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CONSOCIATIONALISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Abstract

In the modern world, political stability, regional peacebuilding and security, and successful political regime transitions strongly depend on the choice of an accurate model that considers all relevant factors and domestic peculiarities. In this sense, peace, sustainable development and mutually beneficial relations, especially in plural societies, require more of them, an option for consociationalism concerning cultural identities and other elements proper to social segments such as language, ethnicity, religion, etc.

The article explores the theoretical and practical foundations of consociationalism and cultural relativism, which considers the equality of all cultures as a guarantee for common security in plural societies by referring to all human beings' freedom and equality in dignity and rights. Considering the wide range of influence that "soft power" can exert, the article observes it as a methodology for the best implementation of consociationalism in plural societies and regions.

As a result, it is concluded that the overcoming of ethnocentrism is only possible through cultural relativism by applying the principles of consociationalism through the methodology of "soft power" that can serve as a prerequisite for political stability, cultural independence and security of all segments as well as for democratic progress in plural societies.

Keywords: consociationalism, cultural relativism, "soft power", democracy, plural societies, social strata, ethnocentrism.

Consociationalism as a Concept for Peace and Stability in Plural Societies

Modern interpretations of democracy are quite different from former classical concepts. The plurality of modern societies and countries as well as the complex social stratification, unequal distribution of society's wealth, emergence of new classes, new strata and segments significantly change modern views on democracy perception and its interpretation.

Nowadays, democracy is transforming from an internal political process into an international-political process and is becoming one of the essential preconditions for ensuring domestic and international security. The internal dimension of democracy is determined not only by its bodies' institutional strengthening and functioning but also by the harmonious coexistence and mutual activity between various social strata. The international dimension of democracy is primarily because the weakness of the state, weakness of democratic institutions, the spread of corruption, religious-ethnic conflicts, and aggressive ethnocracy are principal threats to international security. Therefore, democracy should be considered a form of governance and a means of establishing peace and security. Moreover, in this context, A. Lijphart (1977a) has rightly stated that the model of consociational democracy stands out for its functionality in plural societies.

Consociationalism as a conflict management

theory in divided societies has two predominant dimensions of institutional design that have emerged most clearly in its liberal consociational version-power-sharing and self-governance. Territorial approaches to conflict management in divided societies are occasionally treated as different approaches in the literature, even though empirically, power-sharing and (territorial) forms of self-governance frequently coincide, by design or otherwise (Wolff, 2009, pp. 27-45). However, especially proponents of consociational power-sharing have pointed out the critical connections between and complementarity of consociational power-sharing and territorial forms of self-governance, thus seeking to fill a significant gap in conflict management theory.

The value of consociationalism as a concept for peaceful conflict regulation increases with the degree of polarization and division in a given society or region. As an idea, consociationalism is not precluded by the existence of deeply polarized and divided societies; instead, consociational democracy emerges from these divisions – as one distinct and distinctive developmental option for a given society. As this requires a committed collaboration of elites representing those different groups, consociationalism is not just a counter-model to majoritarian rule with its inherent polarizing features but also a distinctively non-populist conception of democracy (Bogaards, Helms, & Lijphart, 2019, p. 342).

In this context, S. Smooha (2001) importantly states that the term consociational democracy was introduced in response to the wholesale failure of liberal democracies in the new, post-colonial states in Africa and Asia. The Anglo-Saxon, majoritarian type of democracy, which was imposed by the colonial powers on these states, collapsed soon after independence (Smooha, 2001, pp. 14-15). A. Lijphart (1977b), who first suggested and developed the new model, explained the failure by the lack of fitness of liberal democracy to deeply divided societies by identifying certain Western democracies as non-liberal, consociational (or semi-consociational) democracies,

like Switzerland, Belgium, Canada and Finland. During the 1970s and 1980s, extensive literature emerged in which consociationalism was elaborated, applied to many historical and contemporary cases and criticized. In consociational democracy, ethnic groups are recognized by the state and given all the necessary conditions, such as separate communities, language rights, schools and mass media, to preserve their separate existence and identity. Consociational democracy operates through the mechanisms of group autonomy, proportional representation, politics of compromise and consensus, coalition government (elite cartel) permanently engaged in negotiations, and veto power on decisions vital to group interests. The state takes a neutral stand toward the conflict between the groups and impartially implements the compromises reached by group elites (Lijphart, 1977b). While populism is, essentially, an anti-elitist ideology, consociationalism is, at its very heart, about power-sharing between political elites. As such, consociationalism marks not just a theoretical alternative to polarized and/or populist government but a possible political solution for overcoming its fundamental flaws and distinct costs in constitutional practice (Bogaards, Helms, & Lijphart, 2019, p. 342).

It should be acknowledged that the presence of segments in plural societies and the depth of distinctions between them usually change over time. Profound distinctions in the country can lead to mass violence or threaten stability and even the country's existence. The danger here is primarily the pursuit of autonomy or, more often, the pursuit of independence, especially if cultural distinctions coincide with the geographical location of cultural segments (Huntington, 1996).

However, profound distinctions can arise mainly in plural or "cleft countries", where large social groups belong to different civilizations. Such distinctions with some accompanying tensions often lead to a situation when the main group belonging to the given civilization considers the country as its own political tool and tries

to make its language, religion and symbols dominant by imposing them on other segments of society.

In this context, it should be noted that in addition to the dominant national segment, the country's constitution must also recognize the rights of other national communities and segments, especially in plural societies.

The harmonization of interrelations between social groups that make up the community in plural and deeply divided societies should be done by the binding function of the country and governance model (Dernbinska, 2007, p. 6).

The existence of segregated groups in a plural society limits the application of majoritarian democratic procedures and the functioning of democratic institutions. Majoritarian or Westminster democracy is based on the principle of competition between political elites. It also follows the principles of "one man-one vote", "the winner gets everything" (of course, until the next election), and the competitive model of "ruling party - political opposition". Applying these principles, especially in plural societies, will inevitably lead to the political domination of the largest segment of society (even in ancient times, there was an opposition to the dictatorship of the majority) over all others. Consequently, it will give rise to political crises and conflicts (Ragozin, 2003, p. 88).

Furthermore, in this regard, it should be noted that when a dictatorship reaches the power in a democratic way, this is not democracy at all because it can potentially change everything in the opposite direction (see Dictator Civilization, n.d.).

Consociational democracy is seen as a means of reconciling the interests and needs of different segments while maintaining political stability within the framework of democracy.

In this regard, H. Eckstein (1966) rightly defines that the plural society is divided into "segmented contradictions". He states that such contradictions exist where political contradictions largely coincide with the social dividing line of society (Eckstein, 1966, p. 34). Segmented contradictions can be religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, racial, national or cultural. In this respect, J. Furnivall (1948) observes cultural differences as one of the features proper to multicultural societies. "Each group is committed to its religion, culture, language, ideals and lifestyle". Consequently, he defines the plural society as a society where the different parts (segments) live side by side in a common political formation but apart from each other" (Furnivall, 1948, p. 304).

In practice, the world order is experiencing a new and challenging transformation phase. As for the implementation of consociationalism, it should be noted that in this context, since the early 1980s, researchers have frequently referred to the consociational theory to analyze the European political system. However, this approach has not effectively contributed to the setting up of a coherent and clear interpretation grid of the European Union. Once the specific version of the consociational theory and the concepts used have been precisely defined, it seems possible to propose a comprehensive interpretation of the European Union as a new form of consociation, which is called 'inter-state consociation', distinct both from classic federal and unitarian consociations (Costa & Magnette, 2003, p. 1). This statement showcases that consociationalism varies over time. This circumstance requires conducting new research to the observation of possibilities for its implementation in conflicting regions for building "barriers of democracy" against authoritarian rule and expansionism.

Certainly, the choice of a relevant concept depends on the impact of various factors and on the need of society to solve the problems it is facing. From the perspective of plural societies with distinctly segmented religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, racial, or ethnic divisions, A. Lijphart's (1997a) concept of consociational democracy is the best one for solving different issues that emerged in internally divided societies and regions. This concept intends to unify vari-

ous strata of the same society (unifying democracy), and, finally, it highlights the balancing of interests and establishes harmony between its various parts. In this case, consociationalism especially solves the main problem: "*How to combine democracy with society's deep internal distinctions*". Furthermore, this issue is becoming one of the modern world's general challenges (Lijphart, 1997b, p. 27). Thus, "this is a segmental pluralism", which includes all possible dividing lines in a plural society, plus the consensus democracy (Lijphart, 1997b, p. 40). (Consequently, the consociational democracy = segmental pluralism + consensus democracy). Moreover, A. Lijphart calls the groups of people already distinguished by the abovementioned features "plural society segments".

Moreover, such societies are undoubtedly characterized by political stability, which includes order protection, citizenship, legitimacy and governance efficiency. Important indicators of a democratic regime are the preservation of democracy quality and the low level of violence against society. Within the framework of defined requirements (standards), he describes the four elements' structure of consociational democracy. In other words, in a plural society, where the positions of "segments" are pretty strong and stable, the condition for a sustainable democracy is not the rule of the majority, which is challenged by strong opposition, but a system of regulated, balanced, institutionalized, and legitimate participation of these segments' representatives. Accordingly, A. Lijphart classifies four features in two groups which turn the model of consociational democracy into a harmonious system.

I. Main features: a) grand coalition; b) segmental autonomy. II. Auxiliary features: c) proportionality; d) right of veto.

The political systems of several countries operate or used to operate on a consociational basis, including Belgium and Cyprus in 1960-1963 (Wolff, 2004, pp. 30-31). Other successful cases are those of interwar Czechoslovakia (Lorman, 2019, p. 225), Israel, Lebanon, the Netherlands

in 1917-1967, Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1979 and South Africa. Some academics have also argued that the European Union resembles a consociational democracy (Bogaards & Crepaz, 2002, pp. 357-81).

One of the best cases of consociationalism is Northern Ireland's experience, which remains vastly positive. The violent conflict that embroiled it from the late 1960s to the late 1990s is the story of a multi-faceted conflict involving many individuals and groups with opposing interests and means of achieving those interests. The genesis of this conflict can be found in the birth of the province itself when in 1921, the island was partitioned to satisfy the interests of diverse groups: the predominantly Catholic Irish Nationalists and Republicans who sought independence from Britain, and the predominantly Protestant, British Unionists and Loyalists who primarily lived in the northeastern six counties and desired to remain a part of the United Kingdom (O'Connell, 2014).

Violence was a frequent and persistent aspect of this conflict. During this period, several agreements were negotiated between the political parties in Northern Ireland and the British and Irish governments. Nevertheless, only in 1998, these events traced the path to the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement which is seen as a turning point of the conflict leading to a prolonged abstention from large-scale violence. It is important to note that this agreement was primarily designed based on consociationalism principles. According to these principles, the agreement has created a framework in which the political parties representing Northern Ireland's communities could work towards a lasting peace (O'Connell, 2014). Therefore, consociationalism has become an important milestone for the emerging "peace process" because it clarified the views and intentions of both the British and Irish governments and enabled the Nationalist and Unionist communities to understand better how each government viewed their constitutional aspirations. This

agreement's primary goal was to recognise that the conflict in Northern Ireland could only be addressed through a political and democratic process. This document was powerful in that it contained the key ideas of consociationalism that marked a clear path to this regional conflict settlement.

However, consociationalism can be functional if any segment in a given country has its own political organization (elite) or makes a relatively independent policy. In this case, the influential role of highly responsible elites is obviously needed, which should be endowed with the will to act independently, "negotiate", and compromise under pressure from the bottom-up. Such an approach helps avoid the aggravation of disputes, even when there is an internal misunderstanding, disagreement and hostility between people (Isayev, 2008, p. 153). Furthermore, if "the majoritarian model of democracy is refuting, competing and opposing, then the consociational model of democracy is characterized by inclusion, disputes, and mutual consent" (Smorgunov, 2012, p. 159).

In this context, J. Fuh-sheng Hsieh (2013) rightly points out that power-sharing democracy may perform better than majoritarian democracy in many ways. It can help achieve political stability in divided societies and generally provides "kinder, gentler" outcomes in many policy areas. Many other factors may have to be included to account for democratic stability in divided societies. Of course, a counter-example cannot refute Lijphart's thesis, but it may alert us to other possibilities for the phenomena we seek to explain (Fuh-sheng Hsieh, 2013, p. 101).

Notably, it is essential to pay attention to the fact that the efficiency of this model is a property that is overlooked for some reason. The problem, however, is the characterization of consociational democracy's backbone element, in this case, one of its features – "the segmental autonomy".

There can be no doubt that A. Lijphart had predicted the "source of ethnic and other conflicts" in the 1970s, which have been overshad-

owed by global controversies of the Cold War era in the second part of the 20th century. After the end of the Cold War, ethnic and other contradictions have become the primary source of conflicts in the world. These changes coincided with a strong trend of democratic transitions, which gave rise to the "third wave of democratization" (Huntington, 1991).

Furthermore, how to combine democracy in a society with profound segmental differences? It is predominantly the consociational model of democracy that can ensure equality and harmonious coexistence of significant strata of society (ethnic, cultural, religious, etc.). Mentioned main and auxiliary features serve to solve the core issue of segments' consentto their harmonious coexistence.

A special place in the remaking of the new world order, which is facing certain transformations, is given to the South Caucasus, well known for its religious, ethnic, cultural, and civilizational diversity, as a result of which it generates regular instability. At the same time, the region represents a whole with its components: North and South Caucasus, Kurdish (Turkish) settled in Central Armenia in the territory of modern Turkey, and Northern Iran (Iranian Atropatene). In this regard, South Caucasus plays a *connecting/dividing* function. This means that a correct diagnosis of the situation in the South Caucasus and long-term stability in the region requires a harmonious combination of vital interests of countries and peoples that are part of its structure as well as a development of existing cultures (civilizational elements) which is primarily due to both the North Caucasus (the Khazar triangle) and the stability of the adjacent territories of Iran and Turkey (Sayran, 2014, pp. 12-18).

In this regard, the need for an accurate methodology to overcome contradictions and settling conflicts in this volatile region is highly appreciated. Furthermore, only consensus methods can provide efficient solutions aiming to stabilize the region.

Referring to consensus methods, A. Alkaev notes that they are of particular importance for the strategies of ethnopolitical conflict management. He identifies consensus and arbitration as consensus methods (Alkaev, 2005, pp. 346-354). The first of these two methods is the consociational one, as it not only aims to overcome internal conflicts in plural societies but also envisages a transition to democracy. However, it should be noted that the problem is not limited to the choice of consensus method since several factors are essential for the development of democracy: civilization, values, situation and other factors. Moreover, an essential precondition for applying the consensus method is the quick and decisive use of arbitration by the international community, when only the parties will define the preference of the consensus method. Otherwise, it would be desirable for at least one of the parties to reach a reasonable solution through political methods. Although the consociational theory has been developed mainly for the peaceful resolution of problems in plural societies, it also has the potential to be expanded (Rubinstein, 2017, pp. 71-102). K. Basta, J. McGarry and R. Simeon (2015) rightly consider that disputes regarding territorial pluralism remain conflict-generating phenomena in the former Soviet Union, such as Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Georgia (p. 3). It is important to consider that the last two countries are located in South Caucasus.

In his broad-ranging survey of comparative politics, A. Roberts (2020) asked scholars whether "consociationalism is the best available solution to the ethnic conflict" (pp. 490-506). Consociationalism is not simply a solution, but the best solution to ethnic conflict shows that fifty years after its introduction, consociationalism is now the default option for divided societies (Bogaards, Helms, & Lijphart, 2019, p. 350). This conclusion proves that consociationalism can serve as an accurate model of peacebuilding and security development in the South Caucasus by forwarding the region to a democratic path.

Methodology of "Soft Power" and Cultural Relativism

The probability of the consociational democracy model's successful implementation largely depends on the correct methodology. This implies that an accurate method must consider segmental characteristics of societies with their interconnected, complementary, and conflicting interests that require quite complex and consistent work.

From this viewpoint, the strength of peoples' civilizational foundations, originality, geographical space, and cultural values can be considered necessary preconditions for implementing the model as mentioned above.

In this context, "soft power" serves as an alternative to "hard" and "economic" powers. It is an effective and well-functioning tool for "the art of persuasion" in international relations, put into scientific circulation for the first time by an American political scientist Joseph Nye who determines "soft power" as an ability to achieve what is desired, not by coercion but persuasion. For this reason, he highlights three essential components of a given concept: culture, political ideology, and diplomacy (Nye, 2005, pp. 10-13).

Obviously, in the case of soft power" use, the emphasis is made on working with society and its individual groups. This "combines" them with each other and neutralizes inconvenient elements. In this way, it contributes to the further integration of society (Areshev, 2013).

The concept of "soft power" has recently aroused broader scientific interest. It is considered one of the most effective methods for expanding political influence. However, in its more expansive interpretation, "soft power" exerts political, economic, and cultural influence (Zvyagina, 2012, pp. 94-98). It should be stated that the concept of "soft power" is broader than public diplomacy, diplomacy, "branding" of states or propaganda. The concept of "soft power" has shifted the focus from purely practical issues to

studying the principles and technologies of influence on external and internal audiences. In this case, it should be noted that the methods of force are out of use (Grevtsova, 2012, pp. 313-315).

In this respect, V. Radnayeva (2017) rightly points out that the core of "soft power" is informativeness and the ability to adapt to different cultures (p. 80).

"Soft power" implies multidimensional ideological and value structures originating from different cultures and political practices, considered as result of the environment in which they are generated with a unique vision of the world and their own place. "Soft power" is based on the belief that there is no need to resort to intricate and forceful methods when achieving goals.

J. Nye believes that language and culture are themselves "soft powers" that play a decisive role in policy-making, directly or indirectly influencing relevant societal relations. "Soft power" is based on the development of moral perfection and the attractiveness of positive lifestyle patterns established in a particular culture. It is not the power of material factors but the power of information and images. The use of "soft power" is the use of the power of values. Later in his book "The Future of Power", J. Nye (2011) remakes the previous definition, conceptually describing "soft power" as "an ability to influence other countries to achieve their own goals, where cooperation in certain spheres is aimed at designing persuasion and positive perception" (Kharkevich, 2014, pp. 22-30).

The concept of "soft power" describes cultures with a particular logic, broadly, as a modern world political process, which is viewed in both regional and global dimensions (Gorlova, 2015, pp. 268-272). In this regard, the implementation of consociational democracy in plural societies will be possible through the method of "soft power".

In general, "soft power" refers to the state's development strategy, the strength of its ideology and self-identification values, the strength of its social structure and development model, the strength of its people, the creative potential of the nation, the attractiveness of culture and the strength of its impact on international relations. All these are essential elements. Being invisible and unemotional, "soft power" penetrates everywhere (Gorlova, 2015, p. 269).

It is not accidental when using "soft power" J. Nye gives importance to the priority of culture. The core idea is that without culture, neither political ideology nor diplomacy can be realized within the framework of the "soft power" methodology.

Political ideology is another component of "soft power" that refers to our problem. Notably, the political-ideological approach becomes very necessary in conceiving consociational model effectiveness in plural societies. In this regard, when saying political ideology, one should mean a system of principles in the political and economic structure of the society, which is based on specific values. Without proper assessment, it is impossible to effectively use "soft power" in terms of its cultural component. From the viewpoint of consociational model implementation, considering the above-mentioned factors becomes a priority to achieve a positive result.

Developed countries determine their priorities and conceptual approaches to "soft power" differently. For Great Britain, they are based on Anglo-Saxon political values. In the case of Germany, the German language and culture are used, including through the Goethe-Institut. In the case of Italy, they are promoted by historical and cultural values. In the case of China, the effects of non-violent means of development are exerted, as is the protection of national culture primarily through Confucius Institutes. The promotion of American political and economic values is a priority for the US, and the promotion of European socio-cultural values is a priority for the EU (Gorlova, 2015, p. 269). Politics and culture act together as complementary system components of "soft power". The power of politics is an operational force when the power of culture is a resource force (Tarabarko, 2016, pp. 181-184).

The use of the concept of cultural relativism for the consociational democracy model introduction can be seen as an active precondition of "soft power" policy. Given the need for harmonious coexistence of national segments in plural societies, it is necessary to develop an appropriate policy that will support the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, particularly using the "soft power" methodology. "Soft power", as a method of spreading political influence, can contribute to developing preconditions for their peaceful settlement.

In modern societies, where people with different cultural origins have to interact constantly, ethnocentrism can become a harmful, even hazardous phenomenon. Ethnocentrism hinders scientific and impartial research of different cultures. It inhibits the adequate understanding of the behaviour of other cultures' representatives. Ethnocentrism is opposed to cultural relativism, according to which every culture is an exceptional phenomenon that has to be viewed in accordance with its appropriate criteria (see Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism, 2014).

The core idea of cultural relativism is the recognition of cultural values' equality created by different peoples. This implies a recognition of the independence and integrity for each culture as well as an absolute rejection of ethnocentrism (see The Principle of Cultural Relativism, 2015). Consequently, cultural relativism may become a precondition for overcoming ethnocentrism in plural societies. In turn, this can contribute to the development of conditions for effective consociational model implementation using the "soft power" methodology.

In this respect, M. Herskovits (1955) identifies three general aspects of cultural relativism: methodological, philosophical, and practical. The methodological aspect refers to recognising culture following norms and values accepted by the people. It is necessary to describe the activities of individuals in terms of their own culture. An essential aspect of cultural relativism lies in its will to perceive the culture from the inside, just like

understanding its operation's meaning (Herskovits, 1955, p. 351). We are firmly convinced that this approach is very important for multicultural societies, where the possibility of an equal consociational discourse between different cultures is due to this methodology.

On this occasion, T. Pashukova (2009) rightly points out that, if possible, practical skills should be developed by demonstrating the importance of dialogue principles and cooperation for intercultural communication (p. 60).

The philosophical aspect of cultural relativism in the historical process is connected with recognising multiple ways of cultural development. It rejects the mandatory evolution of cultural development stages and the dominance of a unique development trend. In other words, M. Herskovits's (1955) belief is expressed in his subsequent judgment: "To accept that law, justice, and beauty can have as many manifestations as there are cultures means not to show nihilism, but restraint" (p. 547).

As for the practical aspect of cultural relativism, it is more than debatable because relativism can have different manifestations in different cultures. This aspect can be considered at the level of history-modernity (for example: are cannibalism, racism and other negative phenomena acceptable in some cultures?). It can also be shaped from the viewpoint of abstract functionalism (for example: what are the elements of cultures' existence, by what logic do cultures develop? etc.) (see The Principle of Cultural Relativism, 2015). These questions showcase that the practical aspect of cultural relativism is due to specific cultures and their peculiarities. Therefore, this practical aspect is of relative importance.

According to some researchers, cultural relativism, having a positive role in the struggle against European centralism, racism and intolerance, ultimately leads to an endless restraint against even the most intolerable phenomena such as prejudices. It also leads to indifference to the needs of people. From a Marxist perspective, cultural relativism is unacceptable because it

fundamentally contradicts the principle of consistency and dissimilarity of different socio-economic formations (Arutyunov, 1989).

Cultural relativism is not specific to the socialist or post-socialist world. It is proper in the capitalist world, where multiculturalism is considered a democratic value. That is why, in practice, this theory can effectively address the issue of the cultural superiority of one ethnic group over another as a counterbalance to ethnocentrism in a plural society. Moreover, the neglect, destruction, or appropriation of cultural values of other ethnic groups by the dominant ethnic group deepens internal contradictions in plural societies by exacerbating possible conflict manifestations, which can increase intolerance and even generate hate. The most effective approach to neutralizing these risks may be the promotion of consociationalism through both discourse and concrete action, using only "soft power" methods.

Nowadays, few people would doubt that an effective dialogue between representatives of different cultures is possible, especially when they live in the same country. But in what cases a really effective dialogue is possible? It is possible only when this dialogue becomes scientific and ethical. Educated people such as scientists not only listen to each other's arguments but also try to take into account their content. Only the ethical discourse is relevant. In this case, the issue of tolerance becomes advantageous (see Non-Violence and Violence. Multiculturalism and Ethical Relativism, n.d.). The formation of such a dialogue in plural societies as a "soft power" can be facilitated by a consociational discourse that should unite different ethnic groups on an equal issue for all, related to forming a common security consciousness.

In this regard, A. Fet (2014) notes that cultural relativism pursues a predetermined goal: to justify the equality of races and nations by unconditionally accepting the equality of all cultures. The principle of equality of all people is based not on the recognition of normative legal acts but on the direct feeling of brotherhood, solidarity of all human beings that have a biological origin, reinforced by the evolution of culture (Fet, 2014, p. 140).

From the viewpoint of K. Lorents's (1994) biological concept, the principle of equality of all human beings should be understood as a result of the cultural development of our social instinct (pp. 11-28). The violation of this principle means a step back to the already overcome cultural stages: to the Middle Ages or Ancient times. Moreover, in special cases, it means a disorder of the biological mechanism of social instinct, i.e. pathology from a medical viewpoint (Fet, 2014, p. 146).

In this context, the principle of equality is an integral part of a cultural tradition that was formerly called "Christian" but is now called "European" or "Western" culture (Fet, 2014, p. 152). The essence of cultural relativism is expressed in the following simple formula: "Since all people are equal, all human cultures are equal. Any attempt to establish a hierarchy between them is considered as racism" (Fet, 2014, p. 153).

Cultural relativism, being the complete opposite of ethnocentrism, focuses on the cultural peculiarities of segments in a plural society, as shown by the experience of the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Northern Ireland, Malaysia, and other plural countries. It is able to create a real opportunity for democratization in plural societies based on the principles of consociationalism. This approach can be applied to the countries with a plural social structure while the development of civic culture, albeit slowly, will show positive trends. In this case, overcoming ethnocentrism through cultural relativism and applying the principles of consociationalism through the methodology of "soft power" can become prerequisites for political stability, cultural independence and security of different segments and peoples as for democratic progress in plural societies.

Conclusion

The analysis of theoretical and practical aspects of consociationalism has showcased that peace and security, as well as harmonious development in deeply divided societies with internal cleavages, mainly depend on an appropriate model of coexistence which will mutually respect segmental peculiarities and cultural identities. The lack of tolerance, nihilism and the will of most powerful segments to dominate others can only lead to the development of ethnocracy and autocratic regimes. In the case of plural societies, majoritarian democracy can serve only as mechanical democracy because it will give primarily quantitative but not qualitative solutions. This will generate direct threats to political stability and balanced development in plural societies.

The cases of some European plural states and others that have already experienced consociationalism have proven the effectiveness of this model because cultural differences enormously matter. This model of non-majoritarian democracy has proven that the overcoming of ethnocentrism is only possible through cultural relativism by applying the principles of consociationalism through the methodology of "soft power" that can serve as a prerequisite for political stability, cultural independence and security of all segments as well as for democratic progress in plural societies.

Remaking a new world order encloses new regions characterized by political instability, divided societies and deep crises where autocratic rule is still persisting. There is no doubt that a durable solution to different social and political issues in these regions can be possible through consociationalism. Therefore, to build and promote democracy, it becomes necessary to use "soft power" as an inexhaustible arsenal of democracy in each case.

As for South Caucasus, which is characterized by the features mentioned above, only consociationalism can serve as an accurate model of peacebuilding and security by forwarding the region to a democratic path of development.

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