



Armenia 2012: An introduction to the political party landscape

Revised June 2012

Introduction

Democratisation is one of the key goals in the process of EU engagement with Armenia. In recent years, Armenia has achieved significant progress in the process of political association and economic integration with the EU, and Armenia's May 6 2012 legislative elections were a key political milestone on this path. Against this background, it is crucial that interested European stakeholders, analysts and journalists acquire a broader understanding about political parties in Armenia in the new parliamentary setup.¹ In order to meet that goal, we are providing a detailed overview of the six main political parties in Armenia (roughly 1.5 pages per party plus graphics) in their English language alphabetical order. The selected six are those which were elected to the National Assembly, and the provided data includes insights from the TNS opinion polls conducted between 29 February and 5 March.² This report also includes feedback from several Armenia-based insiders, analysts and experts.³ Moreover, this report summarises the most relevant details about the party leaders, their ideologies, foreign-policy orientation, economic and social policies, and their relations with relevant European political bodies and political blocs. Combined with key background and historic data, this report will enable the reader to acquire a quick understanding of the context, content and protagonists that shape the political debate in Armenia in the 2012 – 2017 tenure. We strive to update this guide from time to time in order to provide an accurate and up-to-date reflection of the Armenian political landscape to our readers.

Table 1. Party alliances 1991-2001*

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
ANM	Government									Extra-parliamentary	
ARF Dashnak	Opposition			Banned				non-aligned	Government		
Heritage											
Prosperous											
Republican	Opposition			Government				Opposition	Government		
Rule of Law							Extra-Parliamentary		Opposition		

Table 2. Party alliances 2002-2012*

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
ANC							Extra-parliamentary				
ARF Dashnak	Government									Opposition	
Heritage	Extra-parliamentary						Opposition				
Prosperous				Extra-parliamentary			Government				
Republican	Government										
Rule of Law	Opposition	Government			Opposition		Government				

Government
 Opposition
 Extra-parliamentary or inactive

* Note: ANM = Armenian National Movement (see ANC), ARF Dashnak = Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Prosperous = Prosperous Armenia Party, Republican = Republican Party of Armenia, ANC = Armenian National Congress

¹ This paper has been first published on 18 April 2012. Its current version includes the post-electoral political setup in the country as of June 2012.

² See, *Poll: A snapshot of pre-electoral Armenia*, EuFoA, TNS Opinion, IPSC, Brussels, 22 March 2012

http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/OpinionPoll_EN.pdf

http://www.eufoa.org/uploads/Poll_28.04.2012_EN.pdf

³ In particular we would like to thank Richard Giragosian and Boris Navasardyan for their valuable and detailed comments.

Armenian National Congress (ANC) Հայ Ազգային Կոնգրես (ՀԱԿ), *Hay Azgayin Congres,*

Founder and year of foundation: Levon Ter-Petrosyan, together with the heads of 18 smaller political parties and civic movements, 2008

Chairman: Levon Ter-Petrosyan

Website: <http://www.anc.am/en>



About the party: The ANC was until May 2012 an extra-parliamentary oppositionist political coalition, self-proclaimed the most radical political opposition force, which was formed in August 2008 by 18 political parties and civic groups. The party received 7.08% of the votes in the May 2012 elections, gaining 7 seats in the National Assembly. Members of the ANC were predominantly those political forces which were backing Levon Ter-Petrosyan's campaign during the 2008 presidential election. The most important component of the ANC is the Armenian National Movement (ANM), the party founded by a group of anti-Soviet dissidents including Ter-Petrosyan in 1989, which governed from 1990 to 1999. Apart from the ANM the other most influential members of the ANC are the People's Party of Armenia, led by Stepan Demirchyan, and the Republic Party, led by Aram Sargsyan. The ANC challenged the official results of the 2008 presidential election; it rejects the legitimacy of the government and accuses the government of having used disproportionate force during the post-electoral protests which led to clashes on 1 March resulting in the death of 10 people. In 2011, the ANC launched a series of street protests and presented three conditions to the government for the start of a dialogue. Those were 1. the release of detained party supporters who they considered political prisoners; 2. the right to hold demonstrations in the Opera Square and 3. the launch of a new investigation into the March 2008 events. At the end of April 2011, ANC's requests were satisfied and in July a series of talks between ANC representatives and members of the ruling coalition began. Eventually, after five rounds of talks with the governing coalition, in which the ANC was requesting pre-term legislative and presidential elections, it withdrew because of the arrest of one of its youth activists, accused of having assaulted a policeman. At present, ANC's main goals are "the restoration of the constitutional order in the country through the formation of a legitimate government"; "the dissolution of the current *kleptocratic* regime and setting up of checks and balances"; "the restoration of the electoral system" and "the restoration of free market relations". Recently, the Free Democrats, a group of prominent members of the ANC, including the former Foreign Minister Alexander Arzumanyan, left the coalition and formed an electoral alliance with the Heritage Party.

About the party leader: A historian and philologist by education, fluent in seven languages, Levon Ter-Petrosyan was a Senior Researcher at the Matenadaran Institute of Ancient Manuscripts before he joined the Karabakh Committee in 1988. In December 1988, he was arrested together with a group of members of the clandestine movement and sent to a KGB prison in Moscow. He was released in May 1989 and shortly afterwards was elected chairman of the board of the Armenian National Movement. In 1990, Ter-Petrosyan became Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia. He was elected as the first president of independent Armenia in 1991 and was re-elected in disputed elections in 1996. Armenians mostly associate him with the achievements and shortcomings of the first years after independence, the blockade, the troubles and successes during the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the power shortages, the first reforms, the successes and failures in the transition to market economy, all these are connected to Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Beyond any doubt he was the mastermind of the independence of Armenia. However, people also associate him with the ban of the ARF party and the arrest of its leadership, the irregularities and the clashes around the 1996 presidential elections and the severe socio-economic conditions of those years. In February 1998, he was forced to resign by some members of his cabinet (including former President Robert Kocharyan and



current President Serzh Sargsyan) because of disagreements over an OSCE-proposed compromise agreement for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

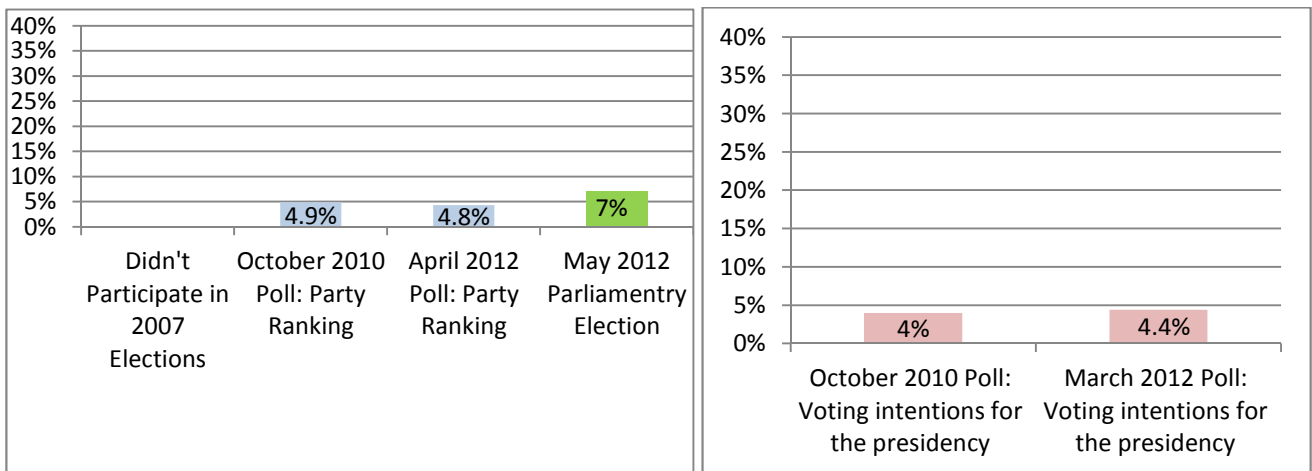
After his resignation, Ter-Petrosyan returned to his academic research and authored two volumes on the Crusaders and Armenia. Between September and October 2007, Ter-Petrosyan broke his silence and delivered two public speeches with extremely critical notes towards the then-president Robert Kocharyan. By accusing the government of “kleptocracy”, he questioned the indicators of the economic growth and insinuated that then-President Robert Kocharyan and his Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan were about to accept a deal on Nagorno-Karabakh, which was substantially the same which caused his resignation in 1998. During the February 2008 presidential elections, he officially scored second with 21.5% of the vote. On Election Day, before the close of polling stations, his spokesperson stated that the elections were rigged, claimed victory and announced protests for the following days. After days of mainly peaceful protests of his supporters, the situation escalated on 1 March 2008 into severe clashes and 10 casualties, and President Kocharyan announced a state of emergency.

Ideology: The ANC members have a diverse ideological background stemming from conservatism to environmentalism, from Social-Democracy to Christian-Democracy.

Alliances (if any): The ANC considers itself an alliance and is as such not allied with other parties. In early 2012, Ter-Petrosyan publicly started speculating about a deal with Prosperous Armenia.

Affiliation with European political families (if applicable): Since 2010, the Armenian National Movement (ANM) is a member of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR).

Ranking in EuFoA-commissioned opinion polls⁴ (ANC did not take part in the last elections in 2007):



European agenda: Mostly pro-European, but the ANC has criticised the Council of Europe (CoE), the EU and the OSCE because of an alleged lack of pressure on the government over human rights violations.

Foreign policy agenda: Balanced foreign policy towards Russia, the USA and the EU. Regarding relations with Turkey, the ANC has supported the steps undertaken by the government to normalise bilateral relations. In fact, during the tensest period of talks, the ANC had suspended its protests against the government. As for the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the ANC is inclined to a compromise settlement and refutes the use of force.

Economic and social agenda: The ANC states to target a free and competitive market, a corruption-free administration and good governance. Its positions are strongly inspired by liberal market theories.

⁴ All our polls are published on our website www.EuFoA.org. Our polls are independently supervised by international polling companies and ensure a maximum of accuracy and political neutrality. Party rankings given in this document represent the VALID responses (without “Don’t know” and “Refuse to answer” – to allow comparisons with real election votes).

**Armenian Revolutionary Federation, (ARF) Հայ
Հեղափոխական Դաշնակցություն (ՀԲԴ), Hay
Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutyun,**

Founder and year of foundation: Christapor Mikayelian, Stepan Zorian and Simon Zavarian, 1890

Chairman: Armen Rustamyan

Website: <http://www.arfd.info/>



About the party: Founded in 1890, the ARF is among the oldest Armenian political parties, having joined the Socialist International in 1907. It is the most active in the Armenian Diaspora: The ARF has a worldwide executive body, the Bureau, which coordinates its activities in more than 30 countries and is led by Hrant Margaryan. The party's activities in Armenia are directed by the Supreme Council of the ARF-Armenia. The party governed Armenia's first Republic in 1918-1920 and was exiled by the Bolsheviks in 1921. The ARF returned to the Armenian political stage in 1990 and actively participated in the anti-Soviet protests. In 1994, Armenia's first President Levon Ter-Petrosyan announced the ban on ARF's activities in Armenia during a televised speech. All the party structures were closed, allegedly for anti-constitutional activities and 31 of its members were arrested. This move explains today's aversion towards the oppositional ANC. In February 1998, shortly after the resignation of President Ter-Petrosyan, the party was rehabilitated. During the elections of 1999, ARF reached 7.8% of the vote and secured 8 seats in the parliament and 1 ministerial post. During the 2003 election, the party improved its performance and secured 11 seats in the National Assembly. The 2007 legislative elections marked another upgrade in the party's electoral performance increasing the number of its parliamentarians to 16 and securing 4 ministerial posts. During the presidential elections of 2008, the ARF presented its own candidate, Vahan Hovhannisyanyan (the head of the ARF's parliamentary faction), who scored fourth with 6.2% of the votes. The party withdrew from the coalition in April 2009 as a matter of principled opposition to the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement. The party received 5.67% of the vote in the May 2012 election, receiving 5 seats.

About the party leader: A physicist by education, Armen Rustamyan is the chairman of the Supreme Council of the ARF-Armenia. In 1995, he was arrested in the framework of the anti-ARF campaign launched by the then-president Ter-Petrosyan. After his release in 1998 he was elected to the parliament in 1999. Rustamyan has been re-elected in 2003, in 2007 and in 2012 and was the chairman of the parliament's Standing Committee on Foreign Relations during the last legislature.

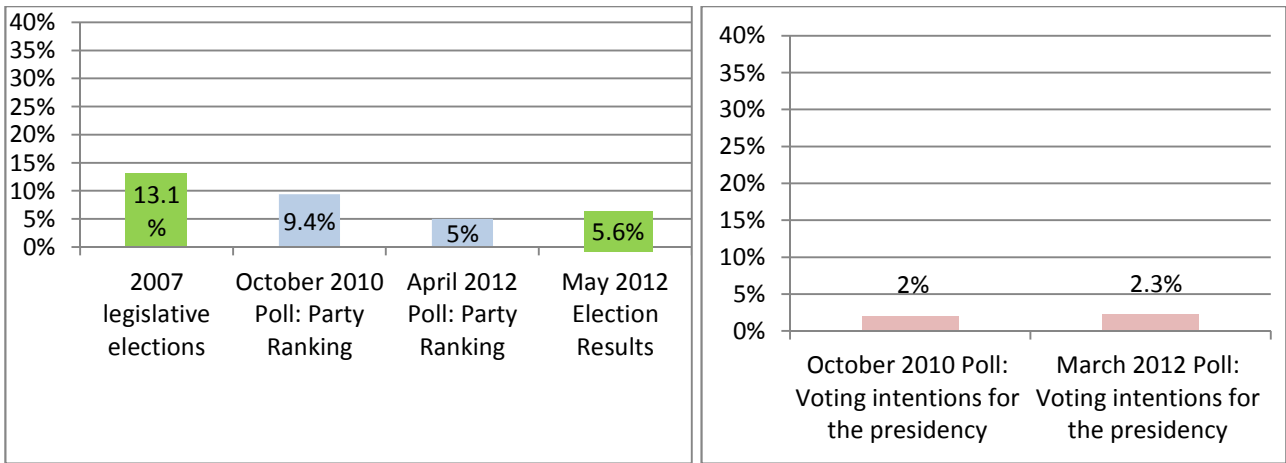


Ideology: Socialist, but predominantly nationalist on foreign and security policy.

Alliances (if any): From 1999 to 2010, the ARF has been associated with the governing coalition in the National Assembly. It moved into opposition in 2010 and is running independently for the 2012 legislative elections.

Affiliation with European political families (if applicable): The ARF's membership to the Socialist International dates back to 1907. The party has close ties with the Party of European Socialists, but it is not a member of the PES.

Results during the last elections: Ranking in EuFoA-commissioned opinion polls⁵:



European agenda: Pro-European, also by virtue of the ARF branches in the Armenian communities in almost all European countries. The party backs the ongoing process of Armenia’s political association and economic integration with the EU.

Foreign policy agenda: Balanced foreign policy towards Russia, the USA and the EU. Regarding relations with Turkey, the ARF sustains that as long as Turkey does not recognise the Armenian genocide there cannot be normal relations with this neighbour. Moreover, the party emphasises that the blockade imposed by Turkey on Armenia represents another obstacle for the normalisation of Armenian-Turkish relations. When it comes to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, ARF’s position is clearly supporting NK’s quest for international *de jure* recognition of its independence and eventually, a union with Armenia.

Economic and social agenda: The ARF advocates for an efficient anti-trust policy, for a strong social component in the government’s economic policies and for strong and credible anti-corruption measures.

⁵ Voting intentions for the presidency are referred to Vahan Hovhannisyan

Heritage Party Ժառանգություն Կուսակցություն, *Zharangutiun Kusaktsutyun,*

Founder and year of foundation: Raffi Hovhannisian, 2002

Chairman: Raffi Hovhannisian

Website: <http://www.hhk.am/en/>



About the party: Founded in 2002, the party's goal is said to advance the national interest over external influences, liberalism in the economic domain, traditional values in identity-related issues and democracy and good governance countrywide. The party received 5.76% of the votes during the May 2012 parliamentary election, holding on to 5 seats. It is the only party in Armenia represented in the National Assembly, which advocates the country's full EU accession. In 2007, the party tabled a bill in the parliament calling for the formal recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic by Armenia. Moreover, the party is advocating a more assertive stance of Armenia vis-a-vis Turkey and Azerbaijan. In 2010, Heritage was vocal in its support for the rights of street merchants once the municipality of Yerevan banned unlicensed street trade in specific areas of the city. On 15 March 2011, party chairman Hovhannisian started a ten-day hunger strike in Yerevan's central Freedom Square asking for radical changes in the government's policies and broader liberties.

About the party leader: Raffi Hovhannisian is a US-born descendant of genocide survivors. He is a Fletcher and Georgetown-educated political scientist and lawyer. In 1987, he co-founded the Armenian Bar Association. Hovhannisian moved to Armenia in 1988 after the devastating earthquake, where he launched a structure coordinating the post-earthquake reconstruction funded by the Armenian Assembly of America. In October 1991, he became the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, without any party affiliation. Hovhannisian served in that position for one year until resigning over disagreements with the then president Levon Ter-Petrosyan over the inclusion of the Armenian genocide recognition in the country's foreign policy agenda. In 1993, he founded and chaired the first political think-tank in Armenia – the Centre for National and International Studies. In 2007, Hovhannisian was elected a member of the National Assembly.

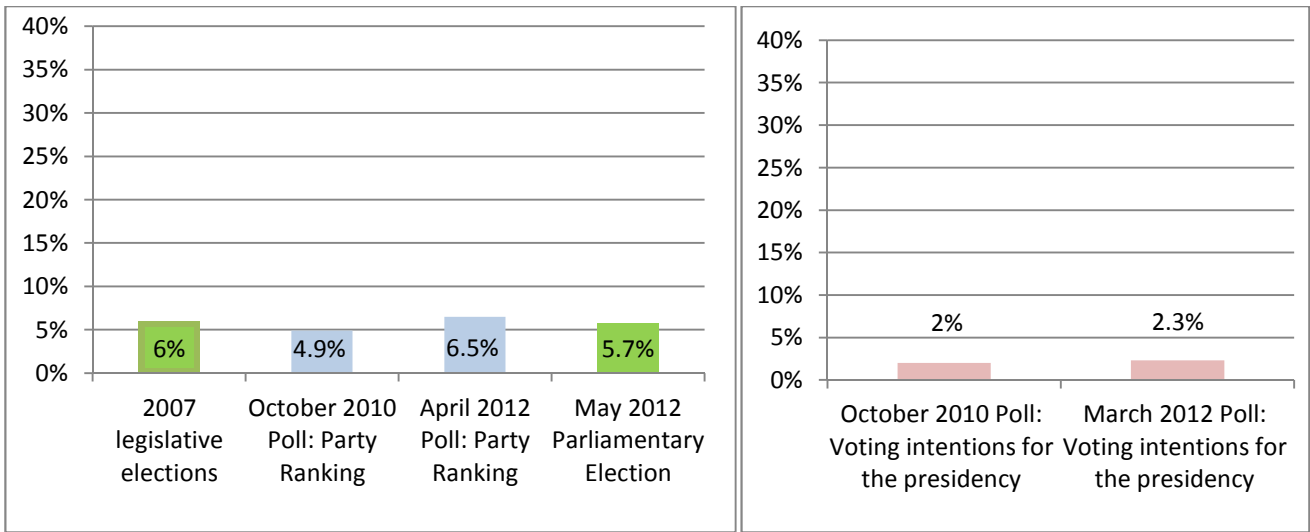


Ideology: national-liberal

Alliances (if any): Opposition; During the upcoming elections the Heritage party is set to run with the Free Democrats with a common proportional list, a group of former members of the radical opposition – Armenian National Congress. Otherwise, Heritage is distant from the ANC or other opposition parties.

Affiliation with European political families (if applicable): The Heritage party is aligned with the European People's Party (EPP) and in February 2012 obtained observer membership status in the EPP.

Results during the last elections and ranking in EuFoA-commissioned opinion polls



European agenda: Strongly pro-European. Heritage is advocating deeper European integration, stronger bilateral relations with European countries, and EU membership for Armenia to become the principal pillar of the Armenian foreign and domestic policies.

Foreign policy agenda: Multi-dimensional foreign policy aiming at a balance between US and Russian vectors of Armenia’s foreign policy, while Armenia’s own interests can, according to them, only be secured with a clear EU integration course. Regarding relations with Turkey, Heritage maintains that while it is in Armenia’s vital interest to have peaceful relations with bordering countries, a comprehensive solution needs to address the legacy of the Armenian genocide and acknowledge it. For this reason, Heritage did not support the process of the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement in the way it was pursued by the government. Regarding the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, it needs to be emphasised that Heritage has been campaigning for the formal recognition of the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia.

Economic and social agenda: The party advocates social equality, market freedom and transparency.

**Prosperous Armenia Party, (BHK) Բարգավաճ
Հայաստան Կուսակցություն (ԲՀԿ), Bargavach
Hayastan,**

Founder and year of foundation: Gagik Tsarukyan, 2004

Chairman: Gagik Tsarukyan

Website: <http://www.bhk.am>



About the party: The Prosperous Armenia party first participated in the parliamentary elections in 2007, when it scored second, after the Republican Party, gaining 15% of the vote and securing 29 seats in the National Assembly and 4 ministerial posts. It then doubled its proportionate strength in the May 2012 elections, achieving 30.12% of the votes, but securing only 28 seats due to losses of directly elected constituency mandates. The party then decided not to continue its formal coalition agreement with the ruling Republicans, and instead joined the opposition, or, as the party leader formulated it, presenting an “alternative”. The formation of the party has widely been linked to the then-outgoing President Robert Kocharyan. The head of the party, Gagik Tsarukyan, one of the wealthiest businessmen in Armenia, provided the party funding, attracted party members from the domestic intelligentsia and regularly coupled the party’s political work with the philanthropic activities of his family foundation. The recent membership of the US-educated former Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian is intended to bolster the political credibility of the party, especially in the area of foreign policy and towards the West. Internationally, the party cooperates with several parties including United Russia, the Party of the Regions in Ukraine, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats and the Chinese Communist Party, as well as having close ties to the leadership of Belarus.



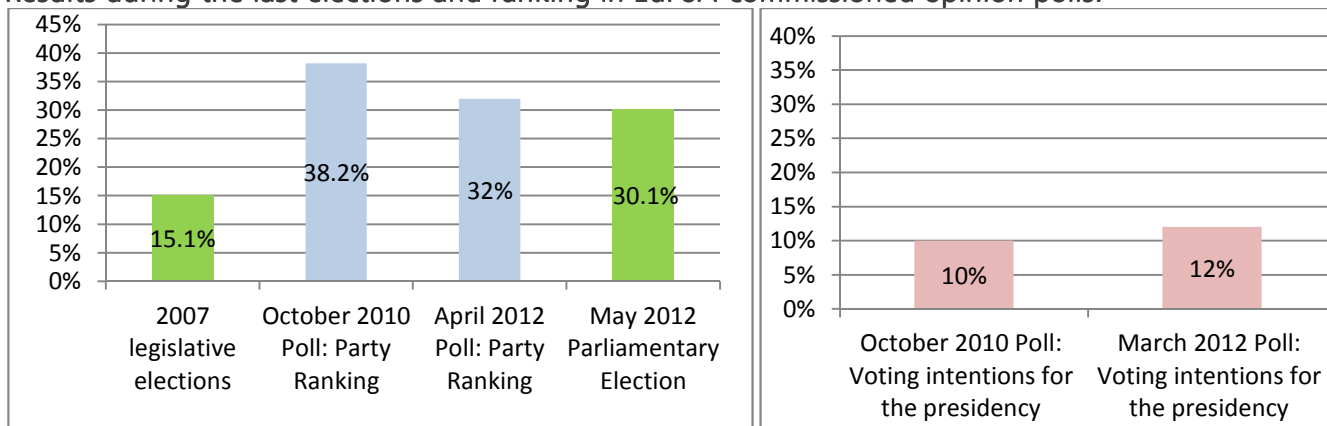
About the party leader: Gagik Tsarukyan is a former European arm wrestling champion, wealthy businessman and founder of the “Multi Group” holding corporation. He is also the president of the National Olympic Committee of Armenia. He ran as an independent candidate during the 2003 legislative elections and won a seat in the National Assembly. In 2004, he founded the Prosperous Armenia Party. In the same year, Tsarukyan founded a charitable foundation carrying his name which focuses on sports, culture, education, social welfare and the construction of churches.

International organisations criticised the charity activities in so far as they are seen to increase the support for the party, especially in rural areas. Apart from being the leader of the party, he is also the head of its parliamentary faction. On an international level, his business interests in Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Russia and Croatia also provide his party with good relations with the political establishment in each of those countries.

Ideology: social and liberal conservatism

Affiliation with European political families (if applicable): Prosperous Armenia’s application for an observer membership status in the EPP was unsuccessful in February 2012, mainly because it appeared more as a platform for its leader than a real political party.

Results during the last elections and ranking in EuFoA-commissioned opinion polls:



European agenda: Prosperous Armenia has a pro-European posture especially when it comes to issues of economic cooperation. In 2009, Gagik Tsarukyan publicly resumed the honorary chairmanship of the European Movement in Armenia, which he dropped at an unknown moment in 2011. Moreover, the Chair of the National Assembly’s committee for European Integration, Naira Zohrabyan, is a member of Prosperous Armenia. Tsarukyan’s personal ties are stronger within the former CIS area, especially Russia, as is true for former President Kocharyan, who is widely seen to be behind this party. The party leader Gagik Tsarukyan organised conferences showcasing Russian President Vladimir Putin’s vision of a Eurasian Union, in open opposition to the government’s policy to establish an EU-Armenia DCFTA, thus casting a shadow on his party’s claim to a pro-European political stance.

Foreign policy agenda: Complementarity, in other words the party promotes good and balanced relations with all global players. When it comes to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and policy towards Turkey, the party has strongly supported the positions of the government, until former Foreign Minister Oskanian, a known critic of the foreign policy of President Sargsyan, joined its ranks.

Economic and social agenda: The party advocates economic liberalism, a limited regulatory role of the government in the market and social protection for the most vulnerable strata of the population. It considers emigration to be one of the most important challenges to Armenian statehood and believes that job creation and strong support for small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) is the right remedy to the problem. Months before the start of the 2012 campaign, Gagik Tsarukyan engaged a group of Estonian and Russian experts to consult the party on modifying its economic and social electoral program. At the same time, however, Tsarukyan’s businesses are reportedly practicing oligopolic market behaviours.

**Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) Հայաստանի
Հանրապետական Կուսակցություն (ՀՀԿ), *Hayastani
Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun,***

Founder and year of foundation: Ashot Navasardyan, 1990

Chairman: Serzh Sargsyan

Website: <http://www.hhk.am/en/>



About the party: The formation of the party was largely driven by the movement for the independence of Armenia (and self-determination for Nagorno-Karabakh), which started in 1988 under Soviet rule. The core of the Republican Party during its formation in 1990 (legally registered after independence in 1991) consisted of some members of the anti-Soviet underground National United Party (1967-1987) and the commanders of some self-defence units. During the elections to the then-Soviet Armenian Supreme Council, the Republican Party won one seat. During the legislative elections of 1995, the party won 5 seats. In 1997, after the death of the party founder Ashot Navasardyan, Andranik Margaryan succeeded him. In 1998, after the resignation of the then President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the Republican Party included the Yerkrpah parliamentary group, which mainly consisted of veterans of the Karabakh war, but it also attracted politicians and businessmen. Defence Minister Vazgen Sargsyan subsequently became the leader of the party. Before the legislative elections of 1999, the Republican Party secured an alliance with the People's Party and formed the *Unity Bloc*. The bloc won 41% of the vote, securing 62 seats in the National Assembly. Party leader Vazgen Sargsyan became Prime Minister, but was killed during a terrorist attack on the National Assembly in October 1999. His brother succeeded him as Prime Minister until May 2000. Then Andranik Margaryan, former head of the Republican Party and then chair of the Unity Bloc, was appointed Prime Minister and stayed in that post for seven years. During the 2003 legislative elections, the party scored first securing 40 seats at the parliament. Andranik Margaryan was re-confirmed as Prime Minister and the Republicans secured 7 ministerial posts. In 2006, after the Rule of Law party moved into opposition, the head of the Republican parliamentary faction, Tigran Torosyan, became Speaker of the National Assembly. In March 2007, party Chairman and Prime Minister Margaryan died after sickness, and Serzh Sargsyan (no relation to Vazgen Sargsyan, or Tigran Sargsyan) then-Minister of Defence, assumed both of these duties. During the legislative elections of 2007, the Republican Party again scored first, securing 64 seats in the National Assembly. In February 2008, Serzh Sargsyan won the presidential elections, amid claims that irregularities helped him escape a second round. In 2011, the Republican-led government started a process of reconciliation with the extra-parliamentary opposition bloc, the Armenian National Congress (ANC), by satisfying the latter's key three demands (see ANC). The party won the 2012 elections with officially 44% of the vote plus the largest part of the directly elected majoritarian seats, 69 seats in total, allowing them to form a government without needing a coalition. The Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan has been re-confirmed and charged to form a new government.

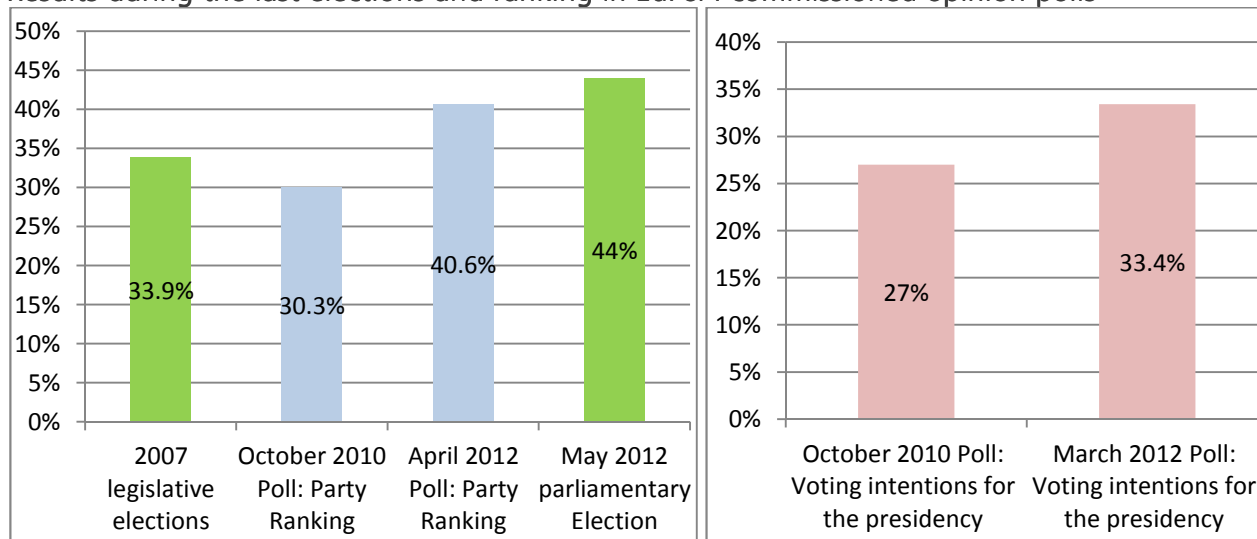
About the party leader: A philologist by education, Serzh Sargsyan was the assistant to the head of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region under Soviet rule in 1988. He joined the self-determination movement in Nagorno-Karabakh at its start and chaired the Self-Defence Committee between 1989 and 1993. In 1993, he moved to Armenia and until 2007, served in several ministerial capacities (as Ministers of Defence, Interior, and National Security) and as head of the National Security Council. Sargsyan became Prime Minister in 2007 and President in 2008 (see above). He is also the chairman of the Yerevan State University's Board of Trustees and chairs the Armenian Chess Federation.



Ideology: national-conservative

Affiliation with European political families (if applicable): The Republican Party is aligned with the European People's Party (EPP) and in February 2012 obtained observer membership status in the EPP.

Results during the last elections and ranking in EuFoA-commissioned opinion polls



European agenda: Throughout the last decade, the party's political choices have been characterised by an increased pro-European discourse, and while most leading figures in the party have strong political ties in the CIS area, their pro-European course does not contradict Armenia's strategic alliance with Russia. Regarding policy options vis-a-vis Europe, and particularly the EU, the Republican-led government has boosted the process of political association and economic integration with the EU in the framework of the Eastern Partnership well beyond rhetoric. Sargsyan supported special EU advisors to be placed in each ministry and implemented most EU recommendations, in particular the amnesty law, the new electoral code, the reformed media law (however enforced too late for the last TV licence distribution), several laws in the area of justice and home affairs, as well as numerous laws and procedures on customs, procurement, intellectual property, food hygiene and other laws in the context of EU trade.

Foreign policy agenda: Complementarity, intended to balance Russian, European and US interests both in Armenia and in the wider region. When it comes to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the party backs the right of self-determination of the NK people and a peacefully negotiated resolution on the basis of the package of the Madrid Principles proposed by the OSCE Minsk-Group. As for relations with Turkey, Serzh Sargsyan initiated the so-called *football diplomacy* talks with Turkey by inviting Turkish President Abdullah Gul to an Armenia-Turkey football match in Yerevan in 2008. The talks, which resulted in the signature of Armenian-Turkish protocols in 2009, triggered the loss of a coalition partner – the ARF party.

Economic and social agenda: As the party has been a key government pillar for many years, party policies are marked by its governmental role. The government led by President Sargsyan and Prime Minister Sargsyan (not related) embarked on a path of undisputedly ambitious reforms and legal approximation with European norms and standards. The goal is to increase the efficiency of the market, improve the investment climate and boost exports. The implementation of these reforms is in some cases very noticeable, but lagging behind in others. While the Prime Minister has repeatedly publicly slammed corruption and dominant market players, change in this area remains very slow.

Rule of Law Party (ROL) Օրինաց Երկիր Կուսակցության (ՕԵԿ), Orinats Yerkir, abbreviated as OEK

(NB: while the literal translation is “Country of Law”, the party itself uses “Rule of Law” in English)

Founder and year of foundation: Artur Baghdasaryan, 1997

Chairman: Artur Baghdasaryan

Website: <http://www.oek.am/official/>

About the party: In 1999, the party participated for the first time in the parliamentary elections where it narrowly managed to overcome the 5% threshold. During the 2003 parliamentary elections, the party performed well and almost tripled its presence in the parliament (13%). Its leader, Artur Baghdasaryan, was elected Speaker of the National Assembly. From 2003 to 2006, the party was in coalition with the Republican Party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and it held several ministerial posts. The resignation of its leader from the post of the Speaker of the National Assembly in 2006 moved the party into opposition. In 2007, Orinats Yerkir participated in the parliamentary elections as an opposition party and garnered 7% of the vote. After the 2008 presidential elections, the party re-joined the governing coalition. Opposition parties criticise Orinats Yerkir for its moves in and out the governing coalition as tactical opportunism. The party received 5.51% of the votes in the May 2012 parliamentary elections and remains a part of the ruling coalition. At present, the party holds 5 seats in the National Assembly and 3 ministerial posts. Arthur Baghdasaryan, the leader of the party, currently holds the post of the Secretary of the Armenian National Security Council.



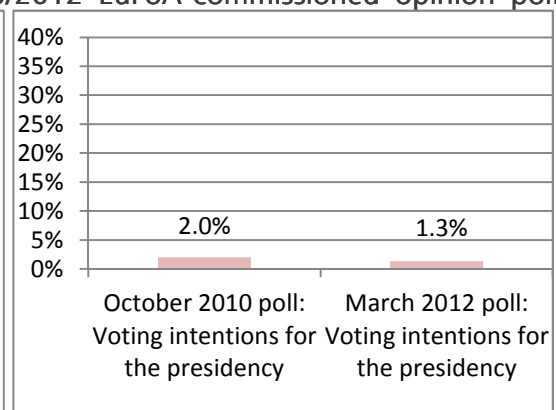
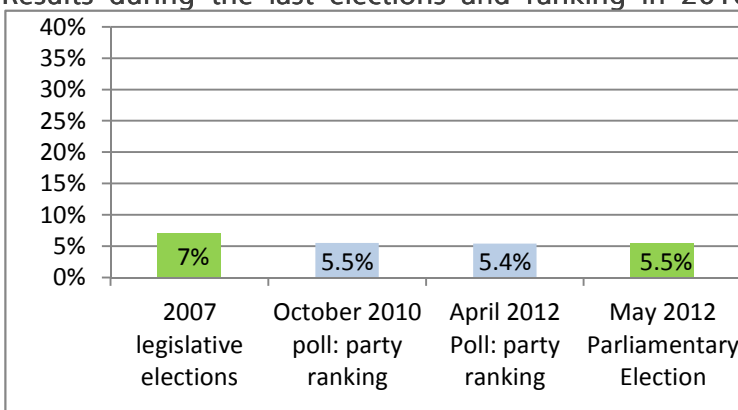
About the party leader: Artur Baghdasaryan, a lawyer by training, was first elected to the National Assembly in 1995 and became one of the youngest MPs. In 1997, he founded the party Orinats Yerkir. In 1998, Baghdasaryan was elected as the chairman of the Standing Committee on State and Legal Affairs, and both in 1999 and in 2003, was re-elected to the National Assembly. In 2003, he became Speaker of the National Assembly, but resigned from the post in 2006. In 2007, he was re-elected to the National Assembly and joined the opposition. In 2008, he ran as a presidential candidate and finished third with 17.7% of the vote. Shortly after, he joined the governing coalition and was appointed Secretary of the Armenian National Security Council.



Ideology: mostly conservative and pro-European.

Affiliation with European political families (if applicable): Orinats Yerkir is aligned with the European People’s Party (EPP) and in February 2012, obtained observer membership status in the EPP.

Results during the last elections and ranking in 2010/2012 EuFoA-commissioned opinion polls:



European agenda: Orinats Yerkir pursues a quite consistent pro-European policy stance, at least on a declaratory level. In fact, in 2006, its leader resigned from the post of the Speaker of the National Assembly allegedly because of criticism coming from the government following his statements on the need for Armenia to join NATO and the EU. Still, opposition politicians argued that disagreements were much broader and this move allegedly was merely an attempt to secure political backing from the West. Currently the party is not publicly promoting Armenia's full membership to the EU and NATO. Irrespectively, the party is one of the five Armenian parties to be aligned with European party blocs.

Foreign policy agenda: Mainly pro-Western but not anti-Russian. When it comes to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its policy towards Turkey, the party's positions are moderate and generally in line with the governing coalition.

Economic and social agenda: The party states that its major priority in this field is the consolidation of the rule of law, good governance and transparency in Armenia. It backs the ongoing market reforms in the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and the EU-Armenia Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) talks.