ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL PROCESS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC INDEX IN THE BALKAN COUNTRIES, 2011–2021

ANDON KUME, OLTA QEJVANI

Abstract: The results of a comparative analysis based on the Electoral Integrity Index, evaluated for the period 2011–2021 in the Balkan countries are this paper's objectives. Referring to perceptions of the level of fulfillment of international standards for democratic elections (PEI), the Balkan region is classified in the group of countries belonging to the "Moderate" category. In the Balkan countries, the positive relationship between the electoral process and the development of liberal democracy is evident, while the level of corruption is a factor that has a significant effect on the electoral process. Clusters analysis performed using estimates of distances between indicators related to the electoral process, the development of a liberal democracy, general economic development and the level of corruption present significant distances. The development of liberal democracy in Balkan countries is conditioned by the level of realization of synergy in the interaction between different factors. This paper aims to identify the legal framework in the details of Balkan countries related to electoral reform, going through recommendations through comparison and quantitative methodology and bringing Czech legislative dimension as a smart solution of problems that countries face in the electoral process.

Keywords: election; index; integrity; democracy; legal electoral reform

DOI: 10.14712/23366478.2023.9

INTRODUCTION

Electoral processes remain of the most important processes in the development of a democratic society. Through them, citizens exercise the universal political right to vote and to stand for election, as one of the most basic human rights on which representative democracy is established and functions. The principles and standards that must be respected in electoral processes are set out in various international documents. In each society that is governed based on democratic principles, the rule of law and free initiative of market, ideas and movement, the conduct of elections in accordance with the requirements of these international documents is a permanent objective. The extent of their fulfillment, starting from the way these requirements are reflected in national legislation and up to the manner and level of implementation of this legislation during

the electoral process, are among all the important indicators that serve to assess the level of democratic development of a country.

Elections, as processes through which citizens exercise their sovereignty for the delegation of power play a very important role in democracy and in the society. Meanwhile, they are also the most complex one. The development and fulfillment of the universally accepted democratic standards is a result of the action of many factors of different natures such as: political, social, economic, cultural, traditional, etc. Moreover, these processes are conditioned by the behavior of various actors that participate in them, political parties, candidates, election administration, central and local public institutions, voters and civil society.[1] Therefore, the task of assessing the level of fulfillment of the standards to be achieved in democratic electoral processes stands difficult and complex.

For the evaluation of the electoral process OSCE/ODIHR, Member States have agreed to refer to the results published in the final Report of International Observer Missions. Meanwhile, in addition, the academic community has always been engaged in developing methodologies, as effective as possible, for the evaluation of electoral processes. One of the most valuable results in this regard, is considered the methodology assessing the Perception Index for Election Integrity, compiled by Pippa.[2]

According to Pippa et al.,[3] the index is an assessment that reflects the level of fulfillment of standards at each stage of an electoral process. Conceived as a numerical measure, the index conveys meaningful and comparative information to judge the quality of an electoral process and to compare different electoral processes that take place at different times or places. Pippa emphasize that the reference to the quality and integrity of elections is one of the effective ways to understand the development of democratization processes in a society.

Through the analysis of the perceptions of the level of fulfillment of international standards for democratic elections (PEI), it has been possible for different countries and regions of the world, but also at the global level, to draft different conclusions and recommendations regarding the processes of democracy development. The combined analysis of this index, with other indices that serve to assess the processes of democratic, social, and economic development of different countries and societies, is one of the current trends in studies that have as their objective the understanding of processes that characterize the existing democratic societies development.[4] PEI analysis and reflections on the reciprocal effects of electoral processes, and other processes that are part of democratic development.

It is particularly important to conduct this on societies that are undergoing the process of developing a democracy and capacities necessary for its effective operation.

1   GAUJA, A. The Legal Regulation of Political Parties: Promoting Integrity? *Electoral Law Journal*. 2016, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 1–3. Online available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication /313042837_The_Legal_Regulation_of_Political_Parties_Promoting_Electoral_Integrity.

2   PIPPA, N. *Why Electoral Integrity Matters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Online available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107280861.

3   PIPPA, N. – MARTINEZ I COMA, F. – FRANK, R. W. Assessing the quality of elections. *Journal of Democracy*. 2013, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 124–135. Online available at: https://wcfia.harvard.edu/publications /assessing-quality-elections.

4   PIPPA, *c. d.*

Such an example are the Balkan countries, which during the second half of the twentieth century were governed under communist rule and, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, entered the process of developing liberal democracies. The object of this paper is the analysis of electoral processes in the Balkan countries and the evaluation of their links with the processes of development of liberal democracies. Assessing the links between the electoral process, the country's economic development and the level of corruption in the Western Balkan countries, the aim is to identify the ways and instruments that these countries should use in their efforts for EU membership and forward.

The fact that in all Balkan countries the elections for the main representative body, the parliament, take place in accordance with the requirements of the proportional system,[5] makes the results of the comparative analysis using the Perception Integrity Index, the relationship between the electoral process and other democratic and economic development process, serve as reference information in order to understand the phenomena of democratic development in these countries and, in particular, in the countries of the Western Balkans.

2. METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 OBJECTIVES

This research aims to accomplish the following:

The identification of differences in the level of fulfillment of standards in elections, in countries of the Balkan region.

The assessment of the correlations between the electoral process and other factors that reflect the democratic and economic development of the country.

The classification of Balkan countries according to the level of electoral integrity.

The identification of the problems and factors that condition the development of electoral processes in accordance with the standards in the Balkan countries, especially in the Western Balkans.

Exploration into Czech practice and adapting those practices as alternatives when appropriate with the Albanian and Western Balkan context when appropriate.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL MODELS

The conceptual model (Figure 1) according to which the study was conducted has at its center the PEI index. In accordance with Pippa Methodology,[6] the model defines PEI as an average of perception values for 11 indicators, which reflect different issues and stages of the electoral process.

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5   The elements provided for each of the Western Balkan countries, are referred from Council of Europe databases such as Albania. In: *Council of Europe: Electoral assistance* [online]. [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/electoral-assistance/elecdata-albania.
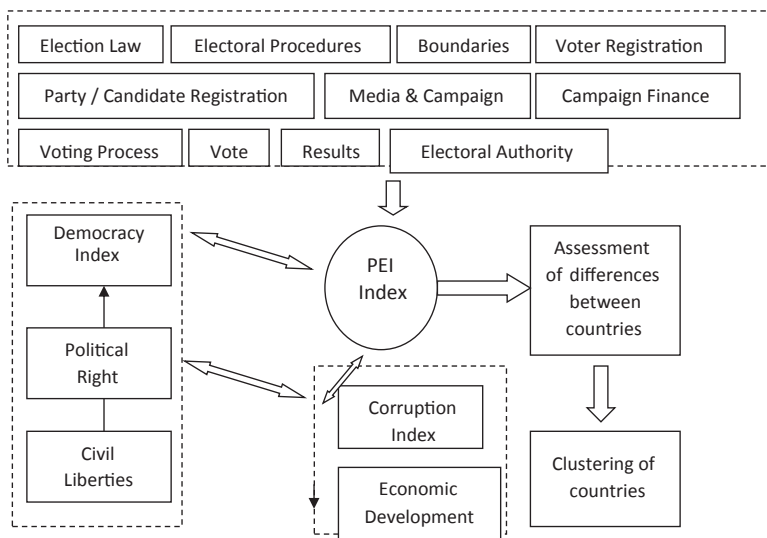
6   PIPPA, *c. d.*

Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study (Source: Authors' depiction)

According to Pietsch et al.,[7] Xezonakis et al.,[8] Donovan and Karp,[9] the processes of democratization of a society and their results are products of the action and interaction of a complex number of factors. Among these, the factors related to elections, human rights and the factors that reflect the economic development of the country, are considered the most important ones. Therefore, the model predicts that the judgment on the ranking of countries according to the level achieved in the integrity of the elections, conducted during the period under analysis, will be made taking into account the effect on PEI of these other two groups of factors.

2.3 DATA

The data published in the links below were used to conduct this study:
PIPPA, N. – GRÖMPING, M. Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-7.0)[10]

7 See PIETSCH, J. – MILLER, M. – KARP, J. A. Public support for democracy in transitional regimes. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*. 2015, Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 1–9. Online available at: http://www.jkarp.com/pdf/jepop_2015a.pdf.
8 See XEZONAKIS, G. – KOSMIDIS, S. – DAHLBERG, S. Can electors combat corruption? Institutional arrangements and citizen behavior. *European Journal of Political Research*. 2015, Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 160–176. Online available at: https://ejpr.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1475-6765.12114.
9 See DONOVAN, T. – KARP, J. Electoral rules, corruption, inequality and evaluations of democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*. 2017, Vol. 56, No. 3, pp. 469–486. Online available at: https://ejpr.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1475-6765.12188.
10 PIPPA, N. – GRÖMPING, M. *Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, (PEI-7.0)* [online]. Harvard Dataverse, 2019 [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/PDYRWL.

Freedom House[11]
Transparency international[12]
PEI – Albanian Parliamentary Election[13]

2.4 ANALYSIS METHODS

The PEI averages and also the averages of its constituent indicators were used to assess the integrity of the electoral processes that took place during the period of 2011–2021, in the countries of the Balkan region (11 countries). In order to assess the differences between the countries of this region regarding the level of fulfillment of standards in the elections, the paper refers to the differences between the average values of PEI for each country and the differences of the average values of perceptions that correspond to the 11 constituent indicators of PEI.

Linear regression analysis and the principal components analysis were used to assess the relationship between PEI and indices reflecting democratic development and the economic and corruption level in the Balkan countries. The data were analyzed with the program Statgraphics-Centurion 2019.

3. RESULTS

3.1 ANALYZE OF PEI

The average values of PEI and for its 11 component indicators, for the Balkan countries taken together are presented in Figure 2. Referring to the value of the PEI index, it can be stated that regarding to the integrity of the electoral processes held during the period 2011–2021, the Balkan region is classified in the group of regions/ countries belonging to the category of *"Moderate"*. The difference between this region and the groups of Western and Eastern European countries, which, referring to national elections held from 2012-2018, are classified in the category *"High"*, is distinct. The only exception is Turkey, which is classified in the category *"Low"*, PEI = 48.[14]

Based on the values of the PEI index, the Balkan countries can be classified into four groups: BiH and North Macedonia are classified into the groups of countries belonging to the category *"Low"*, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bulgaria are classified into the category *"Moderate"*. Croatia and Romania are classified in the group of countries belonging to the category *"High"* and Greece and Slovenia are classified in the category *"Very high"*.

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[11] *Freedom House* [online]. [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores.
[12] *Transparency international* [online]. [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020.
[13] *PEI – Albanian Parliamentary Election* [online]. 25.4.2021 [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: www.insiz.org.
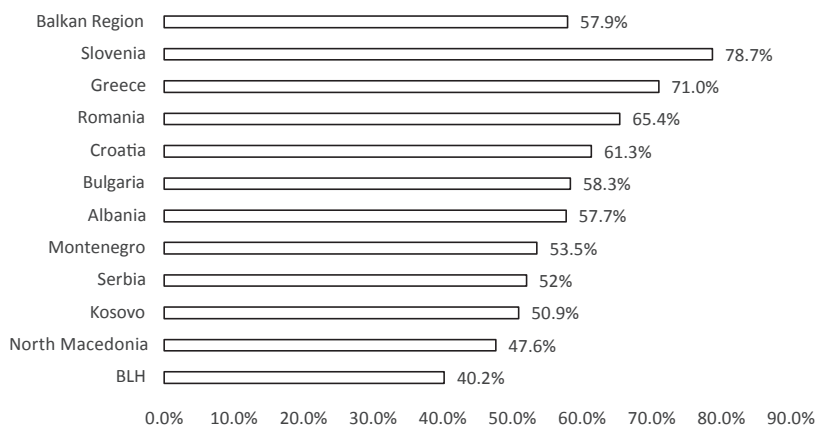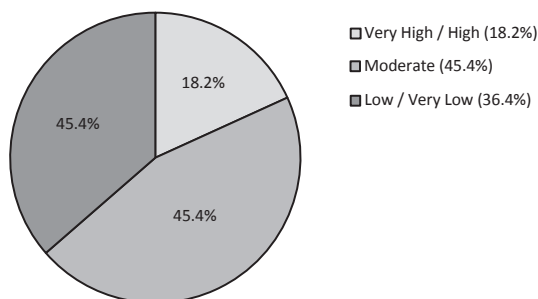[14] PIPPA – GRÖMPING, *Perceptions of Electoral Integrity*.

Figure 2: Overall values of the PEI index – Balkan countries
(Source: Harvard Dataverse and authors' depiction)

Referring to values of 11 indicators that reflect all of the election cycle (Figure 3), the strengths for the Balkan countries are voting processes, vote count, results, electoral procedures, and electoral authority, meanwhile their weakness is media coverage and campaign finance. This is a situation similar to that of other Western and Eastern European countries.[15]

Campaign financing and media coverage are among the most problematic stages of the election process. The use of undisclosed funds, the pronounced lack of transparency in the financing of political parties before and during an election campaign is a phenomenon and a concern faced by the electoral process, regardless of the level of economic development of the country. The assessment of perceptions of the indicator that reflects the financing of an election campaign in different Balkan countries (Figure 4) shows that the use of dirty money in elections, lack of transparency in funding sources, vote buying, and the abuse of public resources are phenomena that occur in all countries of this region. Their intensity varies from country to country. BiH, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, and Bulgaria are perceived as countries in which

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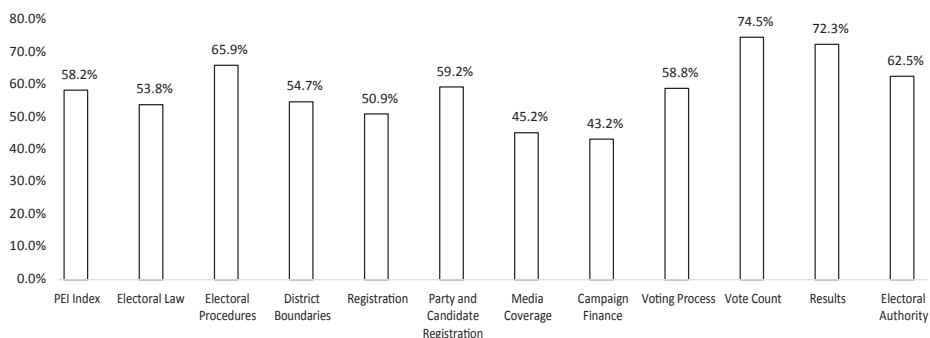[15] Ibid.; or even globally PIPPA, *c. d.*

Figure 3: Performance of elections across stages in the electoral cycle
(Source: Harvard Dataverse and authors' depiction)

the financing of an election campaign is an indicator with a significant negative effect on the integrity of the elections. Croatia, Romania, and Greece are classified in the *"Moderate"* category. Only Slovenia is perceived as a country which, referring to the level of compliance with standards in the financing of an election campaign, is classified in the *"High"* category.

Referring to the scores for the media coverage indicator, except Slovenia, which is classified in the category *"High"* and Albania in the category *"Moderate"*, other Balkan countries are classified in the category *"Low"*. Despite this, it must be said that even between these countries there are a lot of differences. The lowest level for the role of the media in an election campaign is perceived in Kosovo and North Macedonia (Figure 5). The differences between BiH, Serbia, and Romania are not significant though. Likewise, the differences between Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Croatia are not significant.
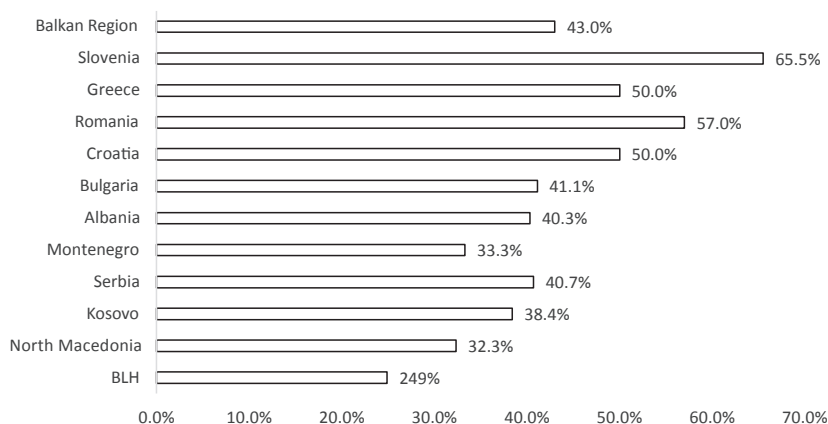

Figure 4: Campaign finance
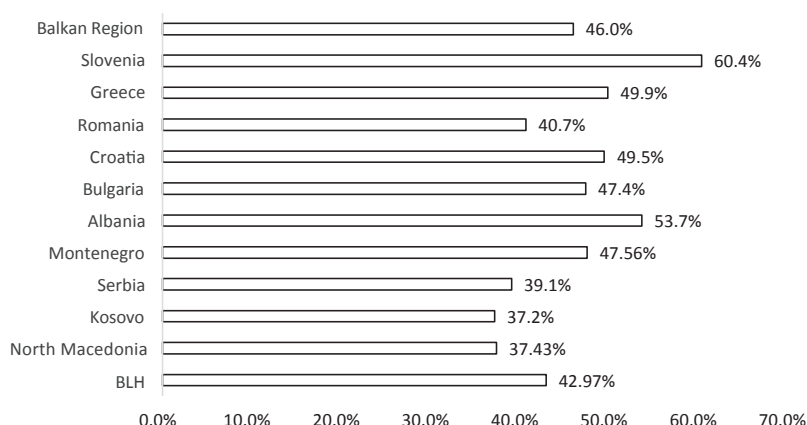(Source: Harvard Dataverse and authors' depiction)

Figure 5: Media coverage
(Source: Harvard Dataverse and authors' depiction)

There are also differences between Balkan countries regarding the indicators that are considered as strong points for the region (Tab. No. 1). BiH is perceived as the country with the lowest level of fulfillment of standards in the election administration processes by electoral bodies, while for Romania, Greece, and Slovenia the perceptions for electoral procedures and Electoral authority are classified in the category *"Very high"*. Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Greece, and Slovenia have managed to hold elections that meet the standards set out in international documents regarding the voting process, the tabulation of votes and the administration of complaints. The differences between the different Balkan's countries regarding the perceptions of the indicators that serve to evaluate, how the standards in an election administration process are meet, can be explained by referring to the way they treat such problem Bowler et al.[16]

Voter registration is one of the challenges faced by all Balkan countries, except Greece and Slovenia. (Table.1). In particular, voter registration is perceived as a very poor quality process in BiH, North Macedonia, and Serbia. These countries are classified in the *"Very low"* category. Kosovo and North Macedonia are classified in the category *"Low"*, while Albania is the only country in the Western Balkans, which is not a member of the EU, which is classified in the category *"Moderate"*.

Perceptions of the Electoral laws indicator significantly differentiate most of the Western Balkan countries from other Balkan countries. BiH, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro are classified in the categories *"Very low"* and *"Low"*, while Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece are perceived as countries where electoral legislation is satisfactorily in line with international standards, the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters and the principles of European electoral heritage.

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[16] BOWLER, S. – BRUNELL, T. – DONOVAN, T. – GRONKE, P. Election administration and perceptions of fair elections. *Electoral Studies* [online]. 2015, Vol. 38, pp. 1–9 [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261379415000062.

Table 1: Average scores (Source: Harvard Dataverse and authors' depiction)

Country	Electoral laws	Electoral procedures	Boundaries	Voter registration	Party and candidate registration	Voting process	Vote count	Results	Electoral authority
	Indicators								
BiH	31.2	40.5	47.2	26.1	46.9	48.80	51.9	52.0	33.1
North Macedonia	43.9	56.5	51.8	32.3	55.4	48.64	59.5	55.1	47.3
Kosovo	49.7	49.8	62.5	43.3	43.4	60.10	50.3	62.5	60.3
Serbia	47.7	61.8	58.8	38.3	57.2	49.70	67.1	62.2	54.2
Montenegro	49.8	55.4	56.2	43.6	61.0	49.40	74.0	72.0	48.7
Albania	59.9	58.1	47.8	67.9	56.7	59.80	74.8	69.4	60.7
Bulgaria	56.5	65.2	57.8	41.8	64.5	53.80	74.1	67.8	63.1
Croatia	63.0	67.0	46.0	50.0	57.0	59.00	82.0	86.0	66.0
Romania	61.0	79.0	54.0	43.0	58.0	65.00	82.0	82.0	77.0
Greece	59.3	93.0	60.0	76.0	71.0	65.00	91.0	89.0	86.0
Slovenia	76.2	85.6	64.0	88.9	77.3	79.50	92.2	82.1	86.5
Balkan region	54.6	64.8	55.1	50.1	58.9	58.10	72.6	70.9	62.1

Very high (70+)
High (60–69)
Moderate (50–59)
Low (40–49)
Very low (less than 40)

3.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PEI INDEX, DEMOCRACY, AND ECONOMIC INDEX

To increase the effectiveness in using the PEI index as an instrument through which the processes of democratic development of the society can be fully and clearly understood, Pippa,[17] Pippa and Grömping[18] emphasize the need to build models that reflect the relationship between this index and other indices concerning processes of development of liberal democracy, economic, and social development. The construction of

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[17] PIPPA, *c. d.*
[18] PIPPA – GRÖMPING, *Perceptions of Electoral Integrity*.

these models is based on the reasoning made by Linz and Stepan,[19] according to which, elections are not enough to realize a fully effective democratic system of government.

It is necessary for the society to engage in the efforts to develop the legislative and institutional capacities necessary for the realization of other essential political rights and civil liberties for the citizens. In countries that are in the process of developing a liberal democracy, it is even more imperative that efforts to hold democratic elections are to be carried out together with efforts to build and operate the rule of law, institutionalize an independent judiciary, and an independent and pluralistic mass media, capable of controlling the executive branch.

In the Balkan countries the relationship between the integrity of elections and the level of development of liberal democracy appears as a linear statistical relationship, positive, r = 0.847 (Figure 6). In the Balkan region, the countries that according to Freedom House have the highest value in the index of liberal democracy are also the countries that hold elections perceived as electoral processes with a higher integrity index. Such a connection is most clearly expressed in the case of the Balkan countries that are members of the EU.

Deviations from this rule are observed in countries such as Kosovo, although referring to the Democracy Index is on the same level with BiH and compared to North Macedonia the level of democracy in this country is significantly lower, is a country that has conducted electoral processes with a higher level of integrity compared to two others. This can be explained by the fact that in Kosovo the presence and contribution of international organizations is a factor that generates significant positive effects on the electoral process. Similarly, it can explain the significant difference in the perception of the integrity of the elections that took place in Albania and the level of development of liberal democracy in this country, if we compare Albania with other countries in
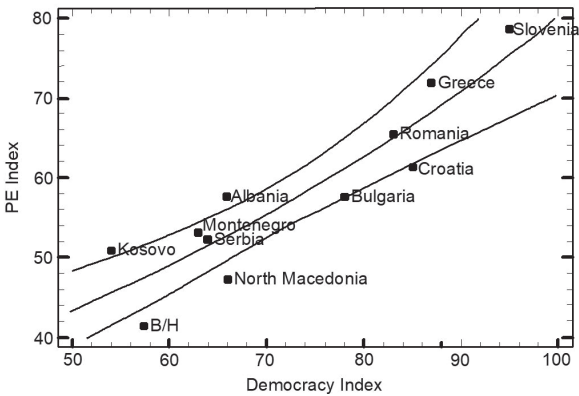

Figure 6: Relationship between the PEI Index and Democracy Index
(Source: Authors' depiction)

19 See LINZ, J. J. – STEPAN, A. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* [online]. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1996 [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: https://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title/2194/problems-democratic-transition-and-consolidation.

the region such as North Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro. Although these Balkan countries do not have significant differences in the Liberal Democracy Index, Albania is estimated to have held elections with a higher level of integrity.

The case of Kosovo and Albania shows that in countries that are in the process of developing culture, behavior and democratic institutions, support from international organizations and institutions to develop capacities as a democratic society, in particular support with legislative expertise and the development of civil society capacities, are factors that generate significant positive effects on the electoral process. Based on these results, it can be stated that in the Balkan countries the connection between the electoral process and the processes of development of liberal democracies, in the main lines is realized according to the general rules and published for other countries and regions of the world.[20]

According to the "Lipset" hypothesis,[21] in order to understand the processes of democracy development, especially in countries moving from the authoritarian system to the system of liberal democracy, references to the process of economic development also are helpful. According to Przeworski et al.,[22] evaluating the links between indicators that reflect the processes of economic development and democracy, using for this purpose time series, creates real opportunities to understand the challenges faced by countries that are in the process of democratic development.
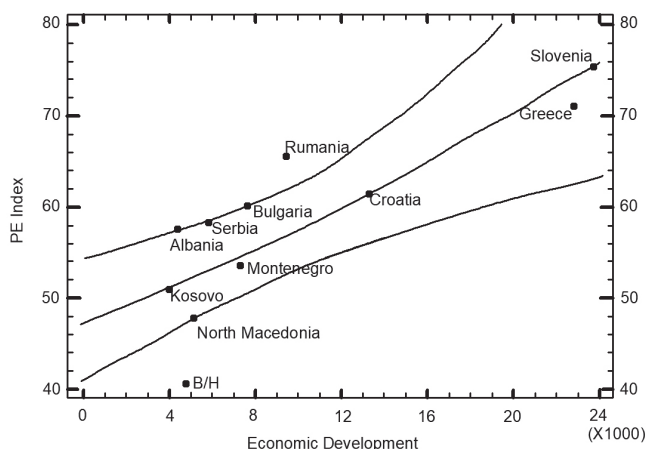

Figure 7: Relationship between the PEI Index and Economic development
(Source: Authors' depiction)

[20] PIETSCH – MILLER – KARP, *c. d.*; PIPPA – GRÖMPING, *Perceptions of Electoral Integrity*.
[21] LIPSET, S. M. Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy. *The American Political Science Review*. 1959, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 69–105. Online available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1951731.
[22] PRZEWORSKI, A. Democracy and Economic Development. In: MANSFIELD, E. D. – SISSON, R. (eds.). *Political Science and the Public Interest*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004. Online available at: https://as.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu-as/faculty/documents/sisson.pdf [revised version].

Pippa[23] emphasizes that in conditions when there is not enough data for time series that reflect the development, in time and space, of economic processes and electoral processes, in order to judge the integrity of elections, macro indicators of economic development (GDP and US $ / capital) and the corruption index can be used. For the Balkan countries the relationship between PEI, economic development, and corruption index, for the period 2011–2021, is estimated in Figure 7, 8.

Referring to the link between PEI and economic development, it can be stated that the accepted link, according to which countries with a high level of economic development are also countries that hold elections with a high index of integrity (Pippa and Grömping),[24] manage to appear only in conditions when the economic development of the country crosses a necessary threshold. For the Balkan countries this is the case of Slovenia and Greece. For other countries this rule still fails to be present. Thus, although Croatia has higher economic development indicators than Romania, Bulgaria and even higher than Serbia and Albania, it is considered a country in which elections are not perceived as integrity index processes with a value proportionally higher than the value of this index in other countries. A complementary argument for the hypothesis regarding the need to cross a threshold in economic development, as a necessity to show the link between PEI and the economic development of the country, is the case of BiH, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.

These three countries, although estimated to have close levels of economic development, have significant differences in the values of electoral integrity. Consequently, it can be stated that, in most of the Balkan countries, the necessary conditions have not yet been met to guarantee that the general principles, according to which, the economic
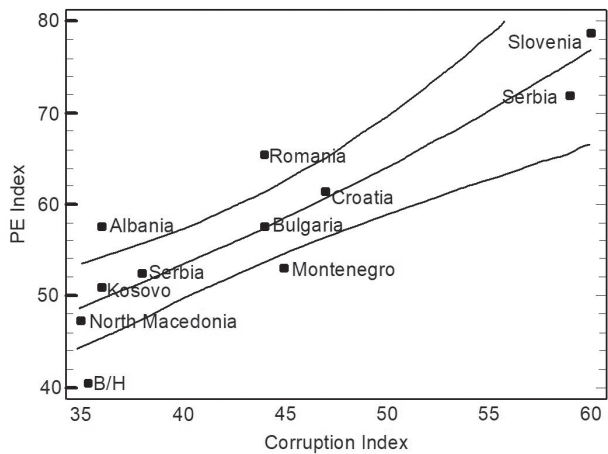

Figure 8: Relationship between the PEI Index and Corruption Index
(Source: Authors' depiction)

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23 PIPPA, *c. d.*
24 PIPPA – GRÖMPING, *Perceptions of Electoral Integrity*.

development of the country is associated and affects in increasing the capacity of society to conduct elections that meet international standards.

For the connection between the PEI index and the Corruption index for the Balkan countries, the situation is almost the same as that communicated for countries in other regions of the world. Countries that have a high level of corruption are also countries that have conduct edelectoral processes with PEI which classifies them in the categories *"Very low"*, *"Low"*, and *"Moderate"*. Countries where corruption is perceived as a phenomenon that appears at a moderate or low level, as in the case of Greece and Slovenia according to PEI values are classified in the category *"High"* or *"Very high"*. Such a situation shows that for the Balkan countries, especially the countries of the Western Balkans, the figure against corruption is, at the same time accompanied by the efforts of society to develop the capacity to conduct democratic elections. In these
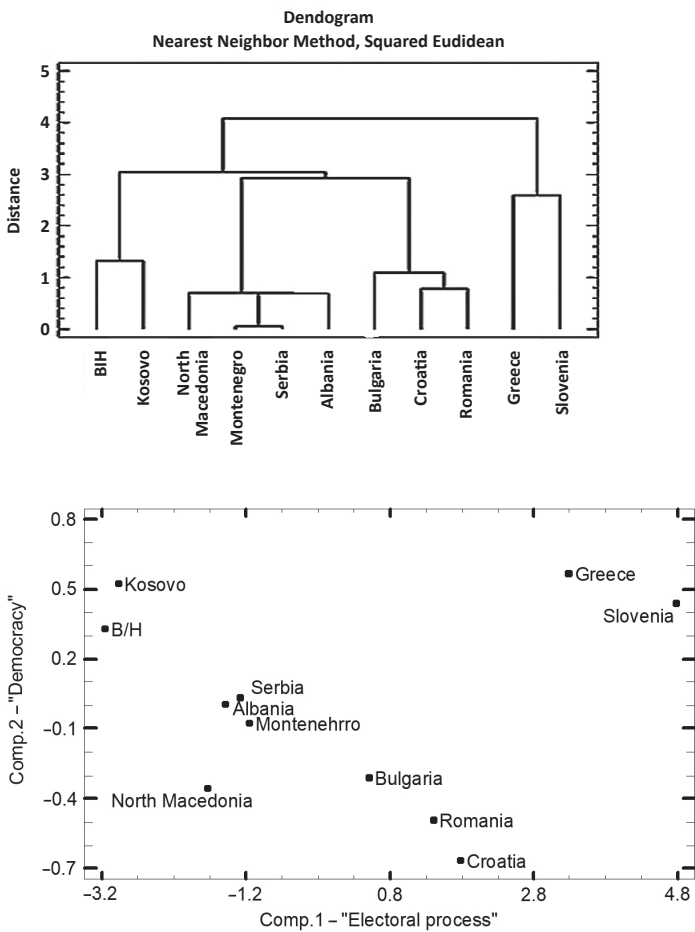

Figure 9: Clustering of Balkan countries

countries, as Donovan and Karp[25] point out, it is necessary to draft policies, programs, and national action plans to integrate efforts for economic, political and social development, with clear objectives for the democratic development of the society. An important part of which are the electoral processes and the rule of law.

Based on the results of the analysis of the main components, the clustering of the Balkan countries in the scatterplot of the first two components, which explain 96.71% of the variance and the respective dendrogram, is presented as in Figure 9.

The analysis of the main component shows four groups: 1. Slovenia, Greece, 2. Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, 3. Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia, 4. BiH, Kosovo. Such a situation shows that, even though before the fall of the Berlin Wall the countries of the Balkan region, except Greece, were all governed under the communist regime, the processes of their transformation into democratic societies have had significant differences. This can be explained by the fact that:

There are significant differences between the Balkan countries in the historical, political, economic, and social processes that took place before the Second World War in these countries.

The communist regime established after the Second World War in these countries exercised its power in different forms and ways, causing different effects on the culture and behavior of societies towards the democratic processes.

Geopolitical interests have caused the international factor to have acted differently in different Balkan countries, actions which have supported and promoted the processes of democratic development, in these countries, in different ways.

Based on the average value of the PEI index[26] for all the legislative elections held in European countries from 2012–2018, the Czech Republic is classified, alongside the countries of N&W Europe as Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Germany, and the countries of C&E Europe as Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, are among countries with very high level of Electoral Integrity. The Czech Republic is one of the countries that, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, is governed under a democratic regime. Meanwhile, although the Czech Republic shares a common recent past of being governed under the communist regime with the countries of the Western Balkans, the behavior and capacities of the Czech society to organize and carry out electoral processes that meet the standards for democratic elections are definitely more developed. Such a fact encourages interest in conducting comparative studies with the aim of identifying factors of different natures, such as political, economic, social, legal, and behavioral, which condition the development of electoral processes standards.

In this way, real opportunities are created for the countries of the Western Balkans to benefit and use the experience in planning and implementing necessary reforms with the objective of increasing the index of the election's integrity.

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[25] DONOVAN – KARP, *c. d.*

[26] PIPPA, N. – GRÖMPING, N. Populist Threats to Electoral Integrity: the Year in Elections, 2016–2017. Faculty Research Working Paper [online]. 2017 [cit. 2022-22-10]. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Perceptions-of-Electoral-Integrity-Index-PEI-50_fig7_316785215.

Table 2: PEI – Czech Republic[27]

	Legislative election		Difference
	2013	**2021**	
Index	77	79	+2
Electoral laws	85	82	–3
Electoral procedures	90	88	–2
District bound	75	81	+6
Voter registration	87	87	–
Party registration	77	77	–
Media coverage	58	62	+4
Campaign finance	55	69	+14
Voting process	72	71	–1
Vote count	94	91	–3
Results	89	84	–5
Electoral authority	87	88	+1

Referring to the values of the PEI indicators for the legislative elections held in the Czech Republic in 2013 and 2021, it turns out that media coverage and campaign finance are the indicators that have the lowest rating. Meanwhile, it is important to note that the values of both of these indicators from the 2013 elections to the 2021 legislative elections have increased by 4 and 14 points respectively. Referring to the values of these two indicators for the elections held in the countries of the Western Balkans, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and BiH, it turns out that even in these countries these are the two indicators with the lowest values.[28] Meanwhile, the trend of changing values for both indicators is not the same as that identified in the Czech Republic. For example, in Albania, the value of these two indicators from the 2013 legislative elections to the 2021 legislative elections has decreased by 4 and 6 points respectively. In these conditions, one of the ways that is recommended to be followed in Albania to plan and implement interventions in the legislation, but not only, with the objective of improving the values of these two indicators, is to perform a comparative analysis capable of identifying the responsible factors of such differences, in Albania and in the Czech Republic. This also applies to all other countries in the Western Balkans.

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[27] See GARNETT, H. A. – JAMES, T. S. – MACGREGOR, M. Election Integrity Global Report 2019–2021 [online]. 2022. The Electoral Integrity Project, pp. 20–34 [cit. 2022-10-20]. Available at: https://research-portal.uea.ac.uk/en/publications/electoral-integrity-global-report-2019-2021.

[28] Ibid., p. 37.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The values of the Electoral Integrity Index classify the Balkan region in the category of regions belonging to the *"Moderate"* level.

Referring to the value of PEI, the Western Balkan countries are classified in the group belonging to the category *"Low"* or *"Moderate"*. Other Balkan countries, with the exception of Bulgaria, are classified in the *"High"* or *"Very high"* categories. In the electoral processes that took place during the period 2011–2021, in the Balkan countries, the financing of an election campaign and the role of the media are the indicators that are perceived to have significant deviations from meeting international standards.

In general, in the Balkan countries, the process of voting and vote tabulation is perceived as a process that meets the standards.

Electoral legislation and the work of the election administration for its implementation result as indicators that positively affect the integrity of elections in almost all Balkan countries.

The countries of the Balkan region, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania, and Slovenia, where the process of developing a liberal democracy is perceived as a process of achieving positions, are also the countries that conduct electoral processes with a higher integrity index.

The relationship between the level of economic development of the country and the integrity of the elections fails to appear in the countries of the Western Balkans. This result promotes the formulation of the hypothesis according to which the connection between the integrity of the elections and the economic development of the country begins to appear only after the country crosses a certain threshold at the level of its economic development.

Corruption is identified as a factor that negatively affects the integrity of elections in the Balkan countries, especially in the Western Balkans.

The significant differences on the implementation of the international standards in elections in different Balkan countries are a consequence of the action of factors related to the history of their political, social, and economic development and their interaction with current factors and situations. The role of international institutions conditioned by geopolitical factors is one of the reasons that can also explain these differences.

The model and experiences of the Czech Republic's electoral issues should be taken into account by the countries of the Western Balkans. Despite the fact that the Czech Republic is a geopolitical, economic, and social reality that has significant differences from the Western Balkan countries, comparative analysis and the use of the Czech experience by these countries in an effort to increase the PEI is justified by their common objective - development as democratic society.

Prof. Assoc. Dr. Andon Kume, PhD
Faculty of Political and Legal Sciences, Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës
andon.kume@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-0669-7753

Olta Qejvani, PhD
Faculty of Political and Legal Sciences, Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës
olta.qejvani@hotmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-4849-376X