Summary

Democracy has been faced, in the last recent years, to its own viability because of all those events in economy and in the social sphere that are also transforming its natural political scene: the State. Facing this, democratic principles seem to take distance from what they mean in their own, enforcing the distance between theory and practice deriving in an application that differs from their theoretical conception. Practice, has not been as “rational” as everybody could hope of a regime as the one we study here. This is why political rationality has become a democratic challenge, understanding that in a first time, political rationality indicates a coherence to be manifested between political actions and political principles.

In this paper we will define, firstly, what rationality means so as other useful meanings for the study, and we will try, in a second time, to identify those elements that in democratic practice can be considered as rational and those that cannot, and in a third time we will give the word to academic’s, so as to know their appraisal about this subject.

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to think that political rationality could represent a challenge for democracy; the most desired regime in the world to adopt and supposed as “rational”. Nevertheless, this political regime has demonstrated to be not as “rational” as everybody could consider because political actors do not always exhibit a rational behaviour, this is, they do not always act in the direction they could respect political principles or get more benefits facing different situations. Because of high expectations about the democratic regime, it has been questioned about its viability, given place to ask, since many years ago, if democracy works; the main theme of the Congress.

Because of the contradictions that democracy presents in practice, in this paper we will focus on the degree in which democracy obeys or not to political rationality. Taking into account the democratic theory, we will analyse the elements that are inherent to a democratic regime, identifying those that are rational from those that are not.

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In order to reach the objective of analysing democracy from a rational perspective, in a first time, we will define what rationality means and we will determine the meaning of political rationality and rational choice. Secondly, we will differentiate between democratic theory and democratic practice, assuming that in the democratic exercise, democracy is far away, in the stricto sensu, from political rationality.

Finally, we will try to establish some proposals, so as to approximate democracy to a “more rational” exercise and to get a stronger level of viability.

1. Conceptual Frame: Some useful meanings

Everybody thinks that everybody knows what democracy is and it seems unnecessary to define it. But, democracy is one of the regimes that its meaning is not as comprehensible as totalitarianism is, even if everybody understands by democracy the most plural regime in which civil society plays a very important role, dialogue is one of the most important qualities, such as liberty and the respect of law. But, in practice, democracy takes place depending on the context in which it settles. This is that even if democracy is a universal concept and that even if its principles are also universal, its practice has depended, on particular interests. In this sense, we are talking about States’ interests, this is, one or more communities’ interests. Interests modify the democratic essence because they will influence it in the decision making. This is that even if democracy has, for example, the dialogue as the best way of solving conflicts, a State’s particular interest could influence in non acting in a “rational” way, in a coherent one, preferring violence to dialogue, because in the moment the State chooses violence, this may be the more “rational” option. In this sense, interests influence in a very important way what democracy has become in the last recent years, and define its new challenge: its political rationality. Rationality should be a quality of regime but not a fuzzy element moving from one interest to another. Because we cannot forget that such as States have one own interest over other countries, within a State, a lot of interests take place too; the particular ones of each individual. This is why democracy has to face also the growth of individualism as another challenge that affects the decision making, but also its own way of governing. This is because even if collectivity is not the addition of individuals, it provokes a different effect. Antique Democracy, the one of V. th century, was based on collectivities and modern democracy has to add all individuals to be nearer of what collectivity is, of what collectivity could represent and what collectivity could desire. This is one of the reasons of the difficulty that democracy presents to be as democratic as everybody hopes, and to be as rational as everybody expects in our days.

Rationality is another concept that can be understood in the sense that a rational action will be the one pursuing a specific goal after a conscious analysis of options. This is a very
comfortable definition but it responds to the human nature in the sense that a decision could be rational for one person if it will help to obtain the results that have been planned before. In a more stricto sensu, we can adopt Weber’s rationality concept: “the organisation of social and economical lives based on efficiency principles and in technical knowledge”. Adopting this meaning, we can say that political rationality should be oriented also to efficiency, and not only to that kind of rationality derived just from a “rational” exercise of thinking but without considering results. Rationality will be oriented also to cover population needs with low costs and in a short period of time, based on regimes principles, in this case, in the democratic ones, a definition that we will consider for the analysis. But, nobody can establish that this orientation could not influence in a negative way in democracy, affecting its humanitarian essence. As we just said, rationality involves more than one actor: the actor who makes a decision and the other actors receiving the consequences of that decision-making. Definitions presented here force to consider rationality from different points of view:

1) From the actor’s point of view and
2) From collectivity’s perspective

From the actor’s point of view a rational choice will be determined by its own interests even if collectivity considers that it is not a rational one or even if the action’s nature is not rational per se. An example of this, are the terrorism attacks or the case of United States’ attack to Irak. This is a case that people consider the attack as an irrational act even if some people thought that it could have been a good option for ending terrorism, as it was said. And for terrorists, terrorism is also a rational action oriented to their goals.

From collectivity’s perspective, a rational choice or action will be the one oriented to the public benefit, or at least, to that collectivity’s benefit. This is the kind of rationality that should be implicit in democratic regimes. Nevertheless, this principle does not always take place in this sense because those collectivity’s interests should be represented in the decision making but representation is, sometimes, not enough. This is a problem that collectivities present and that democracy should solve as another challenge: the collective action is not always oriented to public benefit, but both, actor’s rationality and the collectivity’s one are determined by the supposed “best” alternative to up to.

If we consider rationality as a “daily exercise” that depends on the “best option” being agree with expectations and with results people look for, we can say that rationality, in practice, is not a rational concept because it will suppose an implicit flexibility, moving from one interest to another, this situation makes it not rational. Rationality supposes in its classical meaning “an alternative choice after a deliberation process in which actor should consider: what is possible, what is desirable and what is the best option agree with desirability condition, considering
possible constraints” (RUBINSTEIN, 1998). Cudd defined a rational actor as “the one taking into account all possible consequences deriving from different options” (CUDD, 1993, p. 101-133). The analysis between options is what qualifies an action or a decision as rational. We will consider that in politics, to be rational means to get and practice political power according to regime principles so as to be efficient for population. Collective decision, considered as the addition of all individual options implies the integration of individual preferences in collectivity’s ones. But, the capacity of getting it and exercising it in a better way, will be based on the regime and the way of pursuing goals. Taking this into account, we can say that political rationality cannot be a universal concept, what is rational in totalitarianism and authoritarianism is surely not in democracy and vice versa. In this sense, “practical rationality” is a fuzzy concept moving from one interval to another, considering that sometimes there are situations that can be rational or not according to different contexts and circumstances, and democracy presents also the same pendulum movement between rationality and interests in a specific situation, affecting its own nature and its political rationality, which should answer to majority decisions and goals in a plural context, this is, including differences.

In the sense that we are conceiving rationality, we can define political rationality as the rationality that in politics is coherent and respects political principles according to the regime taking place in a specific State. In this case, that we are analysing democracy, political rationality will be oriented to be coherent with democratic principles and to respect the equilibrium of powers proposed by Montesquieu, so as to avoid an abuse of power from governors. This is to be politically efficient in practicing democracy, another challenge for democracy. Nevertheless, analysing political rationality in democratic regimes merits to be considered from two points of view too, from politicians’ rationality and from citizens’ one. The definition will involve the consideration of electoral competition for getting power and political parties and leadership interests, including all of them as well as pursuing governance. In the way that everybody’s demands, interests and necessities are considered and covered in the best way, peace will be easier to maintain. We should not forget that governance problems make reference to “three main conceptual components (...) These make reference to concepts as efficiency, legitimacy and stability” (CAMOU, in BACA L, et al. 2000, Op. Cit. 283), all of them included in democracy. But they represent also the main objectives to reach so as to be able to talk about a “good government”.

At the same time, if governance is closely related with the State of Law, it is also closely related with stability and security provided by the State. We should say that efficiency is understood as the capacity of reaching planned goals with few resources and in the period of time expected. But it is also possible only if context conditions allow to practice democracy according to what it is. This is another challenge for democracy because even the place in which democracy settles; in the State, this one presents important changes.
Governance is a condition provided by the system in which it takes place; it is certainly an equilibrium in relations between forces, this is between government and citizens who are the ones with capacity of demanding. In this sense, efficiency, legitimacy and stability keep “rational conditions”, this is that they obey to specific characteristics determining their permanence so as to pursue goals. Legitimacy is important in this case. It is easier to govern with a legitimate government than with an illegitimate one.

Legitimacy is the legal and consensual acceptation and obedience of government and State’s functions and rules respectively, supporting State’s decisions. Legitimacy is also another controversial concept depending on the way it is approached as Berten points out: “pragmatic approach takes legitimacy out of rational treatment, from practical and moral questions, according with ethic of discussion procedures. Phenomenological approach doubts about the possibility of ending and guarantying the discussion about legitimate and not legitimate and places legitimacy in the existence of a public space where (BERTEN et al. 1992, p. 11) “a word –individual and collective- validates authority while public confirmation takes place (...)”” (LEFORT in BERTEN p. 11). Nevertheless, legitimacy can be considered a rational element in the sense that its presence provides more gains than loses from Systems with a legitimate government, this is a democratic one; an elected government by population. When we say that gains are more important than loses in a legitimate System, we want to say that it brings with him more benefits in the sense that people in power or political elites could perform their functions.

If we consider Weber’s different kinds of domination, we will see that he made reference to “rational legitimacy”, defining that “when legitimacy is rational and legal, obedience takes place by abstract rules. In this sense who possesses legal power is related by this impersonal relation so as the leader does” (WEBER M., in HERMET et al. 1994, p.142). Leader’s capacity is accepted by the ruling system and representation lays on him. Others, consider legitimacy as the “quality of power where acceptation is not based on force as a first ressource but on the free population consent that is submissive” (HERMET et al. Op.Cit. p. 142). There are so many studies about power, legitimacy and their relationship and so many definitions have been evoked but there is a consensus about population acceptation of power. This acceptation is also rational in the sense that submission means also that people believes that the chosen option could represent a positive result, this is a benefit, that can be an economical one or a social one, deriving from the acceptation of a delegated power. In this acceptation, rationality takes place. Citizens are supposed to choose that candidate with a higher capacity of developing their country than the one with less possibilities of doing it, because as a consequence will be the increase of their status. Making reference to Rousseau’s principle in which people in community receive more benefits than remaining in their natural
Stability makes reference to order. But, it is an order that cannot take place if different sectors do not legitimate policies and power. We understand by sectors all those actors having direct and non-direct influence in the political system, in government and in the State's domain. It indicates that even if there are some different actors in a system, they are organised in a way that their demands are covered so as not to be necessary to go against the system. Forces penetrating a permeable system can live together and occupy an important place. Stability makes reference to that equilibrium and well functioning referred before.

Legitimacy does not exist if efficiency and stability do not take place. In the same way, governance, or the capacity of governing, gives place to components referred by Camou but at the same time efficiency reflects the conditions settled to govern in a legitimate way, allowing stability. They are components that cannot be isolated, all have a direct influence in governance and without governance they cannot be present either. Even if stability is the more identifiable concept with governance, legitimacy plays an important role because citizens will support all decisions and not social violent movements will take place. Governance allows an efficient way to organise the State in its different elements: the economical, the political and the social one. If there is not governance and there is a low level of government's presence, instability can take place in one of those areas and the disruption can turn the system into a catastrophe, deriving even in a coup d'État. Governance is supposed to take place in rational circumstances, this is in an organised system which consider all options so as to make the best decision. But as Schmitter said once, This concept, “seems to show an excessive “elasticity” (SCHMITTER P. in Gobin & Rihoux, 2000, p.51). However, governance moves among public, particular interests and rationality, depending on circumstances.

Governance has become a very important condition and an element to pursue in our days, all over the world. Independently of its internal importance for each State, the external one has also been recovered. An importance that has been relegated since the Cold War took place because of non-warrior interventions or external disruptions of order in any State. Governance cannot be only disrupted by internal forces but by external ones as has been the case of terrorism attacks. All governance characteristics determined before, respond to a democratic regime but, should we understand governance in a different way concerning authoritarian or dictatorial regimes? In those regimes, governance is based in force relations where legitimacy is imposed and not obtained. In this case, political rationality is not the same either. We are in presence of a different kind of rationality in which power is the last and the first goal, even if ways to attain it are not rational or, if rationality obeys to get the goal any
way. In this sense, Governance is not real because it depends on the control the leader imposes on citizens and we should not forget that all rational actions are the result of choosing the best one for desired results. And citizenship does not exist as we understand it in a democratic regime. Stability depends too on the control practiced and in leader's position but it is not real. The little degree of permeability could drive to catastrophic situations even chaotic ones. When system becomes a permeable one, percolation installs and divisions among people, between people and elites, and among elites take place deriving in a separation of what government represents and what people desires. This lets us see that even if governance implies legitimacy and vice versa, governance depends also on particular interests and it is in this sense that the analysis will be develop considering the rational approach, where interests and limits will be pointed out. Even if governance should respond to rational actions, those rational actions will certainly respond, at the same time, to actor's interests. The rational approach could be one of the most skillful instruments to pursue and maintain governance even if it is limited, concerning all variables taking place in the real practice.

An element that we should take into account and that makes the difference between political rationality in dictatorial, authoritarian and democratic regimes respond to what Weber called “different types of social action: the Zweckrational, the Wertrational, the affective action and the traditional action”. The first one makes reference to goals, this is the ways to reach a goal are carefully chosen to reach a rational goal; the second one refers to actions in which means to attain a goal are rational even if the goal is not. The affective action indicates the prevalence of feelings over though and means and goals are not carefully evaluated. In the traditional action, this one is guided by habits (Weber, in W.ELWELL Fr. Max Weber’s Homepage. Social action. 1996.)“. Dictatorial and authoritarian regimes obey more to the wertrational type and the affective one, within democracy should pretend to be nearer to the first type; the zweckrational, even if in practice this does not always take place. To be rational means that all individuals act considering that they are:

a) In a system of preferences, linked with all their moral and ethic values and principles;
b) They know all the options before choosing one;
c) Their own objectives guide the decision making;
d) They evaluate benefits and loses of taking one decision;
e) They consider opponent decision makers in their decisions;
f) They consider the possibility of collaborative decision making (negotiation).

Considering all this, it is important to say that politics and rationality are a challenge per se. Politics refers to what “should be” and rationality tries to integrate real world that is not always as it “should”, to the obligation to be as it is determined in theory; the
normative side. **Political rationality means the conjugation of political theory and practice, this is, the integration of the “should be” to practical behaviour.**

In the next part, we will try to identify in which aspects democracy is rational, in the sense established before, this is, the coherence between democratic theoretical principles and their application in practice, pursuing efficiency, so as to be considered a “rational regime”.

### 2. Coherence between democratic theory and democratic practice: the political democratic challenge

Democracy has some challenges in the XXI century, the first one and the most important is to keep its viability in a very fast changing world, viability that has been questioned since many years ago (LINZ J. La quiebra de las Democracias, 1997). This situation is due to limits that democracy has found since it was born on the Vth century in Greece. Countries do not present the same conditions that Athens and Rome presented at that time. Democracy, the majoritarian regime was conceived for little and low populated territories, so as to be able to include all population living there. Nevertheless, even if democracy means in *stricto sensu* people’s regime, in democracy is not people who governs as it says its definition. Democracy has always been, even in the Vth century, an elitist regime, in the sense that it considers only citizenship so as to be recognised as a person able to participate in decision-making. Along all these years, democratic theory has been relegated to new countries needs, derived from transformations. Practice, in this sense, tries to adapt itself to new political, social and economical changes, taking an important distance between the normative sphere; the theory, this is the “should be” part, from the practical one; reason that makes useful and necessary to make the distinction between democratic theory and democratic practice.

We have talked about the viability of democracy and its crisis, this raises the question about **what is in crisis; the democratic theory or the democratic practice?** This question emerges from another question: how is it possible that democracy could be in crisis if the tendency to adopt a democratic regime in those countries that have been authoritarian or even totalitarian is still positive and if their population did not find under those regimes an important and sustainable development? Are democratic governments who make questionable the viability of this political regime acting in a different way of what indicates democratic essence and transforming it in an even not rational regime? It seems that all these questions have place because democracy is a victim of XXIst. century transformations. In this sense, we can say that it is not the practice of a democratic regime that is in crisis, but it’s theory that does not go any more with new world circumstances. Nevertheless, we could say that the acceptance of democratic regimes starts to be a regional factor, depending on gotten results from democracy.
faced to people expectations. Latin America, for example, presents, according to PNUD’s study *The Democracy in Latin America: towards a citizenship democracy* (PNUD: abril 2004), a clear reject to this regime but it is due to democracy work in this region in terms of efficiency which has not provide the region with a sustainable development. In this sense, we can say that in answer to the main question theme of this Congress, for Latin America, democracy is not working and in consequence it has another challenge: **to recover people confidence so as to keep its essence as the ideal government**, being enough flexible adapting its principles to new reality and to keep distance from those that could carry it to failure. This is, to consider that democracy works, it needs to be more rational in the sense of applying its principles according to new realities and in a coherent way, so as democratic regimes behaviour could be considered politically rational in the way of exercising power. In the measure that power is exercised considering options and choosing the best one for population, benefits will be higher.

One of democratic principles is legitimacy. This exists only when public opinion validates authority. Legitimacy is one of the most important characteristics of a democratic regime. Nevertheless, it has changed along the time in the way that it takes place, from a hereditarian way of recognition to the most sophisticated way of voting. But, what is important is not the way that power is attributed to leaders, but the consensus existing about power delegation and leader’s representation. Nevertheless, legitimacy in the sense of exercising vote, does not assure that democracy takes place. There are many countries with an electoral democracy but authoritarian practices. Mexico has been an example. Elections do not mean democracy but we should take into account that it is difficult that legitimacy takes place if stability and efficiency are not present. Efficiency reflects the capacity of governing; governance that allows to organize the State, the economical, political and social spheres. As we saw before, the development deriving from democracy is a fundamental element in its recognition as a working regime. But governance takes place only on rational circumstances this is, when an evaluation of different situations takes place before decision-making. The way that legitimacy takes place in a democratic regime, is not always as rational as it should. Legitimacy is more rational on the theoretical perspective than in *praxis*. We cannot forget that candidates’ election does not rest on candidates or party’s programs, but on particular interests guiding preferences over another candidate, who may be will give less benefits to that individual person. We cannot talk about legitimacy without making reference to representation and the quality of represent citizens, even if representation is not only a quality of democracies because totalitarianism and authoritarianism look always after population recognition, but it is a very important and the most distinctive quality democracies have, because they cannot take place without it. Democracy depends on representativity. Representation is a necessary condition for democracies to take place but not a sufficient one, it needs to be integrated by other principles so as to be able to talk about a democratic regime. Democracy is the only regime in which individuals take importance as individuals, in the sense that one vote counts for decisions.
Making. Legitimacy is rational in the sense that it helps government to apply policies; to combine theory with practice.

Talking about democracy implies to talk about people’s sovereignty, another democratic element that was conceived for little populations, so as to say that in democracy is the “demos” who possesses sovereignty; this means the citizens. Nevertheless, in practice who really exercises the decision making is the representative elite, but it is impossible to talk about democracy and do not make reference to sovereignty, one of the most distinctive elements in these regimes. But, sovereignty has changed since it was conceived in Bodin terms: “sovereignty is not limited in power, in responsibilities, neither in time. People can give power to someone for its use, to use people and to use people goods, and to use all the State as this person likes so as to render the State to whom this person desires” (BODIN:1583,p.122). This absolutist way to hold power is not any more possible in modern democracies, it cannot be conceived in the property sense, in which the leader owns power but, in the representative one. In Bodin’s perspective, people do not give power to someone, the governor is the most supreme human being and because of that it is impossible to ask him any result. It is the absolute authority. In Rousseau’s case, he conceived sovereignty from the collectivity point of view. For him, sovereignty takes place in the general will that makes it impossible to sell or to be an object of heritage. This conception makes sovereignty a more democratic principle, but it is not as limited as we would like because Rousseau settled leaders sovereignty on the own leader. This can derive on another kind of regime but democracy.

In real democracies, in countries with a democratic parcours, sovereignty settles on people, on people’s choice and demands. Sovereignty, as a power property concept and conceived as a need for a best way of exercising power, settled in the majority principle, can be considered a rational element but not in the sense that the governor is the unique and absolute owner of power, not in democratic regimes. Governors are not supreme individuals, are the ones who have to give results to people who chose them to represent them. To consider them as a superior entity, guides us to talk about another critic element proposed by democracy: equality.

When we talk about equality, another characteristic of democracies, we find that in theory it is very well conceived, but in practice it is hard to apply because we should consider that individuals are different since they born. Nevertheless, equality referred in democratic theory allows only to Herodoto’s isonomy, this is the individual’s equality face to law, this is rights equality. But, it is not enough to consider it in this sense because in those regimes and even in democracies where we can adapt law to circumstances derived from personal interests, we are not talking any more about an application of the State of Law, a distinctive quality of this kind or regime. But, we should accept that law transgressions are lower and more difficult to find in a democratic regime than in a dictatorial or authoritarian one. It is may be one of the most
difficult characteristics to accomplish in practice. Natale expresses: “equality’s philosophy is not limited to men’s position in the State, it is extended to the possibility of profit of social goods” (NATALE: 1998, p.50). In this sense, democracy settles on opportunities equality for everybody, without racial or ethnical differences. This could be easy to establish if it does not depend on a certain development degree, so as to create acces circumstances. Someone who has not received a certain education level, cannot access to some opportunities that someone who had received it. In this sense, equality turns difficult to be applied in practice. If rationality means an analysis of options and to choose the best one for the individual decision making, equality cannot be considered a rational element nor from democracy, nor from individual point of view. In some cases, individuals should choose among their possibilities, that are, in most cases limited, but they do not choose among the best and the worst ones, this is, they are limited by its possibilities. Democracy establishes an egalitarian system, facing rights but facing duties too. Walzer says that equality does not be understood as “the elimination of differences, but the equality on domination, or what is the same a society free of any domination” (WALZER on: PALAVICINI: 2005, p. 24), what is impossible to practice. From democracy’s point of view, considering that its principles should be coherent with its practice and to demonstrate efficiency to be considered as rational, equality is the less coherent and rational principle democracy can hold. Democracy is not an egalitarian regime but an elitist one, reason that makes it not rational in its proposals according to praxis.

Equality evokes another distinctive feature of democratic regimes: the tolerance. It is impossible to make reference to democracy and to avoid talking about tolerance which includes the egalitarian principle of acceptance of others in spite of differences, physical, social, racial, ethnical, economical or political ones. Tolerance means to accept the other with all its differences and to recognize this acceptation. Tolerance means the inclusion of minorities in a majoritarian system. At the same time, tolerance indicates a system allowing conditions for exercising rights and the recognition of difference in decision making. When someone makes reference to include difference in what seems to be “normal” or what the majority considers to be “normal”, means to listen and to accept different points of view, believes, etc. Tolerance, as it is presented, is a “rational” concept in the sense that it is more valuable to include that difference than to create a conflict based on differences. Nevertheless, this does not mean that democracy, in practice exercises always tolerance, prevailing over conflicts. Tolerance, is, may be, the most fuzzy concept between to be practiced or not, and a fuzzy concept between rationality and irrationality. What does tolerance mean if there exists a social or political conflict affecting order? It is possible that it does not take place in that moment? What is rational in a situation of disorder? To be tolerant or not? If to be tolerant in this case means the possibility of a chaotic situation, tolerance is not rational and if it tries to solve the conflict even in a violent way is to assure order, this way and do not obey tolerance principle, would be rational.
In the same sense dialogue and consensus are presented as two of the most important elements that have to take place in a democratic regime. We will talk about both elements since it is impossible to talk about consensus and not to consider dialogue and viceversa, even if dialogue can take place and not to reach consensus. In this sense, dialogue is more a component of democracy than an inherent element as consensus is. In last recent years, dialogue has not been the prevalent element in this kind of regimes facing specific situations. Considering that democracy does not always obey the principle that dialogue prevails over aggression or attack, we can say that democracy is not always politically rational, referring to dialogue.

Consensus is strongly linked with majoritarian decisions and with the acceptance of differences that favorises debates, discussions and analysis. In this sense, and if we consider that dialogue and consensus are a way to keep order and to maintain a stable system, we can say that both, consensus and dialogue, are rational in the measure they try to give power to citizens contributing with power recognition, allowing legitimacy, even if that power is a limited one. We cannot forget that one of the multiple definitions of democracy is “democracy is one of the multiple ways of governing; that one in which power is not only in one hands or in a minoritarian group, but in everybody hands, or what is better, in the majority ones, opposing to other ways of governing” (BOBBIO N.: 1976, p. 11). But, in the measure that dialogue and consensus depend on circumstances, we can say that both are also fuzzy elements in democratic political rationality application.

And the last, but not the less important distinctive element of a democratic regime that we will analyse here, is freedom, this element could seem to be opponent to a system where order should prevail over disorder or catastrophic and chaotic situations. But, freedom in democratic regimes represents a normative way of acting; it means in Baechler words “autonomy, to be free, is to choose with knowledge, after deliberation, is to be able to establish our own projects and to potentailize means so as to reach them” (BAECHLER J.:1994, p. 12). In this stricto sensu, we can say that rationality is implicit in what freedom means because it gives to people the capacity of choosing and to elect, to exercise that freedom or not. It is may be the most rational element we can find as an inherent of a democratic regime, someone is free in the sense that he or she has the capacity of choose one option among all choices existing even if to choose one of them limits the person in his/her decisions, eliminating the other options. Nevertheless, freedom, has also suffered some transformations along the time according to the imminent evolution of democracies. Societies tend to individualism, a contradictory condition to the constant collective socialization, forcing democratic regimes to face citizens participation as a collectivity or that society participates in an organized way face to the prevalence of individuals over society.
As we have seen, the most representative elements of democracies are fuzzy characteristics, moving from rationality to irrational ways of acting, talking about the democratic practice because they depend on circumstances, even if political rationality is an inherent quality of democratic theory. According to this assumption, we have interrogated some academics so as to know their appraisal of democracy as a rational or not rational political regime.

3. Academics’ appraisal about democracy: is it a rational or a not rational regime?

In this part, we present lecturers’ points of view about democracy, as a rational or not rational regime. So as to know what do they think about the political rationality of democracy, we have made a survey with 35 lecturers in social sciences, helped by the basis of semantical differential method, this is, we chose “the evaluative” attribution and “the power” one to have a general idea of their perception about a democratic regime, even if we cannot talk in a strictly way about the semantical differential method that should consider the axes “fair-unfair” and “dynamique-static” in a universal perspective way of thinking. Nevertheless, with this exercise we try to accomplish the theoretical approach that we have developed in the first two parts, with the approach of people used to do analysis of social phenomena.

About those introductive questions about the theme we are studying, 63% of lecturers’ opinions are oriented to say that political rationality means to talk about legitimacy, efficiency and stability, 26% said that means efficiency and legitimacy and only 8% chose efficiency and stability as the representation of political rationality. This means that political rationality, implies people recognition of power and it is only in a democratic regime that in stricto sensu this can take place. Considering this, any political regime but democracy is rational, but in practice, and for keeping its essence, democratic practice should find the way of being more efficient that it is now, so as to recover its place in world.

Also, they were asked about the political rationality of the democratic theory. The results were: 40% said that political rationality of the democratic theory is represented by its own principles; 37% said that its principles averagely represent it; 20% referred that is less represented in its principles that represented; and 3% chose the option that political rationality is not represented at all in its principles. These results show that even if democracy is questioned, its rationality is still recognized.
To the question **do you consider that democratic practice is rational?** 14% answered very much, 28% answered in the average; 51% said little rational and 7% considered the democratic practice not rational at all. If we compare answers considering the democratic theory, we can say that political rationality of democracy is attributed to theory but not to practice, even if they do not accept completely that rationality derives from its principles.

To the question: **what does talking about a rational democracy means?**, lecturers answered: 43% the exercise of a political culture, based on democratic principles; 40% considered it as to adapt the application of its principles to the context where it settles; 11% chose the option: “the analysis of options according to goals to reach” and 6% considered that a democracy is rational when it gives to governors the capacity of exercising power, this is, to live with governance. These answers reflect that the economic perspective of having some options for choosing among them, is not as important as one could think to qualify democracy as a rational or not rational regime. It is more important to recognize regime’s principles application and the coherence that could exist between practice and theory.

To the last general question about **what do you consider to be the most rational regime?** Answers were not as homogenous as we could think referring to democracy. Only 43% of academics pointed democracy as the most rational political regime, while 37% argue that the most rational is totalitarianism and 14% considered authoritarianism as the most rational among three regimes; 6% did not give its opinion.

For the exercise with the semantic differential method, we consider concepts as democracy, democratic practice, political party, State, government, authoritarianism, totalitarianism, citizenship and vote, asking academics to qualify them in two axes: dynamic or static and rational or not rational.

Results gotten are as it is show below:

For **Democracy**, 91% concentrated answers in the “dynamic” side; 3% considered that it is not dynamic, but it is not static either and 6% completely static. This kind of answers shows the positive way of considering democracy by our sample. In this sense, we could think that answers in the axe rational or irrational are also concentrated in the option “more rational than not rational”. This assumption is confirmed in 76% of answers, divided among the options situated in the rational side, considered it as completely rational. The other 28% is divided in thinking that democracy is “less rational than rational”, and even irrational. 6% opted for the neutral position and another 4% for the irrational option.
For **Democratic Practice**, 48% said that it is dynamic, 51% considered it as more dynamic than static. But in the axe rational or irrational, the higher rate of answers was gotten by the option “more rational than not”, with 43%; followed by the option “less rational than rational” with 34% and only 6% considered it as completely “rational”; 6% opted for the neutral perception and 6% said that it is even “not rational”. It is in its application that democracy presents the challenge of been a rational regime.

For **Political Party**, 20% considered it as completely dynamic; 23% thinks that political party is more dynamic than static; 3% said that it is not dynamic but not static either; 34% said that it is more static than dynamic and 20% considered it as static. In the rational or not rational axe, 37% thinks that it is more rational than not, only 9% considered it as totally rational, while 40% thinks that it is less rational than rational. With these answers we can say that if political parties were more rational, in the sense of reach its goals according to its own ideology and interests and if they were more present in society during the non electoral periods, their dynamisme could increase.

**State** was considered by 48% of academics as dynamic; 40% considered it as more dynamic than static, concentrating 88% of answers in the dynamic side. 6% thinks that it is more static than dynamic and another 6% thinks that it is static. In the rational and not rational axe, answers were concentrated between the options: rational, with 54% of answers and “more rational than not” with 43%. The other 3% is situated in the option “less rational than rational”. This is important in the sense that even all those transformations suffered by the State, and theories affirming its extinction, it seems to be the most dynamic and rational entity that exists, keeping its mision and coherence face to others.

**Government** was considered by 46% as dynamic; by 43% as more dynamic than static. 3% said that it is not dynamic but not static; 8% considered it more static than dynamic. 23% of academics considered that government is completely rational, 48% think that is more rational than not, concentrating 71% of answers between these options. 8% considered it as “less rational than rational” and 6% chose the neutral option.

28% of Academics thinks that **authoritarianism** is more static than dynamic; 68% said that it is static; 3% said that it is not static but it is not dynamic either. In the rational-not rational axe, answers were 6% for the rational option; 11% for “more rational than not”; 43% for “less rational than rational” and 40% for not rational at all. In this case, as in the case of political party, the association between rationality and dynamism is confirmed as it is in the case of totalitarism as we can see below.
28% thinks that totalitarianism is more static than dynamic and 71% said that it is static. 3% said it is rational; 11% “more rational than irrational” and the 85% was concentrated in the irrational side.

Citizenship concentrated 77% of answers in the dynamic pole; 3% said that it is not dynamic but not static either, 17% considered it as more static than dynamic. 11% thinks that it is totally rational, 37% more rational than not, 40% less rational than rational, 6% not rational at all and 6% opted for the neutral position. In this case, it could seem that dynamism in citizenship is not always accompanied by rationality.

Vote, the last element evaluated in our interview, is considered as more dynamic than static by 79% of academics. 14% thinks that it is more static than dynamic, and 6% preferred to keep their answer in the neutral option, this is, “not dynamic, but not static” either. In the rational axe, answers were concentrated on the option “more irrational than rational”, with 55% of answers, the other 45% was situated on options “more rational than not” with 28% and “completely rational” with 17%. It is interesting because even if citizenship is not considered completely rational, we can say that academics situated it in the side of more rational than not, while vote is situated nearer to the other side as “more irrational than rational”. This can be because as we said at the beginning of this paper, rationality can be taken into account from collectivities point of view and from the individualistic perspective. And, if we consider vote in the individual perspective, we can may be affirm that it is rational, thinking that one person will vote for the party reflecting his/her interests. But, from the collectivities point of view, an individual rational action could derive in a not rational collective one, as are vote results. We can argue that it is because vote is a concept that is not strictly individual, considering results deriving. Vote is a more personal and individualistic act even if it affects collectivity in an important way. Citizenship keeps a stronger collective sense.
4. CONCLUSIONS

Politics and rationality are a challenge per se. Politics referring to “what should be” and rationality trying to integrate real world that is not always as it should. Political rationality means conjugation of political theory and practice. Considering Weber’s concept of rationality: “the organization of social and economical lives based on efficiency principles and in technical knowledge”, we can say that political rationality implies to apply that organization in the State, where government elites justify and keep their power, face to civil society. Nevertheless, we are not talking about any kind of power, or power gotten by violent ways. The power we are talking about is oriented to reach consensus on decisions among citizens; the art of politics in a theoretical perspective, as it establishes also the democratic theory.
In the case of democracy, we can say that democratic theory obeys to what we have said before. But, talking about democratic practice does not agree any more with theory in a stricto sensu. Democracy has adapted its practice to the new world reality, the one of globalisation in which practices as dialogue, consensus, governance are more and more difficult to reach.

In this sense, democratic practice looses its political rationality that implies to govern according to democratic principles and being an efficient regime in its application, becoming more irrational than rational. If we consider this point of view, we can say that efficiency in democracy means not only to reach goals with a lower cost but to make also the best decision, based on its principles, so as to assure a better status for people.

From politicians’ point of view, rationality should be centred on the coherence between theoretical assumptions and its application.

From citizens a better level of life derived from a good decision making, will mean to be politically rational, in the sense they will legitimate a government with more possibilities of assure it.

Democracy has the challenge not only of applying its principles and to get closer to theory, but also of finding the way of being more efficient that it is now, so as to recover people’s confidence and keep its viability in this XXIst century. In the measure that power is exercised considering options and choosing the best one for population, benefits will be higher.

Academics agree that in democracy, to be efficient and rational means the recognition of regime’s principles application and to be coherent with practice and theory.

As we can see in the graphic, totalitarianism and authoritarism are the most irrational and static elements considered by academics. Political parties are also situated closer to the irrational option more than the rational one, even if there is not a consensus about it. Opinions considering their dynamism are less plural.

Vote is another concept that is not considered as rational as everybody could think and even if we cannot say that academics think that it is static, it is more static than dynamic. Opinions about if it is static are more unanimous than about its rationality.

Citizenship is considered in a similar way than vote but it is more dynamic than this one and it seems to be considered more rational too. Consensus among opinions is high.
Notions as Government and State are considered dynamic but, State is more dynamic than Government. Government is considered less rational than the State but consensus about State’s rationality is higher than about Government’s one.

The most interesting result is when we compare democratic practice with democracy, because even if both are considered more or less dynamic, democratic practice is the most dynamic notion qualified by our sample. Democracy appears as more static than democratic practice but it also appears as the most rational concept. Consensus about democratic practice is higher than the one we find on democracy’s rationality.

After this research, we can say that democracy in practice, has a very difficult challenge that is to become more rational. However, it is difficult because rationality per se is a fuzzy concept if one considers it as the analysis of options so as to choose the “best one”, moving from one interval to another, considering that sometimes there are situations that can be rational or not, according to circumstances, and democracy presents also, the same pendulum movement between rationality and interests in a specific situation, affecting its own nature and its political rationality, which should answer to majority decisions and goals in a plural context, this is, including differences. Both, have the challenge of become non-fuzzy elements but well determined.

III. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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