

INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION AND VOTING RIGHTS IN NORTH MACEDONIA AND ALBANIA

Muhamed Mustafi

Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Skopje, North Macedonia, meti.mkd@gmail.com

Muaz Agushi

Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Skopje, North Macedonia, muaz_agushi@hotmail.com

Abstract: Influence of political expressions and voting rights are the two fundamental areas of a state where excluding culture from politics and vice versa is very dangerous to the health of a nation. While the voting rights is the external and structural form of building a state or nation, the political expression is the inner essence that gives its spirit and identity.

Voting is an indicator of the level of interest and civic participation in political decision-making. When it comes to a competitive system, extensive participation significantly increases the responsibility of political actors for civic demands and concerns.

Elections in North Macedonia have been significantly influenced by ethnic voting and political expressions to mobilize ethnic voters for participation and support votes.

A large number of major voters in Albania are previously disenfranchised in the election.

Voters of North Macedonia and Albania are ready to bring back a previously ousted political leader on charges of corruption and mismanagement, or better said, it is a protest and rational choice.

Keywords: Influence, Political expressions, Voting rights, North Macedonia, Albania

1. INTRODUCTION

Voting rights and political expressions are two concepts that relate mainly to political processes, but seen as interrelated to the studies and interaction with linguistic, social, cultural and economic ones. While the politics is the external and structural form of building a state or nation, culture and expression are the inner essence that give its spirit and identity. In this line, there are different definitions about the concept of "political expression" but according to Almond and Verba with political expression and culture we understand the set of values, norms, knowledge, attitudes and feelings that determine political behavior towards the political system.¹¹² Cultural politics and expression are the two fundamental areas of a state where excluding culture from politics and vice versa is very dangerous to the health of a nation. In order for a state to function well, it is required that these two components are developed in parallel, which should stimulate each other rather than fight each other.

2. IMPACT OF POLITICAL EXPRESSIONS

The identity of expression is largely a political matter and political expressions are flags of allegiance. "The protection of freedom of expression is essential for the democratic political process and the development of every human being."¹¹³ This means that the instrumental view of expression is fundamentally flawed. If anything, it is the pre-theoretical sense that communication is possible or desirable in given contexts or, more technically, the presence of a relatively stable speech community, that makes us postulate the existence of a common expression. So too, it is the unwillingness to communicate or the unavailability of the means to do so that paves the way for the sense that there are insuperable linguistic barriers to contend with. The immediate upshot of this line of reasoning is that there are no such things as expressions, if by 'expressions' we mean natural objects that are "out there", waiting to be discovered, described, and catalogued by the linguist. What this means is that there is an urgent need to foreground the issue of the politics of expression. We have already seen that it is the feeling that you are able to communicate with your fellows that must have led to the concept of a expression and not the other way round. In the early history of our metalinguistic awareness, we did not use a common expression to communicate; rather we posited a common expression after noticing that we were able to communicate reasonably well with the ones in our daily contact -but this new sense of awareness could only have dawned on us after we had our first contact with a speaker whom we simply could not comprehend. The stranger/foreigner or rather his symbolic presence is a sine qua

¹¹² Verba, Almond, Gabriel & Sydney, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, SAGE Publications, Inc.(1989).

¹¹³ Bychawska-Siniarska, Dominika, *Protecting the right to freedom of expression*, Council of Europe, Brussels, (2017), p. 12.

non for the formation of expression identity. Ironically, no group identity could have Consolidated itself without the constitutive presence of the radically other.¹¹⁴

The new political culture of post-communist societies is a product of processes, and the freedom of expression enables citizens to make informed choices, to participate actively in democratic processes, and to help ensure that powerful interests are held to account in line with the rule of law. The processes have been taking¹¹⁵ place in at least three dimensions:

1. Universal dimension, where political culture is associated with the symptoms and phenomena typical of any twist associated with changing political regime systems and not merely normal political rotation.

2. Regional dimension, where its integral element is the structural changes characteristic of those countries which are on the path from communism to democratic order and market economy.

3. 'Special way' dimension, where the history, geopolitical conditions and national structure of post-totalitarian states influence that the challenges that these states face have a differentiated character and a different range of action.¹¹⁶

North Macedonia and Albania are part of the regional dimension, which lies in the path from communism to democratic order. The political culture and expression of societies that abandoned communism, according to Polish scholar Anna Volk-Poveska, are characterized by numerous contradictions. First of all, the conflict between the political system and the interests of society as a result of the transformation processes can be mentioned, and the Albanian and Macedonian societies themselves have brought to power political forces that are carrying out a reform program completely contrary to the wishes and interests of the majority.¹¹⁷ North Macedonia and Albania find themselves in situations where the political culture and norms of a rule of law are lacking, where there is political pluralism without the ability to co-operate between political groups, a people's party without a people, where democracy without a democratic culture rules.

Voter turnout is an indicator of the level of interest and civic participation in political decision-making, competitive party offerings, and civic trust in political actors. In the communist period, in the former communist countries, turnout was mandatory, in some countries such as Albania, East Germany, Czechoslovakia or Romania the turnout was 99-100%, but in countries such as Yugoslavia, voting was more liberal, and even there, between 1974-1986 turnout was between 86 - 93% of voters.¹¹⁸

3. INFLUENCED VOTING RIGHTS

Politicians communicate directly in the medium with e.g. another politician or a journalist but wish at the same time to convince an audience, which has no opportunity for direct communicative interaction. Thus, "in modern nation-states language can function as a marker of individual or political identity. This is particularly true in cases where there is more than one officially recognized language in the community: the choice of which language to speak or write down may reveal not only individuals' relations with and expectations of their audience, but also their self-ascribed political identity and their place within or attitude towards larger power structures."¹¹⁹

Communication takes place on two levels, and on each of them the speaker may wish to realise differing communicative goals. Another aspect of this issue is the diversity of the audience in the case of televised politics. In their public performances politicians do not want to address only one target group but as many as possible. But this means that they have to convey different messages to different people at the same time. Producing coherent statements in such situations is only possible by using various forms of indirectness or vagueness because different groups of the audience may have dissimilar (and even contradictory) wants. Thus, this aspect of vagueness is caused by the relationship between politician and audience and relates to a special feature of the "subjective situation" which is a characteristic of mass mediated communication.¹²⁰

In democracy, the concept of participation is voluntary and depends on civic consciousness. Extensive participation, when it comes to a competitive system, significantly increases the responsibility of political actors for civic demands

¹¹⁴ Rajagopalan, Kanavillil, *The Politics of Language and the Concept of Linguistic Identity* Cauce, Brasil, Revista de Filología y su Didáctica, n° 24, (2001), p. 17.

¹¹⁵ D.G.I. *Freedom of Expression in 2018*, Document prepared by the Information Society Department, Council of Europe, Brussels, (2019), p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Kelamaj, Ilir, *Evoluimi i Kulturës Politike në Ballkanin Perëndimor pas Periudhës Komuniste: Rastet e Shqipërisë dhe FYROM*, Tirane, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Vajdenfeld, Verner, *Demokracia dhe Ekonomia e Tregut në Europën Lindore*, Fondacioni Soros, Tiranë, (1999), p. 47

¹¹⁸ Krasniqi, Afrim, *Sjellja zgjedhore dhe identifikimi i votes ne Shqiperi*, Tiranë, (2012). p. 41.

¹¹⁹ Clackson, James, *Language and society in the Greek and Roman worlds*, Cambridge University Press, (2015), p.63.

¹²⁰ Gruber, Helmut, *Political Language and textual vagueness*, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Wien, International Pragmatics Association, Pragmatics 3:1-28, p. 3.

and concerns. Also, broad participation is more qualitative than quantitative participation. The low turnout indicates that the militant membership of political parties has largely voted. Any high turnout suggests that the undecided, and especially the part that is generally skeptical of political developments and electoral processes, have also voted. Practice in Albania proves that the two major parties have won at least 40 - 45% of national votes, or 20-30% more than their militant share in relation to the total number of voters. Determinants are the undecided, in their rational choice of political offer, and their decision is usually made at the last moments of campaigning and voting.

In the category of abstainers, there are two distinct groups of abstentions, which the researcher Jean Blondel divides into "negative abstainers" and "positive abstainers". The first group includes those who are not interested in politics, and political events, including elections. Whereas, the negative grouping is because they have no preference for candidates or political offers of parties. Studies also show that the higher her turnout, the greater the chances of a change in the country's political direction. The lower the turnout in this election, the higher the chances of the ruling party to run for another governing mandate.¹²¹ It may be that individuals with the same socio-economic characteristics may have varying degrees of participation in elections due to mobilizing agents and specific circumstances.

In recent decades, the study of the relationship between expression and political behavior has drawn much attention in the linguistic ground (see e.g., Carver & Pikalo, 2008; Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 2000; Wilson, 1990). For example, Wilson (1990) argued that metaphor, a sort of expression form, can achieve three main roles in political communication. Since metaphors allow us to think, act and talk about one kind of experience in terms of another, they can help simplify complicated political arguments through reducing them to a metaphorical form. They may also be used to evoke emotions and emphasize particular goals. Finally, Wilson claimed that politicians may manipulate metaphors to unfold absurd images which can be then utilized to ridicule their political opponents. In other words, metaphor allows politicians to present themselves in a positive light, to disgrace their opponents, to justify their own behaviour and to assert particular political issues.¹²²

Electoral studies show that strong majoritarian competition is increasingly associated with higher turnout, as each candidate, party and electoral staff fights for every single vote. In the proportional system, especially in the closed list, turnout is lower. Capacities to implement inclusive programmes and policies also depend on their degree of experience and skills, which are necessary to run or take part in state institutions.¹²³ Citizens have no emotional connection with candidates, so they vote more for their image, leader and leadership than candidates for deputies. In this case, neither the candidates nor the political party fight for every vote, but calculate constituencies and votes, struggling to capture the percentages that allow them to translate into mandates.

The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service was adopted by the Committee at its 1510th meeting (fiftyseventh session) on 12 July 1996 in order to ensure the full enjoyment of rights protected by article 25, the free communication of information and ideas about public and political issues between citizens, candidates and elected representatives is essential. This implies a free press and other media able to comment on public issues without censorship or restraint and to inform public opinion. It requires the full enjoyment and respect for the rights guaranteed in articles 19, 21 and 22 of the Covenant, including freedom to engage in political activity individually or through political parties and other organizations, freedom to debate public affairs, to hold peaceful demonstrations and meetings, to criticize and oppose, to publish political material, to campaign for election and to advertise political ideas.¹²⁴

4. NORTH MACEDONIA AND ALBANIA

In the case of ethnic voting, the situation is different, ethnic parties function as nationalist parties, and as such they have a competitive advantage over broad-based political parties because these parties do not have a large fluctuation of voting from election to election. , is not heavily penalized by the electoral system, runs the campaign at a lower cost, and of course, there is less erosion in their membership than in other popular parties. Elections in Macedonia have been significantly influenced by ethnic voting and the incitement of ethnic and nationalist parties to mobilize ethnic voters for participation and support votes.

¹²¹ Kelamaj, Ilir, *Evoluimi i Kulturës Politike në Ballkanin Perëndimor pas Periudhës Komuniste: Rastet e Shqipërisë dhe FYROM*, p. 11.

¹²² Lin, Cheng Wen, *The Study of Political Language: A Brief Overview of Recent Research*, Tainan, Taiwan, CHIA-NAN ANNUAL BULLETIN VOL. 37, (2011), p. 471.

¹²³ Dudouet, Veronique & Lundstrom, Lundström, *Post-war Political Settlements*, Berghof Foundation, Berlin, (2016), p. 48.

¹²⁴ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Geneva, Switzerland, General Comment No. 25: *The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service* (Art. 25) : . 12/07/96. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.7, General Comment No. 25. (General Comments), (1996).

This division is so evident that in Macedonia, the Macedonian and Albanian parties operate only in ethnic areas, paying no formal attention to other ethnic areas. Another important factor at the levels of representation is the legal scope for the exercise of voting rights in the diaspora. In Macedonia, ¹²⁵ citizens of these countries living and working in other countries and continents in the world, are allowed and enabled to vote. In the Albanian case, this is not possible, and thus, it is automatically expected that a large number of major voters are previously disenfranchised in the election and in the internal political decision-making process.

During the other political elections (parliamentary elections, local elections), the level of citizen representation in elections varies widely. Another contributing factor to participation is the electoral model. Professional studies show that the turnout in presidential elections when the president has great powers is many times greater than in parliamentary and local elections. ¹²⁶

The fact that in North Macedonia and Albania, voters are ready to bring back a previously ousted political leader on charges of corruption and mismanagement, more than social identities are explained by their vote against those in government, ie a pragmatic, protest and rational choice, through which they do not believe, but only hope for the better. A concrete example is the Albanian experience, in which the thesis proves that the leader factor, the factor of personal and provincial recognition, as well as the ideological factor are far more influential than the social one. For this reason, in all the rich areas of the dominant country is the political left, while in the poorer suburbs, the right-wing political parties dominate.

Albania has the record of voting turnout in the first political elections. In Albania, in 1991, 98.9% of voters officially participated, 36% more than in Poland and 7-10% more than in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia. The Albanian record relates to a specific specificity, since in the first elections there were no opportunities and mechanisms for monitoring the accuracy of the elections and the fictitious increase in turnout was one of the main criticisms of international reports on these elections. Turnout was high in both Macedonia and Albania in the first multi-party elections, while turnout dropped significantly, with 2% in Macedonia and 6-7% in Albania.

5. CONCLUSION

As explained in the theories of electoral turnout, the number of voters increases when the electorate regains confidence in the process and the chances of voting for change, when there are serious new political offers and when power rotation is expected or required.

The way politicians use expression to attract the electorate was traditionally through live or televised discourse, although today we also have the social media as an important way to use words to influence people. They also use expression to create slogans that can excite the electorate.

Political discourse operates through indexical expression, meaning that every single word being used either implicitly or explicitly expresses some political view point. This could even be as subtle as an accent, or how people are addressed. Political discourse is always aimed at interaction, including interruption, debate, and negotiation. Political discourse also tends to be vague, leaving the electorate up to interpret what is being said as they would like to understand it.

The same phenomenon is observed in the local elections, in the reports of the majority and proportional voting.

REFERENCES

- Bychawska-Siniarska, D. (2017), Protecting the right to freedom of expression, Council of Europe, Brussels.
- Dudouet, V., & Lundstrom, L. (2016), *Post-war Political Settlements*, Berghof Foundation, Berlin.
- Gruber, H. (3:1.1-28), Political language and textual vagueness, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Wien, International Pragmatics Association, Wien, Pragmatics.
- Clackson, J. (2015), *Language and Society in the Greek and Roman worlds*, Cambridge University Press., Cambridge.
- D.G.I., Freedom of Expression in 2018, (2019), Document prepared by the Information Society Department, Council of Europe, Brussels.
- Rajagopalan, K.. (2001), The Politics of Language and the Concept of Linguistic Identity Cause, *Revista de Filologia y su Didáctica*, No. 24, Brasil.

¹²⁵ In the 2011 elections, which included the voters from abroad, who voted for diplomatic consular posts, the number of constituencies increased from 6 to 9, one in Europe and Africa, one for North and South America, and one for North America. And one for Australia and Asia;

¹²⁶ Kelamaj, Ilir, *Evoluimi i Kulturës Politike në Ballkanin Perëndimor pas Periudhës Komuniste: Rastet e Shqipërisë dhe FYROM*, p. 14.

- Kalemja, I. (2015), *Evoluimi i Kulturës Politike në Ballkanin Perëndimor pas Periudhës Komuniste: Rastet e Shqipërisë dhe FYROM*, Tirane.
- Krasniqi, A. (2012), *Sjellja zgjedhore dhe identifikimi i votes ne Shqiperi*, Tiranë.
- Krasniqi, A. (2009), *Zgjedhjet në Shqipëri 1991-2008*, Tiranë.
- Lin, C.W. (2011), *The Study of Political Language: A Brief Overview of Recent Research*, CHIA-NAN ANNUAL BULLETIN V O L. 37, Tainan, Taiwan.
- Vajdenfeld, V. (1999), *Demokracia dhe Ekonomia e Tregut në Europën Lindore*, L&M/Soros, Tiranë.
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Geneva, Switzerland, (1996), General Comment No. 25: The right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service (Art. 25) : . 12/07/96. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.7, General Comment No. 25. (General Comments).
- Verba, A., Gabriel A. A. (1989), *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, SAGE Publications, Inc., California.