

Oponentní posudek na dizertační práci

Název dizertační práce: *The Causes of Fragility of Albanian Democracy*

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The dissertation thesis of Johana Shahini deals with the Albanian transition, and try to find causes of fragility of Albanian democracy. The thesis seem at first point very chaotic and it is even hard to find the main hypothesis or research question, the author only states: „*The factors that have influenced the fragility of the Albanian democracy are manifold. However, in this dissertation I will attempt to bring light to what I consider, are the main sources of the weakness of the Albanian democracy. For this reason, I will focus on the political consequences and the effects of the electoral laws in the Albanian political system and the Albanian party system, following a sequential model of analysis based on the nexus of correlation between democratic processes and policy inputs and outputs*“ (p. 11). The reader is then acquainted with the hypothesis in the conclusion: „*I investigated the political consequences of the electoral laws and systems in the Albanian political system and party system, which in my opinion have been the primary sources of the fragility of the Albanian democracy and the current state of affairs*“ (p. 241).

The thesis is divided into eight chapters, the first chapter deals with the historical background of the state formation, the second one with the Albanian Developments in the Interwar Period, chapter three focuses on the Characteristics of the Communist regime and its Legacies, chapter four then deals with the Transition period, chapter five is called The Formation Phase, chapter six is about the Consolidation Phase of Albanian democracy, while chapter seven and eight should make the core of the thesis focusing on albanian institutional engineering and the political consequences of Electoral systems. Unconventionally, addendum comes before conclusion.

The author uses the theories of well-established political scientists; the theoretical models are partially well-used while partially the theory and long citations are not followed by proper application or argumentation (e.g. long citation from Aron on page 52 followed by one author's sentence). The authors states in the introductory chapter the reasons why she focused on the elections of 2005 and 2009: „*I have chosen the Albanian parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2009, as the main focus of the empirical analysis, because they represent two different electoral systems applied in Albania* (p. 12)“ This argumentation does not seem satisfactory to the opponent as Albania applied almost every election different elect.

system. As far as the opponent understands, the main argument is that the electoral systems were accompanied by gerrymandering and malproportionment. The author claims: "*Another important aspect of the weakness of the democratic opposition was and is the concept of democracy as majority rule (p. 117).*" Should the argument then lead to the conclusion that proportional system are followed with greater stability?

Hereby are other remarks, comments and questions:

- p.58 *Hoxha's methods never permitted a background for the development of dissident anticommunist groups, such as in Poland, the Czech Republic, and countries of the Warsaw Pact.* Poland and Czechoslovakia were not part of WP?
- p.76 *Populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism have been reinforced by poor economic performance in the region, and a growing wave of officially sponsored criminality has also contributed to unsettling the region's fragile economies and democratic political institutions. [Bugajski 1993]* Can you give other examples of such regime? Who was in case of Albania the bearer and promoter of populism, nationalism and authoritarianism?
- p. 80 *Electoral systems restrict directly the way seats can be distributed. In particular, when single-seat districts are used, only one party can win a seat in the given district. The impact on votes is more remote. When a party fails to obtain seats in several elections, it may lose votes because voters give up on it, or it may decide not to run in the given district. The impact on party system and hence on politics in general is even more remote.* Can you clarify what you mean by remote impact and impact of what?
- p. 80 *Still, current politics determines which parties win seats. Finally current politics has no impact at all on the electoral system, most of the times.* Can you clarify?
- p. 82 *Electoral systems can make or break a party- or even a country.* Was the electoral system then the cause of 1997 uprising?
- Transition chapter: Regarding the transition – two important factors were not mentioned: 1) The consequences of Kadare application for asylum and 2) the embassy crisis.
- Acronyms (csce or comecon or parties in table on p. 104) do not show on their first appearance what they stand for. The acronyms should also have the same form no matter the citation (cf. Acronyms on page 104 and 106)
- p. 100 *An economist with a great deal of expertise in transitions, in a matter of days.* I would not call Nano economist with a great deal of expertise – He was in power only till 1992 when he was sentenced to prison; the economy in 1991-1992 when Nano was a prime minister led to the economic chaos (as also mentioned correctly by the author on page 85).

- p. 104 Is it table 2 or table three on page 104? Does it reflect then the number of votes or the composition of the parliament?
- p. 112 *The issue of free and fair elections was not the only factor that led to fragile state institutions.* Was it not vice versa that the fragile state institutions were one of the causes why the elections were unfair?
- p. 112 *It is true that every political party chooses from its members to form the government, but the selection should be made based on the professional merits of that person (at least in Western Democracies).* Every political party forms government in WE?
- p. 113 *This is not only an Albanian phenomenon, but it has been present during its entire history.* The sentence probably misses „contemporary or new“.
- p. 117 *Always the parliament has had a majority, which enabled the issuing of laws, without taking into consideration the votes and the opinion of the opposition within the parliament.* The parliament or the ruling party?
- p. 133 *Albania is one of the few countries where funds given to the political parties are not public.* The Albanian law stipulates public disclosure, see e.g. Stojarová, V.- Šedo, J.- Chytilék, R.- Kopeček, L. (2007) *Political Parties in Central and Eastern Europe. In Search of Consolidation.* Stockholm:IDEA. Available online at http://www.idea.int/publications/pp_c_and_e_europe/index.cfm.
- p. 160 *It is unclear as to what extent did the Greek geopolitical interests influence the Albanian political factors, when they were designing the constitutional amendments and the electoral code of 2008. I can only come to this conclusion based on the mechanical effects of the latest electoral system and on the policies of Berisha's government in favor of Greek interests.* Is it not too conspiratic statement for a political scientist?
- p. 162 *The most interesting proposal of the 1993 draft constitution endorsed by DP was the election of the president, which, if approved, would transform Albania into a semipresidential republic.* Does direct election of the president mean the republic automatically has semipresidential system?
- p. 218 *Based on all these findings, the current electoral system, with the current provisions, favors the major parties and applies in reality different natural thresholds for the political parties on a constituency level. These thresholds vary from 5% to 15% and eliminate the chances of small parties to gain representation in the parliament.* Calculating the real threshold I come to even higher numbers: In Kukës 78 031 inhabitants were about to vote 4

mandates which puts the electoral threshold de facto at 25 percent whereas in Gjirokastër 103 406 inhabitants elected 5 mandates which puts the threshold de facto at 20 percent.

- p. 239 Having in mind the voters distribution in Albania (south/north division) I would be very careful in formulating conclusions from the sample of voters in Tirana and its surroundings.

The set up of the text seems satisfactory (there is only one problem with right hand margin on page 61), the overview of the sources also seem satisfactory (bonus is that the author used the sources in Albanian language). Nevertheless, the author states (p. 15) that the literature consulted is in 3 languages (Alb, Eng, Cz) – Why is no Czech literature then in bibliography? In this sense I would highly recommend e.g. Šedo, J. (2007) Volební systémy postkomunistických zemí. Brno: ISPO or Knebllová, E. (2009) Změna volebního systému v Albánii v roce 2009 a její dopad na parlamentní volby. In: Electoral Studies, Vol. 4 (2009), No.2, pp. 172-182 or Kubát, M. (eds.) (2004) Politické a ústavní systémy zemí středovýchodní Evropy. Praha: Eurolex Bohemia.

Hereby, I recommend the thesis for the exam with the opening evaluation D.

V Brně, dne 20. srpna 2010

Věra Stojarová