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***Inter-parliamentary cooperation
in electoral monitoring***

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Abstract

Over the past few years, electoral monitoring has become an important exercise in democracy promotion and consolidation. However, little attention has been paid to the role that international parliamentary bodies play in that respect. This paper considers the role of three such bodies that acted together through what is known as the “Parliamentary Troika” (EP, PACE, OSCE PA) in the presidential elections that took place in Azerbaijan in 2013. The paper focuses on this rather poor example of electoral monitoring not to question its basic utility and necessity but rather in order to illustrate several of its problems with a view to invite further debate on how to improve existing monitoring mechanisms as far as parliamentary input is concerned.

Key words

Inter-parliamentary cooperation, electoral monitoring, Azerbaijan elections in 2013, Parliamentary Troika, European Parliament (EP), Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA), Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR)

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INTRODUCTION

By the early 2000s, it was estimated that roughly 80 percent of elections in non-established democracies were being monitored by at least one observer mission¹. According to Brahm², the first international monitoring dates as far back as in 1857. There are many forms of electoral control: in brief, “[t]he mandate of **ELECTION OBSERVERS** is to gather information and make an informed judgment without interfering in the process. The mandate of **ELECTION MONITORS** is to observe the electoral process and to intervene if laws are being violated. The mandate of **ELECTION SUPERVISORS** is to certify the validity of the electoral process³.”

This study looks at how parliamentary participation in electoral monitoring works. Whereas electoral observation or monitoring represents now a common exercise, little attention has been given to the role of parliamentary institutions in these processes in general and in particular in their semi-institutionalized collaboration mechanisms.

This paper will consider the role of several European-wide parliamentary assemblies in electoral observation: the European Parliament (EP), the OSCE PA, and the PACE. All those assemblies are actively engaged in electoral observation/monitoring⁴, be it individually or collectively.

Therefore, this particular contribution intends to show (1) how parliamentary institutions in general (and their specific collaboration in a number of specific issues) work; (2) how they complement an important international function: that of electoral monitoring.

The paper consists of five parts: the first part presents a brief discussion of what electoral monitoring is about. The second part discusses the parliamentary role in international affairs in general terms to put what will follow into perspective. The third part covers the individual assemblies under study, all from the perspective of their contribution to electoral monitoring. The fourth part consists of a specific

¹ Judith Kelley (2012), *Monitoring Democracy: When International Election Observation Works, and Why it Often Fails*, Princeton, Princeton University Press. For more details, see Judith Kelley, “Assessing the Complex Evolution of Norms: The Rise of International Election Monitoring”, *International Organization* 62, 2008, pp. 221–55.

² Eric Brahm, *Election Monitoring*: www.beyondintractability.org/print/2676, as of 12/02/15, September 2004.

³ *Observation, monitoring or supervision, Consolidated reply by the ACE Practitioners' Network. Contributors: Ayman Ayoub, Horacio Boneo, Ilona Tip, Alan Wall, Michael Meadowcroft*: <http://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/election-observation/observation-monitoring-or-supervision>, as of 19/02/15.

⁴ The NATO PA is not covered here as it is only occasionally involved in such missions: “The Assembly does not have a standing mandate to monitor elections. However, in exceptional circumstances, and when invited by national authorities, the Assembly took the decision to send delegations to observe the conduct of election processes. In each of these instances, the Assembly has joined forces with the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights” (*Election Monitoring*: www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=2226, as of 16/02/15). But one needs to refer to it as it shows how complex the overall parliamentary input in electoral monitoring actually is.

case study of electoral monitoring cooperation between these three parliamentary institutions in Azerbaijan in 2013. The fifth and final part presents in lieu of conclusions, a number of possible avenues for future research.

This piece should be considered as a pilot-study. There is little academic work on those issues from the perspective of how parliamentary entities do input on peace and/or democratization processes and on collaborative input in election monitoring. Further research is no doubt needed. It is hoped that this contribution will generate interest in the subject under study

ELECTORAL MONITORING

The 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Observation which was subsequently endorsed by 30 electoral observer organizations⁵ states that International Election Observation consists of and includes a number of functions and roles:

“...part of international human rights monitoring and must be conducted on the basis of the highest standards for impartiality...”;

“...the systematic, comprehensive and accurate gathering of information concerning the laws, processes and institutions related to the conduct of elections and other factors concerning the overall electoral environment...”;

“...the impartial and professional analysis of such information...”;

“...the drawing of conclusions about the character of electoral processes...”;

“[and it] should, when possible, offer recommendations for improving integrity and effectiveness of electoral processes.”

“[M]onitoring can assist democratic consolidation by instilling domestic and international legitimacy. These elections are indeed of vital importance to the democratic future of the state concerned. In his 1998 study, Garber stressed that “elections in a postconflict setting are fundamentally different from those organized under normal circumstances. Postconflict elections are designed to

⁵ The Electoral Integrity Project,

<https://sites.google.com/site/electoralintegrityproject4/data-1/existing-datasets/electoral-observers>. See also *Guidelines for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections, 2nd Ed.*:

“The OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) published the first edition of its *Guidelines for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections in 2001*.

Since then, there have been a number of developments in international standards for democratic elections. The European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe adopted and published a “Code of Good Practice in Electoral Manners” in May 2003. Also, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has become more developed in areas addressing human rights issues arising within the context of election processes. Finally, there have also been developments in election administration, particularly due to the emergence of electronic voting systems, and a number of good practices have been identified in the course of ODIHR’s election observation activities”:

www.osce.org/odihr/elections/104573?download=true.

facilitate, or to symbolize, an end to interstate conflicts”⁶. Peaceful elections may also promote reconciliation between former adversaries”⁷. If “international monitoring is always useful in routine elections, they are indispensable in the climate of mutual distrust and hostility that characterizes postconflict societies”⁸.

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND WORLD AFFAIRS

In recent years, non-traditional actors have developed their role and importance in world politics following the end of the Cold War and the Globalization of the world system⁹: parliaments and parliamentarians are no exception¹⁰. The academic literature shows growing attention to the international activities of parliamentarians and parliamentary institutions of all types and sorts - best reflected in the “empowerment” of regional and/or other international parliamentary bodies: what has been commonly labelled International Parliamentary Institutions or IPIs¹¹. These involve all types of transnational, regional or global parliamentary associations or organizations, covering specific or generic issues. Although it is important to note that these parliamentary roles differ in form and substance, at the same time they often overlap and complement each other.

⁶ L. Barber (1998), “Introduction”, in Krishna Kumar (ed.), *Postconflict Elections, Democracy and International Assistance*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder & London, pp. 1-3.

⁷ Eric Brahm, *Election Monitoring*: www.beyondintractability.org/print/2676, as of 12/02/15, September 2004. See also Krishna Kumar (1998), “Postconflict Elections and International Assistance”, in Krishna Kumar (ed.), *Postconflict Elections, Democracy and International Assistance*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder & London, pp. 6-7.

⁸ Krishna Kumar (1998), “Postconflict Elections and International Assistance”, in Krishna Kumar (ed.), *Postconflict Elections, Democracy and International Assistance*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder & London, pp. 5-14. See also the concluding chapter of this study (1998) Krishna Kumar and Marina Ottaway, “General Conclusions and Priorities for Policy Research”, in Krishna Kumar (ed.), *Postconflict Elections, Democracy and International Assistance*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder & London, pp. 229-237.

⁹ Reinalda B. (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Non-State Actors*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2011.

¹⁰ David Beetham, *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century: A Guide to Good Practice* (Geneva: Interparliamentary Union, 2006; Malamud A. & Stavridis S. (2011) “Parliaments and Parliamentarians as International Actors”, in Reinalda B. (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Non-State Actors*, Ashgate, Farnham: 101-115.

¹¹ Cutler, Robert. "The Emergence of International Parliamentary Institutions: New Networks of Influence in World Society," in *Who Is Afraid of the State? Canada in a World of Multiple Centres of Power*, by Gordon S. Smith and Daniel Wolfish (eds), Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011: 201-229; Puig, Lluís Maria de. *International parliaments*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2008; Šabič, Zlatko. "Building democratic and responsible global governance: the role of international parliamentary institutions," *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2008: 255-271; Kissling, C. (2011) *The Legal and Political Status of International Parliamentary Institutions* Committee for a Democratic UN, Berlin; Costa, Olivier, Dri, Clarissa and Stavridis, Stelios (eds). *Parliamentary Dimensions of Regionalization and Globalization: The Role of Interparliamentary Institutions*, London: Routledge, 2013.

Whereas a few years ago the concept of “parliamentary diplomacy” itself was highly contested among practitioners and theorists alike¹², nowadays, hardly any Parliamentary website fails to mention it, and most parliamentarians throughout the world consider it to be part of their “daily life”. “Parliamentary diplomacy” can be defined as to cover “the full range of international activities undertaken by parliamentarians in order to increase mutual understanding between countries, to assist each other in improving the control of governments and the representation of a people and to increase the democratic legitimacy of inter-governmental institutions”¹³. Thus, parliamentary diplomacy encompasses multi-level functions ranging from inter-parliamentary activity (interaction between different groups within a parliamentary body, such as political parties or committees) to extra-parliamentary means, such as communication between different parliamentary bodies or between parliaments and diverse political stakeholders (government, civil society representatives, political advocacy groups etc.). More specifically, as proposed elsewhere¹⁴, parliamentary diplomacy entails a number of activities that include:

- MPs missions abroad and participation in transnational parliamentary bodies;
- visits by other MPs and parliamentary delegations to parliaments and other institutions (national or transnational);
- questions (written and oral), reports and other studies on foreign affairs that take place within a parliamentary body;
- the actions of transnational parliamentary bodies;
- parliamentary participation in electoral monitoring.

In addition, the literature has identified a number of issue-areas where IPs possess an international role: in “conflict resolution”, as “moral tribunes”, or in “legitimizing regional and global governance” structures¹⁵. It also includes topics such as reactions to military regimes or coups. This is particularly relevant for Africa, Asia and Latin America: for instance how did EuroLat¹⁶ react to the 2009 coup in Honduras or the 2012 impeachment in Paraguay? Another set of issues

¹² Sénat, *La Diplomatie Parlementaire (Actes du Colloque)*, 2001; Stavridis, Stelios. "Parliamentary diplomacy!: some preliminary findings," *Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics of the University of Catania*, No. 48, 2002; Parliamentary Centre 2003; Eloriagga, Gabriel. *La diplomacia parlamentaria*, Madrid: Imagine Ediciones, 2004; Fiott, Daniel. "On the value of parliamentary diplomacy," *Madariaga Paper*, Vol. 4, No. 7, 2011: 1-6.

¹³ Weisglas F.W. and Boer, G. (2007) “Parliamentary Diplomacy”, *Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2(1), 93-99: 93-94.

¹⁴ Stavridis, Stelios. "Parliamentary diplomacy!: some preliminary findings," *Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics of the University of Catania*, No. 48, 2002: 1.

¹⁵ Interregional parliaments possess this additional characteristic of involving more than one « region » in their midst, thus making dialogue often more complex and complicated. This draws from the author’s attendance at the Euro-Med assembly plenaries in Brussels (2001), Athens (2008) and at the EuroLat’s plenaries in Seville (2010) and in Athens (2014).

¹⁶ On EuroLat in general, see Natalia Ajenjo & Stelios Stavridis (2012), ‘EUROLAT: la dimensión parlamentaria de las relaciones UE-América Latina y Caribe’, in Stelios Stavridis, Rut Diamint, Jorge Gordín (eds) *América Latina-Unión Europea/Unión Europea-América Latina: integración regional y birregionalismo*, Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, pp 199-220.

could be grouped under the more general label of ethics (or moral dilemmas) - ranging from how to fight megaterrorism à la 11-S, modern piracy, military interventions in general (and Responsibility to Protect in particular¹⁷), the use of drones, or how to control cyber war in the age of internet with its Wikileaks and other NSA scandals.

IPIS AND PARTICIPATION IN ELECTORAL MONITORING PROCESSES

Electoral monitoring functions are often performed by a number of International Parliamentary Institutions or/and national parliaments, or combinations of the above. This paper considers examples of parliamentary input in electoral monitoring in Europe, although there are plenty of other regions in the world that could be included as well.

Thus, in the Americas, parliamentarians within the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) participated in a total of 13 election observation missions in 10 different countries during the period 2005-2012¹⁸. In Africa for instance, the Great Lake Parliamentary Forum on Peace, also known as the *Amani Forum* - which intended to find peaceful solutions to conflicts in Africa, one of the most troubled areas in the world - included this type of parliamentary action in its main activities. This is an initiative of African parliamentarians from the Great Lakes region and it consists of a network of parliamentarians who are committed to peace and to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, both within their own countries and in the region as a whole.¹⁹

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The EP represents by far the most sophisticated and advanced IPI in the world²⁰. Among its many roles, functions and activities, “[it] observes elections in

¹⁷ See Stavridis, Fernández Molina (2013); Stavridis, S. (2014), “EU inconsistency and incoherence over Libya’: evidence to the contrary”, Special Issue «Recompositions géopolitiques en Méditerranée: Un nouvel agenda de recherche pour les Mediterranean Studies», *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 89 : 159-180: 168-176.

¹⁸ Jacques Chagnon, Speaking Notes, Round Table organized by the IPU Committee on UN Affairs at the 127th IPU Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary, Québec City, 22.10.2012, page 5.

¹⁹ Its activities are: training in conflict resolution and peacebuilding; fact-finding missions to conflict-affected areas; exchange visits between parliamentarians; inter-parliamentary dialogue; inter-political party dialogue; and, election observation (www.amaniforum.org [deadlink now]). See also Huliaras, A. and K. Magliveras, “Understanding Success and Failure in the Quest for Peace: The Pan-African Parliament and the Amani Forum,” in Stelios Stavridis & Davor Jancic (guest editors), Special Issue on ‘Parliamentary Diplomacy Uncovered: European and Global Perspectives’, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* (2015 forthcoming).

²⁰ for the EP as an IPI see Cofelice, Andrea and Stavridis, Stelios. "The European Parliament as an international parliamentary institution (IPI)," *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2014: 145-178.

accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, which was endorsed by the European Parliament in 2007. The Election Coordination Group established by the Conference of Presidents selects the countries to be given priority for the dispatch of a European Parliament election observation delegation”²¹. Established by a Conference of Presidents decision on 8 November 2001 (updated on 10 December 2009), another decision on 16 May 2012 led to enlarging its mandate and composition and to rename it as the *Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group* (DEG).²² Within its *Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union*, the EP has its own *Directorate for Democracy Support*²³ which deals with technical and day-to-day support through its *Democracy and Elections Actions Unit*.

Moreover, “a European Parliament election observation delegation can be organized only in a country where the EP delegation can join a long-term observation mission, whether it is one run by the European Union or by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).”²⁴ This is to say that there are two types of electoral monitoring to which the EP contributes. One is to have an MEP head a long-term election observation mission run by the European Commission. The other consists of EP electoral mission made up of MEPs but who only are present in the country where the elections are held for a short period of time. Both are part of the EU’s overall contribution in electoral monitoring.

According to the same official records available on the Parliament’s website²⁵, until early 2015, there have been 177 such missions: 173 during 1994-2014, that is to say over four terms of five years each. In the current term of 2014-2019, as of the end of the year 2014, there were 4 such missions.

THE OSCE PA

The OSCE PA is one of the key actors in the parliamentary input of electoral monitoring. The OSCE also possesses in Warsaw²⁶ a specialized agency on democracy and human rights which promotes democratization and human rights,

²¹ www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/0095a3afb8/Election-observation.html.

²² www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/default_en.htm. For a list of its current members see www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/members_en.htm, as of 16/02/15. It is important to note the seniority of many of its members, including ex-officio.

²³ This is one of four such directorates, the others deal respectively with: Committees, Regions, and Resources. Information from EP website as of early 2015.

²⁴ www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/0095a3afb8/Election-observation.html.

²⁵ www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions20092014_en.htm. For a detailed analysis of EP electoral observation and in particular the interplay between the EP and the other EU institutions over that role, see Andrea Gawrich (2015), “The European Parliament in International Election Observation Missions (IEOMs)”, Stavridis, S. & Irrera, D. (eds), *The European Parliament and its International Relations*, Routledge: 121-142. See also EP Policy Department External Policies Briefing Paper on *EU Election Observation – Achievements, Challenges*, Brussels, June 2008 (in particular pp. 26-28 which present a number of specific policy recommendations for the EP).

²⁶ The author would like to thank a number of its officials for exchanging views during a visit to their offices in Warsaw on 18 September 2013.

including electoral monitoring: the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR).²⁷

“Since 1993, more than 5,000 parliamentarians and staff have observed more than 130 different elections in more than 30 countries.”²⁸ Just as examples, here is the list of elections that the ODHIR/OSCE monitored during March 2015 alone: parliamentary elections in Tajikistan, Estonia, and Andorra, plus Lithuania’s local elections, provincial elections in The Netherlands, and presidential ones in Uzbekistan. The current schedule shows a total of 26 elections in as many countries.²⁹

A senior representative of the Assembly is appointed by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President to head each mission (see also below role of individuals). After reviewing the country's political situation, including electoral practice, and receiving receive briefings from government, political parties, civil society and media representatives, the observers monitor the elector process according to pre-established rules. As it is stated on its website:

“Parliamentarians rely on these election day observations, their substantive briefings, and their own electoral experience to objectively analyze the election and draw an overall preliminary conclusion about the election. The presence of parliamentary observers at elections emphasizes the importance of legislatures to provide a balance to executive authority. As politicians who have stood for elections themselves, parliamentarians have particular expertise in political campaigns and electoral processes, bringing added credibility to the conclusions of observation missions. Their participation in observation efforts also brings added international visibility, as parliamentarians are often sought out by journalists from their home countries to express their expert opinions. As Members of Parliament, they are also in an excellent position to relate their experiences directly into policy circles in their national parliaments.”³⁰

THE PACE

One should not confuse electoral monitoring as discussed so far with the monitoring procedure of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE member states (including the wider question of whether they fulfill their CoE obligations³¹). Thus, it also states that: “The Assembly was instrumental in introducing institutionalised parliamentary observation of elections in Europe. Its first initiative was monitoring the electoral process of a state in 1974 in the context of the return of Greece to the Council of Europe.”³² The PACE differentiates between them and the PACE’s *external* elections observation, i.e. electoral monitoring in non-CoE countries. As far as the latter are concerned, its website mentions over 140 parliamentary and

²⁷ www.osce.org/odihr.

²⁸ *How observation works*: www.oscepa.org/election-observation/how-observation-works (as of 16/02/15).

²⁹ www.osce.org/odihr/elections (as of 16/02/15).

³⁰ www.oscepa.org/election-observation/how-observation-works.

³¹ http://website-pace.net/documents/19887/259543/Role_E.pdf/980181e7-bdb1-4b0e-ab1c-799bd2a9c560.

³² http://website-pace.net/en_GB/web/apce/election-observations, as of 18/02/15.

presidential elections in Europe with over 1800 parliamentarians deployed since 1989³³.

The technical support for inter-parliamentary co-operation and election observation comes from secretariats located into the Political and Legal Affairs Directorate of the PACE. The latter consists of the secretariats of the Political Affairs Committee, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Monitoring Committee³⁴.

AZERBAIJAN IN 2013³⁵

The Parliamentary Troika (EP, OSCE-PA, PACE) has established four criteria for Free and Democratic Elections “as benchmarks against which the conduct of these elections were to be judged if they were to be considered as free and democratic, and which would provide the basis for further democratic reform in the country. These criteria were:

- the establishment of a democratic electoral code, guaranteeing full transparency of the electoral process in all respects and in the work and composition of the election commissions at local, district and national level;
- satisfactory procedures for the access of all political parties to the mass media, especially the electronic media;
- the establishment of meaningful powers for the new Parliament; and
- the observance of a ‘peace period’ for the development of minimum trust and confidence during the run-up to the elections (cessation of political intimidation and threats of court proceedings, no harassment by police and security forces of opposition supporters)³⁶”.

³³ http://website-pace.net/en_GB/web/apce/election-observations, as of 18/02/15.

³⁴ Council of Europe (2008), *The Parliamentary Assembly – Practice and Procedure*, Tenth edition, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, p.143.

³⁵ This draws information from: “Election Observation Delegation to the Presidential Elections in Azerbaijan (9 October 2013)”, European Parliament *Report by Pino Arlacchi*, Chair of Delegation:

[www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2009-](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2009-2014/2013_10_09_azerbaijan.pdf)

[2014/2013_10_09_azerbaijan.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/election_observation/missions/2009-2014/2013_10_09_azerbaijan.pdf); “Azerbaijan's political parties and the EU”, *At a glance*, January 2015:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/545742/EPRS_ATA\(2015\)545742_REV1_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/545742/EPRS_ATA(2015)545742_REV1_EN.pdf). See also “Statement by the Spokespersons of EU High

Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle on Presidential elections in Azerbaijan”, *European Commission Memo*, 11 October 2013:

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-879_en.htm.

³⁶ *Report by the Parliamentary Troika on the political situation in Belarus in the light of the parliamentary elections of October 15th*, 16 October 2000:

www.osce.org/odihr/elections/14427?download=true.

Indeed, as described above, the October 2013 electoral monitoring in Azerbaijan³⁷ has led to the following characterization: *Disgraced – Azerbaijan and the end of monitoring as we know it* (published on 5.11.13)³⁸. Also, there are forthcoming legislative elections in that country later this year so it would be interesting to contrast how the electoral monitoring process will perform this time round with that of 2013.

Therefore, the main reason for selecting this example from 2013 has to do with the discrepancies among several observing organizations, including parliamentary ones that resulted about the degree of openness of the process. The example is also problematic because of the authoritarian regime that came out of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the conflict with Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh, and the oil resources of the country.

The existence of a vast network of parliamentary input in electoral monitoring is not a guarantee of success as will be shown below. It is however not the intention of this piece to argue that it is not a useful exercise in the first place. Quite the contrary in fact: by identifying problems, it is easier to remedy them. In other words, if we know what went wrong we might try to avoid it in the future.

Although it should be clear that this piece does not deal with the profound causes of the shortcomings in that electoral process. As noted, this paper is a pilot-study that will hopefully lead to more research on the subject. Another objective is to show how complicated and complex such processes may turn out to be.

In terms of 2013 results, Ilham Aliyev won 85% of the vote in his “third” victory. It had been 77% in 2003 and 89% in 2008 respectively. Moreover the country’s constitution had been changed to allow him to stand for yet another election contest. The change was ratified in a referendum by over 90% of the population³⁹.

How was the electoral monitoring process deployed during the presidential elections in Azerbaijan? Observers included 1,300 monitors from 50 different organizations: some were very small, other bigger, and with variation over time period. As far as ODIHR is concerned, they sent twelve observers back in late August, and 319 on the day of the election. ODIHR monitored 1,151 of the 5,273 polling stations. In total, there were monitors from the following countries, parliamentary bodies and international organizations:

- ▶ EP (7 members)
- ▶ OSCE PA (26 members)
- ▶ PACE (33 members)
- ▶ Italy, France, Czech Republic, Germany
- ▶ USA
- ▶ Pakistan
- ▶ CoE
- ▶ Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the CIS
- ▶ PA of Turkic Speaking Countries (TURKPA)

³⁷ For the wider question of how Azerbaijan fits into the more general EU-Russia relations, see inter alia, Ben Smith, *Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius: carrots v sticks*, International Affairs and Defence Section Standard Note SNIA/6766, House of Commons Library, London, 26 November 2013.

³⁸ *Disgraced – Azerbaijan and the end of monitoring as we know it* (published on 5.11.13 at: www.esiweb.org).

³⁹ See: “Azeris end president's term limit”, *BBC News*, 19 March 2009: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7949327.stm>.

- ▶ OIC
- ▶ PABSEC.

As a result, the main parliamentary actors were the EP delegation head; the PACE delegation head; the OSCE PA delegation head; and of course the more “technical” experts: the OSCE short-term observers special coordinator; the ODIHR Director; and the OSCE-ODIHR delegation head.

The claims for massive fraud were numerous as far as ODIHR was concerned: “this process has fallen short of OSCE commitments in most areas”. In 58% of observed polling stations, “the evidence of systematic fraud was overwhelming. While voting was problematic, the counting of ballots was catastrophic (...). It may have been the worst vote count ever observed by an ODIHR election observation mission anywhere”. Concluding that: “[t]he events in October 2013 in Baku reveal a broken system of international election observation”.

However, there was disagreement among some parliamentary observers, from the EP, the PACE and the OSCE PA and a number of non-parliamentary ones: “ODHIR consists of so-called experts with no political responsibilities who were not elected by anybody. So it is easy to manipulate them”. Another parliamentarian declared: “The seven polling stations I visited in those two cities left a very positive impression on me”. All the above led to a separate “joint” statement as well as a separate “joint” press conference on the day after the elections from the delegations by the EP and the PACE. The OSCE-PA was also critical of the ODIHR views. It has also led to calls for improving the system, something that falls beyond the scope of this paper.

This particular example also illustrates how political an issue electoral monitoring is, and that it remains an important tool for the democratization process of many a country. It also confirms the existence of “difficult” relations between expert/professional monitors and parliamentarian monitors. The former put forward their expertise, especially their longer presence on the ground, whereas the latter stress instead their parliamentary condition and the emblematic nature of their presence.

The case of Azerbaijan should also be put into the wider perspective of democratization processes in post-Soviet republics. This remains a very sensitive issue, especially in light of the current EU-Russia relations over Ukraine. This study should also be seen within the specific context of EU inter-parliamentary relations and in particular over its inter-parliamentary assemblies with key regions in the world: thus, as Andrea Gawrich points out “[c]urrently, only the ACP-EU JPA realizes election observation (e.g. in Madagascar in 2013)”⁴⁰. The other three EU inter-parliamentary assemblies should also consider such a role, especially the EU inter-parliamentary assembly on the Mediterranean, and in particular following the “Arab Spring”.

Therefore, this case study has shown that in spite of institutionalized international cooperation in the field of electoral monitoring between three important IPAs, it seems that such an endeavour is a necessary prerequisite but not a sufficient condition for success. As noted above, at the end of this year there will be another opportunity in Azerbaijan for the troika of parliamentary institutions to try and deliver a success story in electoral observation.

⁴⁰ Andrea Gawrich (2015), “The European Parliament in International Election Observation Missions (IEOMs)”, Stavridis, S. & Irrera, D. (eds), *The European Parliament and its International Relations*, Routledge: 130.

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSIONS⁴¹

The objective of this paper was to show that there exists a well-developed international cooperation system at the parliamentary level. The example of electoral monitoring was used also to show a concrete case of parliamentary contribution to democratization in the world. The specific case study on Azerbaijan was made to also show the limits and problems that may arise, even though the basic utility and necessity of such exercise is not of course contested in any way. Indeed, it would particularly useful to carry out in the future comparative studies on those issues. Electoral monitoring can and should be improved all the time⁴².

The study being only a preliminary one, it would no doubt gain from other dimensions that were not explored here. For instance it would be useful to consider a number of additional factors ranging from the questions of what kind of ethical standards for parliamentarians there exist⁴³, what role for socialization in general, including the role of women parliamentarians in particular⁴⁴ there may be, whether it is possible to identify a parliamentary *esprit de corps*⁴⁵, to consider if IPIs also act as *norm entrepreneurs*, let alone “epistemic communities”⁴⁶.

Additional attention should also be given to the complementarity of tools that exist in the (pre-)conflict and (post-)conflict stages, for instance between prevention but also mediation, during conflict and also post-conflict. This

⁴¹ This section draws from a lecture by the author on “Inter-parliamentary/multi-regional assemblies and democracy promotion”, *Winter School on “The Parliaments of Europe in Democracy Promotion and Constitutional Transitions” (PaDeCo)* organized by the School of Government of LUISS Guido Carli University (Rome), the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies of the University of London, the Institut d’ Études Politiques, Université de Bordeaux (7-17 January 2014, Rome).

⁴² For instance comparative work with other IPIs such as the IPU could be useful. See the latter’s *Declaration on criteria for free and fair elections - Unanimously adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 154th session*, Paris, 26 March 1994: www.ipu.org/cnl-e/154-free.htm.

⁴³ See ODIHR (2012) *Background Study: Professional and Ethical Standards for Parliamentarians*, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions & Human Rights, Warsaw.

⁴⁴ See IDEA (2005) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers – A Revised Edition*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm: <http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/upload/IPU.pdf>; Palmieri, S. & Jabre, K. (2005) “Promoting Partnership between Men and Women in Parliament: The Experience of the Inter-Parliamentary Union”, in IDEA, *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers – A Revised Edition*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm: 214-229.

⁴⁵ Costa, O. & Brack, N. (2013) “The Role of the European Parliament in Europe’s Integration: A Critical Reassessment”, in Costa, O. et al. (eds), *Parliamentary Dimensions of Regionalization and Globalization*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke: 45-69.

⁴⁶ Šabic, Zlatko, in Costa, Olivier, Dri, Clarissa and Stavridis, Stelios (eds). *Parliamentary Dimensions of Regionalization and Globalization: The Role of Interparliamentary Institutions*, London: Routledge, 2013.

comprehensive approach to conflict is not unfamiliar to the work of international and other parliamentary assemblies. Thus, after the 2014 May elections, the EP has set up its own *European Parliamentary Meditation Support Service (EPMS)* to strengthen its own international mediation role as a whole and by implication that of the EU. This development follows a number of mediation and good offices efforts by MEPs in the Balkans, over the Yulia Tymoshenko case in the Ukraine conflict with the high profile involvement of former Presidents Pat Cox (of the EP) and Aleksander Kwasniewski (of Poland)⁴⁷, or in other parts of the world, such as Sudan or Myanmar⁴⁸.

Another important dimension is that of multi-layered parliamentary arrangements, that is to say not only including transnational assemblies or national parliaments but also sub-state parliamentary bodies. For instance, there are formal arrangements to that effect in a number of cases, including most recently between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM-PA) and the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM). This is relevant even though to date there has been no such involvement in the “Arab Spring”. But the model could also have implications for the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood, as there is also now a Euro-Nest Parliamentary Assembly⁴⁹.

Moreover, little research so far as been made on the role of individual parliamentarians: “Although it is difficult to assess the definitive impact of scrutiny and information exchange via inter-parliamentary institutions on world and local politics, two things may be said for certain. The first is that there is an impact, however limited it may be, and that it could be greatly increased and made more effective. The second is that the impact is very much dependent on the particular type of inter-parliamentary organization concerned, the procedures for the follow-up on its activities that are used in the national parliaments and, *last but certainly not least, the individual members’ efforts and commitment*”⁵⁰.

This should not come as a surprise as the initiators of the first IPI, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (whose original objective was to act as an arbitration in conflict resolution), were two parliamentarians: William Randal Cremer, a member of the British House of Commons, and Frédéric Passy, a member of the French National Assembly⁵¹. More recent examples would include: the personal engagement of two Spanish MPs with the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms

⁴⁷ See the *Cox-Kwasniewski Report*: www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cox-kwasniewski-report-228006041.html. For more, see also Pat Cox: *The Ukrainian Crisis and Geopolitics – An Echo From the Past or the Shape of Things to Come?*, Institute of International and European Affairs, 2014.

⁴⁸ The author would like to thank a number of EP Secretariat officials for informal interviews in Brussels on those issues during October 2014.

⁴⁹ On EuroNest see Kostanyan, H. & Vandecasteele, B. (2013) *The EuroNest Parliamentary Assembly: The European Parliament as a Socializer of its Counterparts in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood?*, College of Europe EU Diplomacy Papers No. 5/2013. Kostanyan, H. & Vandecasteele, B. “Socializing the Eastern Neighborhood? The European Parliament and the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly”, in Stavridis & Irrera (eds), *The European Parliament and its International Relations*, Routledge (2015): 220-233.

⁵⁰ Weisglas F.W. and Boer, G. (2007) “Parliamentary Diplomacy”, *Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 2(1), 93-99: 95, emphasis added.

⁵¹ See Y. Zarjevski, *The People Have the Floor: A History of the Inter-Parliamentary Union* (Dartmouth 1989).

and Light Weapons⁵², the role of the successive Presidents of the Brazilian Delegation to PARLASUR⁵³, or that played by Glenys Kinnock as ACP-EU JPA Co-President⁵⁴.

Finally, one should not forget the “transmission belt” role that parliamentary bodies perform between states’ executives and their respective civil society actors. This would represent a huge new area of research about parliamentary input in electoral monitoring.

⁵² Šabic, Zlatko, “International Parliamentary Institutions: A Research Agenda”: 32 in Costa, Olivier, Dri, Clarissa and Stavridis, Stelios (eds). *Parliamentary Dimensions of Regionalization and Globalization: The Role of Interparliamentary Institutions*, London: Routledge, 2013.

⁵³ Drummond, Maria Claudia, “The Brazilian Parliamentary Delegation to MERCOSUR: Its Functions in the Brazilian National Congress”: 93 in Costa, Olivier, Dri, Clarissa and Stavridis, Stelios (eds). *Parliamentary Dimensions of Regionalization and Globalization: The Role of Interparliamentary Institutions*, London: Routledge, 2013.

⁵⁴ Delputte, Sarah, “Talking Shop or Relevant Actor: The ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly”: 190 in Costa, Olivier, Dri, Clarissa and Stavridis, Stelios (eds). *Parliamentary Dimensions of Regionalization and Globalization: The Role of Interparliamentary Institutions*, London: Routledge, 2013.