FLAWED ELECTORAL SYSTEM

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Opinions about the election scheduled for 20th of June abound in social media outlets. Unfortunately unbecoming words and expressions accompany these views. It is a rarity to find sober samples of communication. We present an on-line exchange between Massis, Nairi and Sam. They are aliases but the texts are verbatim records of actual individuals.

"Dearest Massis, thank you for your idea about getting help from our friends. Unfortunately, they will not be able to help even if they want to. With the confusing news coming from the borders, and the crisis post Artsakh War, everyone here now is either preparing for elections or mind boggled as for whom or which party to vote for. The electoral system of Armenia is very strange and makes me bonkers. the climate prior to elections is sobering. According to the electoral code of Armenia, amended recently by Pashinyan, we are not voting for any constituency. No individual is. The election is between parties. People will not be able to elect any official from a particular district. All they can do is elect a political party. All the parties in the fray have already submitted a national list to the election commission. Based on the percentage of votes gained by each party or alliance (should they clear the barrier and make it to the parliament) the number of seats will be allocated. Then the MPs will be chosen by the party based on their rank in the national list.

To give you an example, say X party gets 8% of the total votes. After adding the percentage of the votes received by other parties, X will get to appoint say 14 MPs to the National Assembly. The first 14 people on the party's list will enter the parliament. Say party Y has received 32 per cent, they will get to appoint the number of MPs that the percentage allows. In effect, through this last amendment, people have lost their right to elect any official directly. We don't elect a President, we don't elect a Prime Minister and now we don't even elect an MP. People just elect parties and they do the rest. When the person picks up the ballot paper of the party he or she wants to elect, only the names of the top 3 candidates on the list will be visible. The rest of the list is closed.

What is rather more ridiculous is the fact that the votes of the parties that don't make it to the parliament are given to those that do make it. Say there are 27 groups in the fray. Out of these 27, only 4 make it to the parliament. This means that the cumulative votes gathered by the remaining 23 parties will be added up and distributed among the 4 parties that entered the parliament.

During the elections in 2018, around 16% of the votes were received by the parties that didn't make it, (HHK, Dashnak, Qaxaqaciakan Voroshum, etc). These16% of the votes were then distributed among My Step, Bargavach and Bright Armenia with Lion's share going to My Step, followed by the other two.

It makes no sense to vote for a party that doesn't stand a chance because the votes will eventually go to Pashinyan, Kocharyan, Bargavach and whoever else makes it. Imagine if you are a communist, they will take your votes and give them to a right-wing force because they made it to the parliament. Now, this is absurdity. Who made these rules?

You have no idea how many people want to see Kocharyan back to power. Seriously. Literally every 3rd person now. It is crazy.

Three years of Pashinyan and we have this result - Artsakh to Azerbaijan, Armenia to Putin and the Government to Kocharyan.
Long Live the Revolution.
Wish me patience, I need loads of it."

"Dear Nairi, your letter has been long awaited. The electoral system, as you have described, is simply anti-democratic. On the one hand it prevents the national assembly being crammed with splinter and fringe groups and thus makes it more stable. It is a safeguard against the revolving door phenomenon that has been observed in several countries. RoA needs a stable national Assembly yet doing away constituency system altogether is an antithesis to the principle of democracy. The individual citizen is basically barred from electing the person he/she likes or wants. Ad hoc live on-line surveys are conducted. It's not scientific but tells something about trends in the country. Over the weekend I followed some of them. A head-to-head Kocharyan-Pashinyan match shows alarming figures. Kocharyan crosses 40% threshold whereas Pashinyan hovers around 50%. Corruption in combination with Putin's blessing, I fear, can erase that 10% difference. It's a match between bad and worse. It indirectly confirms your observation that one in third are willing to cast their vote to a criminal."

Sam writes, "Dear Massis and Nairi, you perfectly explained and commented on today's election code. The belief that the next prime minister is Kocharyan is very popular among political scientists, historians and intellectuals in general, even if the ARF bloc formed by him does not overcome the 8% barrier. The basis of this trust, of course, is Putin's support. Note also the outrageous fact that Kocharyan has NEVER tolerated being No. 2, and has always eliminated No. 1. Let's remember Arthur Mkrtchyan in Artsakh, LTP, Vazgen Sargsyan and Karen Demirjian in Armenia and others. I even suspect that these three years of Nicolism were a staged performance from the very beginning, in which LTP, Kocharyan and Serzhik had invisible roles. Everyone played their part, Nikol, obviously, on stage, the three mentioned behind the scenes. Let them all go to hell, because the result is a catastrophe: loss of the homeland, about 5 thousand young lives, tens of thousands of wounded and disabled and ... Millions of Armenians afflicted with the psychological morale of the defeated. And on top of all this, almost a complete loss of a partially independent statehood, the re-Azerbaijanization of Artsakh, the eviction of Armenians, even the continuation of the deportation of Armenians from Armenia. In other words, the re-ignition of the burning fire of the nightmare of the whole nation."

There are no comments yet.