բրյուսովի անվան պետական համալսարանի ՅՈԻՆԵՍԿՕ-ի քաղաքագիտության և փիլիսոփայության ամբիոնի ավագ դասախոս, Թրանսփարենսի Ինթերնեյշնլ Յայաստանի հետազոտող, քաղաքական գիտությունների թեկնածու, Երևան, Յայաստանի Յանրապետություն <u>mugntigran @gmail.com</u>

Այս հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել ընտրական համակարգերի և ժողովրդավարական զարգացման միջև կապը Յայաստանում և Ուկրաինայում 2015-2019 թվականներին։ Այդ նպատակին հասնելու համար աշխատանքում առանձնացվում են հետևյալ խնդիրները՝ դիտարկել ընտրական համակարգի էվոլյուցիան և նրանց փոխազդեցությունը ինստիտուցիոնալ միջավայրի հետ։

Աշխատանքում օգտագործվում են քանակական և որակական մեթոդներ։ Յայաստանի և Ուկրաինայի ընտրական համակարգերի ուսումնասիրության համար օգտագործվում են նկարագրողական վիճակագրության և դեպքերի ուսումնասիրության (*case study*) մեթոդները։ Աշխատանքում իրականացվում է նաև համեմատական վերլուծություն ինստիտուցիոնալ համատեքստում ընտրական համակարգերի ընդհանրություններն ու առանձնահատկությունները պարզելու նպատակով։

Ուսումնասիրության հիման վրա կարելի է պնդել, որ ընտրական համակարգի արդյունավետությունը զգալիորեն կախված է ինստիտուցիոնալ միջավալրից։ Թե՛ Յայաստանը, թե՛ Ուկրաինան որդեգրել են համամասնական րնտրական իամակարգեր։ Սակայն եոկու երկրների ինստիտուցիոնալ իամատեքստի առանձնահատկությունները հանգեցրել են տարբեր արդյունքների։ Յայաստանում ժամանակահատվածում գոյություն ունեցող ռեյտինգային բաղադրիչը նշված սահմանափակում էր իամամասնական համակարգի արդյունավետությունը՝ ներառական և մրցակցային միջավայր կազմավորելու հարցում։ Ուկրաինայում ցածր շեմն ու մեկ ընդիանրական ընտրատարածքը hամամասնական անցողիկ

ընտրակարգի պայմաններում նպաստեց առավել բաց ու ներառական քաղաքական համակարգի։

Յիմնաբառեր՝ ընտրական համակարգ, կուսակցություններ, կուսակցությունների արդյունավետ թիվ, ռեժիմի փոփոխություն, ժողովրդավարական տրանզիտ, Յայաստան, Ուկրաինա, ինստիտուցիոնալ միջավայր։

ИЗБИРАТЕЛЬНАЯ СИСТЕМА В КОНТЕКСТЕ ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКИХ ПЕРЕМЕН В УКРАИНЕ И АРМЕНИИ (2005-2019: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ)

ТИГРАН МУГНЕЦЯН

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Целью данной статьи является исследование связи между избирательной системой и демократическим развитием в Армении и в Украине с 2005 до 2019 гг. Для достижения поставленной цели в работе необходимо решить следующие задачи: изучить развитие избирательных систем вышеуказанных стран и взаимодействие избирательных систем с институциональной средой.

Исследование проводилось с применением количественных и качественных методов. Для изучения избирательных систем Армении и Украины использованы методы статистического анализа и исследование случаев (*case study*). В работе также проводится сравнительный анализ для выявления особенностей и общих характеристик избирательных систем в институциональном контексте.

На основе проведенного исследования можно отметить, что эффективность избирательной системы зависит от институционального контекста. Несмотря на то, что Армения и Украина выбрали пропорциональную избирательную систему, отличительные особенности в институциональном контексте привели к разным последствиям. В Армении рейтинговый элемент в пропорциональной избирательной системе уменьшил его эффект в плане развития межпартийной конкуренции и инклюзивности, тогда как в Украине низкий проходной порог и единая избирательная территория в пропорциональной системе поспособствовала становлению более инклюзивной политической системы.

Ключевые слова: избирательная система, политические партии, эффективное количество партий, смена режима, демократический транзит, Армения, Украина, институциональная среда.