

The Features and Challenges of Democratization Process in the Balkans

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Abstract: *This paper aims to analyze the consolidation of democracy in the Balkans, but mostly demonstrated in the case of Albania. The process of democratization in the Balkans has undergone a long path since the fall of the communist regime in the region. As a consequence the analysis of the democratization in the Balkans has remained vague and difficult to be framed. This research was conducted on bases of quantitative and qualitative researches. In terms of the qualitative research there were conducted nine interviews with people that are competent in this field (such as politicians, analysts, political scientist etc.). The interview consisted of 6 open-ended and fully structured questions. Furthermore these interviews were conducted via e-mail or face-to-face. Secondly, the quantitative study will be based on primary data that is taken from the reports of Freedom House and the Economist Intelligence Unit.*

On basis of this study the democratization process can be understood through two main approaches: political and social approach. In terms of the political approach there should be considered the history of the Balkans (conflicts, wars and communist regimes). On the other hand there is the social approach related with the ill feelings transmitted from one generation to another, which indirectly affects the consolidation of democracy. Moreover in this article the process of democratization is analyzed also in terms of the external factors such as that EU or USA. In addition there is done also a short comparison, between Balkan states and other ex-communist states (such as: East European states, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc.).

After assessing all the elements, the future of democratization process in the Balkans and especially in Albania gives space for being optimistic and pessimistic at the same time. While optimism is related with the fact that there is no other path to be followed except democratization, pessimism on the other hand is related with the will of the political class.

Key words: *democratization, consolidation of democracy, the Balkans, challenges, features.*