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Research into Attitudes about Social Change and Global Models of Governance*

This paper presents the results of the empirical research "Cultural Orientation of Actors/Students, Interethnic Relations, National Identity and the Culture of Peace in the Balkans" performed within the macro project "Tradition, Modernization and National Identity in Serbia and the Balkans in the EU Integration Process" (179074). They are related to attitudes about democracy, social change and global management. The key issue of the research is how people perceive the functionality of democracy, whether they are satisfied with the situation and whether they support the democratic processes and democratic institutions. From the findings we can see that the authoritarian legacy consciousness burden the citizens of Serbia greatly, and in particular the examined population - university students. Confirmation of this was seen in the finding that the majority of respondents believe that the best global management model is technocracy. This leads us to the conclusion that our society does not have a fully developed and mature political culture yet since the people are still inclined to accept (personalized) authorities that are ultimately reflected in the state and the holders of state power rather than citizens and their associations.

Keywords: change, democracy, technocracy, authoritarianism

1. introduction

The beginning of the XXI century can be considered as the period of the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991), the period characterized by an accelerated breaking up with authoritarian systems and the consolidation of democracy at the global level. The third wave was initiated in 1974 with the democratic changes in Portugal and continues to this day. The process has been accelerating since the second half of the eighties. Authoritarian regimes transit to a democratic form and parliamentary elections become freer and more open. The number of countries in which the democratic electoral system evolves (multi-party parliamentary democracy) has more than doubled in the last three decades. It seems, at least when it comes to the beginning of the XXI century, that this is the age when democracy is, at least nominally, becoming a global political norm rather than one of the possible choice. But in the new democracies, as it is the case with us, it appears, as a general problem, that they still retain an authoritarian heritage since the democratic norms, values and practices still remain a great uncertainty for many actors of social change, starting with political and economic leaders, political parties, civil society associations and the ordinary citizens. It takes time for people to adapt and accept democracy as a form of global management and government of the state and society. So, in order for democratic systems to be functional, it is important to understand how the citizens themselves perceive their functionality among other things, e.g. if they are satisfied with the situation and whether they support democratic process and democratic institutions. Hence no wonder that the new democratic society has a lot of problems on its way to democratization.

The aim of this paper is to determine the extent to which Serbian citizens support the democratic system and democratic institutions, e.g., the extent to which people experience democracy as the optimal form of global management. Therefore, we conducted a survey of social attitudes of citizens relating to the acceptance of democracy as a system of global management, their attitude towards social changes and issues such as whether the social subject should be managed by the state.

A variety of factors affect citizens' satisfaction with the democratic process (McAllister, 2008). One of them relates to the institutional aspects of democracy. This is especially true when it comes to whether the elections can provide representation of their will in the establishment, and whether the quality of the electoral process can be ensured, which will be reflected in the effects of the election activities of citizens. Second, the support for the democratic system takes into account the responsibility and performance of the system, i.e. whether the system is effective in providing good management as well. It should be taken into account whether the occasional and temporary convergence of political parties in order to create coalitions limits the citizens' choice. Third, the consequences of political participation and political involvement of the citizens to political efficacy are important.

Here will be analyzed the results of the empirical research "Cultural Orientation of Actors/Students, Interethnic Relations, National Identity and the Culture of Peace in the Balkans" performed within the macro project "Tradition, Modernization and National Identity in Serbia and the Balkans in the EU Integration Process" (179074) organized by the Centre for Sociological Research, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, which is financially supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia. The study was a survey and was carried out in the areas of South and Southeastern Serbia (summer 2013) on a sample of 818 students of the University of Niš. The sample is proportional to the composition of students and includes three groups of students: (1) students of social sciences and humanities, (2) students of technical and technological sciences and (3) students of medical and natural sciences and mathematics, by years of study and educational institutions.

2. Survey data analysis

The decades-long crisis affecting the Serbian society has endangered the stability and functionality of the society to the extent that the issue of fundamental social transformation has become a development imperative. Of course, there may be different types and different political contexts in which transformation may take place. Today, the broader public often raises the question whether it is better for our society to establish a democratic or an authoritarian form of political organization. Of course, this is a false dilemma considering that the current social practice has shown that democracy has many advantages over other forms of political organization. Every form of authoritarian government favours particular social subjects to the detriment of some others while democracy strives to articulate different interests. Of course, democracy may have specific problems and go through developmental difficulties and even "children's diseases" but at the end of the development path, however, it shows socially favorable results which in general cannot be said for various forms of authoritarian government.

Revisiting the concept of political power often corresponds to the dominant value patterns in the society among which we will emphasize the global type of national culture and within it the issue of organizational and political culture as particularly important. (Mojić, 2010). Unfortunately, the society of Serbia has in recent history been dominated by patriarchal and traditional cultural patterns within which authoritarianism (Kuzmanović, 1994, 1995) and nationalism (Miladinović, 2006, 2007; Popadić, 2010) play a particularly significant role. In many respects this context has dictated the type of organization and political culture and attitude towards work cultivated in our society. It is no coincidence that the personal authorities were easily accepted in these areas and cults of leaders were built on the basis of them (Kuzmanović, 2010). Rather than democratic solutions characterized by the free elections and a parliamentary form of government there are often present personal authorities who frequently promoted populism and hid themselves behind the idea of technocracy in the public arena. The essence of a technocratic government, which is supposed to represent the rule of experts, is that they, despite their expertise, are not politically neutral as regards general benefit, but they support various authorities and their ideologies and interest clans. Authoritarianism as a value framework and personal power as a political practice are firmly coupled with the demagogic action present in parallel demagogic rhetoric and concrete action designed to satisfy lowly passions, and launch the broad masses support (Stojanović, 2011).

Authoritarianism, the cult of leaders and demagogic actions rendered masses as inarticulate subjects easy to manipulate. In such circumstances, the power of the mass gives legitimacy to the leader and their will is seen as the general will. It has long been known that when ideas controlling the masses become the driving force, they can fundamentally change the social circumstances. The key problem is that the charismatic

leaders with a skillful manipulative rhetoric present their ideas as ideas of the masses and thus get an enormous social power that is presented as a legitimate political will of the people and their every move is seen as the fulfillment of the people's will (Miladinović, 1994).

The recent political history has shown that every social crisis, whether economic or political, is an introduction to the period in which the leader has outgrown the society. The Second World War and the period of revolutionary construction led to the cult of Josip Broz. After his death, the political crisis has brought several nationalist leaders in the political arena (Bowman, 2004; Denitch, 1996; Miladinović, 1994):. Ideological turmoil, in conjunction with the birth of a multi-party system, brought to the surface a large number of potential candidates who rely on their personal charisma and fight for the position of an undisputed leader of the nation. The period after the year 2000 is a period of temporary calm. It seemed that the leaders have gone to history, and the vacuum is filled with new social and political patterns. However, the crisis at the end of the first decade triggered the citizens of Serbia to turn again to personal authorities and give their support to the cult of personality at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century. At this moment it is an unrewarding task to predict the outcome of the current social and political turmoil. What can only be argued about with certainty is that all the necessary conditions are created to establish the cult of the charismatic leader and his personal power. What will be achieved from this depends on a number of political, economic and cultural factors that set the tone of current events.

Table 1: To what extent do you agree with the following attitude:

To what extent do you agree with the following attitude:	Strongly Disagree (1)	Tend to disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Tend to agree (4)	Completely agree (5)	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government	12.84%	11.60%	31.73%	28.89%	14.94%	3.21	1.210	806
Undemocratic order is sometimes better and more efficient than democratic order	14.88%	15.62%	39.24%	19.19%	11.07%	2.96	1.178	806
Democracy is the same as anarchy	29.19%	24.26%	30.54%	9.85%	6.16%	2.39	1.177	806
For people like me it does not matter what kind of political system we live in	47.41%	13.92%	22.41%	8.13%	8.13%	2.16	1.318	806

With the aim to determine the tested population attitudes towards democracy we asked respondents to give their opinion as to which extent they agreed with the four statements (Table 1):

   1.Democracy may have its problems, but it is better than any other form of government
   2. Undemocratic order is sometimes better and more efficient than democratic order
   3. Democracy is the same as anarchy
   4. For people like me it does not matter what kind of political system they live in

It turned out that the highest level of compliance exists as regards the first statement. Even 43.83% of respondents believe that democracy is better than any other form of government, although it may have its problems. If we take into consideration the dominance of authoritarian patterns in the value structure of the society in Serbia, this finding seems to be very favourable. However, it does not provide a developmental perspective of Serbia. The problem is that one in four does not endorse this attitude and one in three does not have a clearly defined opinion on this issue. Even among those who agree with this statement there is some caution about the claim that democracy is the best form of governing a society (28.89% tend to agree but only 14.94% completely agree). Such a configuration of answers suggests that there is a poor subjective potential for adoption and development of democratic political ideas and system in Serbia.

The largest number of the respondents were reluctant to clearly articulate their attitude to the claim that the undemocratic order is sometimes better than the democratic one (39.24%). There is an equal number of respondents who either disagree with or support this statement (about 30%). Within the structure of those who disagree with this essentially anti-democratic attitude, half of them reject it completely but the other half do it in general. This configuration of responses indicates that there is a very good potential for the acceptance of non-democratic forms of governing a society. This finding is not surprising given that previous studies have shown a very high presence of authoritarianism in the value structure of the population of Serbia (Kuzmanovic, 2010).

If we specify the previous attitude and say that democracy is the same as anarchy, then we have a slightly more favorable response configuration. Now willingness to defend democracy is shown by more than a half of the respondents (53.45% of which 29.19% completely) while 30.54% are indecisive. So, there are only 16.01% of those who directly admitt that democracy and anarchy can be equated. In the structure of those who equate democracy and anarchy are 6.16% of those who completely agree with this attitude. Ultimately, this shows the potential for acceptance of extremist political organizations and their ideologies. This potential can be extended from the current six percent to a significantly higher number in times of crisis. Moreover, here is a potential core for extremist forces first line support in any context of escalation of social conflicts and their transmission from parliament and factory halls to the streets. This number can grow in a short time and take on alarming proportions through skillful political manipulation and attempts to establish the cult of the charismatic leader, as it was seen in Serbia and former Yugoslavia in the nineties.

The last statement, "for people like me it does not matter what kind of political system they live in", expresses a political apathy. Political apathy may be considered as an expression of saturation with political events or dissatisfaction expressed by citizens concerning the social perspective or inadequate party and electoral offer and the entire political elite (Stojiljković, 2011) as the "lull before the storm". In our case, only 16.26% of the respondents expressed a direct political apathy in supporting such an attitude. Half of the number (8.13%) accepted this attitude completely. To this number may be added the 22.41% of those who do not opt, which makes the total of 38.65% of potentially apathetic citizens, i.e. those who might want to abandon any political activity. On the other hand, there is the majority of 61.33% of the respondents who do not accept political apathy as a way of personal relationship with the government of the state and society. An interesting finding is that almost half of the examined population completely rejects this claim. This means that there is a great potential for political activism in the Serbian society, and that the citizens are very interested in the politics and political perspectives of the society.

Table 2: Which of the following statements best describes your opinion:

Which of the following statements best describes your opinion:	
The whole organization of our society must be radically changed (in revolutionary action)	25.31%
Our society must be completely changed through a reform	52.21%
Our present society must fight vigorously against any changes	7.74%
I do not know	14.74%

A democratic society is essentially a dynamic society. A dynamic society is a society that is willing and able to change itself quickly and create new forms of social behavior. Of course, it is important to the changing of society that there are no subjective forces that would be carriers of changes. It is a common understanding that the younger and more educated, which includes our respondents, are more willing to accept and initiate social change. Therefore, we offered them to choose an attitude that best reflects their relationship to a global social change (Table 2). The offered attitudes exemplify the following orientations: a radical change (radical cut - a revolution), a gradual change (reform), a resistance to change and the absence of change attitude. The modal response was that the society should completely change through a reform. So, five out of ten respondents accepted reform, gradual changes, as the best solution to the current social problems. On the other hand, one in four respondents thought that the best pattern of social change is a radical revolutionary action. The key difference between these two versions is the duration of the transformation process. While, on the one hand, the reform involves a long-lasting process, the revolution, on the other hand, implies a relatively short-term action. The revolution brings stormy and very dramatic changes almost as a rule while with the reform it is not necessarily the case.

It is an interesting finding that even 7.75% of the respondents think that our society must fight vigorously against any changes. They advocate for the status quo, for preservinf the existing situation of social relations. We need to add 14.74% of those who declare that they cannot opt for any of the available variants.

So almost 85% of students have a clear vision of the pace with which the social transformation is supposed to happen and more than a half are in favour of gradually changing the social relations.

Table 3: Who in your opinion should manage the state:

Who in your opinion should manage the state:	
A strong leader who is not limited by Parliament and elections	17.04%
Experts who know best what is good for the state	60.49%
Army	3.33%
The government and the parliament elected in free elections	19.14%

The respondents were also expected to give their opinion as to within which global government model changes should happen (Table 3). They were asked asked the following question: "Who should manage the state?" and the answers offered were standard variants of authoritarianism (strong leader who is not limited by Parliament and elections), democracy (the government and parliament elected in free elections), technocracy (experts who know best what is good for the country) and militarism (the army). The answers are surprising. The modal response was based on the idea that the state should be managed by technocrats, i.e., experts who know best what is good for the state. Technocracy as the best model of state government is adopted by more than half of the respondents (60.49%).

The second ranked was the answer that the best model of state management is a democracy, specified by one in five respondents (19.14%). Authoritarianism is accepted by 17.04% and militarism by only 3.33%.

Thus, the technocratic model is three times more desirable than the democratic model of state management and government. Here, in our example, we recognize the authoritarian heritage in accepting the authority of experts. The key disadvantage of the technocratic model compared to the democratic is that professionals are given the carte blanche confidence to make strategic decisions and the bulk of the population is excluded from the decision-making process. Technocracy is a kind of the minority educated professionals tyranny over the majority of less educated members of a society. It should be noted that technocracy does not necessarily produce socially valuable results. It can be linked to any political or economic strength of society and can defend its own interests, or can simply take care about its own interests primarily. The point is that global politics should be left to the democratically elected government that will be able to articulate the interests of all stakeholders of civil society and ensure the protection of minority interests in the broadest sense of the word. Experts should be left to perform the individual specific tasks that require professional competence and thereby achieve a socially valuable effect.

But, as it were, a much more serious problem is that one in five respondents accept authoritarianism either in any form of government of a strong leader who is not limited by Parliament and elections or in the form of militaristic government.

In the next step (Table 4) we crossed questions that show the attitude towards change and attitude that defines the optimal model of change. There is a statistically significant relationship (p = 0.000) of low intensity between these two variables (Contingency coefficient C=0.23 and Cramer`s V=0.13). A most frequently accepted combination is the one that connects the reformist view of social change with the technocratic model of governance. Concretely, 65.3% of the supporters of reform course accept the technocratic model of governance as the best, or 56.4% of the supporters of technocracy accept the reform course. Another cell of the table which contains interesting results is one in which even 58.1% of the supporters of the democratic model of governance accept the reform course of changes. Of course, acceptance is not bidirectional, as only 21.4% of reformists accept democracy as the optimal model of governance. Also interesting are the results in the row where supporters of revolutionary change (radical cuts) intersect given that more than half of supporters of radical change (56.4%) also preferred the technocratic model of governance, while on the other hand, only about a quarter of supporters of technocracy accept the radical changes. It is interesting that 44.3% of supporters of the status quo accept the government of technocracy.

The table can also be viewed either in vertical columns or in horizontal rows only. If we look at the vertical columns, we see that, on the one hand, one third of the supporters of the authoritarian model of governance advocate the radical course and, on the other hand, the next third advocate the reform course. It is observed that within this group there is twice more of those who oppose any change (16.2% of supporters of authoritarianism to 7.6% of supporters in the general population). It is observed that within this group, the share of those who oppose any change is twice bigger (16.2% of supporters of authoritarianism to 7.6% of supporters in the general population).

The supporters of the technocratic model are mainly directed towards the reform course (56.4%), while a quarter of them (23.6%) accept the radical cut.

One third of the body of supporters of the militaristic model of governance prefer radical cuts (33.3%), a quarter of them prefer the reform change (25.9%), while the same number of them are undecided. It is interesting that those who do not have a clearly defined attitude toward the preferred dynamic of social change form a majority (25.9% compared to 14.9% of the total population) among the supporters of militarism. It seems that the militaristic attitude towards choosing a subject of change occurs as an expression of profound social hopelessness considering that a large number of supporters of this form of government either want quick, radical change or just do not know what would be good for the society, the state and the economy and it is in the army that they recognize the force that can bring order in the society.

Table 4: Cross tabulation: Who, in your opinion, should manage the state
* Which of the following statements best describes your opinion:

Which of the following statements best describes your opinion:	Who in your opinion should manage the state:				Total
	A strong leader who is not limited by Parliament and elections	Experts who know best what is good for the state	Army	The government and the parliament elected in free elections	
The whole organization of our society must be radically changed (in revolutionary action)	23.5%	56.4%	4.4%	15.7%	100.0%
	35.3%	23.6%	33.3%	20.6%	25.3%
Our society must be completely changed through a reform	11.6%	65.3%	1.7%	21.4%	100.0%
	36.0%	56.4%	25.9%	58.1%	52.2%
Our present society must fight vigorously against any changes	36.1%	44.3%	6.6%	13.1%	100.0%
	16.2%	5.5%	14.8%	5.2%	7.6%
I do not know	14.2%	59.2%	5.8%	20.8%	100.0%
	12.5%	14.5%	25.9%	16.1%	14.9%
Total	16.9%	60.5%	3.3%	19.2%	100.0%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

χ^2=42,946	C=0,23	V=0,13	p=0,000

It has already been noted that three fifths of the supporters of the democratic government model accept technocrats. It should be added that one in five believes that social problems can best be solved applying radical cuts.

Analyzed by horizontal lines we observe that technocracy is the modal choice of supporters of radical changes (56.4%). In addition to this, almost a quarter of them advocate an authoritarian model of governance. The presence of the acceptance of democracy and militarism in this group is significantly lower.

Two-thirds of reform-oriented respondents accept the technocratic model of global management and government, while only one-fifth of them accept a democratic model. Other models of governance (authoritarianism and militarism) barely have supporters in this segment of the population.

Slightly less than half of the opponents of social change (44.3%) accept the technocratic model as the best model of governance, while more than a third of them (36.1%) support the authoritarian model of governance.

The distribution of those who are indecisive as to which model of governance would be optimal is almost identical as in the general population. The only visible difference is related to the supporters of the militaristic model whose number is almost twice as high as in the total population (5.8%).

Conslusion

Now we can return to the question of how people perceive functionality of democracy, whether they are satisfied with the situation and whether they support the democratic process and democratic institutions. From the findings we can see that the authoritarian legacy burden the consciousness of citizens of Serbia greatly, and in particular the examined population - university students. The confirmation of this was seen in the finding that the majority of respondents believe that the best global management model is technocracy. This leads us to the conclusion that our society still does not have a fully developed and mature political culture since the people are still inclined to accept (personalized) authorities that are ultimately reflected in the state and the holders of state power rather than citizens and their associations.

The technocratic system can be considered as a transitional form between classical authoritarianism, which may be embodied in personalized authority or in authoritarian institutions such as the army in a very limited context, and democracy which is represented in the government and the parliament elected in free elections. In this case it is masquerading as professional competence of their carriers so that it can be easily uncritically accepted as a system of governance which is better than authoritarian personnel governments or military administration in periods of turbulent social upheaval which also impairs the democratic nature of the social system at the same time. The problem is that a technocratic government is not the same as a democracy. The technocratic government and management of society is just one more model of authoritarian rule. The difference, in comparison with other authoritarian models, is that the technocrats hide behind the professional competencies, which may inspire some confidence, but it does not mean that there is an existential interest of experts to work for the common good. Technocrats are not controlled by numerous mechanisms of broader social control backed by the citizens. Technocrats are controlled by centers of alienated social power and they may be backed by a host of different authorities.

The expansion of political freedom (democracy) has different effects on economic growth (Barro, 1999). The positive thing is that democratic institutions enable the control of the government, which limits the potential of public servants to accumulate personal wealth or to pursue the unpopular policy. The disadvantage is that more democracy encourages the redistribution of income from the rich to the poor, and the growing power of different interest groups. Therefore it can be considered that the net effect of the growth of democracy is uncertain.

On the other hand, practice shows that economic development embodied in the higher standard of living promotes democracy. This relationship is clearly shown when a democracy is presented through the electoral rights and civil liberties and impact, and the living rate through the growth of gross domestic product per capita, access to primary education, narrowing the gap in education of male and female populations and the growing importance of the middle class etc.

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