

DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN AGE

DEMOKRATIJA U MODERNOM DOBU

APSTRAKT Demokracija se smatra najboljom političkom organizacijom u savremenom društvu koja ima mnoge prednosti u odnosu na druge oblike političkog upravljanja. Nakon pada socijalizma, veliki broj zemalja, čemu su u velikoj mjeri doprinijeli uticaji međunarodnih faktora i pritisci za prihvatanje promjena, usvojili su demokratiju kao svoj sistem. Demokracija se ipak ne može smatrati kompletnim procesom ili konačnim statusom. Pored toga što mogu da unaprijede svoj politički sistem, demokratske zemlje takođe mogu da ga unazade. Prevladavajući model demokratije u zemljama svijeta sadrži uglavnom liberalne dimenzije pomoću kojih merimo stepen demokratije u određenom društvu. Dimenzije liberalne demokratije izražavaju se kroz demokratske principe zasnovane na slobodi, jednakosti, transparentnosti, odgovornosti, pluralizmu, sprovođenju pravde i drugih liberalnih vrijednosti i pokazuju šta demokracija jeste i šta bi ona trebalo da bude. Liberalna demokracija, uzeta kao standard moderne demokratije, smatra se modelom uspješne vladavine i sistema koji promoviše društvo u svim svojim sferama, sistem u kojem se građani osećaju sigurnim, zaštićenim, uključenim i poštovanim.

Ključne riječi: demokracija, liberalna demokracija, izborna demokracija, konsolidacija demokratije.

ABSTRACT Democracy is considered as the best form of political organization in a contemporary society with many advantages over the other forms of political management. After the collapse of socialism, a number of countries, largely contributed by the impact of the international factors and the pressures for acceptance of the changes adopted democracy as their system. Democracy yet cannot be regarded as a complete process or the final state. In addition to being able to improve their political system, democratic countries can also downgrade it. Prevailing model of democracy in the world's countries contains mainly liberal dimensions by which we measure degree of democracy in a particular society. The dimensions of liberal democracy are expressed through the democratic principles which are based on freedom, equality, transparency, accountability, pluralism, implementation of justice and other liberal values and show what democracy is and what it should be. Taken as a standard of a modern democracy, liberal democracy is seen as a model of successful government and a system that promotes the society in all of its spheres, a system where citizens feel safe, protected, involved and respected.

Key words: democracy, liberal democracy, electoral democracy, consolidation of democracy.

Although modern democracy is recognized as a phenomenon of the twentieth century, its first ideas appeared during the second half of the seventeenth century, thanks to, among other things, the creation of the first written constitution of modern democracy in Connecticut (USA), which marked the beginning of the American democracy. Later, in the early twentieth century, according to

the Lijphart (Lajphart, 2003), the first electoral systems of government were established in Australia and New Zealand. From then until the present day, that is the beginning of the twenty-first century, the concept and the system of democracy, based on human and economic freedoms, political and other equalities, accountability of government, pluralism, public control of government, etc., has shown its advantages over the other forms of political management. This is the reason why democracy is considered the best form of political organization. Taking into account the basic characteristics of democracy, Plattner (2010) shows that over the time the modern democracy demonstrated remarkable endurance and resistance, and one might also say an exceptional flexibility, while Sartori (2001) argues that it is difficult to prove or confirm democracy, but undoubtedly the fact that democracy is a preferable form of political system in the modern world can be convincingly confirmed. Diamond and Plattner, supported this view stating that, „democracy remains unchallenged as a global model and the ideal of governance“ (Diamond and Plattner, 2001: IX). The time for doubting the value of democracy is over. While discussions were once made for or against democracy, „today the most important political discussions concern not whether it is desirable but rather how to promote and nurture it“ (Berman, 2007: 28).

After the change of the regime which prevailed in Eastern Europe during the 90's of the twentieth century and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of world's democratic countries has increased. During this period, the new democratic countries started emerging in Africa and South America. The crisis of legitimacy of the so-called authoritarian regime has directed a number of countries along the path of the democratic transition. As the authoritarian regimes did not manage to follow the speed of development in democratic countries and to cope with all the negativities of their internal systems, in the general climate of democracy, they were slowly losing the trust of their own citizens. Losing the legitimacy of the previous regime was often only one of the many factors for acceptance of a democratic political system. That was, in a number of countries, largely contributed by the impact of the international factors and the pressures for acceptance of the changes. Larry Diamond (2008) thinks that the traditional comprehension of sovereignty as a non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries lost its battle against the intentions for establishing democracy. „In a number of instances, international intervention tipped the political balance against besieged authoritarian regimes, making democratic transition possible where they would otherwise not have taken place – or at least not so soon and so free of violence“ (Diamond, 2008: 106). International forces have even intervened in cases of impaired democracies in order to strengthen and consolidate them. The period of the 90's was designated as the third wave of democratization and, according to Huntington (Huntington, 2004) who introduced the concept of the waves, it represents one of the three periods which were „most productive“ for democracy.

Following the 90's of the twentieth century, there are almost no new established democracies, and the objective conditions in other countries do not

indicate the possibility of democratic transformation, or the appearance of the new candidates. Some of the new democracies, created overnight, were to become showing the internal inability to maintain the newly established order. In some countries, democracy even started withdrawing and international efforts, according to Inglehart and Welzel, were making an even bigger chaos. The period after the third wave seems to indicate that the euphoria connected with the spread of democracy is over, so that this has led many observers to the conclusion that „democracy has reached its high-water mark and is unlikely to expand any further“ (Inglehart and Welzel, 2009: 33). However, although the establishment of democracy demands grounds composed of suitable social and cultural conditions the failed democracies had lacked, the fact that thanks to the process of modernization social conditions are becoming more convenient both for creation and maintenance of democracy has led Inglehart and Welzel to the conclusion that the third wave of democracy is not completed. Also, the decrease in the number of new democracies, according to some theorists, represents an unambiguous indication of the beginning of the third reversing wave, while according to other theorists this is only a case of a short-term stagnation. The resistance of some, so-called authoritarian regimes with more developed economic systems, supports the recession thesis. These regimes called „authoritarian capitalism“ have been lately considered an alternative to democracy, demonstrating a solid level of stability and an ability to maintain their power (Plattner, 2010), i.e. an „authoritarian resilience“. Larry Diamond belongs to the second group of theorist who believe that „it is theoretically possible for a wave of democratic expansion to be followed not by a reverse wave but by a period of stagnation or stability, in which the number of democracies in the world overall neither increases or decreases significantly for some time, and in which gains for democracy are more or less offset by losses“ (Diamond, 1997: 34).

Despite all the ups and downs during the last two centuries, democracy has proven to be the most stable political form of societal organization of the modern era. Democratic institutions in consolidated democracies confirm their steadfastness and commitment to democratic principles whose implementation in the process of continuous social development is an ongoing challenge. Democracy, however, cannot be regarded as a complete process or the final state. In addition to being able to improve their political system, democratic countries can also downgrade it by reducing the political responsibility, increasing corruption, by lower respect of freedom and equality, etc. Some of these negative phenomena represent the reality of many democracies, which is often neglected. Diamond (1997) even talks about a possible negative trend of democracy or „progressive guesswork“, by which the democratic changes in recent decades can be explained. „Indeed, democracy may not only become diminished in its political quality over time, it may even effectively *disappear*, not merely through the breakdown or overthrow of formal democratic institutions (e.g. by military or executive coup) but through more insidious processes of decay“ (Diamond, 1997: 19).

As already mentioned, the prevailing model of democracy in the world's countries contains mainly liberal dimensions by which we measure degree of democracy in a particular society. The dimensions of liberal democracy are expressed through the democratic principles which are based on freedom, equality, transparency, accountability, pluralism, implementation of justice and other liberal values and show what democracy is and what it should be. The empirical experience so far suggests that there is no liberal democracy in which all the principles and dimensions function perfectly and that there is a large-scale gap between democratic practices and ideals that are to be achieved. A democratic system and democratic experience is essentially based on the constant loss of balance between „must and to be“ and therefore requires both prescriptive and descriptive definition, considers Sartori. „What democracy is cannot be separated from what democracy should be“ (Sartori, 2001, 87-88).

The largest number of democratic countries of the twentieth century is in practice far away, not only from the ideal democracy, but also from demands of the liberal democracy. With the destruction of the socialist block, the conception of socialism and its ideology was almost extinguished, thus making the ideology of the liberal democracy most dominant in the world. Left without its ideological foundation, the former socialist countries, thanks to the international help and engagement of its elite, immediately turned to the idea of liberal democracy and entered the period of transition. The number of democratic countries has rapidly increased and thereby strengthened the position of liberal democracy. The new democratic path and newly created democratic countries began with accepting and practicing free and fair political elections of the highest state representatives. By doing this, a democratic threshold is satisfied. However, regardless of the initial enthusiasm, over the next few decades, new democracies did not make a visible progress in terms of meeting other liberal criteria. Research and measuring of democracy in the world show that these countries stayed on the level of the minimum definition of democracy or, on the level of so-called „Electoral democracy“ while they still suffer from corruption, disrespect of law and inefficient judiciary, political and civil liberties and individual rights, discrimination against minorities, irresponsible power, domination of the state over the media, the high level of crime and violence and so on. Considering these weaknesses, the question arises: how can they even be considered democracies?

Electoral democracy is defined as „a civilian, constitutional system in which the legislative and chief executive offices are filled through regular, competitive, multiparty elections“ (Diamond, 1997: 7). Electoral democracy represents a weak form of the liberal democracy because many of the countries where it exists basically don't have appropriate conditions for developing and maintaining a higher level of democracy. Many scholars consider this form of democracy a clean shell or a pseudo-democracy. Given the more and more pronounced differences among modern democracies, there is a clear need for their theoretical distinction.

Starting from the fact that the essence of democracy is in strengthening the position and power of ordinary citizens, Inglehart and Welzel believe that

modern democracy can be divided into an efficient and inefficient one. „Effective democracy reflects not only the extent to which civil and political rights exist on paper, but also the degree to which officials actually respect these rights.“ (Inglehart and Welzel, 2009: 42). Unlike inefficient democracies in which political elite are independent in making decisions, in efficient democracies government decisions are in accordance with the needs of the citizens, while their participation in decision-making and personal autonomy is very explicit. Starting from the fact that there are several types of democracy and that some of them are borderline cases between authoritarianism and democracy, Andreas Schedler (Schedler, 2001) offers a classification of democracy where he recognizes: electoral, liberal and advanced democracy. Advanced democracy „possess some positive traits over and above the minimal defining criteria of liberal democracy, and therefore rank higher in terms of democratic quality than many new democracies“ (Schedler, 2001: 151). The Classification of modern regimes developed by Tilly (2007) includes variations of modern democracies and undemocratic political systems. With this classification Tilly seeks to describe and explain the basic types of modern regimes which incorporate different degrees of democratic capacities. The classification includes four levels of public politics: 1. High-capacity undemocratic, characterized by a lack of public participation, the broad participation of government security forces in public policy and governance changes through the struggle at the top, or a mass uprising of the people; 2. Low-capacity undemocratic, characterized by military dictators, ethnic groups and religious mobilizations, constant violent struggle and even civil wars, political actors and criminals deploying lethal force; 3. High-capacity democratic, with frequent social movements, strong political activities, state control of public policy with a low level of political violence; 4. Low-capacity democracies with equally frequent social mobility, interest group activity, mobilization of political power, „semi-legal and illegal actors in public politics and violence in public politics“ (Tilly, 2007: 20).

The classification of the current world's regimes confirms the thesis that liberal democracy, as a dominant political system, is the goal of almost all non-democratic regimes and that its establishment is aspiration of their citizens. Taken as a standard of a modern democracy, liberal democracy is seen as a model of successful government and a system that promotes the society in all of its spheres, a system where citizens feel safe, protected, involved and respected. However, if we look deeper, the countries of the liberal democracy are showing some weaknesses, especially when it comes to the leading of the current policy, and that causes dissatisfaction of its citizens. „This manifests itself in contempt for politicians (especially the people's chosen representatives in the legislature), frequent outbreaks of scandal and corruption, and declining trust in political institutions.“ (Plattner, 2010: 83). Plattner states that citizens are increasingly worried, especially when it comes to the US, due to the intensification of division, brutality of political discourse, inability to solve some problems, declining levels of culture etc. Diamond (1997) thinks that seen from a broader

perspective, democracies are not necessarily economically and administratively more organized than the states with autocratic regimes. The negativities in the functioning of democratic countries are still much less, both due to the shortcomings and the failures of other regimes and the long-term advantages that this system carries with it, such as maintaining the balance between majority rule and individual and minority rights, political freedom, protection of vulnerable groups, reduction of social injustice, correction of misguided policies, etc. Owing to these characteristics, liberal democracy has lasted and survived in many of the countries in which was established.

However, new democracies that meet only the minimum democratic conditions are in danger of leaving the democratic grounds if they do not strengthen their democratic capacities. Joining a democratic path is only an initial stage, it is necessary to maintain and to stay on its course, i.e. to achieve the legitimacy of the new regime at all levels. Strengthening the capacity and stabilization of democracy in democratic countries is called democratic consolidation. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan believe that a country's democratic consolidation does not mean that the country in question must have all the characteristics that would increase the overall quality of its democracy. On the contrary, they provide a rather narrow definition which combines three dimensions of relation towards democracy: the behavioural, attitudinal and constitutional. According to them, a consolidated democracy is „a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives has become in a phrase 'the only game in town'“ (Linz and Stepan, 2001: 94). The establishment and development of the institution of free political elections or creation of markets are not the only confident signs of consolidated democracy. Democracy is consolidated only when all of its participants, i.e. political elites and citizens believe in democracy as their own system, when none of them want to change it even in times of political and economic crises, when all the conflicts in the country are dealt with according to the established norms, that is when all of these are loyal to the democratic regime. A consolidation of democracy in a particular country requires a number of conditions that already exist in it or should be developed. In this regard, Linz and Stepan (Linz, Stepan, 1998), cited five conditions, or, as they call it, arenas of consolidated democracy: 1. Free and active civil society; 2. Political society; 3. The rule of law; 4. The state administrative apparatus that a democratic government can properly use and 5. an institutionalized economic society.

Accepting the concept of consolidation of democracy, Huntington thinks that it is necessary to develop a measure in order to evaluate some democratic country as a stable and consolidated. Thinking in this direction he proposes a kind of test that applies both to new and previously established democracies. „It can be considered that democracy is consolidated if a party or group that received the first elections in a time of transition later loses elections and hand over the power to those who have won elections, and these peacefully leave the power to the winners at some future election“ (Huntington, 2004: 206). A

peaceful transfer of power after the first election and continuity of such political behaviour is a sign of a commitment to the democratic idea and indicates developed democratic awareness, or comprehension that the changes in a society can be solved by a shift in power, but not by changing the regime. However, a consolidation of consensus democracies, i.e. the multiparty democracies, can't be measured in this way, but only the majoritarian democracies, says Arendt Lijphart. In the consensus systems which are more frequent than the majoritarian ones, governments are usually made in coalition, so that „the change of government in such systems usually means only a partial change in the party composition of government – instead of that opposition“ becomes „government“ (Lajphart, 2003: 78). Also, he doubts the validity of this concept for the reason that many stable and consolidated democracies, according to this test, would not be democracies.

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