

PANEL DISCUSSION

Armenia at 20: Recent Parliamentary Elections and Future Prospects

Panelists

- Her Excellency Karine Kazinian, Ambassador of Armenia in the UK
- Dr Armine Ishkanian, LSE
- Dr Vicken Cheterian, CIMERA
- Chair
- Dr Hratch Tchilingirian

Monday 21 May, 6.30pm
 Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS

Last year the Republic of Armenia marked the twentieth anniversary of independence from the Soviet Union. The transition from a totalitarian regime to building a nation based on democratic principles has proven to be a difficult and painful journey. The onerous task of rebuilding the country, on one hand, and the territorial war with neighbouring Azerbaijan, on the other, have presented many challenges to everyday existence of ordinary citizens. Like her counterparts in former Soviet space, the lack of real democracy, justice, transparency and the rule of law have left very few choices to Armenia's population. In the last twenty years migration, social dislocation, internal political processes and major foreign policy challenges have caused enormous difficulties for society, especially the youth. Where is Armenia heading? What are the future prospects? Do the latest parliamentary elections differ from the vast shortcomings of past elections?

These are some of the questions that the panel will discuss. Her Excellency Ambassador Kazinian will be evaluating the challenges and achievements of the past twenty years and in this context she will underline the importance of the recent parliamentary elections. Dr Armine Ishkanian will examine the role of civil society played before, during and after the most recent parliamentary elections. In doing so she will consider how civil society in Armenia has developed over the past twenty years since the country gained independence from the Soviet Union. Dr Vicken Cheterian will present the role of elections in forming the political space in Armenia since independence, arguing that so far neither parliamentary nor presidential elections resulted in rotation of power. He will then underline growing activism demand for pluralism and political representation both in Armenia and in the Diaspora.

Her Excellency Karine Kazinian is the Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia in the UK. A graduate of Yerevan State University's Department of Philology, she has served as a diplomat and ambassador in Africa and Europe, first representing the Soviet Union and since 1991 the Republic of Armenia. Until her appointment as Ambassador to the UK, she served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Dr Armine Ishkanian is the Programme Director of the MSc in NGOs and Development at the Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics (LSE). Her research is focused on civil society, democratisation, development, human rights and poverty reduction. She has published extensively on these topics. She is author of *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia* (London: Routledge, 2008).

Dr Vicken Cheterian is a journalist and political analyst who works at CIMERA in Geneva. He has worked for various European and Middle Eastern publications, reporting on conflicts in the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia. He is the author of *War and Peace in the Caucasus, Russia's Troubled Frontier*.

Reception will follow at Brunei Suite, Brunei Gallery Building, SOAS

School of Oriental and African Studies
 University of London

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