The Importance of Implementing European Democracy

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Abstract

The core concept of democracy is very important because it is associated with the advantages of its system in relation to other political systems. If we would define democracy as a system "outside of historical reality", then we would not even be able to find the democratic realities. In the theoretical as well as in the practical field, the concept of democracy involves the form of rulership of the state, lifestyle of the country and the way of governing a particular society. From all the inherited experiences in the field of philosophical thought and living experience, the great political movements have chosen the system of democracy. A distinctive feature of a democratic society is the open communication between citizens and their government. One of the most well-known philosophers of the 18th century, J. J Rousseau, considered *the Republic* as the best form of the state, whereas the best way of governance, *Democracy.* He is known as one of the most passionate supporters of the rule of law and representative democracy. That is also the reason why Rousseau's ideas remain even today valid within the context of the modern society. The idea of creation of United Europe historically does not belong only to a single thinker, philosopher or man of state. It is the work of a multitude of people during different historical periods of Europe, that "projected" and stimulated with their ideas the progress and destiny of european nations. The paper aims the recognition of the principles of european democratic values and their application in Albania.

Key words: European values, society, democracy, governance, people, pluralism and political system.

1. Introduction

Although the practice and content of the term "Democracy" has to do in essence with the values, virtues and practices of its application, its etymology is derived from the word, *demos* - people, and, *kratos* - force, power. Democracy is defined as the governance of the people. Thus, as "the rule of the people", democracy is an ideal with an ancient historical origin. The principles and values that compose the core of democratic institutions, such as political freedom, general voting, political pluralism and the representative assembly, have a timeline of almost two centuries. Abraham Lincoln has defined democracy as "a rule of the people, from the people and for the people". The priceless historical inheritance, as well as the viewpoints of contemporary thinkers, witness that democracy, is a way of governance with philosophical, political and legal content. Although democracy as a concept and governing practice has gone through necessary changes in order to respond to the needs of time, the Athenian democracy constitutes the foundation of european democracy.

The European Union is a union of states and it means a free movement of people with equal democratic rights. What unites people is the unity of values, of their efforts for a peaceful world. The most important values of the European Union are solidarity, tolerance and defence of human rights. The integration of a country in the european family, involves recognition of the demoncratic processes and their implementation in the society.

Democratic changes that involve most of the Eastern European states, could not leave aside Albania as well, that was isolated for almost half a century by the communist regime. Several decades have passed from that period filled with dreams and illusions regarding democracy. Many tremendous questions take place in the thoughts of the citizens: Have the desired goals and intentions been achieved? Why is democracy in Albania still unstable? What are its "diseases", that prevent the progression towards an open democratic society?

2. Principles of European Democracy

One of the basic principles of european democracy is political equality, that means the requirement over political power that must be distributed widely amongst the people and in a manner as equal as possible. What do we understand by the term "people"? Referring to ancient greek philosophers, it is noticed that the term "People", they used to refer to the majority of the humans who lived in difficult economic conditions. In their understanding, it is also noticed a negative nuance against the notion of people.

Plato and Aristotle, by conceiving democracy, as the rule of the mass of people, thus, as a rule of the crowd, thought that it acted against wisdom and property. For this reason, the country and the people, they thought, must be governed by the philosophers, the most knowledgeable people of the country. Even though democracy has undergone fundamental changes, it still maintains that it represents the need of the people to be governed by the elites. The people don't possess the abilities to govern, thus they elect inside the ruling legislative institutions the representatives of political parties and groups. Even Rousseau in his work, The Social Contract", underlines: *"If there would exist godly people, they would be governed democratically. Such a perfect governance does not fit human nat*ure" *(Rousseau P. 92, 2008)*.

Today the term democracy is not only used to characterize the political relations in a given society, but also to judge and determine the form of governance, its characteristics and its political system. The notion of democracy is based upon the principle, that people, in their entirety constitute the basis, the foundation upon which the whole political and social life is raised. In democracy the political power becomes legal only when it stems from the people. Its interests and well-being constitute the final purpose of governance.

The democratic system of a country is a product of the free will of the people as a whole, where every individual is free to make the political choices that suit his interest. But freedom is the necessary condition of the concept of democracy. From this viewpoint, democracy can be defined as a system of ideas, practices and ways of action that lead towards the institutionalization of freedom.

Democracy has an organic connection with our freedom and rights. For each freedom, has its living space organized in the horizontal and vertical directions. *"Freedoms",* they are different, although in essence they remain "constitutional rights", for every citizen. The quality of a democracy depends on the will of the citizens for a common well-being. This Will is based on the virtue of consensus, that feeds tolerance and the spirit of compromise.

Tolerance and compromise are opposed by those who do not respect the principles of democracy.

The creation of a democratic society begins from the fulfillment of the necessary conditions for independence and human dignity. It requires the unceasing growth not only from citizens, but also from governors. Since its foundation, the EU, is experiencing an uninterrupted process of transformations. This happens due to the need of adapting to the rapid developments and walking in unexplored paths. However the complexity of this process dictates the perfection of the policies and common institutions, that are done through an open debate and extended in time.

Regarding the creation of a european union many philosophers and thinkers have contributed such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Victor Huga, Thomas Paine etc, whom saw in this union of states the only possibility to have peace for the future of people. The first important representative and the protagonist of the idea and its realization for the establishment of a common state as a patron of peace in Europe was the French military leader Maksimilian de Sali. According to his concept the european federation was needed to be composed from the "Christian Republics", that, in order to preserve peace, must be led by France.

An important theoretical contribution to this idea has been given by Saint Pierre, one of the strongest opponents of Louis XIV, who came from a "Strong Orientation Against the Absolute Power of Louis XIV", and who is the author of the idea "On the Federal Union of independent states ". He made a European Republic project, according to which it should consist of a stable state alliance with its own bodies that would be federal parliament or federal convention. Also French lawyer and philosopher Charles Montesquieu featured his work with political and legal content titled "Thoughts on the Universal European Monarchy", a work which saw the light of publication many years later.

A manuscript of Jean Jacques Rousseau, about which we know little, holds the title "On the federation as a tool that combines the benefit of small republics with great states." This paper is devoted to the idea and the creation of a special federal European system. We find a German "European Professional Position" of the 18th century also in the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant. In his work of 1795, "Towards everlasting peace" is spoken of a concept of "federal organization of European republican states" that should be based on two fundamental principles:

- In every state the civil constitution must be republican;
- The international law should be based upon the federalization of free states.

Although later he even expressed doubts and reservations, when he parliament: *"The creation of a powerful european federation, even if theoretically it was able to end the wars between its members, was practically impossible."(Kant P. 54. 2004).* Also, Thomas Peine, published various works and pamphlets about the "League of the Republics of Europe and America". He was a passionate defender of human rights. Whereas the well-known utopian Saint Simon, in the year 1814, demonstrated the original concept of a european union along with an international parliament. In his work "Reorganization of European Society", he speaks of a "general power" that is capable of creating a "European community" progress.

Even French writer Victor Hugo was a proponent of "Europeanization idea". As a classical French romantic writer but also as an active politician, being in charge of the second international peace congress of the United States of Europe, which was held in 1849, with his vision, he introduced the idea of the European Union which became two centuries later important in the political and socio-cultural aspect and practically feasible. In 1855, Victor Hugo noted in his writings: "Our continent will be the state of a people. There will be no borders, no customs, no stops, there will be only free circulation of goods and people. " On 24th February of that same year Hugo prophesied the creation of the only European currency, today's Euro, which would replace the diversity of money of many European states.

Today, the European Union constitutes a common family that wants to live in peace and harmony, by deepening and strengthening brotherhood and solidarity among people, respecting the culture, history and traditions of each of them. The European Union is unique. It is not a federal state like the United States of America, as its member states remain sovereign independent nations. They unite their sovereignty by making joint decisions through joint institutions such as the European Parliament, elected by EU citizens, and the European Council representing national governments. They decide based on the proposals of the European Commission, which represents the EU's interests.

3. Albania – EU Relations

Throughout thousands of years of history, Albania, both geographically and culturally, is a people of European spirit and orientation, regardless of the pressure and direction that foreign invaders have tried to give to its political, economic and cultural life. Such a tendency is proven by our ancient Illyrian history and culture, the efforts for freedom and independence led by the national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti, Skanderbeg, as well as the National Renaissance programme, which permeates a European spirit, up to the Unification the Albanian people along the Antifascist Front during World War II.

Decisive for the history of our people and country were the changes of the political system during the 90^s when the single-party dictatorship was demolished. But, now, under the banner "We want Albania like all of Europe", the popular protests unfolded in the eyes of the world, its centuries' old dream. The first step taken by democratic Albania in the 90s was the establishment of diplomatic relations with the European Union, where both sides signed in 1992 a number of agreements that included the areas of Trade and Cooperation development. From their signature, Albania was given the opportunity to benefit from the programs that the European Union offered to third countries.

After these steps, naturally came the expansion of relations in many other areas of special interest to Albania. Already, our country is listed on the list of first countries benefiting from EU assistance to Eastern European countries, allocated by PHARE, Erasmus, etc. This assistance would include the development of nearly all areas of the country's life, which spurred the launch of other steps, such as the launch of the negotiations for the Association Agreement, a step which is accompanied by Albania's membership in the Council of Europe, through which a great support was given to building the foundations of democracy in Albania.

But, precisely at the height of the rhythms and deepening of democratic procedures in the country, Albania is hit by a severe political-economic crisis, which caused the slowdown of

our country's relations with the EU. This period marked a stagnation in the deepening of Albania's relations with the European Union. It seemed that life and economic and political developments in Albania were losing the chances and status of the country privileged by the European Union. A number of chain reaction developments were emerging on the Balkan scene, which would drag the attention of the European Union. The feature of the Balkan countries highlighted a number of difficulties that testified to the emergence of the nostalgic trends towards the old Single-Party regimes, especially in the area of security they pose for those vulnerable and those in need.

The situation in the Balkan was deteriorated even more from the role that eastern and Russian orientated circles played, led by Slobodan Milosevic, who undertook a fierce, genocidal and wartime campaign against the non-Slave populations of the former Yugoslav republics, which would follow the wars between the peoples of this former republic that had been able to maintain unity through the violence and repression of communist ideology. Under these circumstances, in which the aid to Albania with a fragile democracy was included, the European Union offered these countries the so-called "Stabilization and Association Process" programme.

The multitude of reasons that we mentioned above, stimulated the need of a wide support towards the democratic, political and economic developments in the countries of Southeast Europe. The priorities of the European Union were deepening and stimulating the reforms in order to establish the rule of law from the institutions that had come out of the plebiscitary people's vote, as well as the establishment of the free market economy. All of these EU goals would be summarized in the offer that it made to the southeast European countries through integration into the Stabilization and Association Process. This process would approach more than ever the EU with the Balkan countries. The essence of this process places emphasis on stabilizing the political and economic situation of the Balkan countries and strengthening relations with the European Union. Already on the agenda for the Western Balkan countries a number of tasks, such as the embrace of the fundamental values of the European Union, the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, the protection of human rights, the respect of national minorities, the strengthening of the free market economy and the establishment of social justice. *The main achievement of most of the Balkan countries was the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, which foretells from them* the establishment of a legal framework for cooperation and the gradual adoption of European standards. It offers great opportunities for cooperation with the EU.

Integration into the European Union first and foremost requires the approximation and embrace of the fundamental values on the basis of which this great international body is built and lives. It should be understood as a programme of reforms that brings the country closer to the European model of the state, democracy and the functioning of the economy, and not merely as a free movement of ideas and people towards the west. In conclusion, we can say that the EU is an organization which is distinguished for its multifunctionality in many ways: *"Political, economic, cultural and humanitarian. It consists of several bodies with different functions in decision-making, budget administration and membership of new members."* *(Baca. P.192. 2010).*

4. Conclusions

By laying down the basic principles of democracy, it is possible to reflect on the fundamental changes in Albania on the problem of whether Albanians have devised programs to capture

the lost time for building a democratic society. First of all, this represents a real challenge to the mindset and action of the citizens and the political class of the country in terms of the acquisition of genuine democratic principles, which are also the very foundation of the future political building. With the protection and implementation of democratic principles, Albania's progress and development becomes more sustainable. Challenges to be overcome will enable and strengthen true democracy. Today's historic period is very favorable to Albania so that it can take advantage of the great opportunity to benefit from the experience of truly democratic countries.

The progression of our country on the path of democracy requires citizens of specific quality, responsible, active, and inclined to cooperate with others. The basis of democracy requires the preparation of the figure of the citizen with high moral values, the enhancement of his dignity, the protection of freedoms and human rights. It is very important for the democratic education of citizens, which must be achieved through the excellence of the quality of education. Open communication between the people and the government is a defining characteristic of democratic societies. Only in this way are new ideas produced, trusting each other for common problems, progress, constructive changes and the formation of a positive climate in which all parties can debate and produce further agreements, conclusions and progress.

Given the universal values of democracy, it can be affirmed that it is the largest asset of the political-social systems in the history of the peoples. By embodying a heritage inherited from the past, democracy is not a concrete gate, in defense of only this precious heritage, but also an infinite space for its improvement and perfection. Therefore it is built and protected every day, not only by the elect, politicians and political parties, but by all citizens of a country who enjoy its benefits just as all beings enjoy the warmth of the sun.

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