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Defining Elements of Lack of Meritocracy and Clientelism in Transitional Societies and Less Mature Democracies: A Utilitarianist Approach to Rights

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Our constitution is named a democracy, because it is in the hands not of the few but of the many. But our laws secure equal justice for all in their private disputes and our public opinion welcomes and honours, talent in every branch of achievement… on grounds of excellence alone… (Livingston, 1951).

Abstract

This paper will look into the side-effects of lack of meritocracy and the application of clientelistic practices in transitional societies and less mature democracies that lack pluralistic features. In these countries democratic practices need to be consolidated institutionally and within a normative-utilitarianist mode of governance in order to bring optimum results. Through an overt or covert spectrum of utilitarianism, lack of meritocracy will be investigated against a number of independent variables such as brain drain, democratization, social stratification and clientelistic practices based on power relations between patron and clients. Implicitly these relate to individual rights and social progress. The approach will seek causation patterns for the application of favouritistic practices through analyses of social and political given. In a causal relationship one event precedes another or the second event appears unlikely to have happened without the first even having occurred. The approach adopted is utilitarianist, normative, formulated through a twofold functionalist and liberal prism.

Keywords: meritocracy, clientelism, utilitarianist approach, transitional society.

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Introduction

The application of a non-meritocratic model of governance is bound to be related to democracy, since its very essence is a central value in political and social life. Meritocracy is defined by "utility" as described by John Stuart Mill. To use Mill's words in a post-descriptive way it should be imposed as a "condition of natural acceptance" (Mill, 1963). Undemocratic regimes and less mature democracies lack an egalitarian structure and do not dispose of an institutional premium that will allow smooth transition to reorganization and re-orientation of the state. This may be considered a prerequisite for an orchestrated and conscious effort to introduce a new cognitive and organizational mentality that will result in a revised model of governance operating on social accountability[1].

An equally demanding but also painstaking goal is the consolidation of pluralism and the creation of a truly open society[2] where younger generations will provide the required human capital for the multilevel modernization of transitional societies. These aims can best be achieved by consolidating democratic practices and introducing norms that have been applied in liberal democracies across the world. Political socialization (Voskopoulos, 2004) and meritocracy will enhance the process of establishing an open society of equal opportunities, transparency, accountability and efficiency.

Pluralism, democracy, support for the rule of law and the establishment and eventual consolidation of a civic society cannot materialize fully unless less mature democracies in transition make best and most efficient use of their human resources without social exclusions or the application of elitist practices that lead directly or indirectly to nepotism and brain drain. A truly civic society is one that provides equal opportuni-

[1] In its turn the issue is related to "non-discrimination, equality and inclusiveness" social values expected "to underlie the practice of development". See Ackerman (2005: 2).

[2] Similar arguments are scrutinized in Popper (1973).

ties to all, a normative suggestion that makes meritocracy a value in itself and a moral code of governance. To the same direction points the claim that "the concept of civic society has a normative and mobilizing role…and is primarily a normative idea"[1]. Social life in transitional societies cannot be formulated within a framework of equality, consensus and social stability, unless clientelism, corruption and nepotism, the main but not exclusive obstacles to modernization, are marginalized.

Meritocracy is a highly disputed issue, especially when it comes to narrow it down to the issue of equality of opportunity where merit might be defined by both talent and effort[2]. There is no general agreement as far as intervening and independent variables are concerned. The current analysis aims to avoid philosophical explanations to meritocracy and selectively test it against a range of independent variables related to democracy, governance and institutions.

Meritocracy and brain drain

One of the most burning social issues transitional societies have faced is the loss of human capital and a substantial brain drain, since young talented individuals have left their countries. Brain drain deprives the process of democratization of the necessary human capital which is expected to bear the load of applying new social, economic and political norms to modernize societies, their operational and institutional mode, as well as state apparatuses.

A descriptive definition of meritocracy will provide understanding of how its lack breaks up the social web and constitutes a violation of civil and constitutional rights. *"Meritocracy consists of a form of society in which educational and social success is the outcome of ability and individual effort"* (Jary et al., 1995: 407). The definition does not mean to cover all aspects of meritocracy, but simply provide a general framework of individual evaluation for social advancement and mobility. By definition meritocracy is bound to lead to the creation of modern societies where success will result from proven intellectual and vocational abilities that can best serve public interest. As pointed out, *"meritocracy emphasizes equality of competition rather than equality of outcome, assuming that positions in an occupational hierarchy will be obtained as a result of achievement on merit against universal, objective criteria*" (Jary et al., 1995: 408). Under this spectrum, *"no person of quality, competence or appropriate character should be denied the opportunity to achieve a commensurate social status"* (Jary et al., 1995: 408). The aforementioned suggestions practically imply that everyone should be evaluated on the same criteria and should be given the chance to socially advance in a society expected by its raison d'être to provide equal opportunities.

Critics of meritocracy suggest that by strictly applying meritocratic norms one might exclude or marginalize a part of the society, individuals who were unfortunate, since social conditions did not provide them with the opportunity or material wealth to obtain qualifications and advance socially. This may be in part true and may be explained by a Marxist approach to the issue of (in)equality on the social level. Major critics of equality suggest that it can only *"be achieved by the adoption of strategies which are designed to produce greater equality as an end product of the system rather than at its starting point"* (Jary et al., 1995: 408). Despite the difficulty of devising undisputable, objective measures of ability, the most promising, qualified and talented should advance, particularly in societies undergoing social, economic and political reform.

A normative evaluation of the gains of meritocracy should be the guiding social principle of those states being in the process of consolidating pluralism, the rule of law and democracy for several reasons.

As a part of a causal relationship lack of meritocracy leads to brain drain, since a substantial number of young talented individuals are disillusioned and decide to seek employment abroad. The application of outdated practices, which, however, are not an exclusive feature of societies in transition, may reach such an extent that might affect the operational mode of democracy as a whole. The root of the problem lies in the primitive social and political systems of transitional societies and less mature democracies and the lack of a political culture[3] that will allow domestic politics to be formulated outside the distorting framework of clientelism and favouritism.

[1] See Pavlovic, V. (2001). A Suppressed Civil Society. In Blunden, M. and Burke, P. *Democratic Reconstruction in the Balkans*, Centre for the Study of Democracy, Westminster University, p. 41.
[2] For such an approach see Miller (1996: 277-301).
[3] Political culture is defined as "the attitudes, beliefs, and values which underpin the operation of a particular political system" (McLean, 1996: 379-380).

If the above requirements are of paramount importance to societies that have adopted pluralism, market economy and liberalism in politics, it is easy to comprehend why they are even more important to institutionally backward societies and politically underdeveloped social and political systems in transition. Those factors interact and define the actual form of any system of social stratification, which will bring best results if the most qualified are used in a cost-effective, result-bearing way and become valuable human capital to be used to accelerate the process of transition. Eventually this might be the fastest way for these countries to modernize, since development does not have a static form. While transitional states advance, the same happens with the states that have become models for them. The continuous process will result in narrowing the gap between front-runners and "laggards" and bring optimum results only if qualitative elements of the transition process (meritocracy, transparency) overlay clientelistic practices, nepotism, gerontocracy and favouritism. Practically, this means that states in the process of development, re-organization and transition are expected to make even better use of their human capital, which is a national asset available and cheaper than any form of foreign aid. It also provides the human resources for continuous training of future generations which are bound to complete the modernization of the society.

A third incentive for avoiding practices that do not favour meritocracy is the bad precedent that set to the moral character and operational mode of the society. In a political and social system in which clientelism and lack of meritocracy have become the common norm of social mobility, citizens engage in activities that allow only a small proportion of those able and qualified to advance and become an asset to the rest of the society. The message these practices convey to younger generations is that only association with political parties can provide a basis for social advancement. Similar practices formulate and eventually enhance the sense of social alienation an individual feels within the society and breaks up the social web by setting impenetrable walls and obstacles to those who have adopted an intellectual attitude to social issues without the patronization of particular political milieu.

Finally, modernization, democratic transition and development cannot take place when societal norms are dominated by inequality in opportunities expressed by nepotism and clientelism. The modernization process should be characterized by effectiveness, accountability in all levels and maximum effective use of human resources. Those ought to be the ascriptive and normative elements of a modern, pluralistic society which aims at operating within a utilitarianist norm.

Meritocracy is a sine qua non value in every society for reasons related to pluralism, efficiency, democracy and avoidance of social conflict. Individuals and political leaders need to adopt a normative attitude towards employment, which will impose moral principles and mobilize people so that affirmative action is taken. Similar practices will support the establishment of a true civil society. As pointed out, "a civil society encompasses institutions that are private in that they are independent from government" (Burke, 1883: 17). The above suggestion sets an operational and institutional prerequisite that is the separation and clear distinction between party mechanisms and public administration. It has been suggested that "the division between civic culture and the state reflects a private / public divide" (Heywood, 2000: 17), yet, it requires institutional arrangements not favoured by certain parts of the political elites.

Clientelism as a deviation from democratic practices

The concept of meritocracy as a social good is very old. Plato was amongst the first who looked into it and set it within the operational and normative framework of the society. When he referred to the social evils of his time he focused, inter allia, on disunity and incompetence. Lack of meritocracy refers indirectly to social disunity as the privileged ones constitute a clique within the society. Their social advancement is not based on principles, a concept on which Plato built many of his approaches to social issues.

Clientelism (Eisenstadt et al., 1981; Clapham, 1982) has shaped mentality and behaviour in many politically and socially underdeveloped societies. It describes *"informal power relations between individuals or groups in unequal positions, based on the exchange of benefits"* (Bogdanor, 1991). The above descriptive definition provides the amoral framework of those practices, since they are based on mal-exercising of power through patron-client networks that create a closed stratification system with privileged groups. In sociological terms social closure operates on exclusion and marginalisation. In a clientelistic system *"a person with higher status (the patron) takes advantage of his or her authority and resources to protect and benefit somebody with an inferior status (the client) who reciprocates with support and services"* (Bogdanor, 1991). The above also describes a power relations framework based on exercising authority in a non-normative way. Although it is

clear that there is consensus on the part of the "client", this is provided either because clientelism is viewed as the only means of social advancement or because the social partners do not dispose of an advanced political culture nor ethics. Eventually, is a clientelistic system is to be overthrown there appears to be no other alternatives except a direct confrontation with the political establishment and the emergence of a modernizing elite. Clientelism affects above all the desired by many[1] equality of opportunity and eliminates society from valuable human resources input.

The 1990s catalytic changes in world politics and the ongoing globalization process impose, for the sake of effectiveness and competitiveness, the adoption of a normative model of governance. In its widest sense, *"the term governance refers to the various ways through which social life is coordinated"* (Heywood, 2000: 19). The aforementioned coordination is related, inter allia, to accountability of the governing elites. A model of governance that legislatively imposes meritocratic rules and marginalizes clientelistic practices is bound to prove more efficient to societies that need to speed up the process of reorganization and transition of their economic, political and social models.

Meritocracy and public ethics

Clientelism and lack of meritocracy constitute a violation of civic and constitutional rights, since they overlay the goal of equality set by most constitutions of liberal states across the globe. Providing equal opportunities in substance and above all common evaluation standards is a matter of public ethics. It is not merely a procedural issue but one to be defined by the goal it sets.

In less mature democracies lack of meritocracy may characterize social life despite the typical, procedural application of principles. A democratic procedure may result in an unjust outcome. It is suggested that *"an outcome is just if it is produced by some ideal democratic decision procedure"* (Could, 1995: 198). In this case the criterion of justness is set strictly within a procedural framework and sees the outcome as a secondary goal. In an effort to avoid dysfunctionalities stemming from procedurally legitimized processes, it is necessary to focus on the right of individuals to question outcomes and set it within a general utilitarian framework. Under this spectrum, any decision should be scrutinized on the basis of the relation between democracy and justice.

Those who benefit from clientelistic practices have made their choices based on a private ethics framework that cannot be imposed on them through violent means. A. Bentham had emphatically stated that "private ethics teaches how each man disposes himself to pursue the course most conducive to his own happiness" (Thomas et al., 1992: 251). Hindsight has shown that private ethics are not compatible with public or social justice ethics. Individual livelihood and personal ambitions may be pursued at the expense of the general public's livelihood or in a way that affects negatively the common good of an orderly society. A utilitarian and ethically-oriented approach is bound to set public ethics above private ethics and this can be realized by the introduction of a legal system with clear-cut goals and transparent practices. Bentham made a useful suggestion claiming that "we must know what the dictates of legislation are before we can know what the dictates of private ethics are" (Thomas et al., 1992: 253). The ontological question that rises is whether these dictates simply aim at legitimizing outcomes and private ethics or impose norms of social justice and an equal opportunity framework. In less mature democracies legislation may be used to impose or "legitimize" private ethics and overlay transparency. In these societies the legal system may function as a means of ensuring that outdated norms survive the modernization process.

Inequality in opportunities directly or indirectly refers to a certain social Darwinism, in societies where the fittest, meaning those who have become parts of a corrupt socio-political system, survive. Social Darwinism consists of a system in which *"the strongest individuals in society eventually prevail and form a state to strengthen and maintain their dominance"* (Rush, 1992: 27).

Clientelism, nepotism and lack of meritocracy provide an overlapping, intermingled operational framework of exercising power within the defined borders of a state. To this day, the state-centric model allowed ample institutional and operational space for the application of clientelistic practices. In a way, clientelism and nepotism, and in certain cases gerontocracy, may be identified with the operational mode of the nation-state and its exclusive right to exercise power at will within its territorial base. In certain cases this led to the crea-

[1] In the US for instance a vast majority of 90% believe that "equality of opportunity is an absolutely American ideal". See https://edeq.stanford.edu/sections/meritocracy.

tion of a minimal state[1], meaning a state whose interests did not identify completely, if at all, with the interests of the majority of people. Communist regimes of the past and certain Islamic countries where religious fundamentalism prevailed, or oligarchies, dispose of features of a minimal state whose operational mode is based on overt or covert coercion. Yet, coercion is not an operational characteristic of liberal democracies, as those are built on consensus on the part of social partners.

Clientelism and power relations in a social context

Bertrand Russell defined power as *"the production of intended effects"* (Russel, 1938: 35). Under this spectrum, in the case of clientelism, those intended effects aim at providing fertile ground for social mobility only within a certain milieu. Similar practices result in breaking up the social web by forming small cores of privileged individuals and a great social margin of underdogs (the underclass) outside an accountability framework. Accountability is often synonymous with answerability and refers to *"the duty to explain one's conduct and be open to criticism by another"* (Heywood, 2000: 117), while it is an operational, normative feature of democracy. In certain cases answerability is overlaid by legalistic dictates in order to legitimize inequality of opportunity.

Lack of meritocracy points to civic deficit and reflects unwillingness, on the part of the state, to apply social justice rules. To this direction points the statement that *"law is made by the government…reflects the will of the state…and…takes precedence over all other norms and social rules"* (Rush, 1992: 24). Political clientelism affects the operational and normative mode of democratic government, while meritocracy should be seen as a social good and a matter of social justice[2].

Clientelism and social stratification

In sociological terminology social stratification describes the different layers, or strata in a society (Saunders, 1992: 1). In liberal democracies those layers are not isolated amongst them, a fact that allows horizontal and vertical social mobility. Social stratification analysis focuses, inter allia, on understanding and pinpointing the sources of inequality and lack of social mobility as formulated through the distribution of power on the social level. Long established and practiced clientelism tends to prevent social groupings or individuals to move up the social ladder and affects the way these groups relate to one another and interact.

The sociology literature has focused on the issue of equality, particularly equality of opportunity, questioning the extent to which it is sociably desirable and realistic. Equality of opportunity is *"the idea that all persons, regardless of class, age, race or gender, should have equal rights to compete for and attain sought-after positions in society"*[3]. The provision of equal opportunities aims at achieving a more equal and just distribution of society's wealth, an aim that links equal opportunity to social stratification. Clientelism and nepotism support directly or indirectly the unequal distribution of wealth, since those individuals and groups associated with state power dispose of the material resources that constitute a qualitative and quantitative advantage over the underprivileged ones. Equality of opportunity supports the creation of an egalitarian society, which, however, cannot be established without the enhancement of the rule of law and the normative integration of societies built on values, values consensus[4] and social justice.

Meritocracy will prevent the establishment of a sub-culture of underprivileged within the society. It is plausibly noted that *"the relationship of the sub-culture to the dominant culture has been identified as one of subordination and relative powerlessness"* (Jary et al., 1995: 665). In transitional societies and less mature democracies clientelism and lack of meritocracy constitute the dominant sub-culture divide.

In liberal democracies the concept of equality has a prominent place and focuses, inter allia, on the crucial right to fair selection. The semiotics and practical aspect of the lack of this right refers to the Darwinian motto of the survival of the (socially) fittest and functions against any framework of political and social ethics. Social Darwinism and an ethical application of a normative model of governance are incompatible almost by definition.

[1] For the notion of minimal and maximal state see Buzan (1983).
[2] For the contended concepts of social justice and morality see Sterba et al. (1995).
[3] See Collins Dictionary of Sociology, op., cit., p. 202.
[4] This is reflected in the work of Talcott Parsons and structural functionalism (Parsons, 1977; 1971).

Despite the divergent views on the issue, patronage, whose extended form is clientelism, leads to the marginalisation of those not associated with the state's power centres. In transitional societies lacking a pluralistic structure and democratic background, clientelism is endemic, it affects social stratification and overlays individual civic rights. Similar practices result in social immobility, brain drain and a waste of human capital. Furthermore, a clientelistic social and political framework of exercising power leads to social alienation defined as *"an individual's feeling of estrangement from a situation, group or culture"* (Heywood, 2000: 13) and does not allow for individual social mobility, thus undermining basic principles and values of liberal democracy.

Meritocracy may be seen as an expression of Kantian moral philosophy, while, in societies undergoing transition there is a need to apply a meritocracy habeas corpus to protect constitutional rights or, in their absence, to introduce them. This will allow the protection of the social order and individual civic rights. Sociological research provides the intellectual tools to tackle these issues. The sociology of education in particular focuses on education and social order particularly with the normative suggestions of Durkheim (1956) who suggested that the process of education *"was to be understood in terms of its contribution to the promotion and maintenance of the social order*" (Jary et al., 1995: 631). However, social order in liberal democracies cannot be maintained in an atmosphere of inequality of opportunity, which overlays the political and moral obligation of the governing elite. Similar practices underpin, inter allia, the inefficiency of the nation-state to protect the livelihood of those housed under its social and political structure.

Leaderships in transitional countries are expected to provide an institutional premium so that younger generations have a fair chance in advancing in the emerging social order. Maybe the most powerful incentive for young people is the prospect of their abilities being acknowledged by political elites and their social advancement on merit institutionally protected. Roy Macridis points out that "freedom of thought and expression, protections against government in the form of personal and civil rights, have little value if the individuals are not given a proper recognition so that they can work and live in accordance with their talents and capabilities. Social liberty corresponds to what we refer today as opportunities for advancement or social mobility" (Macridis, 1986: 25).

As noted by Moore and Davis, and according to the functionalist theory[1], *"social stratification comes into existence as an institutionalized form and persists as the device by which societies ensure that the most important positions are filled by the most qualified"* (Moore, 1978; Moore and Davis, 1945). In a transitional phase this is of paramount importance, since *"the positions which carry the greatest rewards and the highest rank are those which have the greatest importance for society and also require the greatest training or talent" (*Moore and Davis, 1945).

Meritocracy and the rule of law

Political and social phenomena such as clientelism and lack of meritocracy cannot be analyzed in a social vacuum outside the general operational framework of a society. As pointed out, "the rule of law, civil society, and democracy are interdependent"[2]. Moreover, "the rule of law is a condition of both democratic state and a developed civil society"[3]. Both statements imply a certain complementarity. In the absence of one, those factors do not function or malfunction.

However, meritocracy may be absent even within a democratic society, since the application of the law may go beyond the constitutional dictates of equality. The laws may also be used in a legalistic way rather than constitute a social premium against inequality. The suggestion leads to a number of ontological questions:

Can our commitment to democratic process allow for decisions or laws democratically arrived at that violate the requirements of justice? (Could, 1995: 193).

To what extent a law serves public interest and transparency?

Can a law have a Janus-like effect on social justice?

It has been suggested that "the rule of law is an essential element and a precondition of modern civil socie-

[1] For a critique of the functionalist theory of social stratification see Tumin (1953).
[2] See Vojislav Stanovcic (2009). The Rule of Law and Civil Society" in M. Blunden and Patrick Burke (eds.). *Democratic Reconstruction in the Balkans*, op., cit., p. 93.
[3] Ibid, p. 94.

ty…while its existence depends on rules which regulate various conflicts and relations between its members and autonomous parts of the society"[1]. Emphasis is given on the regulatory basis of the rule of law.

Meritocracy positively affects interactions amongst social partners and allows social stratification to be formulated on merit. Its lack constitutes absence of rule of law and is most often attributed to an etatic system controlled by political parties, namely those in power. As pointed out, "a developed civil society actually requires social pluralism and limited state power"[2]. Yet, state power remains substantial in a state-centric world, and this underpins the need for a new model of governance in which the state exists but operates on a normative basis. In those societies characterized by a pluralistic deficit, there is also the need to reshape the relationship between the operational mode of the state and the society. Such a quest can only materialize if inequality practices are marginalized. Under this spectrum, clientelism and nepotism constitute an operational system of inequality.

The protection of individual rights is a requirement for justice and this may be more important than any procedural orthodoxy. One approach sees justice "either as equal liberty or as equal consideration of interests"[i]. The later is basic to the establishment of a meritocratic social order as lack of meritocracy overlays the interests of certain individuals and advances decisively those of a few privileged. Robert Dhal had also pointed out the value of equal consideration of interests (Could, 1995: 196).

Clientelism and education

Education functions as a sub-system of the society (Dahl, 1989: 97-105), a means of political socialization, and provides the fundamental framework of future interactions amongst individuals and groups within a society. The efficiency of the educational system will define to a great extent the quality of this interaction and the form of relations amongst social partners or individuals. The role of education is not simply to provide vocational and intellectual tools for social advancement but also to provide the normative, ethical basis of future interaction. This function should be seen as an extension of an educator's duty to the society. In the same way university authorities punish those plagiarizing for not behaving in an ethical way, an educational system should "indoctrinate" students with respect for socially acceptable norms, which, in a democratic social organization, ought to be orientated towards a normative, value-oriented basis. It is plausibly suggested that "education systems provide a basis for determining what is and what is not acceptable social conduct and the means by which individuals are introduced to and taught the common values of the society" (Dahl, 1989: 97-105). Yet, what the aforementioned suggestion takes for granted is that all social partners or individuals in a given society adopt the same values, thus undermining social conflict and divergence of interests. It also overlays the fact that in transitional societies the educational system is in the process of liberalization, thus, it is characterized by a certain structural and institutional vacuum.

One of the scopes of the educational system is to operate as a socializing intellectual process unlike J. S. Mill's isolating experience (Thomas et al., 1992: 248) and a means to familiarize individuals with societal norms. Practically education is required to provide the ethical foundation of the society, which, once accepted, will enhance normative social order necessary to provide social stability based on justice, social cohesion and integration. It will also assist the formulation of an attentive public that will adopt a critical stance towards governance. As noted, "clientelistic and charisma-based party systems have a chance to survive as long as they deal with unsophisticated, uneducated voters for whom the discrepancy between democratic rules and party performance is not noticeable or problematic" (Kitschelt, 1995: 241; 449-450). The educational system has the potential to initiate the necessary changes in terms of ideology and institutions to create a new social mental model of advancement.

Conclusions

In politically underdeveloped societies, clientelism acquires the form of a political ideology inducing people to act in a specific self-centred way and becomes a non-normative state ideology. J. Plamenatz has defined ideology as *"a set of closely related beliefs, or ideas, or even attitudes, characteristic of a group or community"*(Plamenatz, 1970: 15). Ideology directly or indirectly leads or influences the political culture and the foundation of its functioning mode. On the social level, the side-effects may be epitomized in alienation (Macridis, 1986: 303) or estrangement as opposed to "integration" or "participation" (ibid). In these socie-

[1] See Vojislav Stanovcic, op., cit., p. 93.
[2] Ibid, p. 95.

ties it affects the pattern of social stratification, social mobility and supports a political system with distinctive features of inequality in opportunities.

Political socialization and participation may provide powerful tools of bringing about social changes and imposing normative practices on a basis of accountability and transparency in a functioning open society. As noted, *"the vision of open societies calls for an expanded role for democratic citizens"*[1]. A normative social order comprises of values and norms that support an open society with no exclusions. Basic freedoms may be existent in a society but may be self-annulled if they do not go along with distinctive qualitative features such as equality of opportunities, meritocracy and social liberty. Nepotism, imposed by a collectivity, violates basic moral principles of liberalism[2] and affects social liberty while it refers to traditional societies where recognition and social status was determined by birth. On the contrary, in modern societies, build on social justice, status is expected to be achieved on merit[3] and individual performance.

Appointing people on merit is sensible in a wider utilitarianist way on two levels: societal and individual. First, lack of a meritocratic system[4] leads to the establishment of a new social environment and eventually a social stratification model that leaves no room for others, thus depriving the modernization process from its human dynamic. Second, lack of meritocracy[5] does not allow people to realize their capacities by limiting opportunities. In its turn this affects an individual's psychology since it deprives them of encouragement and recognition. Recognition is a great motivator for excellence and contribution and relates to self-esteem. "People define themselves in part by the extent to which others praise and appreciate them. Each person responds to signals from those around him, working hard at activities that win praise and abandoning those that don't. An individual's growth, then, is a joint project of the self and society. In this joint project individuals not only improve their capacities; they also come to realize that they cannot fully succeed unless they make a contribution to the society that helped to shape them".

Liberalisation directly and indirectly refers to aspects of liberty which, in its Platonian sense, refers directly to democracy. However, this should become a leading state ideology behind governance. In any other case the few privileged will still advance on a sole basis of being the beneficiaries of nepotism. Meritocracy constitutes an ethical debate in transitional societies and less mature democracies in the process not only of democratisation but also the establishment of a system of values. Yet, if meritocracy is to serve a generally applied utilitarianist purpose it should ensure equal "opportunities to develop merit" an issue that brings into the ultilitarianist equation the issue of "fair equality of opportunity"[6].

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[1] See Joseph V. Julian (2009). Democracy and Democratisation in South Eastern Europe. In M. Blunden and Patrick Burke (eds.). *Democratic Reconstruction in the Balkans*, op., cit.
[2] For the three elements of Liberalism, namely, moral, political and economic see Macridis (1986: 22-38).
[3] A very interesting analysis on the way merit is understood is provided by Arrow et al. (1999).
[4] For an approach to efficiency, when it comes to look into merit and meritocracy see Daniels (1978: 206-223).
[5] For a critical approach to liberal views and the way they affect human rights see Blau and Moncada (2005).
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