
Striking Differences Of Two Civilizations

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Geography and antagonism have become inherent elements between Armenia and Azerbaijan linking them in a way that it cannot do without comparisons. In this regard it is intolerable to ignore such an important event like the presidential elections, especially when both Armenia and Azerbaijan have held it in the current year.

Elections in Armenia were not perfect, everyone understands that, however in constructional and juridical sense they were so well organized and with high quality that no comparisons may be made between our and the so called elections held in Azerbaijan. A lot of factors and parameters may be brought to support the above said.

However we will bring some of them. None of the political forces in Armenia has been persecuted. They have all been free to participate in the elections, while in Azerbaijan many are exiled from the country and a group of social and political activists (more than 100 according to the western organizations) are in jails. Rustam Ibrahimov's case is worth mentioning in this context. The latter as a single opposition candidate was getting ready for opposing Ilham Aliyev, however the CEC of Azerbaijan rejected his candidacy at the last moment.

The differences are obvious in regard of the resources: If in Armenia various political forces have more or less equal resources (administrative, intellectual, financial, political and media), in Azerbaijan all of this is under the control of one force and this force is in the President's Residency. Shortly, from the viewpoint of electoral process and its result the elections held in Armenia and Azerbaijan are incomparable. Instead, the attitude of the international community and the reaction of the administration are fit to be compared.

The behavior of the international community is obvious for both countries. The factor of political interest is surely not ignored.

However the international community wants to see in two countries progress in democracy, human rights and social development in general.

The elections in this regard are the best opportunity to assess it, and that's why observing missions are sent to these countries and process assessment is carried out. In the case of Armenia the result of the assessment was mainly positive; however some deficiencies were noted too. As for Azerbaijan it was noted that those were not elections.

There is an essential factor here to be mentioned. As a rule, OSCE PA and the Council of Europe sent a short-term observation missions to member countries. These groups mainly consist of MPs, i.e. politicians. Usually these missions join the ODIHR and give a joint assessment. It has been this way in case of Armenia and all other countries. As for Azerbaijan the MP's had made separate statements in a style of "God bless Ilham" in the same time contradicting the ODIHR assessments.

The emotional expressions of Bulgarian and Macedonian MPs do not turn the Azerbaijani "Disneyland" into elections. However, it is obvious that the European values gradually degrade under the influence of oil and caviar. This, naturally, is the problem of Europe and not Azerbaijan. Europe will

lose its grace if it keeps on going in this way. Anyway, it is also obvious that the elections held in Armenia and Azerbaijan are incomparable also in regard of assessment of international observers.

In order to conclude the parallels we are only left to compare the official reactions of the two countries concerning the assessments of the elections. To keep the parity I suggest comparing the statements of the heads of the presidents' staff of the two countries. In both cases they suggest the approach of the administration.

The head of the President's staff of Armenia Vigen Sargsyan had stated: "The reports were very close to reality and to the elections held in Armenia. This speaks about the fact that different and sometimes even competing observation missions have recorded the same result.

In some cases the observed problems and the assessments coincide. They are mainly the same, because the government, the RA authorities have done everything depending on them to push the elections forward by one more step in this process. I am saying one step, because the democracy and elections, as a very significant component of it, have no border after which there is nothing left to change or to do. Thus this was an important one step forward. The formulation of OSCE/ODIHR report saying that the elections were held by special attention paid towards preservation of the fundamental freedoms sounded so dear to me. This is a very important assessment as the main aim of the elections is protection of fundamental freedoms. The rest of the shortcomings may be corrected and we will work on them over time," Vigen Sargsyan has noted.

Armenia not only admitted the assessment of the observers but also agreed to cooperate and to correct the existing drawbacks as well as improving the process. While Azerbaijan was getting ready for elections, the Armenian president reaffirmed at PACE this approach and informed about the existence of a corresponding working group.

Here what Vigen Sargsyan's Azerbaijani counterpart Ramiz Mehtiyev have stated in connection with the ODIHR report:

"According to our sources the election report draft which lacks any positive episode has been prepared in the Warsaw based office of that organization. It should be noted that such deceits are aimed at flaring up tension and provoking negative processes in the Azerbaijani society. This means that some observers have been prepared to give negative assessment to the elections in advance. We can only make a guess what could the real purpose for such hostile attitude be."

Ramiz Mehtiyev in his statement has also accused the U.S., and has noted that ODIHR is dependent on Washington. "That institution is not an independent organization at all, it cannot operate by itself. OSCE works by looking at the USA. Keeping in mind that previously the OSCE had given a non-objectiv, biased assessment, we were against of inviting them to Azerbaijan during the presidential elections.

However, the Azerbaijani side invited the OSCE/ODIHR taking into consideration the factor of U.S. council. The comparison of the reports of U.S. State department and that of OSCE/ODIHR showed that these reports were twins. This is the case of obvious trust abuse."

No comments, as they say. We are only left to wait and to see how the international community will react on Azerbaijan's demarche, for Mahtiyev has not only accused Washington of trust abuse but also of "violating the rights of the U.S. citizens." As the imposing politician has called for not

giving a way to emotions and not getting tempted by the U.S. friendship, it is expected that soon Azerbaijan will turn its back to the progressive world.
