The Problems of Democratic Transformation in the Republic of Armenia

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Armenia is on the eve of parliamentary elections. It is quite difficult to predict the results of elections, as the Armenian society is in a state of transformation.

The processes, started after the collapse of the Soviet Union, aimed at the creation of a new political system, precisely prove that the modern world has entered into a completely new stage of political transformations. Deep-rooted geopolitical changes, spreading out through the scenario of the clash of civilizations, have thrown a challenge to the Armenian society – to perceive the principles of the political dialog in a new manner, based on the necessity to preserve its own identity. Taking into account these considerations, special attention is paid to both the vector and the nonvector character of the democratic transformations of the Republic of Armenia which have resulted in a procedural and structural uncertainty.

Multidimensionality of the democratic transformation model

The processes of democratic transformation suppose the establishment of democratic values, and democratization is often characterized as a systemized open infinity or an organized uncertainty. The Russian political scientist V. Gelman (1998, pp. 22–23, 2001, p. 15), who systematically analyzed uncertainty, insists that in such a situation the system of political institutions and the results of the political process are temporary if the elite does not demonstrate the political will for the targeted direction to the establishment of the norms of social living and the principles of the social dialog of the democratic reforms, carried out by that elite.

The matrix emerging in the process of transformation in the conditions of democratization was analyzed for the first time by O’Donnell and Schmitter,
who, having summarized the experience of the political development of African and Latin American states of the 1950s and 1960s, gave the following definition: “Transit stems from the definite authoritarian regime to ‘something’ uncertain. That ‘something’ can be connected both with establishment of the political democracy, or with restoration of a new, maybe even more violent form of the authoritarian rule” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, p. 2).

Undoubtedly, uncertainty of the transit is an important characteristic of the democratic transformation process, which, however, has not emerged just as it is, but under the influence of the nature of the value orientation of the transition. This circumstance may be explained with the help of the classification of the transit proposed by Karl and Schmitter (1991), who, analyzing the specifics of the transit in Latin American and South-Eastern European countries, considered: the dominating type of actors (elite and masses) and the main strategies (force or compromise).

Depending on the combinations of strategies and actors applying them, the following four modules of transformation were singled out by Karl and Schmitter: pact, reform, revolution, and “imposed” transit. These modules are classified depending on the level of uncertainty which emerges in the process, which apparently gives the following: the minimal level is fixed in case of the pact of the elites, and the maximum level during revolution. It is also high in case of the “imposed” transit.

On the basis of the classification by Karl and Schmitter, we find that in the processes of democratic transformation to get out of the uncertainty, it is possible to outline the following four possible scenarios which are conditioned by the strategy of the actors and proportion of forces.

1. If one of the actors has no well-defined counterweight and the force strategy is accompanied with the principle of the “war against all”, then the engagement of the masses in the clash leads to civil war or total estrangement. In this scenario, it is impossible to get out of uncertainty (it even aggravates the depth and longitude of the uncertainty, providing a high level of marginalization and manipulation).

2. The clash will provide an opportunity to one of the actors to achieve a complete domination over the opponents and become a full-scale possessor of the situation by the principle “the winner takes all”.

3. In case of domination of one of the actors, the way out of uncertainty may be an obvious or not so obvious agreement among the participants of the political process concerning the adoption of general norms (“pact of elites”), which ensures preservation of the status quo on the basis of the agreed conditions.

4. During the force clash of the actors in case of a relatively uncertain defeat, they may use democratic and legislative institutions as a tool of struggle, substituting “the war against all” for “the war by rules”.

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