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NGOS IN ARMENIA

*«STORMY PETRELS OF DEMOCRACY»
AND TOOLS OF EXTERNAL CONTROL*



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NGOS IN ARMENIA: «STORMY PETRELS OF DEMOCRACY» AND TOOLS OF EXTERNAL CONTROL

ANALYTICAL REPORT. INTRODUCTION

The 2019's summer and autumn political season in Armenia is marked by civil protests against the activity of the Soros Foundation, also known as Open Society Foundations (OSF), in the republic.* The representatives of AdevkaD and Veto social movements express sharp criticism of **Nikol Pashinyan**, the head of the government, as well as his entourage. The activists accuse them of being dependent and closely connected with the foreign *partners* that pursue destructive purposes both in Armenia and abroad. Among the activists' demands are the adoption of the law «On the Foreign Agent Network in Armenia» and the restriction of the right to be appointed to public offices for members of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with external financing.

During the preparation and conducting of the extended meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council (with the participation of the leaders of Russia, Iran and Singapore) in Yerevan on October 1, 2019, the Veto movement appealed to all parties concerned «*to cooperate actively in the exposure of foreign intelligence networks and the preclusion of their anti-state activities*». It is noteworthy that due to the police's actions the street march against the Soros Foundation didn't reach Marshal Baghramyan Avenue, while an «alternative» action held by the local office of the International Helsinki Citizens' Assembly didn't face any obstacles on its way.

Discontent with the work of the Soros Foundation, which is an odious financial speculator, «benefactor» and ideological fighter for the «advanced» ideas of the «global world», is not exclusive to Armenia. In particular, the local office of the Soros Foundation was shut down in 2017 in the organisation's historical homeland, Hungary. Discussing the «conspiracy theories», the global media deny any involvement of **George Soros** and his network in various acts to discredit the President of the USA, Donald Trump, however the real situation seems to be more difficult¹.

The Foundation's disciples take part in financing, organisational assistance and informational support of coups d'état in Serbia, Kirghizia, Moldova, Ukraine

and other countries via the branched network of formally independent organisations all over the world. Other activities of Soros-affiliated organisations include financial speculations and the creation of a positive image of the Foundation in the leading *global media*.

A notable example of external interference in domestic political processes was the take-over of the patrol and point duty service regiment by the armed members of the Sasna Tsrer party in the region of Erebuni (in the immediate vicinity of the center of Yerevan) in July 2016. Before and during this incident, the head of the Women's Resource Center of Armenia, the member of the trustee board of N. Pashinyan's Civil Contract party **Lara Aharonian** and her associates were distributing pamphlets with the description of the methods of resisting the police on social media². This conditional «coalition of approval» of actions of the armed Sasna Tsrer members structurally resembles the political coalitions that have been drivers of color revolutions in the post-Soviet states and, apart from NGOs, included the representatives of both liberal and nationalist groups³.

Almost two years after the end of the active phase of the Velvet protests, their leader Nikol Pashinyan shared the information on the cost of the change of power in the country on his Facebook page. In particular, approximately \$260,000 was transferred to the account he had opened. According to the presented report, the current head of the government has been receiving financial contributions from the supporters both from Armenia and abroad, including the ones from the USA, Russia, France and Canada. The largest donation was allegedly 5 million Armenian drams (approximately \$10,000)⁴. However, according to observers, Western sources of funding, including the shadow ones that are going to be described in the present report, remain hushed up. It is also no accident that many NGO activists with their highly specific life experience have become officials and deputies as a result of the Velvet

1 See, e.g.: Madsen, W. *George Soros's False Flag Factories* // <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2016/09/26/george-soros-false-flag-factories/>

* This organisation has been designated as undesirable in the Russian Federation according to the Decision of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation No. 2 of November 26, 2015.

2 See: Lara Aharonian. #Erebuniimportantinfoforprotesters to protect yourself from #police attacks #Armenia // <https://www.facebook.com/lara.aharonian/posts/10154188055175673>

3 Fomin I., Silaev N. *Armenian Nationalism vs. Armenian State: Cleavages and Coalitions in the Discourses on Sasna Tsrer* // Polis. Political Studies. 2018. No. 3. P. 86.

4 Pashinyan Gets \$260,000 Donations during the Demonstrations in Armenia // <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/5261201>

Revolution. This has led to progressive administrative chaos, general uncertainty and instability.

Is it a coincidence, or could one speak of some sort of «common program» implementation adapted for the peculiarities of a certain country? The contents of the present report are derived from public sources. They appear to allow the reader to come up with their own answer to this question. It should be noted at once that the activities of the non-governmental organisations that try to solve the country's domestic problems constructively and fruitfully instead of exacerbating them merit exceptional appreciation.

NGOs in Post-Soviet Armenia: A Historical Overview

The Soros Foundation has started its battle for hearts and minds of Armenian citizens back in the first post-Soviet years. It is perhaps the most scandalous element of the branched network of the infrastructure of external influence aimed at undermining of both the forming institutions of the «new» Armenian state and the Russian-Armenian relations, but it is far from being the only one. Just as in other «newly independent states» in the territory of the former USSR, an ideological vacuum and economic and social upheavals which led if not to the complete disappearance of the former Soviet «middle class», at least to its severe reduction, have contributed to the success of foreign NGOs and their networks in Armenia. In addition, international financial structures have been disposing of the potential rivals, which could cause problems for the western companies by means of output of at least relatively manufacturable and competitive products, by all means available⁵.

In addition to the signs of a severe crisis that has affected all the post-Soviet countries to some extent, Armenia continues being thrust into a sharp ethnopolitical conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Furthermore, after 1991 the small country had to overcome the disastrous consequences of the 1988 Spitak earthquake, which had claimed the lives of tens of thousands of citizens, on its own.

At the end of the Soviet Union, the international charity organisation *World Vision International* founded by Rev. Robert Pierce in 1950⁶ brought its humanitarian programs to Armenia.

⁵ Akopian N. *Armenia: To Restrict the Grant-Eaters' Activity, Legislative Changes are Necessary* // <https://vpoanalytics.com/2019/06/11/armeniya-dlya-ogranicheniya-deyatelnosti-grantoedov-neobhodimy-izmeneniya-v-zakonodatelstve/>; see also: Perkins J. *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man – Moscow, 2014.*

Jon Huntsman Sr., the head of a powerful Mormon family and the founder of Huntsman Corporation, which is one of the world's largest chemical corporations with a multi-billion dollar capital, has also lent certain assistance to the victims of the disaster. He later obtained Armenian citizenship and received a number of state awards⁷. Since 1990, *Huntsman Building Products LLC*, a tiling company, had been active in Yerevan. As will be seen below, direct evidence of the influence of Mormons and representatives of other religious sects, which are closely integrated into the intelligence, military and financial communities of the USA, on Armenian domestic political processes is available.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between prominent western leaders and actively globalizing «new» elites⁸ of practically all post-Soviet countries has opened the avenue for the expansion of «progressive Western values» that were used as a screen for the sweeping revision of the Soviet material and technical as well as human and intellectual heritage. Equally important is the formation of the «correct» scale of values provoking the weakening of the «traditional» institutions that hold the society together. As a consequence, the latter is separated into numerous groups being at odds with each other. The deindustrialization carried out in accordance with IMF methods resulted in the «commercialization» of the society. According to the U.S. CIA, trade and service sector accounts 54.5% of Armenia's GDP, while industrial production amounts to 27.8%, and the agroindustrial sector contributes 17.7%. According to the same source, the population's employment in services, tourism and trade sectors accounted for 46.7% of the country's working population in 2013. The employment in industrial production and in the agroindustrial sector amounted to 17% and 36.3%, respectively⁹. As a consequence, the population becomes more susceptible to marketing techniques which effectiveness increases with the development of social media and the technologies that are hard to regulate legally.

By the end of 2016, 45,735 social organisations (including NGOs, civil society organisations, public

⁶ *Our History. Going when no one else would* // <https://www.wvi.org/our-history>

⁷ *40 Trips to Armenia by the Father of the Potential U.S. Ambassador to Russia* // <https://rusarminfo.ru/2017/03/12/sorok-poezdok-v-armeniyu-otca-veroyatnogo-posla-ssha-v-rossii/>

⁸ For further details, see: Krylov A. *Peculiarities of Post-Soviet States' Development* // *Post-Soviet States: 25 Years of Independent Development Vol. 1. Western Wing of the CIS. Central Asia. P. 8-20.*

⁹ *The World Factbook. Armenia* // <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/am.html>

councils, with 146 think tanks and analysis centers) were officially registered in Armenia¹⁰; the vast majority of them exist only on paper. The civil sector in the Republic of Armenia is governed by the laws «About Public Organisations» (No. ZR-22 of January 16, 2017) and «About Funds» (No. ZR-516 of January 31, 2003). A distinctive feature of the current legislation is the encouragement of social organisations' financial autonomy. Thus, in contrast to the previous act of 2001, according to the new law, such organisations can engage in business activities, launch a commercial enterprise or become part of one¹¹.

The law permits NGOs' cooperation with other non-profit entities, including international ones. Foreign grants and donations can be freely used as sources of funding for organisations. The activity of subdivisions (branches, representative offices) of international and foreign «parent organisations» is regulated in the same way¹².

Another notable feature of Armenia is close cooperation between certain NGOs and the authorities. According to one theory, the distribution of government grants is controlled by the «monitoring group» that includes officials from the presidential administration along with representatives of «partner organisations»¹³. There is an argument that quite a sustainable infrastructure of public opinion formation through the mass media has been created long before the Velvet Revolution of 2018. It was based on both internal «self-financing» and external support arising from the task of geopolitical reformation of Armenia. In addition to minimization of financial costs by means of competent use of local resources, experts also point to the following distinctive features of the Western «soft power» policy:

- technological effectiveness entailing active participation of certain actors and entities, including the ones which are not quite desirable for the USA, in the domestic political process;
- competent staff, lobbyist and informational support;
- a high level of awareness of public and

10 Հաշվետվություն: ՀՀ իրավաբանական անձանց պետական ռեգիստրի գործակալության գրանցված կազմակերպությունների վիճակագրություն 01.10.16 դրությամբ // http://justice.am/storage/files/legal_acts/legal_acts_7549609686321_002stat_2016-10.pdf

11 Gabrielyan A. *Legislative Aspects of the Activity of Modern Public Organisations in the South Caucasus Region // Region and the World. 2017. Vol. VIII. No. 2. P. 77.*

12 Tasits K. *The Western Charitable Foundations in Armenia Serving as Soft Power Instruments // National Strategy Issues No. 5(44). 2017. Pp. 113-114.*

13 Areshev A. *Who Do Armenian NGOs Work for? // 2013. No. 12.*

political, socio-economic, moral and psychological transformations¹⁴.

The authors of 2008's analytical «Review of the Activity of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Republic of Armenia»¹⁵ identify several different types (which are undoubtedly closely interrelated) of foreign partners seriously affecting the formation of the civil society in the Republic of Armenia. The subsequent period has introduced new trends and certain events corresponding to the turbulent character of the country's domestic political life and generally confirmed the relevance of the classification presented:

1. Local and regional branches of foreign international or European political actors for which the NGO support is not the main form of activity. This is about the representations of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO, the UN (the United Nations Development Programme in particular), the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund, etc., in Yerevan. We will also add the local infrastructure of «The Eastern Partnership», a program established by the European Union in 2009 which has obviously faced a crisis after 10 years of implementation, to this list.
2. Diplomatic missions of the lead countries, among which the U.S., British, French, German, Polish, Swiss and Greek embassies can be highlighted. Owing to the nature of their activity, they prefer to fund small-scale projects (\$5,000-\$10,000 on average) related mainly to the protection of human rights, media development, the organisation of conferences and round table discussions, student and scientific exchanges, activities of professional associations, etc.
3. Specialized international and foreign organisations for the provision of international assistance, development agencies of several countries, etc., operating in the region, sometimes in close collaboration with the diplomatic missions of their countries, as well as with international organisations. This applies in particular to the United States Agency for International Development

14 Areshev A. «Soft Power» in the South Caucasus: A Key to the Solution of Problems or to Their Creation? // <http://www.kavkazoved.info/news/2013/04/05/mjagkaya-sila-na-ujnom-kavkaze-faktor-reshenia-problem-ili-ih-sozdania.html>

15 *Review of the Activity of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Republic of Armenia (excerpts) // <http://ea-studies.ru/main/158-obzor-deyatelnosti-nepravitelstvennyh-organizaciy-v-respublike-armeniya-vyderzhki.html>*

(USAID) and the American «*Eurasia Partnership Foundation*»; the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; the British Council¹⁶ and the British «Department for International Development», the German GTZ project, etc. Their grants are usually higher and more stable; they are provided on a more long-term basis. The activity of these organisations implies close cooperation with legislative, executive and judicial authorities of the host country¹⁷.

4. International organisations and foundations contributing to what is called «structural reforms in various fields» in the Western political lexicon and operating mainly through local offices (affiliates). Noteworthy among them are the *Open Society Institute*, *Transparency International*, *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch*, «Reporters Without Borders» («Reporters Sans Frontières»), *Freedom of Information Center*, *The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development* and many others. Apart from holding monitoring and educational programs, they have become a source of professional staff for the Armenian authorities (including the representatives of the middle management level, i.e. the persons directly involved in preparation of draft legislation, making management decisions etc.), as we shall see below. In compliance with the sponsors' ideology and the funding peculiarities resulting from their strict ideological beliefs, these organisations are usually highly politicized. Consequently, their activity in Armenia, including the support of partnership structures, is clearly politica as well.
5. German party funds (the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, etc.) concentrating almost entirely on the social and political sphere. Just as in other post-Soviet countries, they fund the organisation of academic conferences, events to enhance the skills of political party activists, support

of electoral processes, implementation of monitoring etc.

6. Charitable humanitarian (including religious) organisations and their local representatives, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, *Save the Children – Armenia*, *United Methodists Committee on Relief*, *OXFAM Armenia*, *Catholic Relief Service – Armenia Caucasus*, the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, *The Armenian Missionary Association of America*.
7. Organisations of the Armenian diaspora, as well as donors operating under the patronage of «traditional» Armenian political organisations operating both in Armenia and abroad. Among them are the Hayastan All-Armenian fund, the Armenian Assembly of America which is closely connected with the State Department and the Armenian lobby in the Congress¹⁸, the Tavitian Foundation, the Cafesjian Family Foundation, the Hovnanian Foundation and others.
8. The Government of Armenia and local administrations supporting (through state non-commercial organisations) primarily local projects aimed at a limited number of goals.
9. In our view, foreign sects and destructive pseudoreligious cults should be considered as a special kind of influence actors, for the activity of their local offices strongly affects the country's domestic political processes.

International donors cooperate with local NGOs; the latter, in their turn, implement grant programs independently or function as umbrella organisations for smaller subcontractors. Such flexible (networking) organisation of activities offers significant opportunities under liberal laws. Before moving to the description of activities of the most notable organisations, it should be noted at the outset that the declared good objectives have turned into increasing turbulence in the public administration. Particularly dangerous for the state engaged in an unresolved conflict is the growing managerial chaos in which even the heads of federal departments are often far from understanding the decision-making mechanisms which are seemingly within their areas of competence.

¹⁶ The British Council Declares the Cessation of Activity in Russia // <https://www.britishcouncil.ru/Statement-from-the-British-Council-on-Russia>

¹⁷ For example, USAID has been undertaking challenging projects in energy infrastructure development, social protection, public health care, as well as in the improved democratic governance for a long time. A project to reform the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia fundamentally by moving towards a parliamentary form of government (a proper referendum was held in December 2015) was being actively advanced with the technical assistance of GTZ.

¹⁸ At the turn of the 1990s, Raffi Hovannisian, a native of Fresno, California, was the head of its Yerevan office. Later he became the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of independent Armenia, the founder of the Heritage party and the candidate in the 2013 presidential elections with more than one third of the vote.

Open Society Foundations

On February 2, 2019, George Soros sang the Hosanna to the Velvet Revolution, making practical recommendations addressed to the new Armenian government:

«First, the U.S. government can start by reviving the U.S. – Armenia Joint Economic Task Force. The Task Force has been the main vehicle for trade between the two countries since 1999, but it is a modest agreement, only focusing on trade and economic development.

A more expansive agreement between the two countries could help Armenia fight corruption, which for years has eroded Armenia's economy. Transparency International has ranked Armenia 107th out of 180 countries, worldwide, for levels of corruption. Close to 30 percent of Armenia's population lives below the national poverty line, and the country struggles with high unemployment and low labor force participation — particularly among women.

Organisations that focus on key issues such as anticorruption and legal reforms can act as both a partner to and a check on the government, which would be essential as Pashinyan seeks to build a long-term democracy. However, this can only occur if civil society organisations are allowed to freely operate as nonpartisan entities.

The U.S. government could help the new prime minister, who has said he is committed to eradicating corruption, and recover stolen assets. Specifically, the United States could regularly exchange information on assets that oligarchs who backed the previous regime siphoned out of Armenia to the United States — and get them back.

For example, the U.S. Department of Justice could provide Armenia with updates on measures it is taking, such as prosecutions or individual sanctions, against kleptocrats. It could facilitate exchange programs for Armenian investigators and prosecutors to help the former learn about how to use effective investigative strategies — such as financial forensics — to investigate corruption. For decades, Armenia's old regime let ineffective training practices flourish. Armenia's existing anticorruption institutions, such as the national Anticorruption Council, for example, failed to prosecute corrupt officials.

Coming out of that corruption-filled milieu, Armenia's new class of civil servants will need outside assistance. Specialists from the U.S. law enforcement agencies could advise the Armenian government on legal processes and reforms that

would reduce the rate of conflicts of interest while strengthening the integrity of the civil service in general.

Second, the United States could help the Armenian government rebuild the independence of the judiciary by helping to make its law enforcement agencies — and its judges, prosecutors, and police officers — more understanding of civil rights and anticorruption practices. The U.S. State Department and the Department of Justice could help Armenian law enforcement hire outside experts to improve its police service and train prosecutors (and judges) on the protection of human rights and professional integrity.

An expanded Task Force could also allow the U.S. government to increase its support of human rights defenders and other civil society organisations. For example, the Task Force could establish provisions that would ensure that NGOs are able to participate in regular meetings with the new government. The agreement could call for annual meetings between these organisations, after which public reports about the meetings' findings could be released. This would help enhance accountability with the new government and Armenian citizens. The United States could also offer technical experts from the State Department to advise new Armenian civil servants on best practices for engaging with civil society.

Reforming a country plagued by a history of corruption can't be done overnight. Armenia has significant challenges ahead of it that will take time to overcome. To assist Armenia in its journey to sustainable democracy, the United States could expand the Task Force and commit to enhancing the relationship it has with Yerevan. Armenia now has a unique opportunity to overcome years of autocracy and corruption, and the United States can play a significant part in that»¹⁹.

We are using such an extensive quotation in order to make sure that we are talking about promoting the infrastructure of external management of both the socio-political process and the system of governmental decision-making, which is extremely far from the preached good goals. At the same time, characteristically, spending significant amounts on «charitable» purposes has never had a negative impact on the financial well-being of the billionaire-»philanthropist».

In Armenia Soros performs his activities

¹⁹ *How United States Can Support Democracy in Armenia*
// <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/how-united-states-can-support-armenia-s-fledgling-democracy>



George Soros @georgesoros · Feb 2

Strong support of **Armenia's** civil society is vital to the country's democratic present and future.



How U.S. Policymakers Can Support Democracy in Armenia

After a stunning revolution, Armenia has a once-in-a-generation chance to solidify democracy, transparency, and fair government. The United State...
opensocietyfoundations.org

through several structures, including *Open Society Foundation – Armenia*²⁰, *Partnership for Open Society*²¹ and *Eurasia Partnership Foundation*²². These structures are arranged as per «umbrella» principle, together they form a single platform for many non-governmental organisations within Armenia, working in many areas of public activity. The last-mentioned structure alone coordinates the activities of more than 60 non-profit organisations – from journalistic unions to organisations of national minorities. The local branch of the Foundation is headed by **Larisa Minasyan**, who talks with pathos about «the end of authoritarian rule»²³, and the Chairman of its Board of Directors is **David Khachatryan** – brother of **Sasun Khachatryan**, the Head of the Special Investigation Service of Armenia.

Local partners have been funded since 1998²⁴. According to estimates of the Armenian press, more than \$48 million target some 200 organisations in support of such programs as protection of women's rights, prevention of family violence, as well as the

development of free press, investigative journalism, observation missions, civil society institutions. As we mentioned above, the real activity of the Foundation in no way contributes to the implementation of the declared principles: organisations and individuals actively cooperating with it are noticed in activities which influence the internal political processes and protest moods of society. It is noteworthy that Larisa Minasyan herself determines the organisations and persons who should receive grants from the Foundation. She also has a certain impact on the distribution of grants in Armenia from other Western donor organisations²⁵, in which not only people from the entourage of Prime Minister Pashinyan, but also some of their predecessors, as well as activists of many political parties and groups are involved²⁶. There are suggestions about her direct role in the appointment of 27-year-old lawyer **Rustam Badasyan** as Minister of Justice²⁷.

Family ties and hierarchical relations of representatives of transnational NGOs are well known in protecting members of extremist groups, as well as criminal elements (such as the cruel

20 *Open Society Foundations. Armenia* // <http://www.osf.am/about-company/open-society-foundations/>

21 *Open Society Foundations. Armenia. Partnership for Open Society Initiative* // <http://www.osf.am/programs/partnership-for-open-society-initiative/>

22 *Eurasia Partnership Foundation* // <https://epfarmenia.am/>

23 «Armenia's Democratic Awakening Is a Warning to Authoritarians Everywhere» // <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/armenia-s-democratic-awakening-warning-authoritarians-everywhere>

24 According to some estimates, total amount is about \$50 million. In 2017 alone, the Armenian civil society institutions received more than \$3.5 million from the Soros Foundation, half of which went to «fight for human rights» and about a third to «support democracy and fight corruption».

25 *Ter-Ghevondian A. The Message of Soros to Pashinyan: Armenia, trouble came — open the gates* // <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2019/02/04/messedzh-sorosa-pashinyanu-armeniya-prishla-beda-otvoryay-vorota>

26 Among them we can mention Gegham Manukyan, the member of ARF Dashnaksutyun, who, according to the publications of the Armenian press, during several years received grants totaling more than \$160,000 for the promotion of a number of information and public-political programs of «Yerkir-media» TV company, where he is one of the leaders.

27 *Surprises in the Armenian Manpower Policy: Experienced Commissar and a Too Young Minister* // <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/columnists/20190620/19242873/Syurprizy-kadrovoy-politiki-v-Armenii-komissar-opyten-a-ministr-slishkom-yun.html>

murderer **Mher Enokyan**) through illegal pressure and abuse of official powers²⁸. Here is an incomplete list of organisations that have been consistently funded by the Open Society Foundations over the past few years with some explanations:

- **Transparency International** declares the goal of reducing corruption and improving governance by strengthening democracy. Since 2012, only from the Soros Foundation, this Organisation has officially received \$362,000. At the same time, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published by the Organisation «*aggregates data from a number of different sources that provide perceptions of business people and country experts of the level of corruption in the public sector*»²⁹. This description suggests a highly questionable nature of the study from a scientific point of view. The word «perception» emphasizes that the creators are not initially ready to prove its scientific reliability, based on the subjective opinion of third parties. There are no possibilities of any verification of this kind of research at all³⁰. After the victory of the Velvet Revolution, the coordinator of the election programs of Transparency International, Master of political science of the American University of Armenia **Armen Grigoryan** was appointed Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia. Many members of the Organisation also moved to public positions after change of power. For example, program coordinator **Lena Nazaryan** became Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, **Araik Arutyunyan**³¹ – Minister of Education and Science, **Liana Daltakhchyan** – Deputy Head of the Executive Office of Prime Minister. **Vanui Matevosyan** works in the State Non-Commercial Organisation «Center of Public Relations and Information», **Sarhat Petrosyan** is the Head of the Cadastral Register of the Republic, **Eriknaz Tigranyan** became Deputy Head of the Parliamentary Commission on Social Affairs and Health, **Artak Manukyan** is Advisor to the Prime Minister on a voluntary basis³².

- **The «Union of Informed Citizens»** is a public organisation founded in 2014, its multilateral activities are formally aimed at raising the level of public awareness. The goal of the Union is to reduce the spread of misinformation and its influence on the formation of public opinion. During its 4 years of operation, the Organisation has received grants of

28 Ref.: A. Sirunyan *A story about Abuse of Power* // <http://russia-armenia.info/node/55789>

29 *Corruption Perceptions Index 2015: Short Methodology Note* // https://transparency.org.ru/images/docs/cpi/CPI2015_ShortMethodologyNote_RU-EN.pdf

30 Ref.: O. Matveichev, A. Akopyan. *Myths about Corruption. M.: 2017* // <https://mif-corr.ru/node/67>

31 He is also the founder and Board member of the NGO «Youth Initiative HIMA».

32 Ter-Ghevondian A. Ref. mentioned article.

approximately \$590,000 from various foundations, of which more than half – from the Soros Foundation in the last two years. In 2016, the Organisation created a media outlet called the «Fact Checking Platform»³³. More than half of the financial injections were received after the change of power in Armenia, intended for the promotion of this platform. Earlier, in January 2018, three months before the change of power, the Organisation received about \$81,000 from the Soros Foundation to train 50 journalists and 75 activists to participate in the processes of civil movements³⁴.

The Head of the Organisation **Daniel Ioannisyan**, famous for scandalous anti-Russian actions and statements, in 2018 became the Secretary of the Special Commission, affiliated to the government, on the reform of the Electoral Code. In this position, he demanded the reduction of the powers of the current Council of Elders of Yerevan up to its dissolution, openly acting outside his own competence. In 2018, he actively defended the Head of the State Control Service **David Sanasaryan** («grant-eater») accused of corruption. **Daniel Ioannisyan** also made open attacks on then acting Director of the National Security Service **Arthur Vanetsyan**. Perhaps, Ioannisyan is the most outrageous and aggressive figure among the Armenian grantees. Similarly to *Transparency International*, after the victory of the Velvet Revolution, some employees of this Organisation ascended to different public positions. In particular, **Rafael Afrikyan**, one of the editors of the Fact Checking Platform, works in the «Public Relations and Information Center» of the Prime Minister's office, as well as another employee, **Ophelia Simonyan**. **Sona Ghazaryan**, who was previously in charge of media monitoring in the «Union of Informed Citizens», is now a member of the «Civil contract» party and a member of Parliament representing «My step» fraction³⁵.

- **Journalistic club «Asparez» / «Arena»**, founded by people with experience in journalism and television production, exists on the basis of personal, voluntary, financial and material investments. It is closely associated with the Yerevan press club³⁶, which is headed by the coordinator of the Armenian national platform «Eastern partnership» **Boris Navasardyan**. The stated goals are to protect the rights and interests of journalists, freedom of speech and will expression, conduct training courses and discussions. In 2012-2019 the Organisation, headed by **Levon Barseghyan**³⁷, received grants more than

33 *Փաստերի ստուգման հարթակ* // <https://fip.am/>; см., напр.: По следам фейков СМИ // <https://fip.am/ru/5972>

34 Ter-Ghevondian A. Ref. mentioned article.

35 Ref. same.

half a million dollars from the Soros Foundation (not the only source of funding). Along with «Progress for Gyumri» and media center «Dialogue» it is the largest grantee in Marz Shirak³⁶;

- **The Vanadzor office of the Helsinki Civic Assembly**, headed by the infamous **Artur Sakunts**, received about \$550,000 in 2012-2019. The stated goal is the formation of a society based on human dignity, democracy and peace, the promotion of various initiatives in the field of peace and supremacy of law. In reality, the self-proclaimed «human rights activists» actively promoted the idea that «a situation had been created in Armenia where legal mechanisms for resolving issues do not actually work and citizens have only to protest against the authorities as a last resort». Commenting on the intention of mentally unstable **Shant Harutyunyan** to blow up the presidential residence, Sakunts stated that «this was a typical example when we, the citizens, have the right to express our protest as a last resort, up to the uprising»³⁹, and that Armenia received «a new party of political prisoners» and in despair had to turn to civil uprising. Among the theses defended by Sakunts and his company there is such as «the right for armed uprising», which was fully manifested during the dramatic events in Yerevan in summer

36 *The leading partner of the Open Society Institute and its Armenian branch in the field of media development and improvement of legislative regulation of the media sphere, monitoring of electoral processes in Armenia, democratization and freedom of speech, etc. Since 1999, with the financial support of various departments of the Soros Foundation, the Yerevan press club has implemented more than 20 different grant projects. In 2017, the club's budget was about 87 million drams. The sources of external financing were the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (17.7 million drams), Media Initiative Center - from USAID funds (12.4 million drams), Armenian Financiers Association - also from USAID funds (44.6 million drams), Cooperation Agreement with «Democratic society - East» (2.1 million drams), Council of Europe and EU programs (6.9 million drams), etc.; a significant amount came from individuals without specifying their citizenship.*

37 *The number of his followers on the Facebook social network is more than 38 thousand (with the population of Gyumri about 120 thousand people). After the murder of seven members of the Armenian family of Avetisyan by a soldier of the 102nd Russian military base on January 12, 2015, it was at Barseghyan's call that protests were organized in Gyumri demanding the withdrawal of the Russian military base from the country and even the recall of the Russian Ambassador in Armenia. As noted in the second volume of the collection «Post-Soviet States: 25 Years of Independent Development», «the anti-Russian propaganda campaign launched by local media has created an extremely negative information and emotional background for Russian policy in the region. However, even before that, the distinctive feature of the information space of Armenia had been the silence of the local media about the positive aspects existing in relations with Russia and the full protrusion of real or imaginary problems». In July 2016, L. Barseghyan defended the group «Sasna tsrer», which had seized the building of the patrol service.*

38 *N. Akopyan. Ref. mentioned article.*

39 *Դա Շակոյի վերջին ճիչն էր, բռնությունն արդյունավետ է, ծայրահեղությունը՝ անխուսափելի. կարծիքներ Մաշտոցի պողոտայի միջադեպի մասին // <http://archive.hcav.am/events/դա-շակոյի-վերջին-ճիչն-էր-բռնությունն-ար>*

2016. On July 29, together with many «colleagues», the Vanadzor Office issued a statement of support for Sasna Tsrer militants⁴⁰. After the change of power in April-May 2018, the activities of the Vanadzor Office shifted towards promoting the ideas of the so-called «transitional justice». Observers have the impression that Sakunts and his team have fulfilled their «human rights» mission, the ongoing human rights violations are no longer of interest to them⁴¹.

- **The Helsinki Committee of Armenia** headed by **Avetik Ishkhanyan**, which controls, according to its own statements, the state's international obligations to protect human rights. The Committee also aims to promote democracy and protect the rights of people in police, penal institutions and the armed forces. Since 2012, the Organisation has received grants nearly \$400,000.

- **Institute of Public Policy**. It positions itself as an independent think tank («thought factory»), and its goal is to promote the development of transparent and accountable public policy. The founder is **Arevik Anapioşyan**⁴². In 2018, she was appointed Deputy Minister of Education of Armenia.

- **Association of investigative journalists**, founded in July 2000 by **Edward Baghdasaryan**. Trilingual website of the organisation hetq.am, specializing in investigative materials of varying degrees of political bias, receives European and American support (incl. about \$700,000 from Soros Foundations in 2012-2019).

- **The scientific and educational charitable Foundation «Restart»**, better known as the student initiative of the same name, became famous thanks to «loud» actions (including the attack on **Narik Malyan**⁴³). Receives financial support from several sources.

- **Public organisation «Center for the development of human rights»** claims to be actively involved in the provision of care, treatment and

40 *Հայտարարություն Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում մարդու իրավունքների զանգվածային խախտումների վերաբերյալ // <http://archive.hcav.am/events/01-08-2016-08-2/> Two titular functionaries of the Sasna Tsrer party - the Head of the «Constituent Parliament» Garegin Chugaszyan and the Head of the «Modus Vivendi» Center Ara Papyan - are long-time loyal clients of Western foundations.*

41 *Ter-Ghevondian A. Ref. mentioned article.*

42 *She received a master's degree in political science in the American University of Armenia. In 2012-2015 she was a visiting research fellow at the Centre for Human Rights at the British University of Essex. She also passed scientific training at the University of Massachusetts to study political thought and policy of the United States; consultant for Council of Europe, EU Delegation in Armenia and the Fund of Conrad Adenauer; lecturer for the «Center for European studies» at the Yerevan State University.*

43 *A preventive measure was chosen against Restart activists who had tried to throw the blogger into the waste bin // <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/society/20190308/17632277/v-otnoshenii-aktivistov-restart-pytavshih-sya-brosit-blogera-v-urnu-vybrana-mera-presecheniya.html>*

support to representatives of vulnerable groups. The purpose of the organization is to provide useful online information to patients, lawyers and doctors about human rights in obtaining medical care and health services. Since 2013, the public organization has received about \$218,000 as a grant from the Soros Foundations.

- **The center «Cooperation for democracy»** implements a series of programs in the field of human rights, environment, as well as judicial and legal reforms. The focus is on human rights violations relating to freedom of thought. Within the organization there is a website religions.am. Since 2013, the Center has received grants more than \$190,000 from the Soros Foundations.

- **Public organisation «Mandate»** implements the program of monitoring the activities of the National Assembly of Armenia, it has received almost \$500,000 from the Soros Foundations since 2012.

- **Public organisation «Protection of rights without borders»** acted as an intermediary in the financing of the public group that maintains supervision over the detention facilities of the Armenian police. According to the Soros Foundation data, it was given grants worth more than \$150,000 in 2015-2019.

- **The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression (CPFE)**. Its main tasks are to monitor the situation with freedom of speech in Armenia and the process of formation and development of independent media; to track and respond to violations of journalists' rights. In 2013-2016 it received about \$80,000 from the «Open Society – Armenia» Foundation.

- **«Center for globalization and regional cooperation»** by **Stepan Grigoryan**. It positions itself as an analytical center working to promote democratic values, strengthen civil society and the supremacy of law in Armenia, develop a free market economy, regional integration and peaceful settlement of regional conflicts.

- **The first scientific Internet television «Boon TV»** states its purpose as to contribute to the formation of society that uses the achievements of science and art. Received \$129,000 since 2014. The founder of the organization, **Gemafin Gasparyan**, was appointed Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs after 2018.

- **NGO «For Equal Rights»** with the declared goal of stimulating an atmosphere of tolerance, deepening democracy, raising the level of legal awareness through public discussions. The Organization is actively funded by Social club «Article 3», wherein the events are controversial in nature. In 2016-2017

it received \$143,000 from the Soros Foundations. The founder is member of the National Assembly **Gayane Abrahamyan**⁴⁴.

- **«Public Journalism Club»** includes press club and discussion platform «Media Center». Since 2012, the Armenian branch of the Soros Foundations has allocated about \$470,000 to the club.

- **Journalistic Association «Goris Press Club»** received grants about \$140,000 since 2012.

- **NGO «Real world, real people»** established by Minister of health Arsen Torosyan.

- **«Women's Resource Center»** promoting «gender» values and specifically understood struggle against sexual violence (grants in the amount of \$113,000). Thus, in April 2017, a program of sexual education for schoolchildren developed by the Center was presented to some Ministries of the Republic and school principals. According to this document, schools should talk about homosexuality, incest, masturbation, sexual relations and types of contraception. Attempts to introduce the pilot program in several schools in Yerevan were stopped. However, the «Women's Resource Center» continues its activities. Yerevan State University has a Center for gender studies and leadership, the Director of which is the co-founder of the Organization **Gohar Shahnazaryan**⁴⁵. Member of the Board of Trustees of the «Civil Contract», Head of the «Women's resource center» **Lara Agaronyan** is among the active supporters of the ratification of the so-called «Istanbul» Convention, as well as (presumably) some Ministers in the government of N. Pashinyan. The statistics of relevant crimes presented by NGO «activists» differ from the official statistics in a big way. The data of the National statistical service on rape and some other crimes are suppressed, and the «information» of NGOs, supported by rumors on social networks, is given almost as the ultimate truth⁴⁶.

- **«Women's Support Center»** headed by member of the Board of Trustees of the «Civil contract» party Maro Matosyan. Since its inception, the Organization has received more than \$2 million as grant funds (from various sources).

- **Association of Women with University Education**. The goal is to promote democratization, creation of civil society, protection of human rights, equality of rights and opportunities for men and women. In addition, this is increasing the role of

44 «Հոդված 3» ակումբ - #Article3 Club // <https://www.facebook.com/article3club/>

45 A. Ayzazyan. *Methods of activity of the Open Society Armenia Foundation in sponsoring coups and lobbying perversions* // <http://geoclub.info/metody-deyatelnosti-fonda-otkrytoe-obshchestvo-armeniya-pri-sponsirovani-gosudarstvennyx-perevorotov-i-lobbirovani-izvrashhenij/>

46 A. Areshv, Armenia: Will «The Istanbul Convention» be ratified? // <http://russia-armenia.info/node/60244>.

women in politics and society, overcoming gender stereotypes and discrimination. Since 2012 the organisation has received \$123,000.

- **The Coalition for the prevention of violence against women**, established in 2010, calls for the adoption of the law «on the prevention of family violence and protection of persons subjected to family violence» under the guise of protecting women's rights. In 2014-2015 it received \$40,000.

- **Pink Armenia** («Public information and need for knowledge»). The main goal is to protect the rights of sexual minorities, to stimulate the process of protection of human rights. The Organisation is trying to change public policy on LGBT issues. In 2017, along with the aforementioned head of The Vanadzor office of the Helsinki Civic Assembly A. Sakunts, the activists of the Organisation appealed to law enforcement agencies with a request to obtain a legal assessment of the statements of Deputy **Gevorg Petrosyan** «that there is no place for LGBT activists and sectarians in Armenia».

The key information megaphone of the Pro-Western intelligentsia (intellectual society) of Armenia is Lagir and some other, mainly electronic media, whose technological capabilities played a significant mobilizing role in April and May of 2018.

A distinctive feature of 2019 was the allocation of \$210,000 to the International Center for Transitional Justice, which is obviously related with the interest of external players in the «reform» of the judicial system of Armenia, including its personnel. In December 2018 several organisations developed a concept («road map») of «Necessary reforms aimed at the restoration of the Republic of Armenia», containing some notable provisions: «Investigation of the former repressive regime and assessment of the current situation», «Change of the judiciary personnel, as a crash of tools, appointed by illegitimate presidents», «Transitional justice», etc.⁴⁷ In addition, on December, 19 this year they issued a joint statement on the need to develop a strategy for «transitional justice»⁴⁸.

The list of grantees of the Open Society Foundation also includes charitable and legal organisations: *Unison, Tax-Payers and Businessmen's Rights Protection, Europe in Law Association, Armenian Innocence Project, CPI Rights Protection Armenian Center*. Some other organisations and individual

47 Հայաստանի Հանրապետության վերականգնման ուղղված անհրաժեշտ բարեփոխումների հայեցակարգ (ճանապարհային քարտեզ) // <https://hcav.am/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ArmRefConcept-9.12.2018.pdf>

48 Քաղաքացիական հասարակության ներկայացուցիչների վերաբերմունքը Հայաստանի արտահերթ խորհրդարանական ընտրությունների և նորընտիր խորհրդարանի առաջիկա անելիքների վերաբերյալ // <https://transparency.am/hy/statements/view/311>

researchers received single or smaller grants⁴⁹.

According to the documentation of the Open Society – Armenia Foundation, among the long-term goals for the «post-revolutionary» 2019 are the following:

- To ensure controlled public participation in government, dominance of Pro-Western ideas in the information space through the creation of new distribution channels (budget of \$140,000); to support activists (\$60,000); to protect liberal discourse and opposition to conservative propaganda (\$75,000). Funding is provided through the «Independent journalism support program» of the Open Society Foundations.
- Control over the organisation of the educational process in educational institutions; taking into account gender factors in the preparation of textbooks; strengthening the position of the «Institute of public policy» (\$40,000). Development of uniform requirements for educational programs (\$28,000). Strengthening the principles of equality and immersiveness (\$11,000). Advising politicians in the fields of education and science by experts affiliated with the Foundations (\$30,000). Additional funds from the Head Office of the Foundation will amount to \$110,000.
- Strengthening its own position as a regulator of public organisations, as the center for coordination of human rights activities, as the controller of the state's social obligations (\$190,000). Reforming the activities of law enforcement agencies (\$100,000). Additional funds will amount to \$45,000 through the «Eurasian program» line of the main Foundation and \$155,000 through the line of «Human Rights Initiative».
- Preservation of democratic norms and practices; ensuring the participation of NGOs and activists in the implementation of the provisions of the Armenia – EU Agreement on Comprehensive and Expanded Partnership signed in 2017. Followers of the Foundation are expected to actively participate in the implementation of this program, among them are those holding various positions

49 Among them – the current member of the National Assembly Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, the author of a number of works, including such as «Analysis of the content of school textbooks on the history of the Armenian Church and their impact on the younger generation» and «Cemeteries, crematoriums or other decisions»; Head of the Department of Information and Public Relations, State control service of the Republic of Armenia Zaruhi Mejlumyan; deputies Sos Avetisyan, Gayane Abrahamyan, Tagui Kazaryan and others.

in public authorities. There are such measures planned as to implement the provisions of this Agreement with emphasis on strengthening the role of civil society and civil society control over the government (\$160,000), and to develop expert recommendations for the reform of law enforcement (\$40,000). They do not forget to provide «access to justice» to representatives declared as «vulnerable» and «marginalized» groups (LGBT, sectarians) (\$185,000).

- A reserve of \$128,000 is allocated for special needs and unplanned expenses⁵⁰.

According to some researchers, the Open Society Foundations have a monopoly on the work of non-governmental organisations in Armenia. It is through the Foundations office that the main financial flows pass, and it is almost impossible for the civil society activists to receive grants without the approval of the leadership. At the same time, the Soros Foundations' activities are closely connected with the European structures operating in Armenia, which received a new institutional content after the approval of the Eastern Partnership Program in 2009.

At the same time, the conflict of interests between the embassies of the leading Western countries in Yerevan and the structures of the Soros Foundations is reflected in the latter's support for protests against the development of the Amulsar gold deposit, which, apparently, is due to commercial differences between various factions and groups of Western elites.

It is not yet clear with what degree of radicalism the ideological concepts of the «thunderbird of world liberal democracy» will be introduced into the minds and hearts of Armenian citizens. After attacks on the institutions of traditional society, such as the Church, the army and the family, were not effective enough, the bet is placed on the so-called «transitional justice». At the same time, it is not at all excluded that in the future the military and economic components of Russian-Armenian relations will again become the subject of Soros' «concerns».

European Endowment for Democracy

Being founded by the structures of the European Union at the initiative of Poland, the *European Endowment for Democracy* (EED) has implemented more than 5 thousand projects as of 2019. According to the press release of the European Commission, the fund is intended to provide financial grants to

⁵⁰ Soros Foundation in Armenia. Independent study of the system of external governance of the country // <https://cont.ws/@true-armenia/1426046>

journalists, bloggers, non-profit organisations, trade unions, as well as political organisations, including those working in exile. The EED focuses on supporting democratic movements in the former Soviet republics and the Third World countries, to finance which it has spent more than €50 million as of 2019. The Fund uses a context-based approach, which assesses the degree of freedom thrived by pro-democracy activists in the partner nation. According to some researchers, this approach has much in common with the *effect-based operations*, i.e. with the network warfare development of the Pentagon. According to this concept, a network is any environment that allows for dissemination of relevant information. Means of network (information) warfare are considered as tools of subordination of the target society by influencing the behaviour of members of this society. Network warfare accumulates the technologies of expansion, territory divestiture, regime change without using military force, which could be observed in Serbia (in 2000), Georgia (in 2003), Ukraine (in 2004 and 2013-2014) and other countries⁵¹. The authors of the EED annual report rather proudly emphasize emergency support was provided to civil society activists in Armenia during the Velvet Revolution in the response to a fast-developing political situation⁵². They pay closer attention to young people in Ukraine, the Western Balkans and Tunisia. Armenia is also no exception.

As an umbrella pattern for a number of lower-level European non-governmental organisations, the EED coordinates its work with the Soros Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and USAID. Not surprisingly, many organisations, such as the Restart Student Initiative, take full advantage of cross funding. Two student activists from Armenia, **David Petrosyan** and **Amalia Kostanyan**, have been awarded with the Restart Student Initiative prize, which unites «*active university students from all over Armenia who want to make significant changes in higher education*».

United States Agency for International Development

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the federal government agency responsible for providing government assistance to foreign countries. Having appeared in the former Soviet countries in 1992, it is consistently

⁵¹ Prokhvatilov V. Post-Soviet World in the Target of Network Warfare // <https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2019/06/04/postsovetskij-mir-v-pricele-setevyh-vojn-48321.html>

⁵² Supporting People Striving for Democracy // <https://www.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/eu-turn-2019eedannualreport2018.pdf>

increasing the range of its so-called soft power activities. After 20 years of work in Russia, in 2011 Moscow denounced the corresponding agreement as absolutely discriminatory against the Russian Federation.

The USAID has declared its goal in Armenia to contribute to achievement of sustainable development: increased competition, improved democratic governance, and secure energy resources through improved social services and strengthened civil society. In particular, in 2013, an Armenian Anti-Corruption Strategy Assistance Programme Agreement was signed for 2015-2018 (with subsequent supplements for increased funding), but it seems to be impossible to assess its positive impact. The USAID Armenian Office submitted a proposal to amend the agreement signed on September 28, 2013 with the Government on Cooperation for Development of the Most Effective and Regulated Governance, which provides additional funding of \$4,785,000 to continue implementation of the programmes⁵³.

The total amount of assistance provided to the Republic of Armenia by USAID since 1992 is about \$1 billion. According to USAID Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia **Brock Bierman**⁵⁴, if in 2015 the organisation budget for Armenia was \$8 million, then in 2018 it will be \$18 million. Therefore, just in three years, the budget was more than doubled. Brock Bierman places a premium on development of «*technologies that create highly paid jobs and afford people more opportunities to take care of themselves and their families. In addition to technologies, market diversification, development of small and medium-sized enterprises in agriculture or tourism are important.*»

The agency supports various projects in the republic, the declared goal of which is to fight corruption, judicial reforms and other directions typical for transnational structures. Concerning education, it is worth noting the Strengthening Inclusive Education System in Armenia Programme, which suggests modernization of school infrastructure. The ideological and geopolitical component of such projects fully correlates with the Agency's guiding documents, including the recently published «*Countering Malign Kremlin Influence (CMKI) Development Framework*»⁵⁵. For the first area – counter efforts to undermine

democratic institutions and the rule of law – it is proposed to work with society and strengthen civil society's resilience against efforts to restrict and harass non-governmental activity, as well as to reduce the vulnerability of electoral and political processes to external (Russian, of course) interference. The second area concerns work with independent media and countering manipulation of information. The third area relates to combating vulnerabilities in the energy sector, including enhancing the energy security of partner countries, reducing dependence on Kremlin-controlled energy resources and improvement of oversight of the energy sector. In Armenia, this means that the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant will be shut down and that the country's energy security will be inevitably undermined, which the European Union, Turkey and Azerbaijan have consistently sought. Finally, it is proposed to promote export diversification and improve the financial market ability to comply with the international practices and standards as measures to improve economic security. In normal-people speak, the existing negative trends will be consolidated, public debt will increase and dependence on international financial speculators will continue.

In December 2018, B. Bierman arrived in Armenia for the first time since 2003 to meet with Prime Minister Mr. Pashinyan and «*already in June, implementation of the programme through the Office of Transition Initiatives started, and now we provide additional 6 million dollars for similar programmes*». The Agency's activities in Armenia are an important element of the Armenian-American political and diplomatic dialogue and consultations at various levels.

Thus, at the end of June current year, the State Commission for Protection of Armenian Economic Competition negotiated with the USAID delegation headed by the Expert for Economic Growth, Education and Environment **Paul Olivier**. Representatives of the American delegation informed that they are in Armenia for the purpose of elaboration of the new development strategy for the republic. In particular, USAID intends to assess the inclusive economy growth, which will be carried out jointly with the economists of *Integra Government Services International*⁵⁶. During the meeting with the Armenian Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Araik Harutyunyan in

53 USAID will allocate \$4.7 million more to Armenia // <https://verelq.am/ru/node/52348>

54 USAID բարձրաստիճան սպաշտոնյա՝ ԱՄՆ արտաքին օգնության ծրագրերի ֆինանսավորման մասին վերջնական որոշումը դեռ կայացված չէ // <https://www.amerikayidzayn.com/a/5049641.html>

55 *Countering Malign Kremlin Influence (CMKI) Development Framework* // https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/CMKI_Development_Framework_.pdf

56 USAID is elaborating a new development strategy for Armenia // https://finport.am/full_news.php?id=38750&lang=2

Yerevan on August 26, U.S. Ambassador **Lin Tracy** expressed her full readiness to support the reform of Armenian education, as well as to support all initiatives to preserve the Armenian cultural heritage.

Araik Harutyunyan assured that Armenia is always happy to cooperate with the United States, especially in terms of education.

On October 11, 2019, National Assembly Chief of Staff-Secretary General **Tigran Galstyan** and USAID Armenia Mission Director **Deborah Grieser** signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Support of Parliamentary Expertise Analytical Centre. *«I believe that the legislative body provides the accountability of the executive body. So, the parliamentary research services provided by good means are important: to provide neutral and unbiased analysis, as well as substantiate supply stable instruments for the parliamentary oversight analysis»*, Deborah Grieser noted⁵⁷. All this presumes a high level of awareness of the American partners about the internal political dynamics in Armenia and opportunities to influence the legislative process actively. Two years earlier, Ms. Grieser stated, «we have rather strict rules. When we first sign an agreement, we do not just say so: «We have «X» thousands or millions of dollars. The first thing we do is to evaluate this organisation or the government body, evaluate the finance, procedures, and activities of the organisation, and see if it has a system that will allow it to manage the funds provided. And this is just the beginning. Then, during the programme implementation, we carry out continuous monitoring, including financial monitoring. Moreover, all our programmes, at least those that receive more than a certain amount of funding, should also be independently audited»⁵⁸.

According to publications in Armenian media, some USAID programmes, such as support in digitalization of the geological data of Armenia within *Ensure Transparency in Mining programme*, could pursue double goals⁵⁹. In addition, following the Armenian Armed Forces mission to Syria, the USAID reduced the funds allocated for humanitarian demining in Nagorno-Karabakh. In the above-mentioned interview, B. Bierman spoke about importance of forming the next generation of leaders loyal to the so-called western democratic values.

Some officials of Pashinyan's government, such

⁵⁷ Memorandum of Understanding on Support of Parliamentary Expertise Analytical Centre Signed // http://www.parliament.am/news.php?cat_id=2&NewsID=12139&year=2019&month=10&day=11&lang=rus

⁵⁸ We are here to support the development of Armenia - Director of USAID Yerevan Office // <https://rus.azatutyun.am/a/28810509.html>

⁵⁹ Suspicious Grant. What are the true goals of the American gift // *Golos Armenii*, December 2, 2016

as Finance Minister **Atom Janjughazyan**, finished USAID school.

National Endowment for Democracy *

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was founded in 1983 by the US Congress.

The activity of this formally non-governmental organisation is aimed at development and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world, and it is financed through annual direct allocations and trust fund of the State Department. One of the founders of the NED, **Allen Weinstein**, is attributed to a phrase: «*Much of what we do today was secretly done by the CIA 25 years ago*». Regional projects aimed at supporting democracy in selected national republics (Baltic countries, Ukraine, Armenia) and the autonomies of the Soviet Union have been included in the reports of the Foundation since 1988. According to NED report for 1991, «*the communism collapse and Moscow's power decline in the isolated republics have created a need for urgent support and provided the Foundation with a unique opportunity to strengthen new democratic institutions and civil society... The sudden change of regimes has not led to the automatic establishment of global peace and democracy, but has resulted in impoverishment of the population, strengthening of social and interethnic contradictions, nationalism growth, reversal of democratic reforms and strengthening of authoritarian tendencies in some countries*».

Currently, the NED provides more than 1,000 grants annually from the U.S. state budget to support projects of non-governmental organisations abroad working to achieve the so-called democratic goals in more than 90 countries. In reality, however, the fund promotes U.S. interests through funding of various civil society institutions. In Armenia, its clients include Progress of Gyumri, Dialogue Media Centre and Journalists Club Asparez, which are united by a total grant of nearly \$45,000. Progress of Gyumri is a production studio, Dialogue Centre is an expert platform, and Journalists Club Asparez in its turn supplies experts⁶⁰.

Other clients of NED are the aforementioned the Helsinki Association, the Helsinki Committee of Armenia, investigative journalists, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor, as well as the Caucasus Centre of Peace-Making Initiatives, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression, and other organisations. In 2010, the Helsinki Committee of Armenia received \$46,474 to support the activities of organisations aimed at consolidating civil society

⁶⁰ Akobyan N. Specified work

Project Title:	Armenian Times Newspaper	Year: 2014
Organization Name:	Dareskizb LLC	Award Amount: \$36,750
Project Region:	Eurasia	
Project Country:	Armenia	
Project Focus:	Freedom of Information	
Description:	To improve the quality and increase the availability of objective news and information in Armenia. The organization will expand and improve the newspaper, Haykakan Zhamanak ("Armenian Times"), the country's most widely-read independent newspaper. The organization will use Endowment support to increase the length of the paper, improve its layout, and expand its coverage of corruption, rule of law, and regional issues.	
Project Title:	Armenian Times Newspaper	Year: 2016
Organization Name:	Dareskizb LLC	Award Amount: \$40,785
Project Region:	Eurasia	
Project Country:	Armenia	
Project Focus:	Freedom of Information	
Description:	To improve the quality and increase the availability of objective news and information in Armenia. The organization will expand and improve the quality of its website, Haykakan Zhamanak ("Armenian Times"), and publish a printed version of its daily newspaper, which is the country's most widely-read independent news source. The organization will enhance the website's layout and design, produce video reports, and expand its coverage of corruption, poverty, and regional issues.	
Project Title:	Armenian Times Newspaper	Year: 2017
Organization Name:	Dareskizb LLC	Award Amount: \$40,840
Project Region:	Eurasia	
Project Country:	Armenia	
Project Focus:	Freedom of Information	
Description:	To improve the quality and increase the availability of independent news and information in Armenia. The grantee will expand coverage of current events on its website. Under this program, participating journalists will devote particular attention to covering the Yerevan City Council and 2017 parliamentary elections.	

based on the ideals of freedom and democracy in rural areas of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. In 2013, the Helsinki Association received a grant of \$62,250 for monitoring and human rights awareness raising. The Caucasus Centre of Peace-Making Initiatives received \$149,822 from the NED from 2010 to 2013 to promote cooperation and understanding among civil society all over the Caucasus. Famous for its scandalous statements and actions, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor received \$131,650 from the NED (in addition to the proceeds from the Soros Foundation, as well as from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Civil Society Institute, Transparency International and other transnational organisations) over the past four years⁶¹.

The Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression regularly received grants for monitoring state information sources, which supposed improvement of access to official information through monitoring of government websites. The Committee should monitor the websites of 52 state bodies and regional administrations and apply for information and publish its findings, etc.⁶² Finally, it should be noted that the list of NED grantees included Haykakan Zhamanak newspaper for some time, the chief editor of which since 2012 has been **Anna Hakobyan, Pashinyan's wife**⁶³.

⁶¹ In particular, the organisation received about \$10,000 from the American Bar Association for the Vanadzor Legal Clinic project. Strengthening Human Rights Protection Mechanisms in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia Project received \$20,280 from the US Embassy in Armenia.

⁶² See: Western Grants to Armenian NGOs // <https://ria.ru/20140613/1012353820.html>

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (USA)*

Better known by the acronym NDI (National Democratic Institute), the organisation headed by former U.S. Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright**, is actually associated with the National Endowment for Democracy, receiving funding from the state budget as part of the State Department's expenditures for the U.S. Agency for International Development. Persons associated with the US intelligence agencies, such as **Otto Reich, John Negroponte**, and **Henry Cisneros**, remembered for their persistent attempts to overthrow the Maduro regime in Venezuela, and **Elliott Abrams**, took part in the Foundation's activities. The organisation is also active in many former Soviet republics, including Armenia (since 1995).

In January 2015, there was information about the temporary freezing of the NDI office in Armenia due to financial reasons⁶⁴. According to **Gegham Sargsyan**, head of the NDI office, by this time, she had not used the funds of USAID for a year, receiving funding from the National Endowment of Democracy⁶⁵. After September 3, 2013, when the third President **Serzh Sargsyan** announced the change of the European integration vector to Eurasian, the NDI mainly financed the political system and monitored the behaviour of political parties that voted for

⁶³ See: Biography of the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan // <https://tass.ru/info/5184054>

⁶⁴ NDI suspended its activity in Armenia // <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/255244/>

⁶⁵ Why the Armenian Office of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) closed down // <https://ru.1in.am/1076761.html>

joining the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

At the same time, the civil area remained in the centre of attention of the organisation, and the Velvet Revolution of 2018 opened new opportunities for it. In January 2019, the President of the National Assembly of Armenia **Ararat Mirzoyan** met with the representatives of NDI, as well as the International Republican Institute (IRI). According to the official information, Senior Resident Director for the NDI **Laura Nichols** and IRI Chief Advisor **Chris Holzn** presented the mandates of their organisations and expressed interest in the needs and further plans of the Armenian legislative body. Wishing success to the newly elected parliament, the international partners expressed readiness for a close cooperation and implementation of programmes based on needs assessments⁶⁶. According to **Arman Ghukasyan**, an expert of the Glas Naroda Club, during preparation for the 2018 early parliamentary elections the NDI fully financed the final debate between the top officials of the country⁶⁷.

British Council

On July 16, 2004, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs **Vardan Oskanian** and British Ambassador **Torda Abbott-Watt** signed an agreement On Cultural Centres, which legitimized the cultural ties between the two countries, which have been developed since the opening of the British Council office in Armenia in April 2001. According to the document, the British Council was recognized as the official body coordinating cultural relations between Armenia and Great Britain. The main goal of such organisations was development of Armenian-British relations in terms of language, literature, culture and art, science and technology, as well as the exchange of knowledge⁶⁸. At the same time, the Agency for State Register of Legal Entities of the Ministry of Justice of the republic does not list the British Council.

The British Council is a *public* organisation under the auspices of the British Foreign Office.

Mildly speaking, its activities in Armenia are controversial. Telling about the ten years of British Council work in Armenia in 2012, then-Ambassador **Catherine Leach** focused on promotion of English language, art, education and culture: «*Working in*

diffusion of English language with more than 600 teachers and about 1,500 users across Armenia, the British Council periodically conducted internship courses and presented innovative methods of teaching English, which contain all the necessary information to make the course more attractive and accessible». In regards to art, the Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival, the Arm Fest and the ReAnimania festivals were supported, and their annual coverage was up to 450 thousand people. 96 specialists received scholarships from Chiving and John Smith to study in the UK⁶⁹.

We are referring only to the visible side of the much more diversified activities of the Council, which is involved in many scandals (from criminal to spy scandals), around the world⁷⁰. Its cultural and educational programmes in Armenia were accompanied by a number of scandals.

Thus, the English actor and dancer **Nigel Charnock**, who arrived in Armenia in 2007, ventured of desecrating the national flag, which caused a protest of the Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs. In 2010, after another cultural and educational event in the form of a three-day seminar in Tsakhkadzor on promotion of the rights of so-called sexual minorities, there were proposals to ban or regulate its activities in the republic⁷¹. Meanwhile, the influence of British partners on the cultural policy of the Armenian authorities is steadily increasing. Thus, on 18-19 October 2018, a two-day forum entitled Price and Value was held in Aghveran, where almost all heads of state cultural institutions and international experts took part. The event was opened by Deputy Minister of Culture **Ara Khzmalyan** and Director of the British Council Office in Armenia **Arevik Saribekyan**⁷².

German Society for Technical Cooperation

Like the USAID, the German Society for Technical Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH) provides technical assistance to third world countries, often having long-term political consequences. Thus, the trusted personnel with the GTZ background were involved

69 10 Years of British Council Activities in Armenia // <https://armenpress.am/rus/news/677502.html>

70 See, for example: Medvedev advised foreign NGOs to behave decently in Russia // <https://ria.ru/20080218/99476508.html>

71 It should be mentioned that recently other western structures in Armenia, such as the German Heinrich Böll Foundation, have also moved in this direction. Most likely, it is related to the attitude of the great majority of the Armenian society, devoted to traditional values, to overcoming the extremely negative attitude towards this category of citizens.

72 Gevorgyan Z. So far, the price is the main cultural value // *Golos Armenii*, October 17, 2019.

66 Ararat Mirzoyan receives representatives of NDI and IRI Armenia // <https://news.am/eng/news/493586.html>

67 Are Soros and the European Foundation preparing Restart of the revolution in Armenia? <https://easaily.com/ru/news/2019/02/13/soros-i-evropeyskiy-fond-gotovyat-restart-revolyucii-v-armenii>

68 Armenia and Great Britain signed an Agreement On Cultural Centres // <https://ria.ru/20040716/635042.html>

in preparation of the revision of the Constitution of Armenia in 2015. First of all, it is the former advisor to the President of the Constitutional Court and Master of the University of Bonn **Vardan Poghosyan**, who for many years headed the GTZ office in Armenia. He also represented President Serzh Sargsyan in the Armenian Parliament and was included in the specialized commission, which prepared the draft of constitutional amendments. Another prominent representative of GTZ in the judiciary of the country is the current Chairman of the Constitutional Court **Hrayr Tovmasyan**. According to the publications of Armenian experts, such a large representation of former prominent employees of the German government organisation in the Armenian judiciary is not accidental, as the *Hertie School of Governance* actively operates within the framework of the *Transformation Lawyers Winter Academy*, financed by GTZ. As part of the project, young lawyers had the opportunity to practically develop their legal and law-enforcement skills and exploit new knowledge for the so-called transformation of law⁷³. Additionally, one of the long-term consequences of the constitutional reforming in Armenia has been permanent administrative chaos, particularly dangerous in the context of partial blockades and the country's involvement in a live ethno-political conflict.

Some Other Non-Governmental Organisations, Funds and Programmes

The influence of both individual western and transnational agents of influence is by no means limited to these structures. Thus, the Union of Armenian Students of Great Britain and the United Liberal National Party associated with it played a significant part in formation of the Civil Contract Party (headed by the current Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan) and the Bright Armenia Party (headed by **Edmond Marukyan**). The official partners of Yerevan School of Political Studies are the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany), the Armenian Civic Education Association, the Association of Schools of Political Studies under the Council of Europe, and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁷⁴. An example of the projects implemented by the School is the three-year EU co-funded programme *Democracy Starts with You! with the guiding principle: Democracy has*

⁷³ Martirosyan S. *NGO in Armenia: Non-governmental lobbyism without law* // <https://www.ritmearasia.org/news--2018-08-13--npo-v-armenii-nepravitelstvennyj-lobbizm-bez-zakona-38004>

⁷⁴ Yerevan School OF Political Studies // <http://www.ysps.am/>

to be experienced; it cannot be learned from books only!

The aim of the programme was to stimulate the right perception of democracy among rural youth and persons belonging to national minorities in the South Caucasus countries.

Finally, in 2018, the CampCamp workshop organized in Yerevan by the *Prague Civil Society Centre*, an organisation funded by the United States under H.R.3364 - Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act of 2 August 2017, created a sensation.

Article 254 of this document provides funding for Countering Russian Influence in the amount of \$250,000 for 2018 and 2019⁷⁵. The participants of the event were received by then Deputy Prime Minister **Ararat Mirzoyan**, who used to be the coordinator of the *USAID International Foundation for Electoral Systems Programme*.

The most important element of American and British public diplomacy is educational programmes and exchanges. In particular, since 1992, Education USA Armenia has been working in Armenia, it is engaged in informing the Armenian society about the US education system, American universities, etc. Fulbright and Humphrey programmes are widely known in Armenia. As part of the first programme, specialists and scientists are awarded grants to give lectures and pursue researches in the United States. The Humphrey Programme offers a full scholarship programme for government officials. Armenian schoolchildren and students can also participate in different scientific and educational programmes⁷⁶.

Moreover, there were a number of foreign organisations in Armenia, including the International Crisis Group⁷⁷, the Peace Corps, NATO Information Centre, *Policy Forum Armenia*⁷⁸. We can continue the list without any illusions regarding their true geopolitical orientation.

Sects and Pseudo-Religious Cults

Finally, for the purposes of this report, as an independent, specific subject of influence, it is necessary to mention religious sects, many of which

⁷⁵ *Revolution fashion: how young people are taught to stage a coup with western money* // <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/601738-moda-na-revolyciyu>

⁷⁶ Jivanyan D. *Public diplomacy as a tool for enhancing the image of the United States in the Republic of Armenia* // *National and Federal Relations Issues*. 2015. No. 4 (31). Page 105-110.

⁷⁷ Areshev A., Vrtanesian K. *Peacekeeping games around the Karabakh conflict* // <http://politcom.ru/2068.html>

⁷⁸ For more information, see: *100 thousand tons plus Armenia: Huntsman's tentacles in Nikol Pashinyan's palace* // <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2019/05/10/100-tysyach-tonn-plyus-armeniya-shchupalca-hantsmana-vo-dvorce-nikola-pashinyana>

are tools of external forces that actively use the religious factor to influence the Armenian society and interfere in Armenia's internal affairs. According to the data of the Centre of Rehabilitation and Assistance to the Victims of Destructive Cults, up to 65 religious organisations (including more than 50 sects) are represented in Armenia today, covering in one way or another 350 thousand residents of the republic⁷⁹. Additionally, up to 200 unregistered religious organisations are active in Armenia.

The concentration of religious organisations is particularly high in Yerevan, although there are settlements in the country where the majority of the population are sectarians (mainly border areas). Adherents of non-traditional cults are widely represented in Gyumri, Artashat, Hoktemberyan, Charentsavan, Ararat and other cities. The annual number of new converts can be up to several thousand people, owing to the difficult economic and social situation of the citizens, the post-Soviet ideological vacuum, as well as the partial loss of authority of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Among the most active alternative religious associations are *Jehovah's Witnesses*, *Pentecostals*, *Mormons*, *Evangelical Church*, *Word of Life*, *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, *Three Horan Church* and others, which have penetrated almost all spheres of Armenian society. They are seriously participating in the network marketing, working in publishing, education and construction; in a way, they are represented in the area of communications, participate in charity, actively express their negative opinion about the key state institutions. Thus, it is known that one of the dogmas of Jehovah's Witnesses religious organisation is the refusal of its members to serve in the army. Despite the Alternative Service Law, some of them refuse to exercise the duty, preferring imprisonment. Armenia is periodically criticized in the reports of the U.S. State Department and international non-governmental organisations for lack of tolerance towards religious minorities. However, a careful study of the reports shows that, in fact, the Armenian authorities and society are criticized for their attitude towards one single organisation – Jehovah's Witnesses.

In 2012, the European Court of Human Rights ruled to overturn the sentence of the youth activists of Jehovah's Witnesses, who had avoided alternative service and considered the Armenian law on Jehovah's Witnesses to be uncivil. Armenia had to pay a fine for each of the convicts and eventually change some of the articles of the Alternative

⁷⁹ Expert: the government should supervise sects in Armenia // Sputnik Armenia, 6 July 2015. <http://sputnikarmenia.ru/politics/20150706/91951.html>

Service Law, shortening its term and taking control of the military police and transferring it to civilian structures⁸⁰. The activity of the Word of Life religious organisation, which some Armenian priests consider the most dangerous, has reached a large scale⁸¹.

It is also known about the activity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), mentioned at the beginning of our report, which founded, in particular, the Genealogical Centre in Yerevan headed by **Hranush Kharatyan**. On August 23-24, 2006, while being in Armenia, J. Huntsman made a proposal to the then-President **Robert Kocharian** to open a health centre. The then head of the Department of Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Administration of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, G. Kharatyan (who left her post after the tragic events of March 1, 2008) stated that Huntsman's action in Armenia should not be viewed in the context of belonging to the *legitimate* Mormon sect⁸².

Experts also note the fact that many organisations actively raising the idea of protecting religious minorities in Armenia (thus supporting the activities of religious sects) and the sects themselves have a single source of funding. These are the *Eurasia Partnership and Open Society Foundations*, *the Helsinki Civil Assembly*, *the New Generation Humanitarian NGO*, *the Society without Violence NGO*⁸³, and *Public Information and Need of Knowledge (PINK)*.

In their turn, many of them directly coordinate their activities with the State Department, and it is the USA where the majority of funding comes from. In addition, between \$800 million and \$1 billion can be delivered to Armenia annually through «sectarian» channels, and, of course, such significant sums cannot remain unnoticed⁸⁴.

⁸⁰ *The Armenian authorities are ready to pay 112 thousand Euros to Jehovah's Witnesses by the ECtHR decision* // <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/224075/>

⁸¹ Հայաստանի ամենավտանգավոր աղանդը «Կյանքի խոսք»-ն Է. այստեղ հարողստներն են ու շոու թիզնեսի ներկայացուցիչները (տեսանյութ) // *Tert.am* 27 օգոստոս 2011 թ. <http://www.tert.am/am/news/2011/08/27/sect/336550>

⁸² *Irregular conflicts: Colour revolutions. Analysis and Assessment of Forms, Techniques and Methods of Operation of Regime Change in Sovereign States / Under edition of S.N. Grinyaev, Moscow, 2015, page 49.*

⁸³ *In May 2016, this organisation arranged a meeting (with the participation of the Ambassadors of Great Britain and Germany in Armenia, the head of the local branch of the Soros Foundation, L. Minasyan, etc.) on the issue of legal preferences for sexual minorities - please see: Closed meeting of the British and German Ambassadors to Armenia with perverts* // <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YP0IP5uxvQY> And this is not the only example of this kind.

⁸⁴ *Ghukasyan A. NGOs and religious sects in Armenia and legislative regulation of their activities* // <http://www.kavkazoved.info/news/2017/07/21/nko-i-religioznye-sekty-v-armenii-i-praktika-zakonodatelnogo-regulirovaniya-ih-deyatelnosti.html>

Like the social activists, representatives of non-traditional destructive cults widely use the imperfection of the law and new opportunities, received after the events of 2018, in which they took an active part. First of all, this refers to the Word of Life sect⁸⁵ led by Pastor **Arthur Simonyan**, as well as the so-called *Church Living Faith*.

Conclusion

Measures developed in a number of post-Soviet countries to regulate the activities of NGOs with external funding (compiling registers of foreign agents, the registration of foreign grants and procedures for their approval, a ban on foreign funding of political parties and socio-political organisations, etc.) are aimed at maintaining internal political stability and ensuring the national interests of states. The example of countries that ignore the destructive possibilities of external interference convinces of the legitimacy of such an approach.

After the Velvet Revolution, the activity of marginal religious, public, and gender organisations in Armenia, which had previously acted cautiously, has revived its spirits.

As in other former Soviet countries, non-governmental organisations operating in Armenia, financed by western structures, perform a number of specific tasks, including lobbying and intelligence.

Lacking major public support outside of the small group of activists, they accumulate significant destructive potential, not least through networking, cross-funding and human resources support.

This circumstance directly affects the national security and directly affects relations with major military-political allies and trade-economic partners.

First of all, it concerns the Russian-Armenian relations as a factor of ensuring the national state interests of the Republic of Armenia and a key factor of military and political stability in the Caucasus region. Any step towards Armenian-Russian rapprochement is met with a negative reaction from local NGOs and media, funded by the western soft power structures⁸⁶.

Moreover, unpredictable decision-making, administrative reshuffling, internal lobbying, consistent weakening of key state institutions - all this poses a serious threat to the Armenian statehood, is fraught with the further aggravation of dividing lines in society, provokes the risks of military escalation in the region of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The growing role of transnational structures in the former Soviet countries and the Caucasus, in particular, cannot but be taken into account by Moscow in determining the medium- and long-term foreign policy guidelines in the near-abroad countries, including the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) countries and the Eurasian Economic Union.

⁸⁵ «Ես «Կյանքի խոսք» եկեղեցու հետևորդ եմ, իմ հավատքը դա է». ՀՀ վարչապետի աշխատակազմի գործերի կառավարիչ // <https://168.am/2018/07/10/980263.html>

⁸⁶ For example, on the occasion of Armenia's accession to the EEU, the head of the Helsinki Committee in Armenia A. Ishkhanyan stated that it was not the choice of the country, but the decision of the president to turn it towards Russia, which may have a negative impact on the level of democracy and observance of human rights in Armenia, etc.