

## **The Influence of Political Culture on Democracy in Parliamentary and Semi-Presidential Systems. Case Study: Albania vs France**

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**ABSTRACT:** The governing systems are affected by how a country develops the elements of the political culture. Political culture differs from the approaches, recognitions, assessments or interpretations that are made to the political system itself. The measuring indicators of political culture are freedom, equality, democracy, civil rights, and individual responsibility. Political culture is influenced by a country's political, economic and historical conditions, but the way the government systems approach the political culture varies from country to country. The purpose of this research paper is to compare the impact of the political culture of two democratic but no similar governing systems. The first system is the system of the parliamentary republic where the case study will be the Republic of Albania and the second system is the semi-presidential system where the case study will be the Republic of France. The methodology used in this paper is the qualitative comparative analysis. Qualitative analysis will provide preliminary research information for both countries being studied. The comparison of political systems will be carried out through the indicators of political culture, which will be provided by the evaluation of the indices of international institutions. The semi presidential system of the Republic of France turns out to have the highest indicators of political culture. Measuring indicators such as democracy, civil rights, political rights, and equality show stability in the democracy of this country. Indicators for the Republic of Albania have significant differences in comparison to the Republic of France. Based on the study, it is concluded that the political culture has not managed to consolidate democracy in the parliamentary Republic of Albania.

**KEYWORDS:** parliamentary, semi-presidential, index, political culture, system

### **INTRODUCTION**

Based on historical, geographical, economic, and political conditions, states have defined or adapted their own forms of government. The two forms of government addressed in the paper are: the parliamentary republic (Albania) and the semi-presidential republic (France). The Parliamentary Republic of Albania is defined as such in the 1998 referendum (OSCE report 1998). The referendum created the country's Constitution, which sanctioned Albania as a parliamentary republic (Official Bulletin 2018, 4) in Article 1 section 1. The semi-presidential system in France has its beginnings in 1958 when it was proposed in the Conseil d'État, the form of government "presidential regime", in which the presidency was "the keystone" (Knapp & Wright 2006, 59).

Governing systems are influenced by political culture. For political system theorists such as Parson and Easton (1965) "the concept of political culture incorporates all attitudes or behaviors of general culture that are important to the stability of a

political system." For Almond and Verba (1989, 16) "political culture becomes the frequency of different types of cognitive, sensory, and evaluative orientations toward the political system in general."

The understanding of political culture has changed over time. New theories of political culture have developed in dealing mainly with the rational choice approaches. (Ferraj 2007, 199). The new theories state that "in the analysis of cultural influences may also be include the political decision-making or policy-making, including political outlets such as welfare state savings, social savings and other public finances" (Lane and Ersson 2002, 6). Political culture should not be treated as a "rigid" concept but should be analyzed in some measuring components or indicators. The components (measuring indicators) of American political culture are: freedom, equality, democracy, civil rights and individual responsibility (Willson, Dilulio, Bose and Levendusky 2015, 94).

### **Similarities and differences between the parliamentary and semi-presidential system**

There are similarities and differences between the two forms of government. Both forms of government, such as the parliamentary republic or the semi-presidential republic, belong to democratic governing systems. As such, they possess the principles of separation of powers. In other words, in both republics the powers are: executive, legislative and judicial. Both republics come to power through periodic elections. Liberty and rights, representation, guarantee of law and equality in all directions are included in the core of both republics.

As for the distinctive elements, they will be analyzed based on the comparison of the presidential and parliamentary systems treated by Shively (2012, 439). To begin with, we need to clarify that the main governing power in the parliamentary republic (Albania) is the executive power (through the prime minister). In the case of France, the semi-presidential republic has elements of parliamentary and presidential authority, with the dominant elements being that of the president. In this case, the president has the main weight of political decision-making. In the semi-presidential system, the executive and the legislature are responsible for enforcing the law, are independent and often compete with each other; while in the parliamentary system, the legislature and the executive branch are closely codependent. Although the president has the main weight in decision-making, the responsibility for politics is more difficult to identify in a semi-presidential system. Politics as a whole are more easily realized in the parliamentary system than in the semi-presidential one (the dependence of the authorities). The semi-presidential system, unlike the parliamentary one, has an important task, which is to control the executive. The political process is less flexible in the semi-presidential system than the parliamentary one. The presidents have a personal mandate, and the mandate in the parliamentary republic belongs to the ruling cabinet. In a semi-presidential republic, the president has direct responsibility for conducting foreign policy. The presidential cabinet is not made up of prominent party people but by experts in the field unlike the ruling parliamentary cabinet.

### **Comparison of political systems through measuring indicators**

Above we discussed the main concepts of parliamentary and semi-presidential systems (similarities and differences) as well as the concept of political culture (meanings and elements of political culture). More specifically, the elements of political culture will be analyzed comparing official data. The data of a series of international ideas/indices, reports

or indicators such as the OSCE, the Freedom House Institute, Transparency International, and The Economist Intelligence Unit etc. were used to analyze the data of the components related to the development of countries, their political culture and the level of democracy as a reference

**Table 1.** Indicators of political culture

	PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC	SEMI-PRESIDENTIAL REPUBLIC
MEASURING INDICATORS	ALBANIA	FRANCE
Democracy Index	5.89 points (79 <sup>th</sup> place)	8.12 (20 <sup>th</sup> place)
Political rights	27 points	38 points
Civil Rights	40 points	52 points
Human Development Index	0.791 (69 <sup>th</sup> place)	0.891 (26 <sup>th</sup> place)
Corruption perception	35 points (106 <sup>th</sup> place out of 180)	62 points (30 <sup>th</sup> place out of 180)
Gender Equality	60.4 points	74.6 points

*Source: Author*

The democracy index according to The Economist Intelligence Unit calculated in Albania is 5.89, in other words Albania holds the 7<sup>th</sup> place. According to the rating of this measurement, Albania enters the hybrid regimes (hybrid regimes 4.01-6.00). France ranks 20<sup>th</sup> with 8.12 points, becoming a fully democratic regime (full democracy 8.01-10.00). The difference of 2.23 points is significant considering that this difference produces a difference of 59 countries. The escalation on the type of regime, hybrid in Albania and full democracy in France expresses the differences between the two countries.

Political rights and civil rights will be compared through the indicators of Freedom House. According to the rating, Albania receives 69 points; 27 points go to the political rights and 40 points to the civil rights, resulting in Albania being a country with partial freedom. France receives 90 points (38 points counted for political rights and 52 points for civil rights). According to the rating, France results being a country where citizens fully enjoy their political and civic freedoms. Even in this case the difference between the indicators of the two countries is obvious.

The Human Development Index will be compared through the Global Human Development Indicators (UNDP 2020) indicators. The Human Development Index is the multiplier of some indices such as: gender inequality, gender development and the multidimensional poverty index. According to the data, Albania's human development index is 0.791, ranking on the 6<sup>th</sup> place. France has an index of 0.891, being on the 26<sup>th</sup> place. The difference in ranking is 43 countries.

The Corruption Level Perceptions Index will be compared through the indicators of Transparency International. Albania receives 35 points in this assessment, being ranked as the country 106 out of 180 countries analyzed. For France this indicator is calculated at 62 points or scaled as the 30<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries. The perception of the level of democracy is very different in comparison between the two countries. According to Transparency International, Albania stands 76 countries below France, indicating that Albania is a part of problematic countries in terms of the perception of corruption.

Gender equality will be analyzed through data from European Union reports. When it comes to gender equality, Albania receives 60.4 points based on the Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania (2019), while France acquires 74.6 points. Meanwhile the European Union itself has an average level of gender equality of 67.4 points. This shows the high level of gender equality in France, which exceeds the average of EU countries by 7.2 more points.

## Conclusions

The historical, geographical, political, economic conditions have produced different systems in different countries. Political culture, unlike government systems, is internalized in society. So it does not come from outside but is built on the values and attitudes of the citizens. Comparing the elements of political culture in two countries that have different governing systems proves that democracy is achieved when the indicators of political culture are high.

This conclusion was reached after taking into consideration the evaluation of the measuring indicators. By comparing these indicators we can determine that the index of democracy defined France as full democracy and Albania as hybrid regime. As a result, political and civil rights have a higher level of achievement in France than in Albania. The perception of corruption shows the differences between the two countries. The perception of corruption is much higher in Albania than in France. Gender equality also had major disparities. It should be noted that the level of gender equality in France exceeded the average level of gender equality in the European Union. The Human Development Index, which indicates gender inequality, gender development and the multidimensional poverty index, showed that the inequalities between the two countries differed greatly.

Based on the measurements made through the indices of the indicators of political culture, we can conclude that France demonstrates a higher level of political culture, which also indicates a higher level of democracy. However, these indicators do not lead us to the conclusion that the governing system of the semi-presidential republic is better than that of the parliamentary republic, but show that societies with high political culture, such as France, possess a full democracy compared to "a hybrid democracy" that the Albanian society has.

In conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Democracy in Albania must develop the so-called political culture in terms of representation and the freedom of rights.
2. Carefully anticipate the human development index. This index is very important as it includes the areas of equality, economy, and demography.
3. Albanian society must strengthen its role in individual responsibilities and gender equality.
4. To fight corruption in real terms; the perception about corruption in Albania results in high indicators.

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