

THE AGGRESSION OF ELECTIVE AUTOCRACY OVER PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY*

Professor Ioan ALEXANDRU, PhD

Abstract:

We must admit that Democracy is one of the words that started to lose their initial meaning due to the over - use within the political language and not only there, and thus we might say that many times has it become an empty word, almost meaningless. It is enough to follow, within mass media, one the one hand, the manner of parliamentary activities and, on the other hand, to notice the important and frequent protests all around the world, but more often in Europe and Latin America, by means of which one questions their activity and that of the governments and where one can see special police forces, Molotov cocktails, tear gas and all other repressive materials. To easily understand what is going on, I have analyzed the concept of democracy by opposition to other three concepts of dichotomic political regimes: autocracy, dictatorship, communism and fundamentalism.

Key words: *Democracy, autocracy, dictatorship, communism and fundamentalism.*

Not too long ago, to be more precise, on the 4th of February 2016, at the Romanian Academy, in the library amphitheater, there was a scientific debate occasioned by the issuing of my book, *Elective Autocracy vs. Parliamentary Democracy*. The speakers were Alexandru Surdu, member and Vice-president of the Romanian Academy, professor of political science Adrian Miroiu, PhD, who wrote the foreword of my book, Dan-Claudiu Dănișor, at that time rector of the Craiova University, Mircea Duțu, director of the Romanian Academy Institute of Juridical Sciences, the host of the debate, Dana Tofan from the University of Bucharest, and senior lecturer of political sciences Diana-Camelia Iancu, PhD, dean of the Faculty of Public Administration with NSPAS.

They all spoke about the chances of parliamentary democracy faced with the almost aggressive attempts of elective autocracy to gain complete control over the organization of nowadays society. I have tried, during my speech as in my book, to raise the alarm, and I will briefly analyze the actual state or, to be more precise, the conditions under which the political power is exerted in the states whose constitutions sustain the principles of parliamentary democracy.

* The theme was the subject of a concise scientific papers at the Univ. Danubius Galati in an International Conference INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE European Integration - Realities and Perspectives 11th Edition held 20-21 May.

The first thing that is worth mentioning is that, to tell the truth, we must admit that Democracy is one of the words that started to lose their initial meaning due to the over-use within the political language and not only there, and thus we might say that many times has it become an empty word, almost meaningless. It is enough to follow, within mass-media, on the one hand, the manner of parliamentary activities and, on the other hand, to notice the important and frequent protests all around the world, but more often in Europe and Latin America, by means of which one questions their activity and that of the governments and where one can see special police forces, Molotov cocktails, tear gas and all other repressive materials. To easily understand what is going on, I have analyzed the concept of democracy by opposition to other three concepts of dichotomic political regimes: autocracy, dictatorship, communism and fundamentalism¹. What do we notice? We notice that in almost all nowadays democracies there is a preeminence of a sub-category of democracy, which professor Michelangelo Bovero (probably the most important and credible expert when it comes to actual democratic systems) calls „degenerate democracy”, which, as far as I am concerned, is also found within our country, on the one hand, within a vertical distortion of institutional system, meaning the excessive growth of executive power and the accompanying outdatedness of the role of legislative power, and, on the other hand, by means of personalizing power and the tendency to restrain the friendly decision in order to reach, for too many times, the exertion of mono-cratic power, and thus influencing the citizen control mechanisms over power. The consequence: one gradually diminishes the conceptual border between democracy and autocracy, at first, and then between democracy and dictatorship.

We said it before and we have to clearly restate it that we can call democracy only that system in which collective decisions, the compelling norms for all come neither from above, meaning from a single subject, be it monarch or president of the republic, and nor from a few subjects, either aristocrats or oligarchs which take themselves as being above the collectivity, and that these rules, the juridical conduct rules, represent a product of a decision-making process that starts from underneath, from the basis, a process within which all, or more, have the right to freely and equally participate. We must understand that true democracy implies a form of governance, of a political regime that, in order to come into being and in order to keep on existing, without becoming only an appearance and in order not to disappear, is related to accomplishing some specified substantial conditions, and I analyzed these conditions. The conclusion is, with no exaggeration, that the situation is so sad as we should wonder whether these so-called democratic regimes of too many countries, including ours (following the proportions) are not dangerously getting closer to a critical line and whether, in certain cases, the line

¹ Michelangelo Bovero, the conference *Democracy and Fundamental Rights*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObrasf>.

between democracy and non-democracy was not stepped over; and whether, by any chance, we are experiencing an elective autocracy. In other words, the fact that one crossed the line between a regime that still ensures a significant degree of liberty and political equality and thus ensures the favorable environment for making some collective decisions and a regime where decisions generally spring from the higher level, but are not the expression of a collective will.

In the present paper, we have showed and proved that some democratic political regimes, like the presidential and semi-presidential ones (as we have it) are more exposed to this danger of “degeneration of democracy”, but I have and will further maintain that, finally, quoting Norberto Bobbio: “The worst form of democracy is, at any rate, better than the best dictatorship”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On the occasion of a conference at the Faculty of Law and the Institute for Public Policies, with the Diego Portales University (Chile), from the 8th November 2011², the Italian professor Michelangelo Bovero said that the first true turn, from which started the change in orientation and one proposed the change of rules for the political game in a undemocratic or less democratic ways, incorrectly applying the conditions of democracy or changing some of its rules and attacking or eroding the presuppositions or preliminary conditions of democracy took place in 1975, the year of the famous Michael Crozier, Samuel Huntington, and Y. Joji Watanuki report³, entitled *The Crisis of Democracy*, regarding the democratic manner of governance. (Professor Dan-Claudiu Dănișior draws the attention on the fact that democracy is not a value in itself and that, in fact, it represents a procedure or a set of procedures whose obeying could ensure a democratic governance). According to this opinion, the diagnosis was, in fact, a simple one: democracy is ill-functioning or not at all, meaning that the essential public function is not enough, *i. e.* that of decision making and it is ill-functioning because it is a very difficult and too exigent regime. As it follows, the recommended remedy was: to make it better and more efficient, one must reduce the demands. For example:

In case of necessity, democracy must turn into a less comprising regime (as to fundamental rights and liberties or universal vote), meaning that some rights are limited or some categories are excluded, like migrants, thus large groups of people who are not excluded only from the right to obtain citizenship, but are even reduced to semi-servile conditions (see the case of the Romanians from UK).

Then, an extremely dangerous fact, *i.e.* breaking the rule regarding informative pluralism that should be an indispensable obstacle against the manipulation of

² <https://www.google.ro/#q=Michelangelo+Bovero+opera>.

³ Huntington, Samuel, Michel Crozier, Joji Watanuki, *The crisis of Democracy*, NYPU (1975) <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00525735/document>.

public opinion and which the report (that bears the interests of the tycoons of communications) takes as impossible to realize because of the fact that the “objective” logics of global market, facing which, according to my opinion, we must kneel as if they were divine laws, lead straight to large concentrations or even monopolization of mass media.

This motives of efficiency would seem to impose a serious simplification of political pluralism, reducing them, in fact, to a dualism and, even more severe, the questioning of the principle of majority, thus transforming the so-called “majority democracy” into a sub-species of democratic regime by inventing and practicing the political game as if this would be a zero sum game in which all the power is given to the winner. Even if this one, for example, gains only 15%, 20%, or 30% of the votes (see the modification of our electing law with just one voting session).

We could add to all these another degenerative aspect of parliamentary democracy, which refers, on the one hand, to the concentrations and confusions among political, economic, ideological or media power, this obscene cohabitation, as professor Bovero puts it, between money and politics and, on the other hand, to the unquestionable capacity of mass media, especially television, to darken more and more the capacity of political judgment of those considered “uneducated” or “ill-educated” citizens and which are the most of the voters, in almost all real democracies, and who can generate a phenomenon called inverted selection: the election of the worst (“good guy” was the appreciation of a voter about the former president).

I have to confess that I was seriously interested in the issue of constitutional democracy, an issue that was and still is debated upon throughout thousands of pages and tens of thousands of hours of conferences, debates, discussions, polemics etc. for years I have read and studied tens of papers in order to write the book about constitutional democracy and the one about elective autocracy and I am still not sure whether it is a myth or could it become, sometimes, reality⁴. I wanted to try to find out if there is a chance to organize a state, a political model that ensures the hope of realizing the ideal of democracy: justice, liberty, and equality. Unfortunately, J. J. Rousseau seems to have been right when, in his famous paper *The Social Contract*, he said that “*If there were a nation of gods, it would for sure be a democracy. Such a perfect form of governance is not allowed for the mortals to have*”. These words I have chosen as a motto for my book on constitutional democracy, issued in 2012.

Eduard Balladur is also right when he admits that those who conquer power, ignoring the minimal rules of democracy and behaving like real autocrats, are not

⁴ Ioan Alexandru, *Democrația constituțională – utopie și/sau realitate* [Constitutional Democracy – Utopia and/or Reality], Universul Juridic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012.

willing to share it with no one. *Le pouvoir ne se partage pas* is the title of his book, issued by Fayard Publishing House in 2009, and I have mentioned this title in the motto of this paper.

Finally, one can easily see that the exertion of society leadership through a representative political regime seems not to accomplish the adaptation of governance methods to the dynamic of the economic and social changes, which deepens the fracture between state and society. Esteemed colleagues, dear students, it is high time we understood that *Democracy represents the governance of changes or it does not exist*. Or, since the state is unable to administer the changes by democratic means, it gradually gives up democracy.

Thus, the overpraised society in which the liberal liberty is triumphant turns its back to democracy in fact, since it avoids the lucid control of its members. One needs new models of power and new social policies that are adjacent to social dialogue, by means of which the voting people can express themselves and actively take part into decision making. They should be able to sanction the public power during the electoral cycle as well.

My opinion is that the failures of Romanian democracy are also due to the style of governance of public administration institutions, to the quality of political acts and to social organization that did not adapt to evolution changes, to new economic demands, to social algorithms, to the requests of life level related at least to the limit of decency. Thus, they are not the result of the process of transformation of the Romanian society (changes occurred in some other countries, too), but the dimensions and duration depended and still depend on the quality of management, on the value of political and administrative elite. In other words, to keep it simple: so political and administrative elite, so management!

As long as a former president declared that he wants to be a player-president (and, as we have noticed, he was the unique player) and another one publicly declares that he wants "a cabinet of his own", although by Constitution he should be neutral, there can be no consensus and such a person is no longer "the president of all Romanians", as he used to say during the campaign, but the representative of a group having obvious authoritarian tendencies⁵.

As far as I am concerned, we are living in a world that is based on *ill and harmful* principles, on the exaggeration of the importance of the *ego*, if we are to mention the religious and ideological fanaticism, both being totally opposed to

⁵ *The authoritarian syndrome and the temptation to personalize power and even the slipping of parliamentary democracy towards dictatorship, excellently analyzed in the paper The State Is Me – an analytical history of the political crisis during July and August 2012 – written by Alexandru Radu and Daniel Barbu, issued in Monitorul Oficial, in 2013, in which the harmful role of the former player-president for our parliamentary democracy.*

human nature, with the normality of human life as *a part of a whole*, who was created following the idea of universal harmony, tolerance, and solidarity. Our actions and activities are not in harmony with the intention of the creator of this world and to the physiological structure that was given to us. This is why we should understand that hostile and fanatic attitudes that are manifested within the confrontations with political “opponents” are harmful both for themselves, and for their followers, as the evolution of nowadays knowledge proves it. This disagreement between our authentic *Self* and material and social reality that we have created produced the present day deadlock. This is why we can say, without fear of mistake, that this deadlock, the crisis we are experiencing is, at first, of a moral and spiritual nature. We should think about this and try to find the right ways.