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Political Culture and Party
Pluralism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Abstract

In this article we discuss political culture and analyse how the dominant model of this culture affects the functioning of party pluralism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Political culture is a concept that combines psychological aspects such as political attitudes, orientations, political behaviour and social action, as well as sociological dimensions that include the social effects of political attitudes and patterns of behaviour. In this sense, political culture is one of the most important conditions for the establishment and normal functioning of party pluralism and democracy in a country.

Keywords: political culture, party pluralism, political structure, political parties

Introduction

The experience of modern living consistently demonstrates that democracy as a form and instrument of political activity, is rather insufficient. Thus, a democratic institutional framework is not sufficient for a political system to be considered as democratic. Even in a formally democratic system there might be undemocratic political relations and practices at work, which can be especially true of transitional societies. Certain socio-cultural factors, such as social values and models of dominant political culture, are elements that predominantly define the development and survival of a democratic political system: "We can see democracy as a consequence of the relationship between political structure and political culture" (Maldini, 2006:89).

Political culture is a concept that combines psychological aspects such as political attitudes, orientations, political behaviour and social action, as well as sociological dimensions that include the social effects of political attitudes and patterns of behaviour. In this way, as Maldini (2006:89) argues, political culture constitutes a synthesis of the collective historical heritage arising from the political system and of individual political heritage and social experience.

The term 'political culture' was first used by German philosopher Johann Gott-fried Herder in the late 18th century. However, the term was quite rarely used until the 1960s. It entered political science through Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba who published the results of a study on the political culture of five democracies in their book "The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations" in 1963. The countries they focused on were the USA, UK, Mexico, West Germany, and Italy. Based on this research, Almond and Verba drew conclusions about the influence of different political cultures on the democratic system, and by the political culture they meant "specific political orientations - attitudes about the political system and its various parts and attitudes about the role of an individual in the system" (Almond, Verba 1989:12).

In fact, Almond and Verba argue that political culture is: "a political system internalized in cognitions, feelings, and assessments of its population" (Almond, Verba, 1989:13). Political culture is presented as a set of individual orientations and attitudes held by community members in relation to political objects. Orientation is the basic category to start from when taking positions. In their attitudes toward political objects (or a political system), Almond and Verba (1989:14) distinguish between cognitive orientations that include knowledge and beliefs about the political system, affective orientations that relate to feelings of attachment or alienation from the political system, and evaluative orientations that represent opinions about the political system and form a kind of combination of value attitudes, information, and feelings. Political parties, interest groups, and the means of communication (ie the media) jointly participate in translating the demands that society puts before the government into one concrete official policy. The bureaucracy and the judiciary are in charge of the administrative part of this process.

Models of Political Culture

Based on their extensive research, Almond and Verba conclude that there are three ideal types of political culture: parochial, subservient, and participatory. Parish culture is characterized by the general ignorance of political objects as well as non-involvement in political activities. At the same time, most people who belong to this type of political culture do not possess a developed awareness and the idea of broader political processes. Their participation in politics is limited to a short period of time and to their immediate environment. A member of the parish community does not expect the political system to introduce any changes. Submissive culture, unlike parochial culture, is characterized by an individual's awareness of government authority and certain knowledge of political processes with affective orientation. However, this type of culture is characterized by a passive attitude towards the political system and a lack of participation in political life (Almond, Verba, 1989:17-18). Although people of this orientation have an idea of broader processes, they still do not have developed needs and values that would lead them to participate. In other words, they are convinced that the sphere of politics is inaccessible to them. Participatory culture is characterized by one's knowledge of politics but also of one's willingness to participate in the political process. Each of these political cultures corresponds to a certain type of political structure. Thus, the parochial political culture belongs to the traditional decentralized political structure in which people are oriented only to their local community, the subordinate culture corresponds to an authoritarian and centralized political structure, whereas the participatory political culture refers to the modern democratic political structure (Ibid, 22-24). Nevertheless, the real political culture of a country, and here of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is always a combination of parochial, subservient, and participatory elements.



According to Vujčić, participatory culture cannot be constituted until the emergence of democracy, since, in most cases, there is a strong connection between political culture and political structure. However, as this is not the case in each individual example, these types of culture can be combined to produce three types of systemically complex (coalition) political cultures. The first type is parochial - subordinate, the second parochial - participatory, and the third, subordinate - participatory (Vujčić, 2008:181). These hybrid species usually coincide with the process of transition and consolidation of democracy.

J.S. Mill (2009:141) describes stable democracy as a combination of the principles of the leadership of a competent elite and the participation of the majority, i.e. moral and instrumental competence of the political and bureaucratic elite and active participation of the majority of citizens. Almond and Verba believe that civil culture is the most suitable for a stable democratic system and is a unique combination of participatory, subservient, and parochial elements. As Vujčić concludes, civic culture is the political culture of democracy that enables democracies to function in a stable and effective way. The foundations of civic culture include good knowledge of political processes and relations, the feeling of citizens that they can be effective political participants, the idea of justifying the decisive role of political elites in political processes, and the will of these elites to respect the needs and demands of citizens. At the same time, individuals who "become active in the political process" are still "attached to family and local ties" (Vujčić, 2008:182).

In their works on political culture some authors portrayed democratic political culture as the opposite of an authoritarian syndrome that includes faith in powerful leaders, hatred of strangers and dissidents, feelings of helplessness and inefficiency, extreme cynicism, doubt, distrust of others, and dogmatism. In contrast, democratic culture is characterized by flexibility, trust, efficiency, openness to new ideas and experiences, tolerance for others, acceptance of others, and an attitude towards a government that is not blindly submissive. The attitude does not imply hatred and rejection but is responsible and cautious (Diamond, 1999:167).

Considering the different approaches of several authors (Almond and Verba 1989; Lea, 1982;), Ivan Šiber makes the following assumptions and proposes several criteria for the development of political culture:

- 1. "A sense of individual identification with a community as a result of a special historical development that unites each community of a certain time and space.
- 2. Loyalty and trust as the basis of mutual relations in the community.
- 3. Authority and hierarchy, i.e. one's submission to authority as well as acceptance, interaction, and communication is one of the essential bases of the functioning of a political system.

- 4. Open ego, i.e. willingness to cooperate, cordial relationships, respect for others.
- 5. Willingness to share values with others, to belong, and to act together.
- 6. Multiple value orientation that implies the absence of value exclusivity, rigidity, and dogmatism.
- 7. Trust in the social environment, social relations, and support of others.
- 8. Absence of anxiety, presence of self-confidence in one's abilities.
- 9. Management of conflict and aggression as the basis of cohabitation, as well as the necessity of controlling and expressing aggression in a socially acceptable manner" (Šiber, 1992:100-101).

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the political cultures of other Eastern European countries, is characterized by an emphasized dimension of paternalism combined with religious orthodoxy that strongly supports conservative political roles and autocratic tendencies. Therefore, to mobilize and unite the "newly created mass public in Eastern European countries," nationalism was usually used as the strongest ideological instrument. The underdevelopment of the system of parliamentary parties and democratic institutions, as well as the characteristics of the political culture of these countries, are still mainly as a result of conflicts of nationalism and ethnicity, and as a result, political culture is not geared towards political compromise and consensus, which are preconditions for secure democracy (Galić, 2000:201). Research, entitled "Social Capital In Bosnia and Herzegovina" by Bert Šalaj, shows that Bosnian society is characterized by a low level of trust between three ethnic groups together with a low level of trust in a democracy that serves as the principle that conditions a low level of citizen participation in political processes (Šalaj, 2009:68).

The region's Communist regimes first established themselves in countries that were comprised of traditional agrarian societies where there was no tradition of civil society. Such a basis suited them in developing an authoritarian structure of consciousness. It is this structure of consciousness that has become, and remains, a factor that will prevent the establishment of a democratic system for a long time to come whilst, on the other hand, enabling the development of new totalitarian orders in the form of nationalist regimes. Galić emphasizes that the political culture of communism was created on the basis of a totalitarian political system that continuously controlled every segment of social life. The main source of this control was an" omnipotent, hierarchically organized, self-sustainable communist party that maintained the monopoly of power by force (violence)" (Galić, 2000:202), and any attempt to carry out any activity that constituted the creation of civil society, such as private economic activity, organized interest groups, religious activities, etc., was doomed in advance to ban and ruin.



Šiber (1992: 101-102) claims that it was ideology, and not interest, which was the very basis of a socialist society. It was exactly this absence of interest (their socioeconomic basis) that demonstrated the non-existence of pluralism that arose due to confrontation of interests. The collapse of that political system marked the collapse of the ideological system that had served as its connective tissue. This type of society did "not yet have the social basis of political pluralism (the collapse of an ideological system led to a state of anomie and a kind of value 'vacuum')". Also, these societies "do not have a built-in political culture that would help transform individual to general social frustrations, and, at the same time, have a strong need for belonging and authority" (Šiber, ibid).

The crisis created by the collapse of the socialist regime was accompanied by dissatisfaction due to the gap between the levels of ambition and what was achieved. As a result, an individual had to find reasons and meaning for such a situation. The culprits were found outside their groups, which was how homogenizing and inter-ethnic conflicts emerged: "Since the mechanisms of the political system are still being built in the former communist societies, where there are no adequate contents of a political culture that serve as the basis for overcoming the crisis situations, the elements for the emergence of new social movements based on exclusivity towards others and unambiguous determination of gathering are likely to exist too" (Šiber, 1992:107).

In addition to the fact that interethnic conflicts were supported by the nature of the political system of the former Yugoslavia, the political practice also played a significant role in that process. "The lack of multi-party system and the growing economic conflict gradually led to the split of the League of Communists, which was an integrative Yugoslav factor, into six plus two communist parties that increasingly represented the interests of their republics - provinces" (Šiber, 1992:108). It may be said that in the period from 1980 to 1990, Yugoslavia had a kind of multi-party system at the federal level, which was formally within one party, while the League of Communists dominated at the republican level as the single political force. "It follows that already at that time the strengthening of national-republican integration and confrontation with others was in progress. The alliances of communists are increasingly presented as protectors of the interests of 'their people' who are endangered by others" (Šiber, ibid).

Political culture is directly related to the level of development of a society. It is usually observed that societies that are not economically developed and are socially closed, do not have the capacity to develop a political culture in which tolerance, freedom, and democracy prevail. "On the one hand, their political culture moves within the coordinates of political, religious, or ethnic unanimity, and within the coordinates of general mistrust and conflict between political subjects on the other hand" (Šijaković, 2008). Although this is not always the rule, societ-

ies that are developed and open, usually develop a tolerant and civilized political culture.

The mere existence of the institutions of a democratic system is not enough to ensure a stable democratic society however, if they operate beyond fundamental values of freedom, equality, tolerance, pluralism, etc. If their functioning is not based on given values, the consequences are directly reflected in the reduction of trust in the institutions of the system, reduction of political participation in the form of political apathy, civil disobedience, etc. (Maldini, 2006:98). Values that were once widely present, such as egalitarian preference, orientation towards paternalism and conformism, as well as collectivism, survive for a very long time after the collapse of the regime that imposed or recommended them. These values continue to "shape the attitudes of individuals towards newly established institutions. They can also undermine support for these new institutions and jeopardize their functioning. Values shaped in the socio-cultural and political-institutional environment of socialism tend to have weak support for new democracies" (Maldini, 2006:101). That is why has been difficult to establish strong institutions that would bring about the consolidation of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Party Pluralism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The key precondition for the establishment and development of a range of political options and possibilities, and thus of political parties, is the existence of a democratically oriented framework or political pluralism. Sartori explains the very notion of pluralism through three levels of meaning: cultural, social, and political. "At the first level, we can speak of a pluralistic culture in the same range of meanings as the comparative notions of secularized and homogeneous culture. The pluralistic culture emphasizes a vision of the world that is, in essence, based on the belief that the good life is diversity rather than similarity, opposition rather than unanimity, change rather than immutability" (Sartori, 2002:26).

Kasapović draws attention to the fact that the term 'plural society' was first defined by J.S. Furnivall in his book 'Colonial Policy And Practice: A Comparative Study Of Burma And Netherlands India' as "a society composed of different segments separated from each other by deep social divisions. It consists of closed communities in which membership is ascriptive and obligatory. It is typical for the society to identify individuals with individual segments, and not with the whole society or state. This 'anesthetizes' horizontal social conflicts and encourages institutional clientelism within the segments. It also intensifies and militarizes vertical social conflicts and consequently endangers the survival of the state itself' (Kasapović, 2005:25). Sartori emphasizes that pluralism is "the result of wars and the persecution of religion - which is clear from the debates leading to



the principle of tolerance" and concludes that, "it cannot be said to exist until the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar are separated" (Sartori, 2002:29).

The term 'party pluralism', in fact, has a deeper meaning in relation to how we usually interpret it. "Superficially, party pluralism means the existence of more than one party, but the connotation is implicit that parties are the product of 'pluralism" (Sartori, 2002:31). Pluralism is institutionalized if there is a consensus of all relevant social groups on "the necessity of institutionalizing the right to differences" which establishes democracy as a framework in which "every group or individual has a legitimate right to compete under certain rules for the trust of voters and to advocate their proclaimed interests and achieves program goals by occupying key positions in state government" (Halilović, 2017:10). Almost a decade before the appearance of the so-called pluralist revolutions in Eastern Europe, the demands for political pluralization in the former Yugoslavia had already been emphasised. In the early 1980s, the process of establishing civil society began. At first, it took place in larger cities such as Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo. "Slovenia stood out in this respect since the country was the first that formulated the concept of civil society as a kind of the widest social opposition and a basis for the renewal of political pluralism" (Pavlović, 2011:367-368). Unfortunately, there was no such emancipatory impulse for a long time in other republics of socialist Yugoslavia.

Pavlović sees the fact that Tito, who was long-lived, used to cut off any idea of political pluralisation right at its beginning as one of the reasons why more favourable international and domestic circumstances were not used for comprehensive democratic reform. "This was clearly seen in the example of the road affair in Slovenia, the suffocation of the Croatian Spring in Croatia, and the confrontation with philosophers and liberals in Serbia. As there was no possibility for the introduction of a multi-party system, political pluralization came in a perverted way, with federalization and fragmentation of the more or less unified and monolithic League of Communists at the time, which was coming apart at the seams of the republic" (Pavlović, 201:367-368). This author also takes as a realistic the assumption that the tragic disintegration of Yugoslavia could have been avoided if democratic political reform had been implemented a decade earlier.

Political pluralism in Bosnia and Herzegovina has had a broad basis from the very beginning. As early as 1990, there were 41 registered political parties, while in the first multi-party elections, held on October 18, 1990, 15 parties registered for the elections to the Assembly of SR BiH. 11 of 15 managed to enter parliament. More than 85% of voters gave their vote to the candidates of national parties (SDA, SDS, and HDZ). It seems that the political and national affiliation almost completely coincided. Since neither party won the majority, the winning national parties established a special type of cohabitation and partnership. Trnka (2000:26) explains that in this case there could have been no question of a co-

alition of parties because "their program commitments were different and even opposed in a large number of the most important issues. That was also one of the reasons for the destabilization of the political situation and the institutions of the new political system."

Thus the existence of many political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not in itself a guarantee of stability and development of civil society. Political "hyperpluralism" actually often "prevents the development of democracy and free civil society. Consequently, it indirectly (or sometimes directly) helps the manifestation of negative and pathological phenomena in society, from corruption, economic and financial fraud, negative selection of staff in the economy and public institutions, nepotism, control of all-important social activities by individual parties, to involvement in crime and illegal affairs" (Šijaković, 2008). Party pluralism, which was supposed to ensure the spread of democracy in BiH, eventually gave birth to a kind of 'partitocracy' that is reflected in the control and domination of political parties over all spheres of social life and man's free existence as a citizen.

According to Sartori, where there is a large number of parties that belong to the same political "milieu" within a party system, we cannot say that the existing political system is legitimate and acts in accordance with its rules, is fragmented along ideological lines. Usually, such party systems are the product of a segmented, multi-ethnic, or multi-confessional society. Also, the opposite is true, "when the number of parties exceeds the critical threshold within which anti-systemic parties and bilateral oppositions can be found, it can certainly be assumed that the existence of more than five parties reflects a degree of ideological distance that prevents bipolar mechanisms" (Sartori, 2002:164).

Within segmented pluralism as a type of party system, some subtypes can be identified that are specific to each system. Thus, in the broadest sense, it is possible to unite the countries in which this form of system is represented. Besides some other countries, the group may include Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Austria, Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegovina" (...) Lorwin defines segmented pluralism as "the organization of social movements, educational and communication systems, voluntary associations, and political parties along the lines of religious and ideological divisions." As a result, segmented pluralism is "pluralistic in its recognition of diversity (...); segmented in its institutionalization" (Lorwin, 1971:141). If anything, this notion reflects the state of society and, as Sartori concludes, segmented pluralism is in fact a "structural construct of sociocultural diversity".

Due to the fact that in BiH, "ethnic and territorial borders are almost identical, we can conclude that the competition within the Serbian ethnic segment takes place at the level of RS, where, with the help of Sartori's typology we can talk



about a format of moderate pluralism." Competition within the Bosniak and Croat segments dominantly coincides with the cantonal levels, where the Bosniak intra-cantonal competition would have the format of a moderate pluralism, and the Croat system with a predominant party due to the permanent domination of HDZ" (Vukojević, 2017:80).

The specificity of the emergence of certain political parties in BiH is reflected in the fact that the founders of these political parties are former dissidents, or "victims" of the former socialist regime. "There was a complete reversal: once persecuted and undesirable participants in political and social events and activities - dissidents - became desirable and obligatory participants in all political events at the beginning of the transitional period and the emergence of political pluralism" (Šijaković, 2008). We may actually say that these dissidents, who were the initiators and founders of the democratic processes, are the ones who brought about political pluralism and the development of civil society.

Conclusion

Bosnia and Herzegovina, like the majority of other post-socialist states, has encountered factors that have obstructed, and are obstructing, its path to the adoption of democratic values and the development of political culture. Some of the aggravating circumstances resulting in these obstructions, were the long-term presence of the socialist value system; war events; pronounced interethnic tensions and intolerance; insufficient openness to new ideas, and bad experiences with the implementation of democratic principles¹. On the level of party pluralism, these aggravating circumstances manifested themselves through a changing institutional environment and a steady increase in the number of political parties, which was reflected in a decline in confidence in democratic standards and principles. Since the entire political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is imbued with the principle of constitutiveness, there is an apparent partialisation of social consciousness that is limited by narrow ethnic borders, which altogether prevents the formation of basic consensuses and a set of common social values.

Although the notion of pluralism, as Sartori states, consists of three dimensions (cultural, social, and political), we cannot speak of a pluralistic culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the full sense of the word, as it is limited by ethnic boundaries. The fact that political parties mostly fall into one of the three ethnic segments has contributed to the formation of segmented pluralism as a pluralism that does not cross the lines of ethnic divisions, within which political participation is usually retained. In perspective, such party pluralism reproduces interethnic mistrust

¹ See more in Puhalo, S. & Neda Perišić (2013). *Apstinenti u Bosni i Hercegovini* [Abstinents in Bosnia and Herzegovina]. Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

and deepens divisions by making it impossible to establish a truly democratic society and civil culture that makes such a society stable and effective.

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