Political Institutional Trust in the Post-Attempted-Coup Republic of Armenia

Katy E. Pearce

Abstract: This paper presents a model of institutional political trust in Armenia after a coup attempt. The model of political trust was created using exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. Results indicated strong support for a three-factor model with civil society, elected government and non-elected government as factors.

Keywords: Armenia, coup, institutional trust, political trust

Armenia, a transitioning democracy experiencing many challenges, provides a unique opportunity for scholars and policymakers to examine political institutional trust after an attempted coup that occurred in the spring of 2008. Certainly, measures of Armenians’ attitudes of trust toward the involved parties collected several months after the attempted coup will extend our understanding of how political institutional trust is affected by crisis. And, as Claus Offe argues, post-Soviet states are an “ideal scene to study the failure of institutionally mediated trust-building.”

This paper presents a model of institutional political trust in Armenia, especially given the transitional nature of the Armenian political landscape that may be useful for understanding trust after a crisis. The sections below provide a brief introduction to recent Armenian history, a summary of the political landscape of Armenia will be presented with a description of relevant institutions. Then follows a review of trust and political trust and a

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discussion of the present study. The model of political trust in Armenia was created using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Results of EFAs indicated strong support for a three-factor model with civil society, elected government and non-elected government as factors. CFAs suggested that the three-factor model was stable. These findings indicate that there are relationships between political trust based on government-affiliation and elected versus non-elected/institutional status.

Armenia

Armenia was one of the first republics to break away from the Soviet Union due to grassroots citizen activism during the late 1980s. Since gaining independence in 1991, Armenia has been challenged by external conflict, internal instability, and political strife. The small state’s transition to both a democratic political system and a market economy had a promising start as its new leaders embarked on political and economic reforms. However, democratization slowed with the outbreak of war with neighboring Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. In addition, Armenia’s gross domestic product shrank by more than half between 1992 and 1993, and the new regime developed authoritarian tendencies that increased following a 1994 ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan. Since that time, Armenia has improved its economic—but not its political—structures. The state lacks both an effective checks-and-balances system and a strong presidency, resulting in weak governance and widespread corruption.

In addition, the roots of Socialism are very strong in former Soviet states where the effects of Communist regimes still linger. According to Rasma Karklins, “old habits die hard, and established structures and procedures retain influence both through inertia and as a safety net in confusing times.” While these structures and procedures remain in place, individuals also carry on Communist traditions. In the former Soviet states, “the new power actors (governments and political parties in power) still tend to reproduce the old forms of hegemony based on the still exclusive ... ideology.” The post-Communist leaders’ behavior is unsurprising, and “Political regimes and political history matter, and these countries continue to be influenced by their past. A crucial legacy is that they were ruled by a handful of Communist party elites that had exceptional powers and were above the law.” The Communist legacy, then, in both governmental as well as police institutions cannot be ignored, and has important implications for institutional trust.

Official corruption is perceived as widespread in Armenia. Some examples of perceived corruption include the lack of auditing capacity of the legislative branch; government investigations of civil servants being politically driven; the lack of accountability, weak political competition; the lack of a checks-and-balances system; and tolerance for nepotism. Although the government has introduced a number of reforms during the past few years—including the simplification of licensing procedures, civil-service reform, a new criminal code, energy privatization, and better dissemination of laws and regulations—corruption remains a problem. Indeed, there appears to be little political will to reduce corruption, and legal and other forms of harassment are commonplace for persons who publicly allege corruption on the part of government officials.

The absence of political competition and “the close links between the political and economic elite and the lack of effective law enforcement procedures” are two of the
factors that promote corruption. These relationships also “constitute a strong barrier to
democratization, because [the individuals involved] use political pressure and coercion
to sharply restrict access to portions of political power and economic influence.”
In the former Soviet states, “individuals who have used their government positions to aggran-
dize enormous wealth exercise the greatest share of political power in the fledgling state
structure.” Moreover, these political elite create stratification “with a small political and
economic elite at the top, and a new impoverished mass forming the base.”

Elimination or reduction of corruption is unlikely in the near future because within both
the government and society, there remains a culture of intolerance toward any discussion of
government corruption. Transparency International found that 87.8 percent of respondents
believed public tolerance to be a main perpetuating factor of corruption. Nonetheless, the
International Republican Institute found that 97 percent of Armenian respondents consid-
ered the wrongdoings and corruption of political leaders to be a “rather serious” or “very
serious” problem. Similarly, 89 percent of respondents reported corruption as a problem,
with 33.5 percent of respondents reporting that corruption had increased over the past three
years. Thus, in previous studies, Armenian citizens’ beliefs about corruption have been
established. This study seeks to see how this may manifest in trust in institutions. The
institutions for which trust was measured in this study are discussed below.

Elected Officials
Armenian elections can be considered quite corrupt given that “all national elections
held in Armenia since independence have been marred by some degree of ballot stuffing,
vote rigging, and similar irregularities” and “the Armenian law enforcement bodies have
effectively been given the new roles of political policing and keeping track of and bullying
opposition activists, especially in the regions outside the capital.” The government has
relied heavily on its status and extensive financial resources, which are often used to buy
votes. In 2005, “the local polls, boycotted by the opposition, were won mostly by wealthy
candidates representing various business clans and even quasi-criminal elements loyal to
the regime. The latter increasingly relies on government-connected oligarchs.”

Prime Minister Serge Sargsyan’s party won a decisive victory in the May 2007 par-
liamentary elections, and he was declared the winner in the first round of presidential
elections in February 2008. On election day, February 19, 2008, assailants threatened
and attacked opposition activists who were protesting what they believed to be elec-
toral fraud. Several assaults occurred in the presence of police and election officials
and witnesses argued that the police did not intervene in the violence. The protests
continued peacefully for ten days, but on March 1, special police forces confronted
the demonstrators. Many witnesses reported police using excessive force, beating
demonstrators with batons and attacking fleeing demonstrators. The clashes resulted
in at least ten deaths (eight demonstrators and two police officers), and many injuries.
Police detained several hundred demonstrators, and charged more than 100 opposition
supporters and others with organizing or participating in illegal demonstrations
and mass disturbances. Additionally, police committed due-process violations includ-
ing incommunicado detention, denial of access to counsel, and failure to investigate
allegations of ill-treatment. Subsequent trial proceedings raised fair -trial concerns:
several detainees were convicted based solely on police testimony and in expedited
trial proceedings. The government declared a state of emergency on March 1, 2008,
temporarily restricting freedom of movement, assembly, expression, and access to information. The state of emergency was lifted on March 21. Given the events of spring 2008, this was a particularly sensitive time (fall 2008) to have collected data on attitudes toward political institutions in Armenia.

Parliament
The Armenian Parliament has 131 members elected for four-year terms with 90 proportional and 41 majoritarian electoral order. The most recent parliamentary election in 2007, as discussed above, was considered fraudulent by citizens and international observers. Parliamentary representation follows business interests with most members of parliament voting and lobbying in favor of the businesses they own or represent, and public confidence in the parliament is quite low.

Executive Government
The executive government of Armenia consists of the prime minister, ministers, and president, as discussed below. The prime minister oversees the government’s activities and coordinates work of the ministers. The prime minister is appointed by the president but can be removed by a vote of no confidence by the parliament.

President
The president of Armenia is elected for a five-year term. As was discussed above, there were presidential elections in 2008 that were considered fraudulent and an attempted coup was carried out but failed. Public confidence in the president is quite low.

Unelected Officials

Police
Armenian police are divided into Central Headquarters and 11 provincial police departments that are subdivided into 52 police precincts. The Central Headquarters is at the top of the command structure and consists of a chief, deputy chiefs, and specialized branches. The police chief is appointed by the president at the nomination of the prime minister. Deputy chiefs are also appointed by the president from the nominations of the chief. Police personnel are armed primarily with Soviet-made firearms and ammunition. According to the 2008 US State Department human rights report the police lack training, resources, and established procedures to implement reforms or to prevent incidents of abuse. Although reform efforts continue in the area of traffic control and criminal investigations, it is apparent that corruption remains a significant problem in the police force and security services. In 2006, the police implemented new procedures were implemented to curb corruption at roadside checkpoints, and the government established a new system of paying traffic fines in order to reduce opportunities for bribes; its frequency appeared to decrease in 2007.

In the World Values Survey, 32 percent of those polled stated that they had no confidence in law enforcement at all, while Artak Shakaryan found that 85.7 percent of respondents reported traffic police as “low” or “very low” in honesty (see also Michael Krikorian). Moreover, a 2008 USAID survey found that 65 percent of Armenians felt that police corruption was common.
Army
Armenia’s conflict with its neighbor Azerbaijan is still unresolved, and thus, the state maintains an army disproportionate to its size, with 40,000 soldiers for a population of 3 million; in comparison, Mongolia has a similarly sized population but only 9000 soldiers. Furthermore, Armenia spends 16.4 percent of its federal budget on the military, as opposed to the United States (4.06 percent), Russia (3.9 percent), France (2.6 percent), Mongolia (1.4 percent) and Ukraine (1.4 percent). Military service in Armenia is compulsory for males.

Banks
The Armenian banking system is at an early stage of development, according to a recent report. According to the 2006 CRRC data, only 9.4 percent of Armenians had a checking account, 1.4 percent had a savings account, and 2.7 percent had a mortgage. Hence, familiarity with the banking system is likely low for most people.

Educational System
Corruption in the educational system is widespread. According to a 2008 USAID survey, 58 percent of Armenians believed that corruption was common in education. According to Freedom House, this is detrimental to younger people as it exposes people to corruption networks very early in life. Graduation exams and entrance exams for university are marred by corruption. In an effort to reduce this, a move toward centralized written exams took place in 2009 as part of the Bologna process.

Healthcare System
In the immediate post-Soviet era, Armenian healthcare essentially collapsed. A new system was organized, using many Soviet structures. Although there are official healthcare prices set by the government, they are too low to cover the cost of services, so informal payments are common. An informal payment ranges from a “tip” to the doctor that delivered a baby to paying out-of-pocket for essential medication. There are no rules or, seemingly, reason to the system, as there is no accountability. With the informal payment system, it is unsurprising that 61 percent of Armenians felt that corruption was common in healthcare.

Legal System
Legal reform has been a “slow, incremental” process in Armenia, according to the American Bar Association’s (ABA) program for legal reform in the country. The association argues that while Armenia initially adopted many international legal codes, they have not been truly put into effect. In 2007, the parliament approved a new judicial code to enhance transparency and independence. There are great concerns about witnesses and prisoners, as well as bribes.

Media
The Armenian media operate in a hostile environment. Although there are independent and opposition print-media organizations, the government continues to restrict full media freedom. There are more than 20 radio stations and more than 40 television stations, most of which are privately run. However, the authorities maintain “tight control over the state-owned Armenian Public Television and virtually all private channels, which are owned by businesspeople loyal to [the President] and rarely air reports critical of his administration. Their reporters are believed to operate under editorial censorship.”
The media in Armenia, then, is extremely limited in its ability to operate without official or unofficial state intervention.  

**Religious Institution**

While the Armenian Church is central to Armenian identity—with Armenia being the first state to adopt Christianity in 301 CE, it hosts one of the world’s oldest Christian communities—during Soviet times, individual involvement in the church has waned. While individuals are perhaps more religious today than they were 20 years ago, involvement in the church is not common. For an overview of religious trust in Armenia, see the work of Robia Charles.

**Ombudsman**

The ombudsman is a recent post in Armenia, with a 2003 legal adoption and 2004 appointment; created after a Council of Europe recommendation, the position works to defend human rights in the country. A USAID survey found that 24 percent of Armenians do not find that ombudsman corrupt, which is the best ranking of all institutions.

**NGOs**

The non-governmental organization (NGO) sphere is quite developed in Armenia. There are 400 active NGOs, mainly in the capital. Most NGOs rely on foreign donations rather than Armenian government funds; the government does not interfere much with NGO activity, though authorities often perceive NGOs as hostile actors or political competition. In fact, NGOs can be an alternative mechanism for challenging development assistance and delivering public goods that the state cannot deliver efficiently or effectively.

**European Union**

Armenia is integrating into the European Union’s European Neighborhood POLICY program. This program extends the cooperation between the EU and Armenia from the original 1996 agreement that had wide-ranging implications for dialogue; trade; investment; and economic, legislative, and cultural cooperation. Once Armenia agreed to the program, the EU published an action plan with specific development goals. After joining this program, Armenia is now eligible for grants and other assistance. A 2007 IRI survey found that 80 percent of Armenians were in favor of EU membership.

**United Nations**

The United Nations has been involved in Armenia since 1992 with numerous divisions and departments operating throughout the country.

**Trust**

Trust is a complex construct that exists interpersonally and institutionally. Speaking to trust being a complex, multi-level concept, Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, argue that it involves “an individual making herself vulnerable to another individual, group, or institution that has the capacity to do her harm or betray her.” Another conceptual definition comes from Claus Offe: “[t]rust is the belief that others, through their action or inaction, will contribute to my/our well-being and refrain from inflicting damage upon me/us.”
Political Trust

Political trust, more specifically, is the “judgment of the citizenry that the system and the political incumbents are responsive, and will do what is right even in the absence of constant scrutiny,” or “the degree to which people perceive that government is producing outcomes consistent with their expectations.” As such, “political trust is a central indicator of public’s underlying feeling about its polity.”

Institutional Trust

Mishler and Rose summarize two theoretical traditions of political trust: exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous implies an origin outside the political sphere in deeply rooted beliefs, cultural norms, and social norms. Endogenous implies that institutions perform well, and consequently citizens trust those institutions rationally. Mark Warren argues that institutional trust is based upon shared expectations of an institution, backed by sanctions that ensure that the behavior meets the expectations.

Institutional trust is a necessary condition for civil society and democracy, as it links citizens to their representative institutions. According to some scholars, trust also can enhance governmental legitimacy and effectiveness, though the directionality of this relationship has been contested.

Trust in a Post-Soviet Context

Distrust in institutions is widespread in post-Communist countries, which is unsurprising given that Communist-era leaders were perceived as particularly untrustworthy. However, the Soviet welfare system was essential for ensuring security, employment, healthcare, and education for all citizens. After the Soviet Union collapsed, many of the welfare functions of the Soviet system stopped or were reduced, and the structural adjustments made for the new republic were designed and implemented without any vision or goals in mind. Political trust, many have claimed, is important in a post-Soviet context, as trustworthy governmental institutions may create citizen-based social trust where there is little or none.

Andrew Stickley, Sara Ferlander, Tanya Jukkala, Per Carlson, Olga Kislitsyna and Ilkka Henrik Mäkinen conducted a similar analysis of institutional trust in Moscow and found four factors: political (president, government, parliament, political parties, local authorities), protecting (courts, police, army, trade unions), media/monetary (television/radio, press, banks), and well-being (church, hospitals).

Study

The goal of this study was to determine a model of institutional political trust in Armenia in a time of crisis, especially given the transitional nature of the Armenian political landscape. An understanding of political trust during a time of crisis will provide the context for political trust in non-crisis times and provides less-frequently-studied post-Soviet perspective. This 2008 model can be compared to other time periods in Armenia as well as other states.

RQ1: Which political institutions do Armenians trust?
RQ2: Which political institutions are related to each other?
RQ3: What do the relationships say about political trust?
Method

Respondents and Procedures
Respondents were households in Armenia collected in fall 2008 by the Caucasus Social Science Resource Center, funded by the Carnegie Foundation as part of its Data Initiative (renamed Caucasus Barometer in 2010). Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable (with N)</th>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (N = 2082)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement (N = 2082)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (N = 2512)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No primary education</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete secondary education</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed secondary education</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary technical education</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete higher education</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete higher education</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived economic status (N = 2082)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures
Regarding trust in institutions, respondents were told, “I will read out a list of social institutions and political unions. Please, assess your trust toward each of them on a 5-point scale, where ‘1’ means fully distrust, and ‘5’ means fully trust. First, please tell me how much you trust...” and asked to rank. They were also given the option to answer, “I don’t know” (coded as 98) or refuse to answer (coded as 99). The following institutions were used: army, banks, educational system, healthcare system, legal system, non-government
organizations (NGOs), parliament, executive government (prime minister and ministers), president, police, media, religious institutions you belong to, ombudsman, European Union and United Nations.

**Data Analysis**

The goal of the analysis is to create a factor model of political trust in Armenia after the crisis of 2008. The constructs will explain variance in the matrix of associations (correlation matrix) so that the constructs can be used to represent variables in future analyses. Factor analysis is used in this study as it can determine coherence or structure among items. Correlations between items are shown in Table 2 for the entire sample. Because of the large sample size, the original sample was randomly split into two subsamples in SPSS so that exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses could be conducted. Correlation matrices, means, and standard deviations are available in Tables 3 and 4.

In the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the 15 institutional variables were submitted to provide a sense of the probable factor structure. EFA models the variance and covariance matrix of the data and determines the number of factors that best account for covariance among the items. EFA provides the number of factors as well as the patterns of the factor loadings.

Rotation is used to assist in interpretation of factor loading, (i.e. which items belong to which factors). Rotation methods allow for easier identification of factor item loadings. The vectors created and retained can be depicted using a multi-dimensional graph. As each item has some contribution to the vector, all items on the scale are depicted on the graph. The rotation method is an attempt to find the best “vantage point” for seeing grouped items. Rotation brings clarity to the measurement model because it provides statistical evidence to group certain items together on one variable, other items on another and so forth. Promax rotation was used to allow for correlated factors. For each vector, every item in the analysis has a rotated loading coefficient. If the researcher suspects that factors will be correlated, using oblique rotation methods (e.g., promax) is best. If the researcher suspects that factors will not be correlated, an orthogonal method like varimax should be used.

To determine the number of factors, the Kaiser rule was used, as were scree plots, eigenvalues, model fit tests and interpretation of the factor loadings based on theory. Factor loadings were all greater than .40, which is appropriate. Next, a CFA was conducted. CFA models may be used within exploratory research to better refine the EFA results and provide parameter estimate tests and global model fit. Additionally, CFA models allow researchers to identify items that are weakly related and remove them from later analysis, creating a more parsimonious model.

Fit tests, as recommended by Li-Tze Hu and Peter Bentler, were used. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) compares the null model with the predicted model. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) takes into account the simplicity of the model. Standardized Root Square Mean Residual (SRMR). The \( \chi^2 / df \) ratio, which is robust to departures from normality and is sensitive to misspecifications in model structure. While \( \chi^2 \) is a traditional fit test, it is heavily influenced by sample size; with this sample, it is likely that the \( \chi^2 \) will be non-significant.

A good model fit with CFI is indicated with .95 or higher. Although values of 0.06 or less are considered an adequate fit for SRMR and RMSEA, 0.05 or lower is preferred for RMSEA and .08 or lower for SRMR. In addition, as Timothy Brown argues, at least one index
### TABLE 2. Correlation Matrix, Means, and Standard Deviations for Measured Variables for Initial Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trust – army</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.23*</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Trust – banks</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.30*</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Trust – educational system</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.30*</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trust – health-care system</td>
<td>0.23*</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Trust – legal system</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.30*</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>0.51*</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
<td>0.58*</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trust – NGOs</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Trust – Parliament</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.73*</td>
<td>0.60*</td>
<td>0.55*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Trust – Executive government</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.51*</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
<td>0.73*</td>
<td>0.77*</td>
<td>0.61*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Trust – President</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.60*</td>
<td>0.77*</td>
<td>0.57*</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Trust – police</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td>0.58*</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.55*</td>
<td>0.61*</td>
<td>0.57*</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Trust – media</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
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Initial sample mean

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| Subsample SD                     | 1.120 | 1.354 | 1.268 | 1.251 | 1.286 | 1.235 | 1.311 | 1.342 | 1.389 | 1.367 | 1.232 | 1.104 | 1.255 | 1.209 | 1.214 |

*p < .001.
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Subsample mean: 4.32 3.12 3.28 3.38 2.67 2.74 2.52 2.88 3.20 2.66 3.01 4.23 3.22 3.16 3.19
Subsample SD: 1.068 1.330 1.258 1.268 1.232 1.311 1.355 1.433 1.370 1.215 1.135 1.251 1.243 1.238

* p < .001, ** p < .02.
from each fit class (absolute, parsimony, comparative) should be considered because each provides different information about the model fit.

All factor analyses were conducted with Mplus version 5.21. All descriptive analyses were conducted with SPSS version 11.0.

Results

Mean Trust
The mean trust in institutions were (in order of most trusted to least trusted): army (M = 4.32, SD = 1.095), own religious institution (M = 4.23, SD = 1.253), healthcare system (M = 3.43, SD = 1.253), educational system (M = 3.33, SD = 1.263), ombudsman (M = 3.24, SD = 1.253), president (M = 3.23, SD = 1.411), UN (M = 3.21, SD = 1.225), EU (M = 3.16, SD = 1.225), banks (M = 3.15, SD = 1.342), media (M = 3.01, SD = 1.224), executive government (M = 2.90, SD = 1.348), NGOs (M = 2.76, SD = 1.233), police (M = 2.72, SD = 1.370), legal system (M = 2.70, SD = 1.277), and parliament (M = 2.76, SD = 1.311). While all of the means were above average, it is important to note that many participants answered “I don’t know if I trust that institution” with NGOs, ombudsman, EU and UN being unknown by more than 20 percent of respondents.

Results of EFA
In the initial EFA, three and four factors were extracted and evaluated. A two-factor solution was rejected because a number of conceptually similar items had split loadings across the two factors. Five-factor solutions had a number of factors unrelated to one another with no theoretical connection. However, both the three- and four-factor solutions had clearly interpretable results.

<p>| TABLE 5. Description of Demographics of the Sample |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>RM-SEA</th>
<th>C.I.</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>Determinancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>720.865</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>.094-.107</td>
<td>0.909</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.92, .97, .98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7354.908</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>.053-.069</td>
<td>0.973</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.89, .96, .89, .98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 5, the overall fit of the three-factor model was $\chi^2 (63) = 720.862$, $p < .0000$. The eigenvalue was 1.05. Model fit statistics included CFI = .909, RMSEA = .100, and SRMR = .051. The CFI was too low and the RMSEA were too high. Factor loadings for the three-factor model are in Table 6 and factor loadings for the four-factor model are in Table 7. The overall fit of the four-factor model was $\chi^2 (105) = 7354.908$, $p < .0000$, as seen in Table 5. The eigenvalue was 0.633, which is too low. Model fit statistics included CFI = .973, RMSEA = .061, and SRMR = .021. The fits were appropriate, but there were many items with too many cross loadings. The scree plot for this EFA is Figure 1 (see page 82). Factors loadings for the four-factor model are in Table 6.

Those items that crossloaded (bank, legislature, police, media, religious institution, UN, and EU) were then removed from the next stage of analysis. This was conducive with theory, as these are not direct government institutions. Additionally, the
### TABLE 6. Three-factor model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRUARMY</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUBANK</td>
<td>0.524</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUEUC</td>
<td>0.779</td>
<td>−0.215</td>
<td>0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUHLDTH</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>−0.077</td>
<td>−0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUELEGL</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>−0.014</td>
<td>−0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUNGOS</td>
<td>0.537</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>−0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUPARL</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td>−0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUEXEC</td>
<td>−0.126</td>
<td>1.024</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUPRES</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUPOLI</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>0.388</td>
<td>0.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUMEDI</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>−0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUELI</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUOMBD</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>−0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUSTEU</td>
<td>−0.011</td>
<td>−0.009</td>
<td>0.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUSTUN</td>
<td>0.497</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>−0.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 7. Four-factor model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRUARMY</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>−0.121</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUBANK</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>−0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUEUC</td>
<td>0.522</td>
<td>−0.100</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUHLDTH</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>−0.009</td>
<td>−0.017</td>
<td>−0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUELEGL</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.478</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUNGOS</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUPARL</td>
<td>−0.002</td>
<td>0.674</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>−0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUEXEC</td>
<td>−0.049</td>
<td>0.966</td>
<td>−0.016</td>
<td>−0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUPRES</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>−0.042</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUPOLI</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUMEDI</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>−0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUELI</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>−0.002</td>
<td>0.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUOMBD</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>−0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUSTEU</td>
<td>−0.014</td>
<td>−0.013</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUSTUN</td>
<td>−0.018</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next EFA without those items was conducted, and 3 factors were extracted and evaluated. A two-factor solution was rejected because a number of conceptually similar items had split loadings across the two factors. Four- and five-factor solutions had a number of factors unrelated to one another with no theoretical connection. However, the three-factor solution had clearly interpretable results. As is seen in Table 9, the overall fit of the three-factor model was $\chi^2 (8) = 15.217$, $p < .0000$. The eigenvalue was 1.05. Model fit statistics included $CFI = .997$, $RMSEA = .034$, and $SRMR = .008$. The scree plot is Figure 2 (see page 83). The factor loadings are in Table 10.

The three factors were labeled civil society, elected national government, and non-elected national government. The first factor consists of items that are associated with civil society (trust in NGOs and trust in the ombudsman) and while it is preferable to have three items load on a factor, in this case two was deemed satisfactory. The second factor consists of items that are elected national government (parliament, executive branch and
The third factor consists of items that are larger government institutions that are not elected (army, education system, and healthcare system). The three factors were moderately related: civil society was positively correlated with elected national government \( r = .056 \) and with non-elected national government \( r = .057 \). Elected national government was positively correlated with non-elected national government \( r = .037 \). These factors and their associated items were used as the basis for specifying the CFA model.

### Results of CFA

The CFA extended the EFA results reported above by assigned each of the 15 items to the factor with which it was most associated in the EFA. As with the EFA, a random subsample was used after a split of the original file. The overall fit of the initial model was \( \chi^2 (16) = 86.732, p < .0000 \). Model fit statistics included CFI = .974, RMSEA = .067, and SRMR = .032. Table 11 shows the fit statistics. Factor loadings and model from the final CFA appear in Figure 3 (see page 83). The three-factor solution was supported.

### Discussion

Based upon the descriptive and the factor model, this study looked at the research questions of which political institutions Armenians trust, which political institutions are related to each other, and what these relationships say about political trust. Overall, trust in political institutions is low in Armenia. Mean trust results in Armenia were similar to, although lower than, a previous study conducted in 2001 where Roger Sapsford and Pamela Abbott reported that mean Armenian trust (scale 1-5, 5 being the highest) in institutions was 3.10 for the president and 3.75 for the parliament, compared to this 2008 data in the present study having means of 2.52 and 3.23, respectively.
Mean trust results in Armenia were also similar to Russians’, Ukrainians’, Hungarians’, Slovaks’, and Czechs’ low trust in prime minister and parliament\textsuperscript{102}, as well as Russians’ low trust in parliament\textsuperscript{103} and police.\textsuperscript{104} Additionally, the Armenian results were similar to other studies in which it was found that Russians have high trust in the army,\textsuperscript{105} as do Belarussians and Ukrainians,\textsuperscript{106} (although Petr Macek and Ivana Markova found low trust in the army among Russians).\textsuperscript{107}

As noted above, a three-actor model emerged in the EFA and was confirmed by the CFA, consisting of civil society, elected and non-elected institutions.

**Civil Society**

The factor of civil society, consisting of NGOs and the ombudsman, was quite interesting given the large percentage of respondents stating that they did not know if they could trust these institutions. Additionally, mean trust was not very high (NGOs at 2.76 and the ombudsman at 3.24). Considering the great unfamiliarity with these institutions, it is not surprising that they stood apart from the other factors.

**Elected**

This factor consisted of parliament (mean trust = 2.76), executive (mean trust = 2.90), and the president (mean trust = 3.23). Trust in one’s elected government is unsurprising, as those with faith in elected officials would perhaps feel this way across the board. It is also possible that respondents perceived those institutions as being intertwined (Macek and Markova suggest this as well).\textsuperscript{108} Mean trust is quite low for these institutions within this factor.

**Nonelected**

This factor consisted of the army (mean trust = 4.32), education (mean trust = 3.33) and the healthcare system (mean trust = 3.43). All three had relatively higher mean trust. Larger entities such as healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and the army are long-standing; those with trust in the larger institution are likely to hold faith in other institutions, as well.

**Future Research**

**Demographics**

This study made no effort to determine whether institutional political trust structures differed by demographics, as it was an exploratory study. Gender, socioeconomic status, settlement type and education may create differences in political trust. In future studies, an examination of gender differences is essential. Many have found that political trust differs by gender. And merely looking at the descriptives for this Armenian study, while there were only some significant differences between male and female mean scores of trust, the percentage of respondents answering “I don’t know if I trust this organization” differs significantly between males and females in many categories.

Moreover, settlement type matters, as well. In rural Armenian communities, in the absence of effective state support mutual assistance is critical—this comes in the form of cash donation, cash loaning, in-kind assistance, labor assistance, and psychological support.\textsuperscript{109} Local governments in rural areas may not be able to perform basic tasks.\textsuperscript{110}
Additionally, rural educational systems may differ from urban ones. According to one informant, rural schools are “the foundation of every community.”

In the future, splitting the sample and conducting EFA and CFA by sex, categories of socioeconomic status, and education would be a useful extension of the findings in this study.

**Over Time**

Given the events that took place during the spring of 2008—namely, the election of a new president and the attempted coup—conducting this study on the CRRC Armenia 2006 and 2007 dataset to determine if any differences exist in trust toward these institutions is essential to determine if fall 2008 data can only be considered valid for this particular time period. In particular, looking at the mean trust toward elected officials (which is a great deal lower than in other institutions) and comparing this to older data would be especially fruitful.

**Regional**

Further, as these same items exist for Armenia’s neighbors, Azerbaijan and Georgia, there is an excellent opportunity for cross-cultural comparison. While these three post-Soviet republics have a shared history, and many of the political corruption issues are shared, differences could be explained by different levels of authoritarianism in the three republics. Alternatively, if the factor structures are similar in the three republics, this may indicate an opportunity to advance a theoretical model of institutional political trust in post-Soviet states, or at least in the Caucasus.

**Interpersonal and Generalized Trust**

Interpersonal trust is related to institutional trust generally and, as scholars have found, generalized interpersonal trust, (used by Eric Uslaner to describe a society in which relations between people in different social circles are driven by positive motivations and trust,) is positively related to institutional trust in post-Communist states. Future research should examine the role of interpersonal trust levels and institutional trust and how institutional trust can vary with interpersonal trust levels.

Additionally, with Armenia’s Soviet past, social capital is a salient concept that should be explored in future research. The Russian term blat, a “distinctive Russian form of social capital,” was used within dense personal networks to secure resources. Many argue that blat networks are still used today, sometimes substituting for formal organizations. And as Letki and Evans argue, in post-Socialist states where there is a lack of a stable and reliable legal system, state hostility and repressive attitudes result in strong interpersonal relations of trust and reciprocity, creating a situation in which interpersonal trust substitutes for institutional trust. How does blat fit into trust? This is an empirical question that needs to be investigated.

**Antecedents to Political Trust**

Miller, Koshechkina and Grodeland discuss four categories of influences on political trust: distrustful citizens (individuals are generally distrustful of others), untrustworthy institutions (due to incompetence, corruption, and or lack of fairness), discordance between citizens and government (perception that politicians are not on the side of the citizens), and
hard times (adverse economic trends). All four of these may, in fact, come into play in the Armenian institutional trust landscape. Future research may examine these categories in the Armenian context.

Kinds of Trust
As Macek and Markova note—as do William L. Miller, Tatyana Y. Koshechkina and Ase B. Grodeland—there may be distinctive kinds of trust. To borrow Macek and Markova’s example, “[t]rusting the army requires a different kind of trust from trusting local government.” Future research needs to tease out these different kinds of trust.

Construct Validity
In a transitional state just beginning to explore democracy, especially in such a turbulent time, it is fortunate that we are able to take a glimpse at institutional political trust structures. Extension of political trust theory into places where trust may not conceptually be the same as in Western empirical research is important as we reassess our understanding of such constructs.

Additionally, perhaps examining “trust” as a construct is inappropriate. While social capital is especially important for developing countries with the “triple challenge” of democratization, economic development and avoidance of conflict, perhaps the Western construct is inappropriate.

Mixed Methods
Mixed methods could resolve some of these issues. Thus, future research may utilize mixed or multiple methods to explore the construct of trust in Armenia. As Macek and Markova argue, trust is a polysemic term, challenging to differentiate from fear, risk, and faith, and difficult to measure quantitatively. Large cross-cultural and mixed methods studies like Miller, Koshechkina and Grodeland while a large undertaking, provide a more nuanced look at complex sociopolitical constructs.

Addressing cultural factors while measuring constructs is problematic due to language and translation differences, but also to conceptualization of constructs. For example, what an American means by nostalgia may be similar to what an Australian means by nostalgia due to shared language, but perhaps also because of shared cultural similarities. By comparison, he connotations of nostalgia, even if appropriately translated, to a Chinese person may be quite different due to cognition patterns, cultural values, and so on (see John Hitchcock et al. for review). In cross-cultural research, construct validity is especially problematic because behaviors and cognitions are culturally-specific. While some basic psychological principles and processes may be universal, the concepts, attributes, patterns, norms, attitudes, values, frames of reference, construction of and response to social reality are all culturally based. Hitchcock et al. have used a mixed-methods approach to validate a construct cross-culturally. They argue that while mixed methods are growing in popularity, there has not been a discussion as to how to best combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate construct validation. Mixed methods are useful for construct validation, as they can address cultural factors and propose a seven-step method for addressing these factors.
Conclusion

What is to be done about institutional trust in Armenia? Some have suggested that trust must be generated from the bottom-up, as interpersonal trust is the only available trust in post-Soviet societies. While this may be the case, without reliable trustworthy institutions, interpersonal trust can only go so far in creating a civil society. In contrast, it may be that, trust can be recovered from above by eliminating many of the problems that plague many post-Soviet governments: arbitrariness, secrecy, and so on. Offe furthered the top-down argument, positing that if “truth-telling, promise-keeping, fairness, and solidarity” occurred that trust could be built between post-Soviet citizens and their institutions. While this may be wishful thinking, many aid programs promote such actions. Either way, trust is an important issue of study in this region—“a key matter in determining what sort of society will emerge from post-communism.”

NOTES

8. The Heritage Foundation, “Armenia country report.”
11. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 102.
14. Ibid., 70.
19. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
43. USAID, “Armenia corruption survey of households.”
45. Ibid.
48. USAID, “Armenia corruption survey of households.”
52. Ibid.
55. Hank Johnston, “Religio-nationalist subcultures under the Communists: Comparisons from...


58 Freedom House, “Armenia: Country at the crossroads.”

59. USAID, “Armenia corruption survey of households.”


64. International Republican Institute, “Armenia national voter survey.”


68. Offe, 47.


80. See Offe; Rose, *Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust*; and Piotr Sztompka, “Trust and
81. Sztompka, “Trust and emerging democracy.”
88. Ibid.
104. See Macek and Markova; and Mishler and Rose, Political Consequences of Trust.

107. Macek and Markova, “Trust and distrust in old and new democracies.”

108. Ibid.


119. Miller, Koshechikina and Grodeland, “Diffuse trust or diffuse analysis?: The specificity of political trust in post-communist Europe.”

120. Macek and Markova, “Trust and distrust in old and new democracies.”

121. Miller, Koshechikina and Grodeland, “Diffuse trust or diffuse analysis?: The specificity of political trust in post-communist Europe.”

122. Macek and Markova, 180.


124. Macek and Markova, “Trust and distrust in old and new democracies.”


132. Rose, Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust.

133. Sztompka, Trust and Emerging Democracy.

134. Offe, 85.


FIGURES 1–3
FIGURE 2. Scree Plot for Final EFA

FIGURE 3. CFA Model
Demokratizatsiya
The midterm election results underscore a problem for progressives: Tea Partiers and conservatives have a more clearly defined view of the role of government than progressives. The burden is on progressives to articulate when and why we need government—and when and why we don’t—to advance our life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.

In our Winter Issue, we invite Alan Wolfe, Rick Perlstein, and Eric Liu and Nick Hanauer to remind us of our first principles—and why our ideas are better than the other side’s. You’ll also find Thea Lee, Robert Atkinson, Harry J. Holzer, Sherle Schwenninger, and Heather Boushey on the future of the American workforce, Michael Bérubé on the 15th anniversary of the Sokal hoax, Alan Brinkley on President Obama’s philosophy, Mary Jo Bane on Robert Putnam’s American Grace, and more.

“One way to guess what Obama might do.”
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Turkey: What Vision for the Neighborhood?
Friday, January 28
In partnership with the American Jewish Committee

Parag Khanna
Author, How to Run the World: Director of the Global Governance Initiative, New America Foundation
How to Run the World
Tuesday, February 8

Larry Cox
Executive Director, Amnesty International USA
Thursday, February 10
Part of the Global Connectors Series: Vision for a Better World

Saturday at the Warwick Melrose
with Ambassador Akbar Ahmed
Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies, American University and Author,
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