

# **CENTRAL-EUROPEAN CASE STUDIES**

**VOLUME 2.**

**PUBLICATIONS OF THE CENTRAL-  
EUROPEAN INTENSIVE COURSE**

**EDITED BY:**

**GERGELY KARÁCSONY**

**PÉTER SMUK, PHD**



**UNIVERSITAS-GYŐR Nonprofit Kft. ♦ Győr, 2008**



**Széchenyi István University**

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## FOREWORD

*Lectori Salutem!*

One of the most important factors challenging the European integration is the distance between the cooperation on the level of political elites/institutions and the society; in other words, the backwardness of the forming European public opinion. The scarcity of the energy resources, the new chapters of global politics, the wide-spreading environmental risks – all have the effect to enrich Europe's recent history with experiences of interdependence.

Discussing our common affairs – one of the most uplifting vocations of intellectuals. Initiating international discussions on our common affairs – a highly responsible mission for European civil society. In the recent years the *Batthyany Lajos College of Law* in Győr, offered forums for young intellectuals to create a conversation about affairs of Central and Eastern Europe. In February 2008, the international seminar and tutorial program, called “*Central European Intensive Course*” took place for the second time at our College. The north-west border-region of Hungary became a meeting point for young scholars coming from many different countries. Our Central European past and fate teaches and urges us not to miss any opportunity to initiate professional-cultural discussions on the present and future of this region.

The College of Law in Győr started and promoted research activities in Central European cases, and organizes all the necessary assistance for young researchers. We believe that the case studies, prepared by the participants of the international research-seminar, will help to understand our common affairs better. These case studies expound narrower topics in social sciences, but in the same time, they also indicate further research-topics. Hopefully, this volume including the case studies prepared in 2008, reaching the European workshops

and intellectuals, will be able to hand on our results and draw attention to the values involved in such initiatives.

Hereby, we would like to express our gratitude to the organizations and persons, whose effective assistance made possible to carry out this Intensive Course and this volume. Main supporters of our College are: the International Visegrad Found, the Universitas-Győr Kht., the Rector's Office and the Faculty of Law of the Széchenyi István University of Győr. Our honorable partners are: Villa Decius Association (Kraków), Association for International Affairs (Praha), Municipality of Győr, Kisalföld Volán Zrt., Audi Hungária Motor Ltd., and the Multidisciplinary Doctoral School in Győr. In the technical carrying out of this project and volume *Dr. Gergely Karácsony, Dr. Dominika Borsa, Rita Nagy* and *Dr. András Horváth* – leaders and colleagues of the College – played a prominent role.

We are specially thankful for the following experts and professors, who gave lectures or helped in organizing the Intensive course: *prof. Erich Hochleitner* (A), *Dr. Agnieszka Wenninger* (D), *Magdalena M. Baran* (PL), *Dr. László Horváth* (H), *prof. Pál Tamás* (H), *Dr. Csaba Törő* (H), *Dr. Attila Marján* (H), and from the Széchenyi István University: *Dr. László Milassin, Dr. András Szegedi, Dr. Mihály Lados, Dr. Eszter Lukács, Dr. Károly Grúber, Dr. Gábor Hulkó*. The articles have been consulted and read by the tutor professors indicated at the list of authors.

I wish you a good case-studying, intellectual experiences, and further conversations for the sake of developing a (Central) European public opinion!

In Győr, June 2008

Peter Smuk, PhD.  
*editor,*  
*Director of the*  
*Central European Intensive Course*

## **THE AUTHORS:**

**Helin ALAGOZ**

Turkey

*Tutor: Dr. Csaba Törő (HU)*

**Tamara DEMYDENKO**

Ukraine

*Tutor: Dr. László Milassin, PhD (HU)*

**Anna GIR**

Poland

*Tutor: Dr. László Milassin, PhD (HU)*

**Dorian JANO**

Albania

*Tutor: Magdalena M. Baran (PL)*

**Dominika KASPROWICZ**

Poland

*Tutor: Dr. Peter Smuk, PhD (HU)*

**Grzegorz PAKOWSKI**

Poland

*Tutor: Dr. Paweł Ukielski PhD (PL)*

**Maja SAVIĆ**

Bosnia-Herzegovina

*Tutor: Dr. Peter Smuk, PhD (HU)*

**Olena SHUTOVSKA**

Ukraine

*Tutor: prof. Kyrydon Alla Mukolayivna (UKR)*

**Natasza STYCZYŃSKA**

Poland

*Tutor: prof. Pál Tamás (HU)*

**Elena TERZI**

Moldova

*Tutor: Dr. Elina Benea (MD)*

**Matylda URJASZ-RACZKO**

Poland

*Tutor: Dr. Jan Stanisław Ciechanowski, PhD (PL)*



# ON PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEM IN ALBANIA: WHAT IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY

**Dorian Jano\***

*Political parties are created freely.  
Their organization shall conform with democratic principles.<sup>1</sup>*

## **I. Introduction**

Consolidation of democracy has been one of the most central political questions of post-transition period in Eastern European countries. Even though more than a decade has passed from the fall of communism, different patterns of progress toward establishing a democratic regime have been observed.<sup>2</sup> A variety of arguments and explanation have been offered to this fact but the most compelling ones are those dealing with parties and party system. Given that “parties are the central institution through which mass representative democracies now work” it is reasonable that “their structure and performance be viewed as among the most, if not the most, significant part of the road to democratic consolidation”<sup>3</sup>. As such, investigating the evolution of party systems in a young democracy seems a good starting point for implications on if a democratic system is consolidated or not.

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\* I am very grateful to the editor of this volume for the opportunity given to write an article on Albanian Parties and Party system. I would like also to thank Magdalena Baran for her very useful suggestions in trying to help make this article more comprehensible.

<sup>1</sup> *Part one: BASIC PRINCIPLES, Article 9, and Point 1* of the Albanian Constitution. Available at <<http://www.president.al/english/pub/kushtetuta.asp>> (Access 29 April 2008)

<sup>2</sup> On this issue see SCHIMMELFENNIG Frank (2007) “European Regional Organizations, Political Conditionality, and Democratic Transformation in Eastern Europe”, *East European Politics and Societies* 21(1): 126–141

<sup>3</sup> HOFFERBERT Richard (1998) “Introduction: Party Structure and Performance in New and Old Democracies”, *Political Studies* XLVI, p. 423

This article will try to contribute to the debate on party system and its implications on the democratic consolidation in South-Eastern Europe by making a deep analysis of the Albanian case. Choosing to investigate Albania is due to two main reasons. Firstly, because comparative works done on Eastern Europe usually leave Albania out or just marginally mention it as a particular case giving only limited analyses. And secondly, because little is said on parties and party system in Albania where most of the research tackles this issue superficially and in more general terms. By addressing directly the issue of parties and party system in Albania I intent not only to give a full picture on parties and party system development in Albania but deduce also conclusions or provide insights and interpretations for the kind of democracy Albania is experiencing.

In doing so, this article will lay out his arguments into five main parts. My starting point will be a short snapshot of the historical background of Albanian political parties so to sketch an idea of what may be argued as a continuity or path-dependency element on the today Albanian political system. The second part of my article will focus on the recent party development in Albania pointing at its major characteristics. As the next step I will discuss the relations between political parties and their electorate. In the third section, the question of Albanian political reality will be examine both from the perspective of political sociology, using Lipset-Rokkan model of cleavage alignments and that of political institutionalism, more inclined to the primacy of institutions and political competition. As complement to such an agency-centred approach, the party-elite behaviour will be discussed to comprehensively explore the complex picture of Albanian political reality. Fourthly, on tackling the contradictions that are ever present in the debate of whether Albanian democracy is consolidated or not (always with reference to how parties and party system works), I argue that it is not much the (democratic) institutions who have framed political elites' behaviour, rather than the opposite. It has been the authoritarian political culture of the Albanian political elites

that have distort the democratic institutions. The main challenge in the Albanian case is not the adaptation of democratic institutions, formal rules and principles but how much they are put into practice by the political actors. As last but not least, having discussed the handicaps of the Albanian party system I will put forward some suggestion that are to be considered as immediate for the well-functioning of Albanian party system and as a consequence of Albanian democracy.

## **II. Historical background of Political Parties in Albania**

The collapse of communism all around Eastern Europe and particularly the Albanian Students Protests gave birth to a multi-party system in Albania. The establishment of political pluralism set great expectations to the whole population for a very simple reason. Pluralism, the instigator of democracy, was seen as the only alternative to cure what Albania was suffering for almost 50 years. It made people believe that the diversity of parties will express the interests and aspirations of Albanians, but which later on prove not to be the case. This is partially because a stable party system capable of sustaining new democratic system was conditional on the limited experience of liberal democracy and relative weakness of the party development before the onset of the communist rule<sup>4</sup>. In this context Albania's first political groups, forces and parties in the western sense of the word emerged only after World War I. They were rather evanescent gatherings centred on prominent persons who created temporary alliances to achieve their personal aims,<sup>5</sup> or in the best case they were orientated toward ensuring the national sovereignty, independence and recovering lost territories having less clear programs on the internal organization of the Albanian polity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> LEWIS G Paul (2000) *Political Parties in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, p.6

<sup>5</sup> Albania - *Government and Politics*, Source: U.S. Library of Congress

<sup>6</sup> BIBERAJ Elez (1999) *Albania in transition – the rocky road to Democracy*,

The Progressive Party, the major conservative one, was composed of clan chiefs and well-known landholders. Its main platform was the firm opposition to any agricultural reform program that would transfer their lands to the peasantry. Fan Stilian Noli and other Western-oriented leaders formed the Opposition Party of Democrats aiming at abolishing feudalism, resisting Italian domination, and establishing a Western-style constitutional government. During 1920-1930 small communist groups were appearing in the major cities but it was only in 1941, with direct assistance of Yugoslav Communist, when the Albanian Communist Party was established.<sup>7</sup> It soon became the best organized and most influential of all the Albanian parties created during the war. It gained significant popular support because of their emphases on the national liberation character. Favoured by this fact, they manage to overpower their weaker and poorly organized opponents grouped around the Legality Movement, which advocated King Zogu's return, and the National Front, which favoured the establishment of a democratic republic. After forming a provisional government in November 1944, the communist moved quickly to extend and consolidate their power throughout the country. They established a one-party system excluding so the possibility of participation and/or a coalition with other parties and groups. This one-party system had been preserved till 1991 when the political pluralism and multiparty system was established in Albania.

### **III. Party development in Albania**

When parties came into existence, after pluralism emerged in the country, Albania lacked any tradition of party formation. The former communist ruling party abandoned the previous ideology and reconstructed itself as reformed Socialist Party. The Democratic Party, a broadly-cast umbrella

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Oxford: Westview Press, p.19

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.20

organization including various individuals, resembled less a traditional party.<sup>8</sup> It can be best described as a non-communist grouping including people with very different interests and political point of view. What all of them shared in common was only their opposition to the previous communist regime. This can explain to an extent the reasons of fragmentation of the Democratic Party since the very beginning. But the fragmentation of parties went further beyond and became a fashionable trend where even the already fragmented parties were further fragmented. The latest fragmentation was that of the Socialist Party in 2004, as a result of a major inter-party conflict among two major competing factions represented by then chairman Nano and ex-premiere Meta.

Two, seem to be the main related reasons of this 'fashionable' fragmentation of parties. First, parties act as authoritarian organizations in themselves without internal democracy<sup>9</sup> and secondly, there is the eager for individual power and narrow personal interest which makes some individuals more 'comfortable' when 'having their own party'. Moreover, it is this narrow personal interest that is making parties to easily break up and build coalitions with parties sometimes of a diametrically opposite political spectrum. A good example can be the Albanian Agrarian party and the Human Rights Union (PBDNJ) which broke the coalition with Socialist party after their defeat in 2005 election and made a coalition with the winning Democratic Party

The programmes of parties lack clear political positioning on a great number of important issues. That is why often we encounter right wing parties, if in power, to implement social policies and the vice versa, the Left Wing Parties to implement more liberal, market-oriented policies. It seems that parties' policies are of secondary importance making Albanian Parties lose their identity on the ideological spectrum. Furthermore, the parties' programmes are very general and

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.277

<sup>9</sup> KAJSIU Blendi, A. BUMCI, A. RAKIPI (2002) "*Albania: A Weak Democracy, a Weak State*", Tirana: Albanian Institute for International Studies

usually include 'catchy statements' such as: integration into EU and NATO, fighting corruption, reducing poverty, increasing employment and many other like these. They are much more rhetorical rather than realistic policies since they lack full and deep strategies on how to really fulfil them. Such trends make the political differences of the Albanian political parties' programs become increasingly very much alike each other.<sup>10</sup> This explains the electorate behaviour where the vote is not a *yes* for the party program but usually it is a *no* for the party already in power.

#### IV. Electorate and Political Parties Relations

As Albanian parties developed or more frequently had failed to do so, it is even because of the relatively low level of political participation and overall reluctance of the newly empowered citizens to join parties and engage in the variety of activities traditionally associated with. This situation is creating a gap between the people and the political parties in the sense that political debates continue to grow away from the everyday concerns of electorate.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the parties are enjoying an absolute monopoly of political power firstly, because of the absence of organized forms of public pressure addressed by the civil society and other groups of interest and secondly, because of '*partitocratizing*<sup>12</sup>' the overall state institutions. That is why, once the parties are in power they leave apart the citizens' concerns and problems. Such a situation has brought the party systems in the country to lose increasingly the legitimacy. This

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<sup>10</sup> BARJABA Kosta (1998) "Albania in transition: elite's role and perspective", Final Report of the research project, Tirana-Albania, p.15

<sup>11</sup> KAJSIU *et. al.* (2002) "*Albania: A Weak Democracy, a Weak State*", *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> *Partitocrazia* is a term used to described Italian system, here similarly it is used to indicate that all the state apparatus is run by party militant and more over they do the party policy rather than that of the institution they work for. See for example: BOGDANI Mirela and John LOUGHLIN (2004) "The role of the elite and domestic actors" Ch.5, *Albania and the European Union: European Integration and the Prospect of Accession*, Tirana: Dajti 2000, p.90

dramatic crisis of legitimacy and representation is attributed primarily to the fault of the political parties, the primary and principal factor of power, to integrate state power with popular aspirations.<sup>13</sup> That explains why the attitude of the public towards political parties is at best indifferent and at worst hostile. Albanian Political Parties are perceived as highly inefficient<sup>14</sup> and corrupted. During all these years of democracy the electorate had reinforced and deepened the existing negative perceptions on political parties. They blame political parties for the today's Albanian situation which is depicted by setbacks rather than progress. The impact of party development characterized by political authoritarianism and also by political liberalism coupled with irresponsibility, abuse and corruption<sup>15</sup> is seriously threatening the process of democratization in Albania as well as freezing the country's integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

All these had made Albanians lose their trust in political parties. This can be drawn by the continuous falling number of party members; the no massive gatherings in the elections campaigns; and the less participation in elections. If we look at the attendance in the parliamentary elections we can notice a drastic and continuous drop of participation. From 98.92% in 1991 it fell to 89.00% in 1996 where a continuous further drastic drop to 55.59% followed in 2001.<sup>16</sup> At the last parliamentary elections of 2005 the participation continued to fall reaching only 48.8%, being the lowest turnout rate in Albania's post – communist elections history.

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<sup>13</sup> RULI Genc (2003) "Albania: the Weakness of the State", in Wim van Meurs (ed.) *South Eastern Europe: Weak States and Strong International Support, Prospects and Risks Beyond EU Enlargement*, Vol. 2, Opladen: Leske and Budrich/Bertelsmann Foundation

<sup>14</sup> KAJSIU Blendi (2004) "Albanian Political Parties – Amidst Dilemmas and Challenges", (Paper presented at the Conference "Political Science and Society: Challenges of Democratization, Development, and European Integration"

<sup>15</sup> RULI Genc (2003) "Albania: the Weakness of the State", *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> The data are taken from (Annex V: Voter Turnout and Election Results for the Albanian Parliamentary Elections 1991-2001) KAJSIU Blendi, A. BUMCI, A. RAKIPI (2002) "Albania: A Weak Democracy, a Weak State", Tirana: Albanian Institute for International Studies.

## V. Agency-centered approach: Political sociology or Political institutionalism for Albania?

The stress today is put on the on-going debate and interaction between three schools or thoughts of understanding parties and party system: that of *political sociology* seeking to explain political phenomena primarily by reference to social structure and its within divisions; that of *political institutionalism* more inclined to the primacy of institutions for mediating political struggles; and that of *Political competition* applicable to liberal democratic regimes where parties respond to the demand of competing with other parties reflecting the logic of competitive (and co-operative) interaction.<sup>17</sup> Although when coming to analyses and explanations of how parties and party system works it is more of a synthesis of the above mentioned factors that needs to be observed in the context of a specific country.

So how much do these theories explain Albanian political reality?

The Theories of Social Cleavages developed during 1960s by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, the most important representatives of political sociology, put their emphasis on the social identities as the basic building blocks of party support in Western Europe.<sup>18</sup> These social divisions are based on the historical experiences of Western countries and include the regional cleavages of centre-periphery, the class inequalities of workers-owners, and sectarian cleavages over church and state. In the Albanian case constantly there has been a discussion on north-south division which seems to have played a role even in the political life of the country. The two sub-groups, Ghegs (North) and Tosks (South), have in exchange dominated Albanian politics and were always divided in the

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<sup>17</sup> WARE Alan (1996) *Political Parties and Party systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.7-13

<sup>18</sup> NORRIS Pippa (2003) "Social Cleavages" Ch.5, *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*, New York: Cambridge University Press.



ruling party and the opposition. The Ghegs ruled during King Zogu's reign (1925-1939) while the Tosks took over under communism (1945-1992). The leaders of the today Democratic Party are Gheg dominated while then ruling Socialists were Tosk dominated.<sup>19</sup> Albanian Elections showed always a majority of Socialists and Communists votes in the southern part of Albania while in the north there is a dominance of Democrats, Royalists and Nationalists votes. A pattern that was still notable even in the last Parliamentary elections of July 2005<sup>20</sup>. The Albanian right-wing parties have firstly been mainly voted by young population, a generation of anti-communist and revolutionary spirit. Meanwhile the main social base of left-wing parties have been the adult community followed latter by a bend from the adult and third generation to the young generation.<sup>21</sup> An explanation to this turn may be first, the change of the Leadership of the Socialist party since the new Socialist Leader has gain popularity; and secondly, the creation of the LSI (Socialist Movement for Integration) who draws sizeable support from the young age group.<sup>22</sup> Other forms of cleavage, such as the ethnic/nationalist ones seem to have had only a minor effect on voting behaviour. It is mainly in the very south of Albania were a minority of Greeks live. Regarding a religious cleavage in Albania, little or no evidence is present. This because of the previous enforced atheism during the Communist regime as well as of the myth of 'Albanianism' which made religion in Albania play no role, at least in the political scene. Of course these are not absolute distinctions

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<sup>19</sup> Albania - *Government and Politics*, Source: U.S. Library of Congress

<sup>20</sup> If we refer to the results of the 2005 Parliamentary Elections we will notice a dominance of 'the right wing parties' in the northern part of Albania while in the south the dominance is of 'the left wing parties' see the table: *Rezultati per kandidatet e zgjedhjeve "PARLAMENTARE 2005"* (The result of the candidates for the Parliamentary elections 2005) Sunday 10 July 2005, Tv Klan,

<sup>21</sup> BARJABA Kosta (1998) "Albania in transition..." *op. cit.* p.14

<sup>22</sup> Concerning the 2005 Albanian Election Study, Edi Rama, the new Leader of Socialist Party was second preference for the most wanted to become Prime Minister while the LSI draws most of its supporters from the 18-29 age category. Reference from ILIRJANI Altin (2005) "Electoral Behavior in the 2005 Albanian Parliamentary Election", *Albanian Political Science Association (ALPSA)*, p. 4

since the process of social stratification has not yet occurred in Albania. The political parties have not found yet their human resources and social basis,<sup>23</sup> neither their formation is rooted in 'the conflicts within the society'. What's more the parties themselves show a degree of fluidity.

If political sociology is problematic when applied to the Albanian case it becomes even more problematic and complex if we want to identify the bases of party competition. In Albania the very nature of the political system is not disputed and parties do not debate the desirability of democracy and party competition. But what is disputable, is the very character of this competition. That is, do we have free and fair competition among parties that does not privilege any of them *ex ante*? In Albania, limited rather than fully pluralist competition can be noticed where elections are often marred by intimidation and corruption.<sup>24</sup> If we refer to Freedom House surveys Albania can be classified as having, at best, partially free and democratic elections.<sup>25</sup> While comparative works of East Central European countries on party system institutionalization (an index combining political freedom, party control, and dimensions of political competition) point out Albania to have the lowest score.<sup>26</sup>

## **VI. Agent-centered approach: Albanian Party-elite Behaviour**

Although more than a decade after the collapse of Communism has past, there are still authoritarian tendencies in

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<sup>23</sup> BARJABA Kosta (1998) "Albania in transition..." *op. cit.*, p.15

<sup>24</sup> GRZYMALA-BUSSE Anna (2000) *Communist Continuities and Democratic Innovations: Political Party Systems in East Central Europe after 1989*, Center for Comparative Research at Yale, p.7

<sup>25</sup> Albania's Electoral Process rating remains 3.75 with the worst score 4.50 in 1998. Nations in Transit ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level and 7 representing the lowest level of democratic development. For more see: Freedom House (2005) "Albania," in *Nations in Transit: Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia*, eds. Jeannette Goehring and Amanda Schnetzer. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>26</sup> GRZYMALA-BUSSE Anna (2000) *Communist Continuities and Democratic Innovations... op. cit.*, p.29

terms of political parties' behaviour. The party in power controls everything leaving little or no room for the opposition to function. Or often more than the party, it is the individual politicians who take over the political process and ignore the legislative rights of other parties.<sup>27</sup> The country used to go into institutional or political crisis as a result of such behaviours from the party (or individuals) in power. All these disturbances limit the ability to push forward reforms, leaving Albania a step back in the process of catching up with the European integration.

Under the communist regime and even before, opposition forces were 'eliminated' as the only way of maintaining power. This pattern seems to continue even today were the most notable example is the imprisoning of then-premier and socialist leader Nano once PD came in power and the suspicion about the murder of Azem Hajdari (one of the founders of Albanian Democratic Party). As in the past, there are limited elements of contemporary party competition where even inside a party the other competing fraction will be either prevented or otherwise expelled. This violent struggle of clans for controlling not only political parties but more dangerously the state and its institutions has brought the distortion of the notion of democracy. The public administrate has been paralyzed since state institutions are not immune to political or leader changes and pressures. Every political party or every leader once in power has practiced a 'wash out' of the state administration.<sup>28</sup> Previous employees were replaced with parties/leaders loyal supporters and not with experts. Such tactics has politicized state institutions making them subordinated to and used by political parties for their very narrow interest.

The highly polarized and confrontational political climate among the two main political parties as well as their incapability to resolve their problems through negotiations and consensus has shifted the role of the international community

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<sup>27</sup> Freedom House (2005) "Albania," in *Nations in Transit...* "op. cit.", p.8

<sup>28</sup> KAJSIU et. al. (2002) "Albania: A Weak Democracy, a Weak State", op. cit. p.6

from that of a mediator to that of an arbitrator party. All political parties in the country seem to have recognized and embraced these international involvements creating a certain dependency, both economic and political. This outside political reliance where local actors become increasingly dependent on the international community and the latter become increasingly involved in Albanian domestic politics is undermining the institutional building processes in the country.<sup>29</sup>

## **VII. Albanian Party System: how stable and democratic?**

Defining what type of party system a country has it is more than counting the number of parties in a polity. Other factors such as: determining a party's inclusion in the count, criteria for a party's relevance or credibility, the roles of behaviour, competition, and party unity need to be taken into consideration. It is worth stressing here, as the Albanian case proved, that it is not the multiparty system (having more than one party) as such that is crucial for the 'well-functioning' of any emerging democratic regime. Rather than it is the stability and the proper functioning of this party system that matters.<sup>30</sup>

Before analysing the patterns of competition and coalition behaviours of the party system it is with interest to see what type of party system does Albania have?

In pure statistical term Albania showed the closest approximation to the 'two party system'<sup>31</sup>. Although about 45 political parties are formally registered, in reality not all of them exercise political activity. In fact, most of the political parties in Albania are inexistent and do not have any activity or else, most of them fail to have a countable electorate. This results in the

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p.7

<sup>30</sup> Some arguments to support this statement will be given in the next paragraphs.

<sup>31</sup> LEWIS (2000) *Political Parties... op. cit.*, p.90. And also ABUŞ Murat (2003) "Democratization in the Balkans, 1990-2002", *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 2 (3&4): 86-105

continuously failing of these small parties to be represented in the parliament. In spite of their multitude and heterogeneity only some ten of political parties have some influence in the Albanian political scene.<sup>32</sup> Two of them are the biggest ones: the Socialist Party and the Democratic Party. In western models a two-party system is thought to produce good basis for democracy in terms of stable government and adequacy of representation.<sup>33</sup> In the case of Albania, this two-party system turns out to be no guarantee of stability or government effectiveness either. Recall here the anarchy of 1997, the quasi-destabilization in 1998, and the frequent political and institutional crises that Albania is going continuously.

The reason of such bizarre situations is that the today's politics still inherit elements from its past. The state is identified with the political party in power so it is difficult to tell where the party ends and where the state begins. That is why the events of 1997 along with the failure of the party in power brought as a consequence the collapse of the state itself.<sup>34</sup> The new parties emerging after '90-'91 proved as 'infected' as their communists predecessors had been, "where political opponents are considered enemies"<sup>35</sup>. The parties' political culture is still the same archaic way, with less respect or no respect at all for the rule of law. The manipulation of the election has become the norm and the unwritten law of the Albanian electoral system. With the exception of the 1992 parliamentary elections all the other elections had been strongly contested by the losing party and the international community as well. In their reports we usually read that the elections in Albania "complied only *partially* with ... international standards for democratic elections"<sup>36</sup>. Such evaluations leave Albania far from having a

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<sup>32</sup> If we refer to Official results of the July 3rd, 2005 Albanian Parliamentary Election but even to the previous Elections we can notice that the parties represented in the Albanian parliament are not more than thirteen.

<sup>33</sup> LEWIS (2000) *Political Parties...* *op. cit.*, p.126

<sup>34</sup> KAJSIU *et. al.* (2002) "*Albania: A Weak Democracy, a Weak State*", *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> BOGDANI and LOUGHLIN (2004) "The role of the elite and domestic actors" *op. cit.*, p.90

<sup>36</sup> For the latest election of 2005 see: OSCE/ODIHR, Press release (2005)

consolidated multi-party system on the base of fair competition and free elections. As a result the country's ambition to democratization and progress is delayed.

### **VIII. Political Culture vs. Democratic Institutions: what type of democracy for Albania**

The importance of political parties in Albania becomes a major issue only after the year 1991 when mono-party system came to an end opening the way for political pluralism in the country. All were hoping that the new freely created parties would be built, organized and function conform with democratic principles, having as their final objective democracy to that level as practiced in the 'West'. But it seems that few if any of these parties 'embraced' this notion since we are witnessing continuity with the communist past practices. This is because firstly, an alternation in power is hardly accepted by the in-power party. The collapse of pyramid schemes in 1997 brought the political instability which result in anarchy, while for the latest 2005 elections the rotation of power took almost three months creating an institutional vacuum for Albania. And secondly, any of the parties once winning the elections will have an absolute monopoly on power leaving no space for the opposition. Although the multi-party system in Albania made possible the fall of the totalitarian system it still seems to bring no huge change. Parties behave in an autocratic rather than democratic way where there is no real party competition, political dialogue or co-operation.

Such a mismatch of authoritarian political culture with democratic institutions has raised doubts and concerns about the quality of democracy in the countries. Having a multiparty-system is not all since democracy is not simply a machine that once set up, functions by itself. It depends on the elite and their

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"Competitive Albanian elections weakened by insufficient political will and system open to abuse", TIRANA, 4 July.

political culture which should be conform to the rules of democratic institutions. As it has been discussed so far with reference to parties and party system it can be said that it is not much the (democratic) institutions who have framed political elites' behaviour, rather than the opposite. It has been the authoritarian political cultures of the Albanian political elites that have distorted the democratic institutions. As such Albania cannot be considered a consolidated (liberal) democracy. Rather it can be argued more for a 'hybrid' type of democracy with democratic institutions but still autocratic political behaviour.

## **IX. Suggestions instead of a conclusion**

Given the above mentioned handicaps of the Albanian party system and the high atmosphere of provincialism and old mentality dominated by harsh and uncivilized tone there is an urgent need building a new political approach of parties. The emergence of independent competitive parties, the challenge of holding free and fair elections and the peaceful rotation of power seems to be the most significant challenges of the recent political situation in Albania. And for all these the Albanian political parties are called to show their responsibility and accountability as being the only prominent institutions responsible for.

A total reform is needed in the functioning and organization of the party system in Albania. A big turn should be done to run from the 'post-communist party'<sup>37</sup> type. Meaning that the Albanian Political Parties still carry over some authoritarian baggage from the former period imitating the ex-communist party. Due to political elite's mentality, the political pluralism in Albania has been misunderstood by the political parties. Democracy as understood in Albania is nothing but a

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<sup>37</sup> "...the idea of "post-communist party" is used to refer to organizations formed on the basis of the former ruling party not just in a descriptive or historical sense, but also with the distinct implication that they carry over some authoritarian baggage from the former period...". LEWIS (2000) *Political Parties...* op. cit., p.5

total domination of government upon the opposition rather than a cohabitation between political forces and share of power between legislative, executive and judicial institutions.

Post-communism used to be the common history of the Eastern Countries immediately after the collapse, picturing all these countries with important similarities but that were diminished over time.<sup>38</sup> Political significance changes in terms of levels of democratization and of economic development are achieved by most of these ex-communist countries leaving Albania behind. The greater responsibility for this falls on political parties since “as long as the party system is not consolidated, the consolidation of the new Albanian democracy is very unlikely to happen”<sup>39</sup>.

The Albanian multiparty elections of 2005 were the most crucial indication of whether Albania had appropriated the real values of pluralistic democracy. Positive steps were done in restructuring the Central Election Commission, improving the voter lists as well as in approving significant electoral law packages in line with OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. But there is more to be done regarding parties' electoral programmes, internal parties' democracy and relations among the in-power and opposition. What's more even the latest parliamentary elections (2005) were still too far of being qualified as free and fair. So, it is the duty of the Albanian political parties to make further improvements in view of the future elections as to bring the country to the European standards, or at least *organize themselves conform democratic principles* respecting what is stated in the constitution.

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Geoffrey Pridham has stated that: “*As long as the party systems are not consolidated, consolidation of the new democracies as a whole is very unlikely.*” Reference from CRAWFORD Keith (1996) “East Central European politics today: From chaos to stability?”, Manchester University Press, p.226.



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