

# SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO EXECUTIVE POWER EFFECTIVENESS: INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA (2000–2024)

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СИСТЕМНЫЙ ПОДХОД К ИЗУЧЕНИЮ ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТИ  
ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬНОЙ ВЛАСТИ: ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ  
ПРЕОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В РА (2000–2024)

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*Abstract* – This article examines executive power institutional effectiveness in the Republic of Armenia during 2000–2024 through comprehensive systemic-institutional analysis. Employing neo-institutional theory, systems analysis, and comparative-historical methods, the research identifies three interconnected analytical levels: institutional (constitutional-legal foundations), strategic (policy planning mechanisms), and operational (implementation systems). Armenia's administrative reform trajectory evolved from traditional Soviet-inherited bureaucratic structures through New Public Management approaches toward Good Governance and New Public Governance frameworks, adapting international reform models within post-Soviet institutional contexts and path dependencies. Empirical analysis demonstrates that executive effectiveness emerges from systematic interactions across analytical levels rather than isolated interventions. The study traces paradigmatic shifts in governance structures, examining how constitutional reforms, civil service professionalization, territorial reorganization, and digital transformation contribute to administrative modernization. Particular attention addresses the 2018 Velvet Revolution as a critical juncture reshaping governance trajectories. Drawing on government documents, comparative governance indicators, and scholarly literature, the article

contributes to comparative political science by analyzing adaptation processes of international governance models within Armenia's political culture, institutional legacies, and socio-economic conditions characteristic of Eastern Partnership countries. The research reveals determinants of governance quality in post-Soviet transition states, proposing evaluation frameworks for assessing executive performance across multiple dimensions.

*Ամփոփում* – Հոդվածում ներկայացված է Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում գործադիր իշխանության ինստիտուցիոնալ արդյունավետության համապարփակ համակարգային-ինստիտուցիոնալ վերլուծությունը 2000–2024 թվականների ընթացքում: Հետազոտությունը հիմնված է նեո-ինստիտուցիոնալ տեսության, համակարգերի վերլուծության և համեմատական-պատմական մեթոդաբանական մոտեցումների ինտեգրման վրա: Համապարփակ վերլուծությունը բացահայտում է երեք փոխկապակցված վերլուծական մակարդակներ՝ ինստիտուցիոնալ (սահմանադրական-իրավական հիմքեր և կազմակերպական կառուցվածքներ), ռազմավարական (քաղաքականության պլանավորման մեխանիզմներ և համակարգման համակարգեր) և գործառնական (իրականացման համակարգեր և ծառայությունների մատուցում): Հայաստանի վարչական բարեփոխումների էվոլյուցիոն ուղին ժառանգած խորհրդային ավանդական բյուրոկրատական կառուցվածքներից անցել է դեպի ժամանակակից լավ կառավարման և Նոր հանրային կառավարման շրջանակներ՝ համակարգված կերպով հարմարեցնելով Նոր հանրային կառավարման մոտեցումների միջոցով միջազգային առկա բարեփոխումների մոդելները հետխորհրդային ինստիտուցիոնալ համատեքստում բարեփոխումների տրամագծին: Համապարփակ էմպիրիկ վերլուծությունը ցույց է տալիս, որ գործադիր իշխանության արդյունավետությունը առաջանում է համակարգային փոխազդեցություններից և հետադարձ կապի մեխանիզմներից բոլոր վերլուծական մակարդակներում, ոչ թե մեկուսացված ինստիտուցիոնալ միջամտություններից կամ բեկորային քաղաքական փոփոխություններից: Հետազոտությունը հետևում է կառավարման կառուցվածքների և պրակտիկաների հիմնարար պարադիգմային շեղումներին՝ ուսումնասիրելով սահմանադրական բարեփոխումների, քաղաքացիական ծառայության պրոֆեսիոնալացման նախաձեռնությունների, տարածքային կառավարման վերակազմակերպման և արագացված թվային փոխակերպման համատեղ նպաստը վարչական արդիականացման գործընթացներին: Հատուկ վերլուծական ուշադրություն է դարձվում 2018 թվականի Թավշյա հեղափոխությանը՝ որպես վճռորոշ պահի, որը հիմնովին վերաձևավորեց կառավարման կառուցվածքներն ու հետագա արդիականացման ուղղությունները: Հիմնվելով առաջնային կառավարության փաստաթղթերի, միջազգային համեմատական կառավարման ցուցանիշների և վերջին շրջանի գիտական գրականության վրա՝ հոդվածն էական ներդրում է կատարում համեմատական քաղաքական գիտության մեջ:

*Аннотация* – В статье представлен комплексный системно-институциональный анализ эффективности исполнительной власти в Республике Армения в период 2000–2024 годов. Используя неoinституциональную теорию, системный анализ и сравнительно-исторические методологические подходы, исследование выявляет три взаимосвязанных аналитических уровня: институциональный (конституционно-правовые основы и организационные структуры), стратегический (механизмы планирования политики и системы координации) и операционный (системы реализации и предоставления услуг). Трактория административных реформ Армении эволюционировала от традиционных унаследованных советских бюрократических структур через подходы Нового государственного

менеджмента к современным рамкам хорошего управления и Нового государственного управления, систематически адаптируя международные модели реформ в специфических постсоветских институциональных контекстах в зависимости от траектории развития. Комплексный эмпирический анализ демонстрирует, что эффективность исполнительной власти возникает из систематических взаимодействий и механизмов обратной связи между всеми аналитическими уровнями, а не из изолированных институциональных вмешательств или фрагментарных политических изменений. Статья прослеживает фундаментальные парадигмальные сдвиги в структурах и практиках управления, изучая вклад конституционных реформ, инициатив по профессионализации государственной службы, реорганизации территориального управления и ускоренной цифровой трансформации в процессы административной модернизации. Особое, с точки зрения анализа, внимание уделяется Бархатной революции 2018 года как критической точке, фундаментально изменившей структуры управления и последующие траектории модернизации. Опираясь на первичные правительственные документы, международные сравнительные показатели управления и новейшую научную литературу, статья вносит существенный вклад в сравнительную политологию, рассматривая сложные процессы адаптации.

Keywords – governance, effectiveness, reforms, institutions, The Republic of Armenia.

Հիմնարաներ – կառավարում, արդյունավետություն, բարեփոխումներ, ինստիտուտներ, ՀՀ:

Ключевые слова – управление, эффективность, реформы, институты, РА.

## Introduction

Executive power institutional effectiveness constitutes a fundamental challenge for contemporary political systems, particularly transitional democracies navigating complex processes of state-building and governance modernization. The question of how state executive body's function and achieve results has occupied political theorists and practitioners throughout political thought's evolution. However, the twenty-first century imparts new urgency to this enduring question as citizens increasingly demand accountability, transparency, and measurable governmental outcomes while states confront unprecedented challenges ranging from digital transformation to climate change, from demographic shifts to geopolitical instability.

In Armenia, administrative reforms initiated in the early 2000s continue evolving through different state governance paradigms, each responding to temporal demands and international pressures while negotiating path dependencies inherited from the Soviet period. The transition from New Public Management concepts emphasizing efficiency and managerial approaches toward Good Governance and New Public Governance frameworks emphasizing democratic participation, network coordination, and collaborative problem-solving reflects broader global political development trends (Krogh and Triantafyllou 2024; Osborne 2010). However, this transition acquires unique Armenian characteristics shaped by post-Soviet institutional legacies, regional geopolitical dynamics, democratic consolidation challenges, and the transformative events of 2018's Velvet Revolution.

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Recent scholarship emphasizes that effective governance requires not only technical efficiency but also democratic legitimacy, procedural transparency, and inclusive participation (Barbier and Tengeh 2023; OECD 2023). This evolving understanding necessitates analytical frameworks capable of capturing governance effectiveness as a multidimensional phenomenon emerging from complex interactions among formal institutions, strategic planning processes, operational implementation mechanisms, and contextual factors. The 2024 Chandler Good Government Index, measuring capabilities and effectiveness of 120 governments worldwide, demonstrates that successful governance depends on systematic development across multiple dimensions rather than excellence in isolated areas (Chandler Institute 2024).

This article synthesizes comprehensive research findings examining Armenia's executive power operational reforms through three interconnected analytical levels: institutional, strategic, and operational. The central argument posits that executive power effectiveness cannot be understood or improved through fragmented interventions targeting single dimensions; rather, effectiveness requires holistic, systems-oriented approaches recognizing the interdependence of formal institutions, strategic planning processes, and operational implementation mechanisms. This systemic perspective, grounded in contemporary public governance theory and empirically validated through the Armenian case, offers insights applicable to other post-Soviet states pursuing governance modernization.

The analysis draws upon multiple data sources including primary government documents, constitutional texts, strategic planning documents, official statistics, international governance indicators (particularly World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators and Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index), and recent policy reports from international organizations and think tanks. This methodological pluralism enables triangulation of findings while capturing both formal institutional arrangements and actual governance practices.

### **Theoretical foundations and analytical framework**

Executive power concepts have evolved substantially since their theoretical emergence in early modern political philosophy. While ancient and medieval political thought addressed governance broadly, specific identification of executive functions as distinct from other governmental roles developed alongside separation of powers principles emerging from Enlightenment political theory. This historical evolution remains relevant for understanding contemporary debates about executive authority and governmental effectiveness.

Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed foundational theoretical contributions establishing executive power as a legitimate governmental function. John Locke's social contract theory articulated continuous authority needs for implementing laws, though his formulation combined what would later distinguish as executive and judicial functions. Importantly, Locke's primary concern was negative –pre-

venting dangerous power concentration – rather than optimizing governmental performance. Montesquieu advanced separation of powers theory by explicitly identifying three governmental functions: legislative, executive, and judicial. He associated executive power particularly with international relations and legislative decision implementation, but his framework aimed primarily at securing political liberty through institutional balance rather than maximizing administrative efficiency.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau approached the question from a different angle, subordinating executive power (government) to sovereign legislative will while acknowledging its distinct organizational reality. His formulation recognized that government constitutes an institution with operational logic, even while bound by popular sovereignty expressed through law. The Enlightenment thinkers thus established executive power as both legitimate and necessary for governmental function, but their concerns remained primarily normative and protective – preventing tyranny and preserving liberty – rather than performance-oriented.

The nineteenth century brought new dimensions to executive power theory through German idealist philosophy. Hegel's comprehensive philosophical system integrated executive authority into rational state structures where different governmental functions achieve dialectical unity through hierarchical coordination. His analysis addressed questions of administrative optimization and relationships between particular administrative roles and universal state purposes. This represented a significant shift toward viewing executive power not merely as a necessary constraint on legislative will but as an active instrument for realizing collective purposes.

The twentieth century fundamentally transformed both political practice and scholarly analysis through empirical political science emergence, bringing quantitative methods and systematic comparison to governance studies. Public administration developed as a distinct field, drawing insights from organizational theory, management science, and systems analysis. Max Weber's bureaucratic theory emphasized rational-legal authority, hierarchical organization, and rule-based procedures as foundations for efficient administration. Later critics noted tensions between bureaucratic rationality and democratic responsiveness, generating ongoing debates about optimal institutional design.

### **Contemporary governance paradigms and reform models**

Contemporary public administration scholarship has converged around three major reform models capturing developments in present-day governance transformations: New Public Management (NPM), Neo-Weberian State (NWS), and New Public Governance (NPG) (Krogh and Triantafyllou 2024; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017). Each model contains discrete and relatively coherent sets of ideas, values, and assumptions about appropriate ends and means in reform policies. Understanding these paradigms proves essential for analyzing Armenia's reform trajectory.

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New Public Management, emerging in the 1980s–1990s, aimed to enhance public sector efficiency and performance by increasing market-based competition, performance management, and managerial autonomy (Hood 1991). NPM reforms emphasized disaggregation of large bureaucracies, competition between service providers, explicit performance standards, and output-oriented accountability. While NPM achieved certain efficiency gains, critics identified limitations including fragmentation of public services, accountability deficits, and inadequate attention to coordination challenges (Hood and Dixon 2015).

Neo-Weberian State reforms emerged partly as reaction to NPM's perceived excesses, seeking to enhance public sector effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy by reaffirming state's role while incorporating modern management practices. NWS emphasizes professional bureaucracy, rule of law, consultation with citizens, and performance measurement while maintaining traditional public administration values (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017). This model proved particularly influential in continental European countries and some post-Soviet states seeking to strengthen state capacity while avoiding NPM's market-oriented extremes.

New Public Governance represents more recent theoretical development emphasizing collaborative networks, stakeholder participation, and co-production of public value. NPG reforms advance collaboration both across government agencies and between public sector, private organizations, and civil society (Krogh and Triantafillou 2024, 3041; Osborne 2010). This paradigm recognizes that contemporary governance challenges – from climate change to digital transformation – require coordinated action across organizational and sectoral boundaries. NPG particularly emphasizes trust-based relationships, shared accountability, and co-creation of solutions rather than hierarchical command or market-based transactions.

### **Systemic-institutional analytical framework**

This research employs a systemic-institutional framework integrating multiple theoretical approaches to capture executive power effectiveness comprehensively. The framework rests on three theoretical pillars. First, neo-institutional theory emphasizes how formal rules, organizational structures, and informal norms shape political behavior and policy outcomes (Acemoglu, Robinson 2023; North, Wallis and Weingast 2009). Institutions create incentive structures, distribute power, and establish procedural constraints that profoundly influence governmental effectiveness. Path dependency – the tendency for institutional arrangements to persist and constrain future choices – proves particularly salient for post-Soviet states where Soviet-era legacies continue shaping contemporary governance.

Second, systems theory provides tools for analyzing interdependencies and feedback mechanisms among different governmental components. Executive power effectiveness emerges from interactions among multiple subsystems – legislative, judicial, administrative – operating within broader political, economic, and social

environments. This perspective highlights how changes in one institutional domain ripple through interconnected systems, creating both intended and unintended consequences (Benz 2023). Systems analysis also emphasizes boundary-spanning coordination mechanisms essential for addressing contemporary governance challenges requiring integrated responses.

Third, comparative-historical methods enable identification of patterns across time and space while remaining attentive to context-specific variations. Comparative analysis of post-Soviet transitions reveals both common challenges – managing institutional legacies, building state capacity, establishing democratic legitimacy – and diverse trajectories influenced by initial conditions, reform strategies, and external factors (Abegaz 2023, 152–158). Historical analysis traces reform trajectories, identifies critical junctures where significant institutional changes become possible, and examines how earlier decisions constrain later options.

### **Three-level analytical model**

The analytical framework distinguishes three interconnected levels of executive power effectiveness, each requiring distinct but complementary analysis. The institutional level encompasses constitutional-legal foundations, formal organizational structures, and fundamental rules governing executive authority. Analysis at this level examines constitutional arrangements (presidential versus parliamentary systems, power distribution between branches), administrative organization (ministries, agencies, their jurisdictions), civil service systems (recruitment, career paths, accountability mechanisms), and fiscal frameworks (budget processes, financial management systems). Institutional analysis identifies formal capacities and constraints shaping executive action.

The strategic level addresses policy planning, priority-setting, and resource allocation mechanisms translating institutional capacities into programmatic action. Strategic effectiveness depends on analytical capacity for identifying challenges and opportunities, participatory processes engaging stakeholders in priority-setting, coordination mechanisms aligning efforts across agencies, monitoring and evaluation systems tracking implementation, and adaptive capacity adjusting strategies based on feedback. Strategic analysis examines how governments develop coherent policy agendas, allocate resources effectively, and maintain strategic direction amid competing pressures.

The operational level focuses on implementation mechanisms, service delivery systems, and day-to-day administrative practices converting strategic plans into concrete outcomes. Operational effectiveness requires management systems coordinating personnel and resources, information technology enabling efficient processes, quality control ensuring standards maintenance, accountability mechanisms preventing corruption and abuse, and innovation capacity improving practices continuously. Operational analysis examines actual governmental performance in delivering ser-

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vices, implementing policies, and responding to citizen needs. Critically, these levels function not as independent domains but as interconnected components of integrated systems where performance at each level depends on and influences others.

### **Institutional level analysis: constitutional frameworks and administrative structures**

Armenia's constitutional development reflects broader post-Soviet trajectories while exhibiting characteristics specific to its political context and reform dynamics. The 1995 Constitution, adopted four years after independence, established a semi-presidential system with strong presidential powers over government formation, foreign policy, and security matters. This configuration, common among newly independent post-Soviet states, sought to provide stability and coherent leadership during turbulent transition while establishing basic democratic frameworks. However, the concentration of executive authority in the presidency created tensions between formal democratic structures and actual power distribution, contributing to periodic political crises.

The 2005 constitutional amendments maintained semi-presidential frameworks while modestly strengthening parliamentary oversight and constitutional court independence. Yet fundamental power balances remained weighted toward the presidency, with prime ministers serving primarily as administrative coordinators rather than autonomous political leaders. This arrangement contributed to governance challenges as presidential authority lacked adequate institutional constraints while prime ministerial responsibilities exceeded actual powers.

The 2015 constitutional reforms represented more profound institutional transformation, transitioning Armenia from semi-presidential to parliamentary republic (Republic of Armenia 2015). Adopted through referendum, these amendments dramatically shifted power from president to prime minister and parliament. The president became largely ceremonial figure elected by parliament, while the prime minister assumed primary executive authority, heading government and setting policy direction. Parliament gained enhanced legislative powers and oversight mechanisms. This institutional redesign aimed addressing long-standing governance problems by clarifying authority lines, strengthening parliamentary accountability, and reducing presidential power concentration.

However, the 2015 reforms' timing and circumstances generated controversy. Critics alleged they served incumbent leadership's interests by enabling power retention through different institutional configuration. The 2018 Velvet Revolution, occurring shortly after these reforms' implementation, dramatically altered their political significance. The new leadership under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan inherited parliamentary system but operated under different political dynamics characterized by popular legitimacy, anti-corruption mandates, and reform expectations. This created unique situation where institutional frameworks designed under

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previous regime were operationalized by government enjoying substantially different political foundations. As Freedom House notes, while the 2018 revolution brought significant democratic gains, Armenia continues navigating tensions between extensive prime ministerial powers prescribed by constitution and needs for effective checks and balances (Freedom House 2024a).

### **Civil service professionalization and merit-based recruitment**

Civil service professionalization constitutes critical component of executive power effectiveness, directly affecting implementation capacity, policy expertise, and administrative continuity. Armenia's civil service development trajectory illustrates both progress and persistent challenges characteristic of post-Soviet administrative modernization. The 2018 Civil Service Law, amended subsequently, established frameworks for merit-based recruitment, competitive selection, performance evaluation, and professional development. The law created State Civil Service Council as independent body overseeing civil service management, conducting competitive examinations, and protecting civil servants from political interference.

Post-2018 period witnessed intensified efforts to implement merit principles. According to State Civil Service Council statistics, competitive selection procedures have expanded significantly. In 2023, the Council conducted 847 competitive examinations for civil service positions, representing substantial increase from previous years (State Civil Service Council 2024). The introduction of standardized testing, transparent procedures, and independent oversight aimed reducing political patronage and improving qualification standards. However, challenges persist including limited applicant pools for specialized positions, uneven implementation across different ministries and agencies, continuing political pressures particularly for senior positions, and insufficient resources for comprehensive professional development programs.

The 2022 Public Administration Reform Strategy, approved by government decision, identified civil service professionalization as priority area, proposing measures for strengthening capacity-building programs, improving performance management systems, enhancing salary competitiveness particularly for technical specialists, and expanding e-governance tools supporting civil service functions (Government of Armenia 2024). Implementation progress shows mixed results. The BTI 2024 Armenia Country Report acknowledges administrative modernization efforts while noting that institutional inertia, limited resources, and political complexities continue hindering full realization of merit-based systems (BTI 2024).

### **Territorial administration and decentralization dynamics**

Territorial administration reform represents another critical institutional dimension affecting executive power effectiveness. Armenia's highly centralized governance structure, inherited from Soviet period and reinforced by post-independence political dynamics, creates tensions between aspirations for democratic partic-

ipation and realities of concentrated decision-making authority. Despite constitutional provisions and programmatic commitments to decentralization, local governments retain limited autonomy, constrained by financial dependence on central budgetary allocations, limited revenue-raising authority, weak administrative capacity at municipal level, and central government interventions in local affairs.

The government's 2021–2026 program reiterated decentralization importance, proposing measures to strengthen local government autonomy, enhance revenue-generating capacities, build administrative capacity at sub-national levels, and improve citizen participation in local governance. The 2024 territorial-administrative reform consolidated previously fragmented municipal structures, reducing municipalities from over 500 to approximately 71 communities. This consolidation aimed creating more viable administrative units capable of effective service delivery and strategic planning.

Implementation of participatory budgeting mechanisms in selected communities represents promising development. According to Open Government Partnership reporting, by 2024, twenty-one communities implemented participatory budgeting allowing citizens to propose and vote on local development projects (OGP 2024). These initiatives demonstrate potential for enhanced local democracy while revealing challenges including limited citizen awareness and participation, insufficient municipal administrative capacity for facilitating participatory processes, modest scale of resources allocated through participatory mechanisms, and uneven implementation across different communities. Freedom House notes that despite reform intentions, Armenia's political system has not been decentralized as promised, with local governments continuing to have only limited autonomy and remaining dependent on central budget allocations (Freedom House 2024b).

### **Strategic level analysis: policy planning and coordination mechanisms**

Strategic effectiveness requires translating institutional capacities and political priorities into coherent policy agendas supported by resource allocation and implementation mechanisms. Armenia has developed increasingly sophisticated strategic planning frameworks over the past two decades, though implementation challenges persist. The evolution from ad hoc planning toward systematic strategic management reflects international influences, donor assistance, and domestic learning processes.

Following the 2018 political transition, the government initiated comprehensive strategy review and development processes. Multiple sectoral strategies emerged addressing education, healthcare, economic development, justice, and public administration. The 2022–2030 Public Administration Reform Strategy represents particularly significant initiative, outlining comprehensive modernization agenda structured in three phases: 2022–2024 focusing on institutional modernization and functional analysis; 2025–2027 emphasizing digital transformation and service integration; and

2028–2030 targeting sustainability and continuous improvement (Government of Armenia 2024). The strategy identifies concrete objectives including eliminating functional duplications and gaps across government bodies, strengthening policy development and coordination capacities, accelerating e-governance implementation, improving public service delivery, and enhancing transparency and accountability mechanisms.

However, strategic planning faces persistent challenges affecting implementation effectiveness. Analytical capacity limitations constrain evidence-based policymaking. Many ministries lack sufficient expertise for rigorous policy analysis, making them dependent on external consultants or international organizations. This creates risks of strategies disconnected from domestic realities or insufficiently owned by implementing agencies. Coordination deficits across ministries and levels of government fragment reform efforts. While coordination mechanisms exist formally, actual practice often reveals insufficient inter-ministerial consultation, competing priorities, and inadequate information sharing. The Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia's 2025 assessment identifies unclear leadership and oversight as significant obstacles, noting the absence of specific bodies assigned to oversee strategy implementation comprehensively (Babayan 2025).

Resource constraints – both financial and human – limit implementation capacity. Ambitious strategic objectives often lack corresponding resource commitments, creating credibility gaps. Civil service capacity limitations, discussed earlier, directly affect strategic implementation. Monitoring and evaluation systems, while improving, remain underdeveloped. Tracking implementation progress, assessing policy impacts, and feeding lessons back into planning cycles require systematic M&E frameworks that are still being established. Participatory mechanisms in strategic planning have expanded but remain limited in scope and depth. While consultation processes with civil society organizations occur more regularly post-2018, meaningful stakeholder participation in priority-setting and resource allocation decisions requires further development.

### **Center of government coordination capacities**

Centers of government – institutions supporting executive leadership – play crucial roles in policy coordination, strategic planning, and implementation oversight. In Armenia, the Prime Minister's Office serves as center of government, responsible for coordinating ministerial activities, preparing government decisions, and overseeing policy implementation. Post-2018 reforms aimed strengthening the PM Office's coordination capacities through various initiatives. Notably, commitment to establishing a Department of Participatory and Open Governance within the PM Office seeks institutionalizing open government practices and stakeholder engagement (OGP 2024).

However, center of government strengthening faces challenges including tension between coordination needs and ministerial autonomy, where stronger central coordination may be perceived as interference in ministerial prerogatives, complicating cooperation. Limited analytical capacity at the center constrains ability to provide high-quality policy advice to leadership. Coordination mechanisms often remain ad hoc rather than systematic, depending on personal relationships and informal networks rather than institutionalized processes. The rapid policy development pace following 2018 sometimes overwhelmed coordination capacities, leading to insufficiently consulted or coordinated decisions. OECD research on public governance emphasizes that effective centers of government require not just formal authority but also analytical capacity, coordination mechanisms, and trust-based relationships with line ministries (OECD 2023).

### **Operational level analysis: implementation systems and service delivery**

Digital transformation represents critical operational priority for Armenia, affecting both governmental efficiency and citizen service access. Armenia has achieved notable progress in e-governance, building on strong information technology sector foundations. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital service adoption, demonstrating both opportunities and challenges in rapid digitalization. Key e-governance achievements include the unified portal (e-gov.am) providing integrated access to multiple government services, electronic identification systems enabling secure online authentication, digital document management systems improving inter-agency communication efficiency, online procurement platform enhancing transparency in government contracting, and mobile applications for various public services.

Recent developments demonstrate accelerating digital transformation momentum. In 2023, the Ministry of High-Tech Industry signed partnerships with major technology companies including Amazon Web Services and NVIDIA, positioning Armenia as emerging regional technology hub (Defence24 2024). These partnerships aim not only commercial technology development but also government capacity building in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and data analytics. Harutyunyan, Manucharyan, Muradyan and Asatryan assess digital literacy across Armenian society, identifying determinants of digital capability and gaps requiring attention for ensuring inclusive digital transformation (Harutyunyan et al. 2024, 5–8). Their research underscores importance of addressing digital divides that could otherwise exclude segments of population from e-governance benefits.

Despite progress, digital transformation faces significant challenges. Interoperability issues among different government information systems create inefficiencies requiring duplicate data entry and preventing seamless service integration. Cybersecurity vulnerabilities pose risks as more services migrate online, necessitating robust security frameworks. Digital literacy gaps among both citizens and civil servants

limit effective system utilization. Elderly citizens and rural populations particularly face barriers accessing digital services. Regulatory frameworks often lag behind technological capabilities, creating legal uncertainties around digital signatures, data protection, and online service provision. Investment requirements for sustaining and expanding digital infrastructure remain substantial, requiring continued resource allocation amid competing priorities.

### **Anti-corruption frameworks and integrity systems**

Anti-corruption efforts constitute essential operational dimension affecting executive power effectiveness. Corruption undermines institutional legitimacy, distorts resource allocation, and erodes public trust. Armenia's corruption challenges have deep historical roots in Soviet-era informal practices and post-independence state capture dynamics. The 2018 Velvet Revolution partly emerged from public frustration with corruption, giving the new government strong mandate for anti-corruption action.

Post-2018 anti-corruption initiatives include strengthened legal frameworks through amendments to Criminal Code and Anti-Corruption Law, enhanced enforcement through Investigative Committee and Special Investigation Service activities targeting high-level corruption, institutional reforms including judicial vetting processes, asset disclosure requirements for public officials through electronic registry systems, and whistleblower protection mechanisms. The establishment of the Unified Anti-Corruption Electronic Platform in 2022 represents significant transparency initiative, providing public access to information about asset declarations, conflicts of interest, and corruption cases (BTI 2024).

International assessments show mixed results. Armenia's score in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index has improved modestly but remains below desired levels. The ERCAS Index of Public Integrity notes that Armenia faces challenges from high administrative discretion and weak regulatory quality, requiring comprehensive administrative revolution rather than solely judicial reforms (ERCAS 2024). Persistent challenges include selective enforcement perceptions, where anti-corruption actions sometimes appear politically motivated; systemic corruption in some sectors, particularly healthcare and education, where informal payments remain common; limited capacity of anti-corruption institutions; judicial independence concerns affecting corruption case prosecution; and political financing transparency issues. Freedom House raises concerns about ruling party funding transparency, noting investigative reports highlighting lack of transparency regarding Civil Contract's funding sources and law enforcement agencies clearing the party of wrongdoing despite concerning evidence (Freedom House 2024a).

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**Public financial management and fiscal governance**

Public financial management effectiveness directly affects government's capacity to allocate resources efficiently, deliver services, and maintain fiscal sustainability. Armenia has undertaken substantial PFM reforms over past two decades, supported by international financial institutions and technical assistance programs. Key PFM framework components include medium-term expenditure frameworks linking strategic priorities to budget allocations, program-based budgeting focusing on outputs and outcomes rather than merely inputs, treasury single account system improving cash management and financial control, public procurement frameworks emphasizing transparency and competition, and external audit through Chamber of Control providing independent oversight.

Recent reforms aimed strengthening various PFM dimensions. The 2020 Budget System Law introduced program budgeting requirements, obligating ministries to define programs with clear objectives and performance indicators. Government financial management information systems were upgraded to improve reporting and analysis capabilities. Public procurement moved increasingly online through electronic procurement platform, enhancing transparency and efficiency. Fiscal rule frameworks were strengthened, with the 2021 Fiscal Responsibility Law establishing debt and deficit targets aimed ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability. These reforms reflect international good practices while adapting to Armenia's specific institutional context and capacity constraints.

However, PFM challenges persist. Budget credibility issues arise from significant deviations between planned and actual expenditures, undermining strategic resource allocation. Procurement efficiency remains uneven across different entities, with some agencies demonstrating good practices while others lag behind. Fiscal transparency has shown progress but gaps remain in accessible budget information and citizen participation in budget processes. Expenditure efficiency varies considerably across sectors, with some areas achieving good value for money while others show room for improvement. Subnational financial management lags behind national level, reflecting broader decentralization challenges discussed earlier. Armenia's 2022–2024 Open Government Partnership commitments include platform development for participation in budget processes, recognizing need for enhanced citizen engagement in fiscal governance (OGP 2024).

**Synthesis: systemic interactions and effectiveness determinants**

The central finding emerging from this comprehensive analysis is that executive power effectiveness results from systematic interactions across institutional, strategic, and operational levels rather than from isolated reforms at any single level. This systems perspective yields several critical insights with significant theoretical and practical implications. Three analytical levels function not as independent domains

but as interconnected components of integrated systems where performance at each level depends on and influences others.

Institutional deficiencies at the constitutional-legal level undermine strategic planning and operational implementation. For example, unclear authority distribution between central and local governments complicates strategic coordination and operational service delivery. Weak civil service frameworks limit both strategic policy development capacity and operational implementation effectiveness. Conversely, strong institutional foundations enable but do not guarantee strategic and operational success – they require complementary developments at other levels.

Strategic inadequacies waste operational capacity and institutional potential. Even well-functioning institutions and capable operational systems underperform without clear strategic direction, coherent priorities, and adequate resource allocation. Armenia's experience illustrates how ambitious institutional reforms may achieve limited impact without corresponding strategic planning improvements. The proliferation of sectoral strategies without adequate coordination mechanisms creates fragmentation rather than synergy. Insufficient monitoring and evaluation systems prevent learning from implementation experiences, perpetuating ineffective practices.

Operational limitations prevent strategy realization even with sound institutional foundations and well-designed plans. Digital divide issues limit e-governance strategy effectiveness. Corruption at implementation level undermines integrity strategies. Capacity constraints at municipal level impede decentralization strategies. These interdependencies imply that effective reform requires coordinated attention across all three levels, recognizing their systematic relationships. Reforms targeting single levels while neglecting others achieve suboptimal results. Sequencing matters – certain institutional reforms may be prerequisites for strategic or operational improvements. Resource allocation must address all three levels according to specific deficiencies and opportunities. This systemic perspective aligns with contemporary public governance scholarship emphasizing integrated approaches and collaborative problem-solving (Krogh and Triantafillou 2024, 3045–3048; OECD 2023).

### **Contextual determinants and path dependencies**

Executive power effectiveness depends not only on internal system characteristics but also on multiple contextual factors that shape both reform possibilities and governance outcomes. Political culture influences both formal institutions and informal practices. Armenia's political culture, shaped by Soviet experience and post-independence trajectories, affects trust in government, expectations of accountability, and participation patterns. Clientelistic networks persisting from earlier periods compete with merit-based principles, creating tensions between formal rules and actual practices. Gradual cultural evolution toward democratic norms, particularly

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among younger generations, creates opportunities for institutional consolidation but requires sustained effort.

Economic conditions fundamentally constrain reform possibilities. Armenia's middle-income status limits resources available for capacity building, infrastructure investment, and comprehensive service delivery. Economic growth following 2018 – with GDP per capita more than doubling from USD 4,042 in 2018 to USD 8,715 in 2024 – expands fiscal space for reforms while creating new challenges managing rapid growth (Caucasus Edition 2024). The substantial Russian emigrant influx following Ukraine war's outbreak brought both economic opportunities and social integration challenges. Economic diversification away from traditional sectors toward high-tech industries alters governance requirements, demanding different regulatory frameworks and support mechanisms.

Geopolitical environment profoundly affects domestic governance dynamics. Armenia's location in the South Caucasus, bordered by Turkey and Azerbaijan with which it has unresolved conflicts, creates security imperatives influencing resource allocation and institutional priorities. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war and 2023 Azerbaijani takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh fundamentally altered Armenia's strategic situation. According to Caucasus Edition analysis, while these events were tragic, potentially creating conditions for democratic consolidation by reducing external threats and nationalist pressures that previously constrained democratic development (Caucasus Edition 2024). The massive refugee influx – approximately 120,000 people fleeing Nagorno-Karabakh – created enormous humanitarian and integration challenges requiring government response capacity.

Shifting geopolitical alignments, particularly distancing from Russia and closer engagement with the European Union and United States, affect governance reforms. The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with EU, entering force in 2021, provides frameworks for institutional approximation to European standards, technical assistance for reforms, and political support for democratic consolidation (Caucasus Edition 2024). International influences provide both resources and pressures for reforms. Technical assistance from international organizations and bilateral donors supports capacity building and institutional development. However, donor-driven reforms sometimes face legitimacy and sustainability challenges if insufficiently owned domestically. Adapting international best practices to local contexts requires careful attention to institutional specificities and cultural appropriateness. Historical legacies create path dependencies constraining reform trajectories. Soviet-era institutional arrangements, practices, and mindsets persist in various forms, requiring conscious effort to transform.

### **The 2018 Velvet Revolution as critical juncture**

The 2018 events represent a critical juncture in Armenia's governance evolution – a moment when established patterns were disrupted and new developmental

paths became possible. Critical juncture theory, prominent in historical institutionalism, emphasizes how certain periods create openings for significant institutional changes that otherwise face strong resistance from established arrangements (Acemoglu and Robinson 2023, 1495–1500). The Velvet Revolution exhibited key critical juncture characteristics. First, it generated massive popular mobilization disrupting normal political processes. Unlike previous protest movements, the 2018 mobilization maintained peaceful character while achieving unprecedented scale, forcing political elite accommodation. This created new political dynamics where previously entrenched interests lost power to influence outcomes decisively.

Second, the revolution produced legitimacy enhancement for reform initiatives. The new government enjoyed popular mandate for change, reducing resistance to reforms that might otherwise face obstruction. Anti-corruption measures, previously meeting elite opposition, became politically feasible. Institutional reforms, including civil service professionalization and judicial independence strengthening, gained momentum from revolutionary legitimacy. International support for reforms intensified as Armenia's democratic progress attracted positive attention.

Third, the revolution created window of opportunity for previously blocked reforms. Path dependencies that constrained earlier reform efforts weakened as established power structures fragmented. New actors with different interests and perspectives gained influence in policy processes. The scope of possible changes expanded beyond incremental adjustments to include more fundamental transformations. However, critical junctures create possibilities but do not determine outcomes. The period following 2018 illustrates both opportunities realized and challenges encountered in translating revolutionary momentum into sustainable institutional change.

Positive developments include substantial anti-corruption actions, including high-profile prosecutions of former officials; accelerated institutional reforms across multiple sectors; improved international standing and increased donor support; enhanced press freedom and civil society space; and greater governmental transparency and accountability mechanisms. However, significant challenges emerged. Capacity constraints limited the speed and scope of implementable reforms despite strong political will. The existing civil service, largely unchanged from previous periods, sometimes lacked expertise or commitment for implementing ambitious reforms. Coordination challenges across newly empowered ministries and agencies complicated policy coherence. Geopolitical pressures, particularly related to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, diverted attention and resources from domestic reforms.

Path dependencies proved more resilient than initially expected. Soviet-era institutional legacies and post-Soviet practices persisted in various forms despite leadership changes. Political polarization intensified as pre-2018 elites, having lost formal power, contested new government's legitimacy and policies. Economic challenges, exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic and regional conflicts, constrained

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reform possibilities. Freedom House notes that while Armenia made major positive reforms in 2023 regarding judiciary, police, anti-corruption, and territorial administration, concerns emerged about transparency in ruling party financing and potential return of business influence in politics – issues representing possible reversals of 2018 revolution gains (Freedom House 2024a). This underscores the point that effectively utilizing critical juncture openings requires sophisticated strategy, adequate capacity, sustained commitment, and favorable contextual conditions – not merely revolutionary momentum.

### **Comparative insights from post-soviet transitions**

Comparing Armenia's experience with other Eastern Partnership countries—particularly Georgia and Moldova – reveals both commonalities and variations in post-Soviet administrative modernization trajectories. All three countries inherited similar Soviet institutional legacies, confronted comparable state-building challenges, pursued democratic consolidation amid geopolitical pressures, and engaged with European integration processes through Eastern Partnership framework. However, their specific paths diverged significantly based on initial conditions, reform strategies, political dynamics, and external influences.

Georgia's experience offers instructive parallels and contrasts with Armenia. Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution, like Armenia's 2018 Velvet Revolution, created critical juncture for governance reforms. Georgia pursued aggressive administrative reforms including radical civil service restructuring, comprehensive anti-corruption campaigns, extensive privatization, and regulatory simplification. These reforms achieved notable successes in reducing petty corruption, improving business environment, and strengthening certain state institutions. However, critics identified challenges including insufficient attention to democratic accountability mechanisms, concentration of power in executive branch, uneven territorial development, and social welfare system weaknesses. The ERCAS analysis suggests Armenia could benefit from Georgian-style administrative revolution while avoiding some pitfalls through maintaining stronger democratic oversight and social protections (ERCAS 2024).

Moldova's trajectory exhibits different characteristics, marked by political instability, state capture episodes, and protracted struggles for reform consolidation. Like Armenia, Moldova pursued European integration through Association Agreement with EU, but implementation faced greater obstacles from entrenched interests and geopolitical pressures. Moldova's experience highlights risk of reform reversal when political will weakens or vested interests' counterattack. However, recent developments – particularly since 2020 elections – demonstrate renewed reform momentum, offering hope that sustained commitment can overcome obstacles. Comparative analysis suggests that post-Soviet reform success requires not only appropriate reform strategies but also favorable political coalitions, adequate state capacity, and sustained international support.

Broader comparative literature on post-socialist transitions emphasizes diversity of outcomes despite similar starting points (Abegaz 2023, 165–172). Central European countries that joined the European Union achieved substantially different governance quality levels compared to post-Soviet states. Even among post-Soviet states, Baltic countries outperformed other regions significantly. These variations reflect complex interactions among multiple factors including pre-communist institutional legacies, paths of extrication from communist rule, economic transformation strategies, civil society strength, and timing and nature of EU engagement. For Armenia, comparative analysis suggests importance of maintaining reform momentum, building broad coalitions supporting transformation, investing systematically in state capacity, managing geopolitical relationships strategically, and learning from both successes and failures of other transitional states.

### **Policy implications and recommendations**

Based on this comprehensive analysis, several policy implications and recommendations emerge for improving executive power effectiveness in Armenia. These recommendations are organized according to the three analytical levels while recognizing their systemic interdependencies.

#### **Institutional level recommendations**

Constitutional consolidation remains critical priority. The 2015 constitutional framework functions under different political dynamics than originally envisioned, creating ambiguities requiring clarification through either constitutional interpretation or potential amendments. Particular attention should address parliamentary oversight mechanisms, prime ministerial power constraints, and center-periphery relations. Clear authority distribution prevents institutional conflicts while enabling accountability.

Horizontal accountability mechanisms strengthening requires continued attention. While anti-corruption frameworks have improved, comprehensive integrity systems require judicial independence consolidation through completing vetting processes and ensuring Supreme Judicial Council autonomy; ombudsman institution strengthening for effective rights protection; audit institution capacity enhancement particularly regarding performance auditing; and whistleblower protection frameworks practical implementation. The BTI 2024 report notes that despite reform strategies, judicial independence from systemic corruption remains incomplete, requiring persistent effort (BTI 2024).

Civil service professionalization must continue advancing through comprehensive professional development programs addressing skill gaps; competitive compensation systems attracting and retaining talent; performance management systems linking evaluation to career advancement; and expanded merit-based selection coverage to all government levels. The 2024 Public Administration Reform Strategy

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provides roadmap, but implementation requires adequate resourcing and sustained political commitment (Government of Armenia 2024).

Local governance capacity and autonomy enhancement represents critical decentralization priority. Recommendations include fiscal decentralization expanding local revenue authorities and reducing central dependency; administrative capacity building particularly in smaller municipalities through training and technical assistance; participatory mechanism expansion beyond current pilot communities; and inter-municipal cooperation frameworks for service delivery efficiency. The Open Government Partnership framework provides useful structure for advancing these reforms (OGP 2024).

### **Strategic level recommendations**

Participatory planning processes require deepening beyond current consultation practices to genuine stakeholder engagement in priority-setting and resource allocation. This includes regular consultation with civil society organizations representing different constituencies; private sector engagement in economic policy development; academic institution involvement in evidence-based policymaking; and citizen participation mechanisms at both national and local levels. Contemporary governance scholarship emphasizes co-creation and co-production principles as essential for effective public value management (Krogh and Triantafillou 2024, 3048–3050).

Government analytical capacity investment remains essential for evidence-based policymaking. Recommendations include establishing or strengthening policy analysis units within ministries; recruiting policy analysts with quantitative and qualitative research skills; developing government-wide data analytics capabilities; and creating knowledge management systems facilitating learning and information sharing. The Applied Policy Research Institute assessment identifies analytical capacity as critical gap requiring attention (Babayan 2025).

Linkage strengthening between planning documents at different levels would improve coherence. Sectoral strategies should explicitly connect to broader government program priorities. Annual budgets must reflect strategic priorities through program-based allocations. Local development plans need alignment with national strategies while respecting local autonomy. Regular strategy review processes should assess continued relevance and necessary adjustments.

Monitoring and evaluation capacity improvement for strategic implementation tracking requires establishing M&E units with clear responsibilities; developing performance indicator frameworks for programs and policies; regular reporting on implementation progress and challenges; and utilizing M&E findings for adaptive management and learning. OECD research emphasizes M&E as critical element of good governance promoting accountability and contributing to citizen trust (OECD 2023).

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### **Operational level recommendations**

Digital transformation acceleration should attend to accessibility ensuring services available to diverse user populations including elderly and rural citizens; cybersecurity strengthening protecting sensitive government and citizen data; interoperability improving system integration across government; and digital literacy programs for both citizens and civil servants. Armenia's strong IT sector foundation provides advantages, but inclusive digital transformation requires attention to potential exclusions (Harutyunyan et al. 2024, 12–15).

Anti-corruption efforts must address systemic dimensions rather than merely high-profile prosecutions. Recommendations include sectoral corruption risk assessments identifying vulnerability areas; prevention mechanisms including rotation policies and segregation of duties; integrity training for public officials; civil society engagement in corruption monitoring; and international cooperation in asset recovery and information exchange. The ERCAS assessment suggests comprehensive administrative reforms are necessary complement to judicial actions (ERCAS 2024).

Public financial management modernization should continue through full program budgeting implementation across all ministries; performance information integration into budget decisions; procurement system efficiency improvements; fiscal transparency enhancement through accessible reporting; and subnational PFM capacity building. The OGP framework provides useful structure for advancing fiscal governance reforms (OGP 2024).

Inter-agency coordination mechanism strengthening includes establishing clear coordination procedures for cross-cutting issues; creating inter-ministerial working groups for specific challenges; developing information sharing protocols and platforms; and center of government coordination capacity building. Contemporary governance challenges increasingly require integrated responses cutting across traditional ministerial boundaries (Benz 2023).

### **Cross-cutting recommendations**

Systems perspective adoption recognizing interdependencies across institutional, strategic, and operational levels should guide reform design and sequencing. Piecemeal reforms targeting single dimensions while neglecting others achieve sub-optimal results. Comprehensive approaches addressing multiple levels simultaneously prove more effective while acknowledging resource and capacity constraints requiring prioritization.

Reform sequencing must recognize capacity constraints and political feasibility considerations. Some institutional reforms may be prerequisites for strategic or operational improvements, suggesting logical implementation sequences. However, sequencing should balance technical logic with political momentum – reforms enjoying strong support and demonstrating quick wins can build momentum for more challenging transformations.

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Sustained commitment beyond initial enthusiasm requires institutionalizing reforms through legislation, regulations, and procedures; building coalitions supporting continued transformation; demonstrating tangible results maintaining public support; and protecting reforms from reversal attempts by vested interests. Critical juncture research emphasizes that revolutionary moments create openings but sustainable change requires persistent effort over extended periods (Acemoglu and Robinson 2023, 1510–1515).

Strategic management of external influences including EU partnerships, international donor assistance, and technical cooperation should maximize benefits while maintaining domestic ownership. International support provides valuable resources and expertise but should complement rather than substitute domestic capacity building. Adaptation of international best practices to local contexts requires careful attention to institutional specificities and cultural appropriateness. The CEPA framework with EU provides useful structure but requires active domestic engagement ensuring reforms reflect Armenian priorities and conditions (Caucasus Edition 2024).

### **Conclusion**

This research examined executive power institutional effectiveness in Armenia through comprehensive analytical framework addressing institutional, strategic, and operational dimensions across the 2000–2024 period. The central finding confirms that effectiveness emerges from systematic interactions across these levels rather than isolated improvements at any single point. This systemic perspective, grounded in contemporary public governance theory and validated through the Armenian case, offers insights with broader theoretical and practical significance.

Armenia's governance trajectory from 2000 to 2024 illustrates both possibilities and challenges of administrative modernization in transitional democratic contexts. The evolution from traditional bureaucratic systems through New Public Management approaches toward Good Governance and New Public Governance frameworks reflects global trends while exhibiting context-specific characteristics shaped by post-Soviet legacies, geopolitical realities, and domestic political dynamics. The research demonstrates how international governance models adapt – sometimes successfully, sometimes problematically – within specific local contexts characterized by particular institutional legacies, political cultures, and socio-economic conditions.

The 2018 Velvet Revolution represents critical juncture creating opportunities for accelerated reform through disrupting established patterns, generating new political dynamics, and opening windows for previously blocked changes. However, translating revolutionary momentum into sustainable institutional change requires sophisticated strategy, adequate capacity, persistent commitment, and favorable contextual conditions. The post-2018 period illustrates both significant achievements and persistent challenges in capitalizing on critical juncture opportunities. Recent assessments by international organizations including Freedom House, Bertelsmann

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Stiftung, and Open Government Partnership acknowledge substantial progress while identifying areas requiring continued attention.

Looking forward, Armenia's governance development depends on maintaining reform trajectories despite inevitable obstacles including resource constraints, capacity limitations, political resistance, and geopolitical uncertainties. Constitutional consolidation clarifying authority distribution and strengthening accountability mechanisms merits continued attention. Strategic planning enhancement through improved analytical capacity, participatory processes, and coordination mechanisms remains essential. Operational modernization through digital transformation, anti-corruption efforts, and public financial management improvements requires sustained investment and attention.

The systemic interdependencies identified in this research underscore necessity of integrated approaches addressing multiple dimensions simultaneously. Fragmented reforms targeting single levels while neglecting others achieve suboptimal results. Comprehensive strategies recognizing how institutional foundations enable strategic planning, how strategic clarity guides operational implementation, and how operational effectiveness validates institutional arrangements prove more effective. This insight has particular salience for post-Soviet states where reform efforts often focus narrowly on specific dimensions – constitutional engineering, civil service reform, e-governance – without adequate attention to systematic connections.

Beyond the Armenian case, this research contributes to comparative political science by illuminating how international governance models adapt within specific local contexts. Post-Soviet transition states share certain common challenges – managing institutional legacies, building state capacity, establishing democratic legitimacy, managing geopolitical pressures—while exhibiting important variations based on initial conditions, reform strategies, and external influences. Understanding both universal principles and contextual specificities proves essential for effective comparative analysis and cross-national policy learning. The recent scholarly emphasis on context-sensitive reform design finds empirical support in this analysis (Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock 2023; Krogh and Triantafillou 2024, 3052–3055).

The methodological framework developed in this research – combining neo-institutional analysis, systems theory, structural-functional approaches, and comparative-historical methods – offers tools applicable beyond the Armenian case. The three-level analytical model (institutional, strategic, operational) provides structured approach for examining executive power effectiveness in diverse settings while remaining sufficiently flexible to accommodate contextual variations. Future research might apply this framework to other Eastern Partnership countries, conduct cross-regional comparisons including Central Asian states, examine specific sectors in greater depth, or develop quantitative indicators operationalizing the three-level model for systematic cross-national comparison.

Several limitations of this research deserve acknowledgment. First, while the study draws on multiple data sources, comprehensive quantitative assessment of some operational dimensions remains constrained by data availability. Future research incorporating survey data on citizen satisfaction, administrative process efficiency metrics, and comparative performance indicators would enrich analysis. Second, the focus on executive power somewhat brackets legislative and judicial dimensions that significantly affect overall governance quality. More integrated analysis examining inter-branch dynamics would provide fuller picture. Third, while this research addresses some social and distributional dimensions, deeper analysis of how governance reforms affect different social groups – by income, region, ethnicity, gender – would illuminate important equity considerations.

Despite these limitations, this research makes several contributions. Empirically, it provides comprehensive analysis of Armenia's governance evolution during critical period of transition and transformation. Theoretically, it demonstrates applicability of systemic-institutional frameworks integrating multiple theoretical perspectives for analyzing executive power effectiveness. Methodologically, it illustrates value of combining institutional analysis, strategic assessment, and operational evaluation for comprehensive governance assessment. Practically, it offers evidence-based recommendations for Armenian policymakers while providing insights potentially relevant for other transitional states pursuing governance modernization. As democracies worldwide confront unprecedented challenges – from climate change to digital transformation to social polarization – understanding how to build effective, legitimate, and resilient governance systems becomes increasingly critical. This research contributes to that essential endeavor.

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