# The 2007 Parliamentary Elections: Coming to Power versus Democratic Perspectives

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For some time, it seemed that unacceptability of the election model is recognized nation-wide. Ukrainian politicians chose the most primitive and worst option (one constituency for 37 million voters, strict lists, the same status and threshold for different election subjects and many other elements) out of numerous modifications of the proportional system alone (nomination procedure, requirements to congresses, widening of the circle of electoral subjects, increase of the number of constituencies, type of electoral lists, procedure for re-distribution of votes cast for parties that did not pass the electoral threshold etc.). This entails political corruption, makes the democratic institutions – parliamentary elections – senseless from the civil viewpoint and strengthens power and advantages of people separated from the rest of society.

Electoral and extra-electoral procedures do not provide for preventive measures against the formation of an unsound and ineffective legislature, whose work does not satisfy either Ukraine's needs for development or interests of various social strata and groups.

As a matter of fact, a favorable electoral model alone is not enough for the public participation in order to strengthen democracy. The electoral model is a link in the chain of other necessary factors: deconcentration of power, real self-government (vested with not only powers but also resources), strengthening of the law and the property system etc. However, it is the electoral model that serves as a basis for delegation of power and determines to whom this power belongs.

Over the whole election campaign, we have observed similarity and difference of positions of political groups on various issues of the country's development. And we have determined that the formation of a government is one of those issues, about which parties are unanimous. It happens that in the agitation passion, politicians take upon themselves too much, promising to "eradicate" something "once and forever" or do "something incredible"… Though, the election campaign is nearing its end but we did not hear any plain statements about the electoral model. None of fervent political supporters of "common" Ukrainians, who assure us of their loyalty singing the serenade about the "European choice", lost their mind and none of them failed to drop even a word of the need to make the procedure for power legitimacy more transparent for these very "common" Ukrainians and more effective for their real civic participation. Yet, everything happens vice versa. Conscience of political agitators is clear and experience "whispers" that these "common" Ukrainians do not care about political rights and if they choose between 8,500 and 11,000, then "we will go to you!".

It is sad and disturbing that on the 16$^{th}$ year of Ukraine's independence and the development of democratic principles of policy-making, the Ukrainian society faces the separation of politics and compulsory consumption of ineffective governance. In fact, silence of politicians about the political model is no surprise. It is its current modification (*appointment of party leaders to offices* instead of delegating representation of various social groups) that helps this model to keep power in the

best way. It does not allow gaining absolute power but makes it possible not to spend time for administrating changes in the country and continue changing the system of power. Presently, the matter does not concern political preferences of citizens (attitude to some politicians is an important but not primary). The question is that nowadays, politics is built on principles of separation of citizens from the formation of power, which allows applying in politics the Soviet tactics for winning businesses and reinforces power of a few people (even their statements are full of poorly disguised superiority). Hence, it is denoted not as democracy but as political oligarchy.

We, citizens, are loosing. But politicians are loosing as well. Grown on artificial soil and rootless, they neither accumulate nor bear social energy and do not have any prospects. Therefore, politics is doomed to reproduction of the only really important problem – redistribution of power inside itself. (And in Ukraine, power is redistributed among politicians, since we witness the rapid privatization of politics by a few political forces. The so-called small parties patiently watch this process. But it is a topic of another discussion – whether it is necessary and whether it is possible and how to gradually eliminate monopolization of politics and its non-competitiveness.) Given the situation, each of the above forces strives to involve the society in power redistribution, making it flexible but nevertheless weak argument, while discussing who will be a legitimate master of the state and who will simply watch how spheres of influence and resources will be redistributed. If redistribution agreements are impeded, the political actors might deliberately provoke political crises and politics will eat itself. As a result, this will entail decline of Ukraine as a potentially competitive state on the international market. It does not mean stagnation until politics gets exhausted because decline might linger too long for human life.

The society badly needs qualitatively new governance. Whether each of us is ready to wait? If we recognize that political expediency of the existing electoral system is an intention of politicians to remove their rivals from political scene, then to change the situation (or, at least, correct it) for the short-term period, it is necessary to prioritize the renewal of political rights of Ukrainians and the political elite that under any democratic system shall represent interests and needs of not large and very large capital masked with “charity” but various social strata and groups .

So, how can the society shake confidence of politicians, who feel at ease in this situation, and achieve changes? Who will dare to assume the role of “ice-breaker” of estrangement?

At the first stage, communities could lead this slow process because it is citizens, who create a democratic state. In fact, communities are weak now, while the territorial reform (though, like all others) is far away. Nevertheless, using the slightest readiness of some politicians not to change the electoral model at the local level (which has nothing in common with allegedly attractive agitation for the election of chairmen of regional state administrations, who do not belong to the self-government system) but, at least, to discuss a possible new model of elections to regional, district and city councils, we can share our vision of such model ensuring equal, general and open community representation. In their turn, communities together with other interested groups and their organizations could shape and promote changes at the national level.

Needless to say, other people will dictate Ukrainians their political will until various social groups realize and recognize their own interests as personal (instead of being satisfied with promises) and until they form representatives of these interests (or find them among existing political groups). (For the time being, experience proves that Ukrainians realize only such simple rights as the right to preserve green parks nearby their houses.) Presently, Ukrainian politics substituted all other social institutions (and frequently simulates the mission of promoting labor, property, economic and other rights of various social groups. For instance, it is not independent trade unions but political groups that discredit themselves competing in “humanity” of the minimum wage rate etc.) However, politics cannot and should not substitute them.

Ukraine’s example demonstrates that the knowledge of principles and “how to build a democracy” does not releases the society from the historical need to strengthen some institutions, whereas wasted (even “for a reason”) decades entail the loss of even those accomplishments, which laid the foundation for a new state.

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