

**TOWARD AN ECLECTIC APPROACH
FOR DEVELOPING A POSSIBLE
THEORY OF DEMOCRACY IN
ALBANIA**



Political Science

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Abstract

The main focus of this paper is on the eclectic analysis of the social and cultural aspects of democratization in Albania within the limits of this influence. Study analysis considers issues related to economic or institutional policy influenced by the model political elite. Consequently, here we will claim an eclectic appreciation of our outward values towards democracy, as well as other democratic ideas from cultural traditions comparing them that can provide a notion for a theory of democracy in Albania. The eclectic analysis will reflect on the relation between the state formation theory and society. We will use qualitative analysis involving theory consuming engaging the questions of whether recently Albania is on a prolonged transition and has failed to democratize. What is the path to the future of democratic consolidation if we approach it with an eclectic analysis? We will explore a few aspects of democratic consolidation in Albania in terms of the strength of democratic values represented theories of universalism, traditionalism, and eclecticism discussed during the analysis. It is envisaged that a critique of the various assumptions and presuppositions of these prominent schools of thought will lead us to a credible theory of Albanian democracy. Under this assumption, understanding the elite's decision-making is vital in explaining the consolidation of democracies but not sufficient to promise the consolidation due to other specific country-based structural factors.

Introduction

This paper argues that there is a general lack of democratic theory at the level political and scholastic in order to provide fundamentally the principles, meaning, foundations and criteria of democracy in Albanian culture. Here are exposed some conceptual highlights implied in the interweaving of democracy as a concept and how it is practiced in different countries. Consequently, here we will claim an eclectic appreciation of our outward values towards democracy, as well as other democratic ideas from cultural traditions comparing them that can provide a notion for a theory of democracy in Albania. So basically the goal is to conclude that this eclecticism is consociational in principle, and can help solve the contemporary socio-political problems that concern current democratic experiences in Albania.

The question of the possibility of a theory of Albanian democracy is seen with apathy in the political-philosophical discourse among politicians but why not academic research. For many politicians, it is absurd to think of such a possibility, because their opinions are formed according to the models and practices of theoretically generally borrowed democracy. The next logical question is if we have an element for which we can discuss or build a platform of an Albanian theory of democracy, based on the values of political heritage or the way we have resolved conflicts in history.

The democratic changes in Albania that started in the 90s, dictate a social opening towards a basic concept for the implementation of society in democratic structures which is the

renunciation of the totalitarian mentality in socio-political life, why not in our culture, so a change which reveals a new premise towards the formation of a theory of Albanian liberal democracy (Biberaj, E. 1998). The forces that brought this need for democratization have been and are internal and external influences. It is simple to say that the internal forces that dictate sharply towards this path of development, have been the frequent failure of the systems, or political leaders in Albania, this always amplified by a difficult economic situation¹. These failures inevitably led to an increase in pro-democratic demand and liberalization of society, as in political initiatives but more importantly in economic decision-making which is also a key factor for the expansion or change of cultural and demographic course, which in this case necessarily the influx of plots from the countryside to the city, the creation of large urban centers with a different cultural dynamism (Bajraba, K. Gasparini, A. 2001). But paradoxically in Albania this much desired system has not been produced, on the contrary it has produced negative effects (Biberaj, E. 1998).

In light of the harmful effects produced in abundance by the current crises in Albania, the basic questions that arise are:

- *Is democracy stable in Albania?*
- *Why is democracy not giving a sustainable economic development in Albania?*
- *Is it desirable to have a liberal democracy in Albania, or perhaps, a democracy of ours in action?*

A consideration of the answers to these fundamental and inseparable questions. Their shortcomings will be examined in this paper, with the aim of reaching an opportunity for the creation of a theory of Albanian democracy. According to various scholars, the methods that are widely interpreted are categorized into three schools of thought - universalism, traditionalism and eclecticism - will be discussed. It is envisaged that a critique of the various assumptions and presuppositions of these prominent schools of thought will lead us to a credible theory of Albanian democracy. However, before discussing these approaches to thought, it is more appropriate to make some clarifications on the link between democracy and development. This exposes the conceptual errors implied in the interweaving of democracy as a concept and how it is practiced in different political systems. Consequently, it argues that an eclectic appreciation of our indigenous democratic values and practices, as well as democratic ideas from other cultural traditions, can provide a consistent theory of democracy. One of the most difficult aspects of the concept of democracy is how it is practically translated into a functional structure in society (Przeworski, 2000).. This other difficulty has led to various forms and phases of democracy in Albania, as well as to a serious flaw in the link between democracy and economic development in 1997 (Krasniqi, A, Hackaj, A 2013). This perspective belongs to the approach when we see a causal link between democracy and social-economic development. Thus far in 1996-97, it was unable to achieve civic society control, and general election led to a feeble superficial democracy. Unfortunately, after this election, the involvement of the intellectual elite in political life was reduced, civic society was almost inexistent and due to economic failure because of pyramidal schemes, an outbreak of

¹ <https://www.dw.com/sq/ruga-e-v%C3%ABshtir%C3%AB-e-shqip%C3%ABris%C3%AB-drejt-demokracis%C3%AB/a-4997037>

armed conflict, and civic unrest, the democracy in Albania did backslide to authoritarian political decision making. This was a major downfall in the transition to democracy and market economy². It is worth noting that consolidation of democracy is not necessarily directly link to economic prosperity. But in the Albanian case, challenges all possible theories and would encounter several troubling paradoxes in the context of these theories of political and economic transition(Krasniqi, A, Hackaj, A 2013)

1. Purpose and Literature of Democratic Theory

Democracy has long been considered relevant only in countries with consolidated democracies. This is because a nonviolent and agreeable society is a precondition of a functioning democracy. Democracy is achievable in a country where the voters are mainly satisfied with the performance of their government (Lipset, S. M., & Lakin, J. M. 2004). Under this assumption, Albanian society had to be guided by intellectual elites, and with the assistance of western allies to set a secure path to western models. The ruling political elites fitted and forged ideologically with the past communist doctrine, and they had lost legitimacy among people. The solution was to bring up forth intellectuals from different academic and social areas. Presumably, with the assistance of western democratic allies, these elites would facilitate the transition and would guide the society through the difficult period of transition. But the result is that the society has been for a long time unmanaged by the political class that came to power after the collapse of communism which could not normally operationalize the institutional functioning to a democratic standard, and due to this mismanagement, has produced inefficient institutions. Completely wrong implementation and choice of economic reforms, did create a chaotic economy and ambiguity among economic operators. This chaos introduced a high level of informality, corruption, and weak governmental finances. Such a situation did not allow much foreign capital investment and it resulted in continuous workforce emigration (Bernd J. Fischer 2012). In terms of government, this process had led to a high politicization of the state apparatus and produced domestic problems.

Such domestic problems were detrimental for the process of transition because it led to a lack of circulation of political elites, also the threat of old ideas and ideologies such as communism were still in place (Bernd J. Fischer 2012). Asymmetrical power-sharing relationship between the executive and two other branches of the check and balance system led to the assimilation of power by the very few elite or political actors. It led to the projection of individual autocracy and the institution of individual cult in the political culture. It was believed that the transition process in these countries would not take long, to some degree a decade or less (Carothers, 2002).

This was a generalized view, which considered that would be applied uniformly in the entire post-communist region without taking in consideration the specific conditions and circumstances of each country. It dealt with the idea that certain countries that opened early the

² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/albania/freedom-world/2021>

process were successfully in the implementation period and this could work both wise and would have the same effect in other countries as an easy process. Time and present experience demonstrated that none of these setups were held and implemented as desired (Carothers, 2002).

Strategic choice approaches argue that it has little effect, and their researchers see actors as far-sighted, well-oriented to democratic models, and influenced by political culture. Others argue that prospects for consolidation increase when the balance of power between authoritarian and democratic forces reaches a level of equilibrium that enables or exerts pressure on the parties to negotiate moderation and compromise (Pridham, G. 2001). Another argument is that there is no right or more favorable way to transition to democracy. This depends on and is influenced by different countries with different historical and contextual features as a result of these factors. These factors shape perceptions of power relations and levels of uncertainty during the transition period. Therefore, the necessity for more eclectic analysis, is predominant over a generalize theory of democratization (Diamond, L. J. 1999).

O'Donnell and Schmitter, (1986) have introduced a basic notion of the study of democratic change, namely that it refers to the replacement or exclusion of dictatorship through free elections as a manifestation of democracy and the historical and long-term stability of democracy that constitutes democratic consolidation. Therefore, within this framework the implementation of new institutional rules, especially constitutional ones is a necessary priority (Ostrom, 2005).

Democratic change has historically been considered a structural socio-economic variable and it has been analyzed within agent-based models that consider transitions as a function of the structural factors and behaviors of the two main political agents, such as: motivated top-down approach from elites and bottom-up approach run by citizens or civil society (Lipset, 1959; Przeworski, 2000).

In theoretical debates versus approaches to different modes of transition, they are characterized by the distinguishing feature of differentiation in the paradigms of transition and consolidation of democracy. From an eclectic point of view, he emphasizes that the conditions and ways that enable and facilitate a successful democratization process, have a tendency to differ from each other, because they are dependent on factors that include previous experience with democracy, traditions in the way how civil society control operates, the comprehensive levels of political engagement in society, and the effects that come from previous successful democratization experiences (Inglehart, R. 1997).

The reasons are quite distinct, the low level of economic development, which comes as a result of disrespect for the freedoms and restrictions dictated by functional democracy, affects and interacts with democracy itself by lowering its values and thus creating a hybrid culture or misunderstanding of the basic values or principles of democracy (Gabriel A, Almond & Sidney, Vreba 1963). The first, as a chain process, operates on both sides in the democracy-development relationship, but not necessarily. It is clear that the main motivator is the economy and institutional methods that enable a healthy economy and consequently development.

So we have a causal link not necessarily influential, manifested in these decades in Albania that has not only produced an unsustainable economic system, but stagnation and decline from time to time. It is important to note that the supposedly causal link between democracy and development is not as direct as it may seem. Democracy is not a guarantee of development. Although development is a complex concept, when viewed from the perspective of the economy, which quite often is a kind of solution for it, it will be understood that the economic situation of a state can be a possible cause or consequence of democracy, not as a feature of democracy itself (Lijphart, Arend, 1969).

It is also an opportunity that when governance is quite democratic involved with the principles of participation, rule of law, transparency and accountability, among other things, when all things are equal, it can contribute towards the betterment of our economy (Alexander, G. 2002).

2. Result Analysis

Francis Fukuyama in his book “The End of History and the Last Man” presents a Universalist position on liberal democracy as the model of democratic governance practicable everywhere, and indeed the most desirable to embrace. With the fall of communism and the proclamation of the US ‘victorious’ by the Cold War, Fukuyama declared the liberal state as universally victorious. He argues that industrial development necessarily follows a universal model - established by the major capitalist economies of the West - a process that will ‘guarantee’ a “growing homogenization of all human societies, regardless of their historical origin or cultural heritage.” (Fukuyama 1992, p.14). Thus, he asserts that “all countries undergoing economic modernization must increasingly resemble each other: they must unify nationally on the basis of a centralized, urbanized state, replace the traditional forms of social organization (as tribe, sect and family) with economically rational ones based on function and efficiency, and provide for the universal education of their citizens” (Fukuyama 1992, p.15). Fukuyama notes that the end has come for the struggle between different ideologies, because the universalization of Western liberal democracy has triumphed over other contentious democratic and economic alternatives.

Universalists thinking that liberal democracy is the ultimate form of man, state governments must link liberal democracy with its economic system, which is the capitalist system, because historically, it has proven to be more stable, desirable and necessary to address development challenges in third world countries. Critically examining this Universalist view can be seen as an imperialist attempt at market hegemony. While democracy may indeed have some universal characteristics, the introduction of liberal democracy as a political salvation for the Balkan countries could risk being run by an oversight hand. Fukuyama's claim to the veracity of capitalism becomes unnecessary when faced with the fact of a current economic crisis facing the world's major economies. Moreover, it is debatable that Fukuyama's liberal democracy cannot be the end of human history, simply because we are not at the end of human intelligences. Different groups, or nations, have every right to build new concepts of democracy that respond to their

religious, economic, and social needs. The fact that a democracy is old does not mean that it is likely to be stable (Geoffrey Pridham, E. H. 1997). Long-established democracies face their unique challenges. For example, in consolidated democracies, there is a growing trend of apathy and frustration among voters, especially young people, while in developing democracies the number of voters tends to be high, and many democratic movements led by young people (Zakaria, F. 1997). Local cultures and traditions have an impact on how democratic values and systems are built and sustained. It is wrong to think that certain cultures are inherently unfriendly to democratic values and institutions. A critical analysis of the development of this idea and practice, and seen in the global governance of democracy, then democratic suggests that the complaints of democratic governance to and grow from the universal human values of dignity and freedom. Where democratic governance has failed, it has done so much because of imperfect institutions rather than of a particular country. Democracy becomes rigid, corrupt, and unresponsive in the absence of periodic reform and renewal (Holden, B. 1974)

This orientation in the discourse on democracy and the Albanian experience is an attempt to reconcile the differences between extreme assumptions and the Universalist position and traditionalist thought. The central claim to the eclectic concept of thought is that more than the adoption of certain democratic values and principles in traditional culture Albanian is welcomed. We should not completely neglect the democratic ideas and practices that have been developed in other cultures, because some of the imported ideas could contribute to making sustainable democracy in Albania. Our democracy should neither be a simple return to traditional Albania, nor a repetition of Western ways of governing. Albania can not move from one extreme to another without its own map or its original path, taking into account other social formations due to democratic development in its wholeness.

3. Conclusion

Albania is a typical case study for exploring democratic consolidation with an eclectic analysis approach. The difficult transition period seems to be mainly chosen by the political class as a mean toward ends. The end goal of political elites evidently is to retain power as long as possible, considering the fact that the same elites have circulates the political sphere and transition path for more than 30 years, taken in account they many of them are extensions of the past totalitarian regime. This has reduced drastically civic trust in the political class and their legitimacy to rule and has not shaped a modern democratic political culture. The employment of the up down model, pyramidal party control and the of and that of the rule of power in the circulation of the elite, made it possible for the functioning of the new political elite to begin the process of differentiation of the Albanian elite in the creation of an elite layer of professional politicians. The construction of the cult of the leader is a consequence of a political career not based in meritocracy. These phenomena shortened the incomings of the new elites in power, it diminished the model of meritocracy inside the party selection process of leadership and it reduced the civic society representation in political decisions. Establishing the model of power control and exercises of power did put Albanian democracy under the gray zone and according to Carothers,

Th. 2002, it is a dominant-power political state. Countries with this syndrome have limited but still real political space, political contestation by opposition groups, and at least most of the basic institutional forms of democracy (Carothers, 2002. P.11). Yet one political grouping, whether it is a movement, a party, an extended family, or a single leader that dominates the system in such a way that there appears to be little prospect of alternation of power in the foreseeable future (Carothers, 2002 p.12). A theory of Albanian democracy, is what is expected, can be either a body of thought that offers and analyzes a conception of democracy, together with an explanation and justification of the existence (or possible existence) of democracy thus conceived, or a account of current political systems called "democracy". In discussing a theory of democracy, the basic assumption that practical is the meta-archetype and theoretical reflection. Where there is a theory, democratically well articulated, the chances of success in its practical manifestation are greater than where there is none. From this point of view, this paper seeks to meet the urgent need to leave the first traces in the development of a theory of Albanian democracy.

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