

ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN TODAY EVENTS AND COMMENTS

Electronic Bulletin N13, 2013

ELECTIONS JUST AS THEY ARE



Region Research Center (Armenia) and the Institute for Peace and Democracy (Azerbaijan) continue their cooperation on the joint internet platform “Public Dialogues” (www.publicdialogues.info) with the support of the Embassies of Great Britain in Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the Embassies of Poland in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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The parallel interviews of experts from Armenia and Azerbaijan (Virtual Parallels), as well as the internet press conferences held with the participation of experts from different countries for Armenian and Azerbaijani mass media are organized with the financial support of the Embassies of Great Britain in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The views and opinions expressed on this bulletin are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of British and Polish Governments.

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VIRTUAL PARALLELS

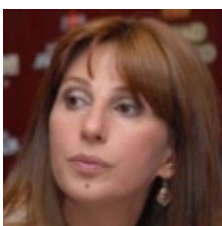
THE INTERVIEWS IN ARMENIA ARE ORGANIZED AND HELD BY REGION RESEARCH CENTER AND BY THE INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN AZERBAIJAN,

within the framework of a project, supported by the Embassies of Great Britain in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The interviews in this rubric are simultaneously published in Armenia (the Hetq newspaper, hetq.am) and in Azerbaijan (the NovoyeVremya newspaper, <http://online.novoye-vremya.com>).

Postfactum evaluation from Armenia and Azerbaijan after the presidential elections in Armenia (February 18, 2013) and in Azerbaijan (October 9, 2013)

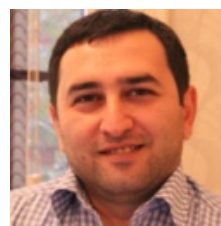
INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER MISSIONS IN 2013 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

QUESTION - Immediately after independence all the elections (presidential, parliamentary) in the country began to be observed by the OSCE / ODIHR observer missions. After accession to the Council of Europe and joining the Eastern Partnership program the elections began also to be observed by the representatives of the CoE and the EU. There are observers from the CIS countries. Can you see any discrepancies in their reports?



**ZARUHI
POSTANJYAN**

*head of the parliamentary
faction of the Heritage Party*



**BASHIR
SULEYMANLI**

*executive secretary of the
Elections Monitoring and
Democracy Training Center*

-After the latest presidential elections held this year the unelected person was greeted in Brussels, Moscow and the United States. This means that the geopolitical interests have distorted the purpose and nature of the observer missions. Of course, the discrepancies in their reports and the details are secondary, but the opinion on the results of the election was the same. And if the results of a rigged election are believed as the same, it does not matter, who spoke harsher about the existing problems. Also judgments should not be made only based on the events of the day of voting. Prior to the election process, we repeatedly pointed at

- Of course, there are considerable differences. Azerbaijan acceded to various OSCE documents (Copenhagen, Vienna), has pledged to hold elections in accordance with the OSCE standards. Joining the Council of Europe and by accession to the Eastern Partnership Program, Azerbaijan has also committed to holding free and fair elections. However, in the democratic world, the OSCE has gained a reputation of a professional and categorical structure to ensure the improvement of the electoral system and the election monitoring. The OSCE sends to a long-term election observation mission. The Council of Europe

all the sores to be eliminated to all those structures you mentioned above. Not only the "Heritage" party, but also various social organizations and political forces spoke about them. We specifically pointed to all the problems to be solved by fair and transparent elections, and warned that the disregard of these shortcomings would create a favorable environment for the illegal activities of the authorities. Look, due to emigration the electoral lists in Armenia contain names of people currently not in the country. We have a strong suspicion that this fact is used to vote instead of the missing people. After the elections, the authorities are unwilling to publish the registers, referring to the requirement by the Venice Commission, which, by the way, came up with some other language. I mean that even before the elections they were aware of these issues and should not have judged only by impressions of the day.

and the EU sent their representatives, i.e. deputies, to observe the voting process. These structures give only a general evaluation to the elections, or rather the voting process. On the other hand, because of the political nature and orientation of these structures, their observation may be biased.

Reports of observers from the CIS, in general, are far from being professional, and are compiled on the basis of personal relations with the leaders of the country. In addition, this structure does not include any democratic countries, these are countries with no properly established electoral systems, their statements cannot be regarded as professional.

It would be totally wrong to draw parallels between the OSCE/ODIHR reports and those of the other three structures. At least, because the OSCE election monitors the elections on an ongoing basis and cooperates with the authorities of Azerbaijan for the improvement of the electoral system.

Full versions of the interviews
Geopolitical Interests Distort the Purpose and Nature of Observer Missions
Reports by International Observers Cause Headaches for the Authorities
<http://publicdialogues.info/en/node/625>

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From the internet press conference of ANAR MAMMADLI

Head of the Elections Monitoring and Democracy Training Center,
Azerbaijan (October 15, 2013)

- The third term in office will create many problems for Ilham Aliyev, and among them, the issue of the foreign policy of Azerbaijan will stand in the foreground. I do not have clear information on Ilham Aliyev's intentions regarding the Eurasian Union. However, I have to say that it would be difficult to withdraw from participation in the Eastern Partnership. At the same time, I do not think that Russia will use the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to influence Aliyev's decision. And finally now some pro-governmental analysts and politicians have started talking about the possible membership of Azerbaijan to the Customs Union. This shows that on the sidelines of the government there are proponents of this membership.
- Unfortunately, the members of the various groups – both the representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly – supported the government and released non-professional statements on the outcomes of the election. They did not assess the quality of the electoral process. It is clear that they are members of various political groups and parties in their own countries, too, and they were not impartial. However, I must stress that these missions included people, involved in shadowy relationships with the incumbent government of Azerbaijan. We can get more information on these relationships through Caviar Diplomacy.

Arminfo news agency-www.arminfo.am, Hetq online newspaper-www.hetq.am, panorama.am, correspondent of Regnum news agency-www.regnum.ru from Armenia and NovoyeVremya newspaper-www.novoye-vremya.com, BizimYol newspaper-www.bizimyol.az, Zerkalo newspaper-www.zerkalo.az, Turan news agency-www.contact.az from Azerbaijan participated in the press conference of Anar Mammadli.

Full version of the material: <http://publicdialogues.info/en/node/589>



From the internet press conference of KOBATURMANIDZE

**Head of the Elections Monitoring and Democracy Training Center
(CRRC), Georgia (October 22, 2013)**

The internet press conference was held on the eve of the presidential elections in Georgia

- Forthcoming elections (October 27, 2013) are unusual for Georgia in at least two respects: first, the incumbent political force (Georgian Dream) does not have exclusive and excessive access to money and media; second, political programs and ideologies matter more than individuals. These two factors are far more important than which candidate will be on the second place. True, competition looks like to be for the second place, the first one will obviously go to the Georgian Dream candidate. However, it cannot be excluded that he wins after a run-off elections
- I would say that recent political processes, not only elections, have relevance for democratic development in the region. The Georgian case has at least four lessons for the democracy promoters:
 1. voters matter not only in democracies, but in autocracies too
 2. if the government is not attentive and responsive to voter preferences, it will lose legitimacy
 3. the incumbent cannot rely on the repressive apparatus only to win elections
 4. fragmented opposition has no chance in elections, but the united opposition does
- There are quite a few contemplations in the Georgian media. I am more inclined to believe that the next prime minister somebody from Ivanishvili's close circle, a technocrat rather than a politician, who will have to rely on Ivanishvili's political capital.
- Georgian Dream does not exclude opening the railway to Abkhazia. Our last poll in August 2013 showed that 75% of people support this approach. However, opening the railway makes sense if all sides are interested. Now it looks like there are no matching steps from Russia – perhaps they don't see enough benefits of it to start negotiations on trade-offs.

Arminfo news agency-www.arminfo.am, Respublica Armenia newspaper-www.ra.am, News Armenia news agency-www.newsarmenia.am, Public Radio of Armenia-www.armradio.am from Armenia and Turan news agency-www.contact.az, BizimYol newspaper-www.bizimyol.az, NovoyeVremya newspaper-www.novoye-vremya.com from Azerbaijan participated in the press conference of KobaTurmanidze.

Full version of the material: <http://publicdialogues.info/en/node/627>