

POLITICAL ELITES IN ALBANIA DURING THE TRANSITION FROM COMMUNISM TO DEMOCRACY

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Desantila HASANAJ

Fatih University

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To my precious family...

APPROVAL PAGE

Student : Desantila HASANAJ
Institute : Institute of Social Sciences
Department : Political Science and Public Administration
Thesis Subject : Theses Guide For M. A. Candidates
Thesis Date : June 2013

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

(Assist. Prof. Ertuğrul GÜNDOĞAN)
Head of Department

This is to certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

(Assoc. Prof. Michelangelo GUIDA)
Supervisor
Examining Committee Members

(Assoc. Prof. Michelangelo GUIDA)

(Assist. Prof. Şammas SALUR)

(Assist. Prof. Philipp AMOUR)

It is approved that this thesis has been written in compliance with the formatting rules laid down by the Graduate Institute of Social Sciences.

(Assoc. Prof. Mehmet KARAKOYU)
Director

AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.
2. The program of advanced study of which this thesis is part has consisted of:
 - i) Research Methods course during the undergraduate study
 - ii) Examination of several thesis guides of particular universities both in Turkey and abroad as well as a professional book on this subject.

Desantila HASANAJ

June, 2013

ABSTRACT

Desantila HASANAJ

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POLITICAL ELITE IN ALBANIA DURING THE TRANSITION FROM COMMUNISM TO DEMOCRACY

Transition from Communism to Democracy in Albania has started since early 1990s. The main role in this process belongs to the political representative body, as the highest level of decision makers. In order to understand better this process and Albanian politics in general, a study on elites should be conducted. In order to complete the research, different sources have been used, including books, newspapers and academic writings, in different languages. In addition, in order to have a better understanding, even from the perspective of the elite itself, interviews have been conducted with some of the most important figures of Albanian politics.

The research will be based on the main political parties and especially on the most important politicians. This thesis will also explain the process of transition and democratization by recalling some of the most important economic and political events. Albania since 1990 has passed through parliamentary elections, turmoil of 1997, election of President of Republic, and the struggle for power between competing political groups and within their own group. A deep analysis of all these events, will give a clear picture of who is Albanian's political elite and what was its role during all these years in the process of democratization and transition.

Key words:

Albanian politics, Political Elite, Transition Process, Democracy, Communism, Political Parties

KISA ÖZET

Desantila HASANAJ

June 2013

KOMÜNİZMDEN DEMOKRASIYE GEÇİŞ SÜRECİNDE ARNAVUTLUKTA Kİ SİYASAL ELİTLER

Arnavutluk'un komünizmden demokrasiye geçiş süreci, 1990'lı yılların başlarında başlamıştır. Bu süreçte kilit rolü, karar verme mekanizmasının en üst basamağı olan, siyasi temsil organı üstlenmiştir. Bu süreci ve genel itibariyle Arnavutluk siyasetini anlamak için; elitler hakkında yapılacak bir çalışma yol gösterici olacaktır. Yapılan çalışma; farklı dillerde yayınlanan, kitaplar, gazeteler ve akademik çalışmalar incelenerek tamamlanmıştır. Aynı zamanda, konunun ve özellikle elitlerin bakış açılarının daha iyi anlaşılabilmesi amacıyla, Arnavutluk siyasetinde önemli etkiye sahip olan isimlerden bazıları ile röportajlar gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bu çalışma, temel siyasi partiler ve özellikle siyasetteki en etkili isimler temel alınarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ayrıca bu tezde, geçiş süreci ve demokratikleşme analizleri, bazı önemli siyasi ve ekonomik olayların değerlendirmesi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. 1990'dan itibaren Arnavutluk; parlamento seçimleri, 1997 Krizi, Cumhurbaşkanı seçimi; Cumhurbaşkanı'nın tüm bu zamanda içerisinde ki rolü ve kendi grubu ile farklı gruplar arasında ki güç mücadelesi gibi bazı en önemli ekonomik ve siyasi olaylar ile yüz yüze gelmiştir. Bahsi geçen tüm bu olayların derinlemesine bir analizinin yapılabilmesi için; Arnavutluk'un siyasi elitlerinin ve onların geçiş sürecinde ki rolleri detaylı bir şekilde ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Arnavutluk Siyaseti, Siyasi Elit, Geçiş Süreci, Demokrasi, Komünizm, Siyasi Partiler.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APL	Albanian Party of Labor
SP	Socialist Party
DP	Democratic Party
SMI	Socialist Movement for Integration (Party)
CSCE	Commission on Security and Cooperation
EU	European Union
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe
FRESSH	Forumi Rinor Euro Socialist Shqiptar
PM	Prime Minister
CE	Council of Europe
USA	United States of America
SMD	Single Member District
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
DA	Democratic Alliance
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
FRD	Fryma e Re Demokratike
SDP	Social-Democrat Party

PBDNJ	Partia e Bashkimit per te Drejtat e Njeriut
PDr	Partia Demokratike e Reformuar
SMD	Single Member District
CEC	Central Election Commission

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, Albania has been passing through a difficult process of transition and democratization. During all these years, many important events have defined the trajectory of Albanian politics. The most important factors that had a direct impact on these events and on the transition and democratization process are the political elites. Based on this assumption it is important to have a study on this topic. The main aim of this research is to analyze Albanian political elite, to explain what its composition is and what was its role after 1990s. In order to answer these questions, the political elites should be observed by taking in consideration the main political actors of the two main political parties, the *Partia Socialiste* (Socialist Party, SP) and the *Partia Demokratike* (Democratic Party, DP), and also a few small political parties that had an impact in the formation of coalitions during these years. At the same time, social and economic conditions are the main criteria to observe what Albanian political elite did in order to accelerate the democratization process and end with the transition process. In addition important indicators of the Albanian situation are the process of the General Elections during these years, separation of powers and independence of institutions, relations between different institutions like the Presidency, Prime Minister and General Prosecutor, economic development and level of corruption, and recognition of Albania among international organizations like NATO and European Union. All these indicators will be examined one by one in the coming chapters to further clarify the role of Albania's political elites.

For the elaboration of this research different sources in several languages have been used. In order to have a better understanding of political elites in terms of origin, professional background and motives behind their political participation,

interviews have been conducted with some important figures of Albanian politics. In a country, where first sources are difficult to be found and academic researchers are not in large number, making interviews are the most important sources (Amour 2012, 143). Unfortunately interviews have been conducted in a period of 6 months before the general Parliamentary elections Albania had on June 2013. Despite the fact that the electoral campaign usually start one month before the election, preparations in all political parties have started long time before the prescribed date. This resulted in taking less number of interviews that were intended to, and of course pondered answers from the interviewers regarding the present political situation. The biggest barriers were their diffidence and their attempt to classify me according to political affiliation and hidden agenda. More often politicians refused face-to-face interviews. With the excuse of not having free time and “this is a very busy political period”, many interviews had to be made via email.

The Albanian process of transition and democratization started almost at the same time with the countries from the East-Communist Block. Although Albania has some exceptional features that distinguish it from other East European ex-Communist countries in how the Communist regime declined, there are some theories regarding elites, transition and post-transition processes drawn from those cases that fit the Albanian as well. So in the 1st chapter, the most applicable theories will be explained in order to show where Albania stands in comparison to other East European ex-Communist countries. The second chapter will be focused on explaining the change from *Partia e Punës e Shqiptarëve* (Albanian Party of Labor, APL) to the Socialist Party. This is the only case among all ex-Communist countries where the Communist party after being aware of its decline of power, gives up its

party, in order for some new members to inherit all the party structures, then named it differently and excluding the highest hierarchy of the old party. The 3rd chapter will explain the first real Democratic Party, with all its features and the main actors this party had since 1990. Then at the 4th chapter the role of small parties, like *Levizja Socialiste per Intergrim* (Socialist Movement for Integration, SMI), *Aleanca Demokratike* (Democratic Alliance DA) and some other important small political parties, that had the greatest impact on the political scene will be analyzed. The 5th and the last chapter will be focused on demonstrating where Albania stands in the process of transition and democratization, by analyzing the economic conditions, social conditions, process of general elections and that of the election of President of Republic, and at the same time the relations between members of political elite within their parties and with different parties. By explaining these events, this thesis will study the role of political elites.

After analyzing the factors mentioned previously, the main argument we can draw from this study is that the Albanian political elites could have done much more for Albania in terms of development and democracy. However, they chose as priority, self-empowerment and became slaves of their lust for power and wealth. The Albanian political elite operate with short-term goals, quick-reward results and momentary tactics, as the only way to absorb public support in critical situations such as elections. Albania lies in a situation without clear definition regarding the end of transition process, with a hybrid democracy, and all this because of the non-tolerance and non-cooperation political elites show in cases where reforms need to be taken for the benefit of society. Circulation of elites is very small and it happens only in the low ranks political power, taking in consideration that powers of the party

leader are very large so he is the only one who holds the real fate of circulation and substitution.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Political elites are the several thousand persons who hold top positions in large or otherwise powerful organizations and movements and who participate in or directly influence national political decision-making. Put most simply, political elites are those persons who have the organized capacity to make real political trouble (Burton and Higley 2010, 182).

In order to have a clear picture of the transition process and democratization process in Albania, the study of political elites is crucial. As defined in the quotation, the term political elite refers to the persons who have “influence in the decision making process” of a country and also have the capacity to make “real political trouble”. Moreover the political elite concept, in this study will be directly related to the elected representatives by people and to the most important political figures, leaving outside the powerful organization and movement leaders. Despite the fact that many neglect that Albania has a political elite, based on the moral values of politicians and on the not regular election processes that has happened, the term will still be used in order to show that Albanian conditions today are a consequence of the decision taken by these politicians.

Moreover, this chapter will show the relation of political elite with transition process and democratization process from the theoretical perspective. These three issues are interchangeably related to each other not just in practice but also in theory. After the fall of Communism and the passage to Democracy, like all ex-Communist block of Eastern Europe, Albania started the process of transition and democratization at the same time. In fact, the aim of transition was to make Albania a

democratic system, but what was reached was just a hybrid democracy. Since Albania is not a full democratic country, the process of transition still continues, and the main responsible people for this situation are political elite.

1. The Transition Process

The transition phenomenon of the 1980s, to the end of the 1990s was described as the “third wave of democratization” by Samuel Huntington (cited in Carothers 2002, 5). This wave included the fall of Communist system and the rise of democracy. In more general the word ‘transition’ means ‘a change in (or of) a country’s institutional system, that is, a set of individuals’ interaction, such as the market (or central planning) or election’ (Balcerowicz 2001, 17). Different types of transition modes were applied to different countries. Munic and Leff categorized modes of transition according to the “identity of the actors who drive the transition process and strategies they employ” (Munic and Leff 1997, 343). The best category that fits to the Albanian case also is “the reform through transaction” that according to the authors has been applied to Brazil and Poland. In this form of transition, the old elites do not oppose or restrict the call for democracy by the counter-elite. However their main objective is to keep their position in politics, their role and control in the transition process and the most important they want to keep counter-elites in a position of negotiation (Munic and Leff 1997, 348). In Albania the Communist regime started declining after the death of its leader Enver Hoxha in 1985. His successor Ramiz Alia was from the Communist elite, but he never had the hand and the spirit of a cruel dictator. Moreover, during these years the Communist block was already shaking, and changes started in most of East European Communist

countries. The death sentence for Ceausescu, the Communist leader of Romania, and his wife, with the accusation for crimes against humanity during his dictatorial rule, was a clear warning for Alia as the consequent Communist leader of Albania. Aware of these changes, Alia started with some liberal policies in term of economic and social policies before the claims for pluralism of thoughts and politics by the students. At this time Albania was in a bad economic situation because of the embargo posed by Enver Hoxha with all Communist and non-Communist countries. Despite the need for change, the students were not determined in their request for changes. Fear from the regime was present and it was an obstacle to the students and the intellectuals also, who were keeping same position as the students. From the first meeting with the President Alia, students asked from president if he would make these liberal reforms and bring pluralism and, they clearly stated that they were not in the position to oppose the President or to go against him (Meksi 2010, 28-60). During Communist rule Albania never had as opposition to the system, just some individuals who were easily punished for not obeying to the rules and ideology of the system. As Markof says:

The absence of autonomously organized political actors, independent of the state, makes it difficult for a would-be democratic movement to negotiate a transition with those power holders who might be open to change (Makof 2005, 388).

As a consequence, the first opposition party came after an agreement between the former Communist President of Albania, Ramiz Alia, and a group of students and intellectuals. Latter the Communist party just changed its name into the Socialist Party, and the same party structures were transferred also. The leaders of the Socialist Party were members of defunct Communist Party covering top position

levels in administration. From the consensus between the elites and counter-elites is how the transition process started. The Albanian counter-elite claimed at the beginning that the transition process would be gradual so it would also imply the democratization of the country. If a country has peaceful negotiated transition, it is because the old elite do not feel themselves physically threatened, or not confident that they may not have again position in the forthcoming regime (Balcerowicz 2001, 25). Same can be said for the new elites, who are “forced” to accept a peaceful negotiable transition process because of the fear to the previous regime.

During this time there were certain modes of transition that could affect the post-transition regime’s continuity (Munic and Leff 1997, 345). The “reform through transaction” has as a consequence the not-functioning of the democratic institutions. The old elite implied the participation in democratic system of new and old elites at the same time. The same happened in Brazil and Poland, and the same has been the case in Albania as well. Since Albania is not a full democratic country yet, the transition process still continues.

2. Democratic Process

Despite the wish of Albanians for development and progress, they are way back to where they want to be. The greatest victory of the fall of Communist regime was proclamation of democracy. But is Albania Democratic? Albania’s aspiration to join European Union was present since the beginning of 1990s, but still it is outside the EU doors. Moreover, Albania is not classified as full democracy. Instead Albania is considered a hybrid regime, with institutions that do not function properly, with not strict rule of law, and not complete free and fair elections.

2.1. Making Albania like Europe

The transition is a process in which we know when it starts but it is difficult to tell if it has ended. Assuming that end of transition is when certain important and powerful goals have been reached, this study will show if Albania has reached its goals or not. Albanian transition started as an opposition toward Communist regime aiming consolidation of democracy. In a country where everything is rotated around Communist ideology and Communist system, during the first years of transition, speaking about immediate consolidation of democracy was impossible. What Albanian political elite did, was to proclaim as an aim “Making Albania like all Europe” (*Ta bejme Shqiperine si gjithe Europa*), in other words “copying” what other European democratic countries have reached and “paste” it in Albania. But politics does not go in this way. There are many factors that affect political regime continuity. Since the beginning of democracy, Albanian politics never had a clear left, right or central ideology, but a policy of the elites to preserve their power and to pretend be working to make Albania a member of the European Union. During electoral campaigns of local and national elections of all these years of democracy you can hardly find a proper electoral program. Mainly campaigns are filled with demagogic speeches by the leaders of the party, by accusation toward opposite parties and by empty promises. In fact, the EU integration process can be measured as a progress of the reforms that define the transition process in Albania (Meksi and Pasha 2003, 291). In other words the adoption of democratic rhetoric and democratic institutions by Albanian political elite is a consequence of the impact of the EU for the accomplishment of membership in this organization, as it happened to many other ex-Communist countries of East Europe (Elbasani 2004, 24; Gill 2002, 178).

Albania has problems with the process of elections, corruption and sometimes even violation of the constitution so, consolidation of democracy, as “the only game in town”, is still an objective to be reached.

2.2. Albania: A Hybrid Regime

The problem of third wave democratization countries is that not all of them changed from Communism to Democracy. In fact there is a wide gap between these two systems, in the sense that many countries ended being in the hybrid systems zone. Since there are many countries in this situation, McFaul feels the need to group these countries in the “4th wave of democratization”, a wave in which all hybrid regimes are present (McFaul 2002, 213). Albania is found in this zone, with the tentative to pass from authoritarian regime to the highest level of democracy, but still stuck in the hybrid zone. This “grey zone” attributes different features to different countries. Concepts like illiberal democracy (Zakaria 1997, 42), pseudo-democracy (Diamond 2002, 25), electoral authoritarian regime (Schedler 2006, 245), competitive authoritarian regime (Levitsky and Way 2002, 53) and delegative democracy (O’Donnell 1993), are used in order to express the situation of a country that is neither democratic, nor authoritarian but stands between these two. All these systems have at least one feature that differs one from each other but their borders are blurry so is difficult to say in which system Albanian fits best.

Fahred Zakaria explains the concept of “Constitutional Liberalism” as a precondition for democracy. He says that constitution liberalism is about governmental goals and limitation of power (Zakaria 1997, 25, 28, 30). An appropriate liberal democracy is difficult to be applied and today in the world there

are more non democracies than democracies. Democracy in Albania is yet not consolidated and does not have all the features of constitutional liberalism, but still it is legitimate and is accepted by all. There are elections, but not hundred percent regular, but still legitimized as to elect the government. According to Zakaria this happens because illiberal democracies, even if they are reasonably democratic, have problem within themselves, and is this legitimization they have, that prohibits fixing all these problems (Zakaria 1997, 42). Basic democratic problems of Albania are: the intervention of elites in the judiciary and executive system, problems with the elections, miss functioning of separate institutions, high level of corruption and not trustful judiciary system. There are two main turning points in the Albanian politics during all these years of democracy: transition to democracy in 1991, violation of elections of 1996 and turmoil of 1997, where many people lost the money in the “pyramidal schemes”¹. Everything else is consequence of the behavior of Albanian political elite during these two main political events.

3. Political Elite Theory and the Albanian Case

The role of political Elite is considerably important regarding the development and progress of a country. Taking in consideration the change in regime from Communism to Democracy, meant a full set of changes in the way of governing, composition of institutions, state apparatus and the way of life. In order to have a better understanding of Albanian political elite, an observation from three different

¹ Pyramidal scheme were some illegal financial institutions. They operated by taking money from people, and within a short time, return the money back with very high return rate. These return rates, during 1995-1996 exceeded 100 percent. Pyramidal Schemes started in the early nineties, but spread quickly and they had their boom at 1996-1997. When their owners saw that it was impossible to return all the money back, escaped with all the money, taking so all the savings of Albanian people.

angles related to each other will be examined. In this way this triangle of political elite based theories will be explained by giving answer to three main questions: How was Albanian political elite formed? Who were the people who composed Albanian political elite during transition? and did Albania had circulation of elites?

3.1. How Albanian Political Elites Emerged?

Ex-Communist countries, including Albania too, do not resemble any Western Democratic country whose political elites, are originated from certain level of education or from certain strata. In France, United Kingdom and to a certain extent in the US also, the University institutions are very important in determining the future elites. So the Oxbridge in the UK, *Grandes écoles* and the *Grands Corps* in France and some Universities in the US like Harvard, Yale or Princeton, are crucial for the formation of political elites in those countries. Most of the politicians, especially in the UK and France, and a few less in the US, are graduated from these educational institutions (Hartman 2007, 61, 64, 66, 68, 70, 74). Why Albania and ex-Communist countries do not have such a trend in the formation of elites is because free educational system was absent. Education was strictly controlled by the government in terms of quality of education and the preferences of specialization.

Albanian political elite after 1990s was neither based on hereditary power transfer. The consequent political elite, was not based on the transfer of power to offspring of Communist regime leaders. Facing an opening in terms of economy and freedoms, many Communist intellectuals utilized the opportunity to increase their monetary power, and assure a stable position in Albanian politics. Political elite in Albania does not escape the definition ruling minorities by Mosca, as a class who

possess intellectual and monetary power over the rest of society (Mosca 1896 (1939), 50, cited by Hartman 2007, 9). When examining members of political elite after the fall of Communism and establishment of democracy, most of them were high specialized bureaucrats and intellectuals from different fields. Latter on some of these people increased their income and became elite in terms of preserving power through their intellect and money.

3.2. The Composition of the Albanian Political Elite During Transition?

Albanian political elite composition has changed during those twenty three years of democracy. Despite the fact that some important figures are still present and considerably powerful, many others withdrawn from politics and others replaced them. The basic feature that distinguishes Albanian political elite is the origin. Originated from North or South, is the main criteria to define a politician, in order to understand where his support come from, and the way he maintains his power.

Burton and Higley, while explaining the political elite transformation, distinguish different types of elites. The two basic features that define the elites are integration and differentiation (Burton and Higley 2010, 187). Albanian model seems to fit better at the weak integration and wide differentiation model of transformation of elites. The characteristics of this model are no consensus on political game rules and codes that causes unstable politics, not a single hierarchy of elite authority and fragmented elite, but still a representative regime (Burton and Higley 2010, 188-9). Albanian political elite authority is concentrated in the party leadership. Since there are only two main parties in Albania, the power passes from one to the other. The problem is that their leaders do not differ very much from each other. From the

Democratic Party we have the same leader since 1990s. From the Socialist Party the leader has changed in 2005 after 15 years. The position of the leader of the party does not have restriction in his mandate, in this way he may keep that power as an eternal leader. Democratic Party electorate is mainly concentrated in the north part of Albania, since the leader is from a north city, Tropoja, while the Socialist Party support comes mainly from south, since the leaders are from that region (see graphs at the end of the chapter) (Petrillo 2007, 1). This division of north-Democratic and south-Socialist comes also from the separation of society during the Communist regime in terms of economic and social development. Since south part of Albania had more favorable conditions for economic development and since Enver Hoxha was from that part, also the development was more obvious (Gerxhani and Schram 2000, 10-11). Since Socialist Party inherited the structures of APL, and the leader was from south, the SP's support mainly comes from that region, and the DP's support comes from north region. Albanian politicians' main objective is to get the power and maintain it. In case of losing the elections, each that assumes the opposition role, will contest and create instability by not cooperating with the government, but making the governing body impossible to work properly and creating obstacles for them. Despite these problems between the elite members, their government is legitimate and representative in certain way, if not taking in consideration the frauds done during the elections.

Diamndorous and Larrabee believe that there is a similar trend among new regimes of Balkan countries regarding the political class or elite behavioral and their concept of state and power. They say there are some 'silent features' that are applicable to all of them like: "patrimonialist, sultanistic and (post)-totalitarian

inheritance on state-society relations, non-liberal concept of democracy, ethnic concepts of the nation and the expected use of public office for private gain” (Pirdham and Gallagher, 2000:16). Albanian political elite has been not less charged for patrimonialistic and clientalist use of power and so does not make a difference from other countries. In any official post or public administration job position, first are taken in consideration close people of politicians and people with power, then the others, no matter of meritocracy. For the year 2012, Albanian had a score of 33 in the corruption perception index (Transparency International 2012)².

For the 1st time that elections were severely manipulated was the year 1996. These elections were a flame that with the pyramidal schemes and many other irregularities created the fire of 1997. According to Gill:

The presence of free and fair elections will not ensure that other institutional structures function in a democratic fashion, but such structures are unlikely to be democratic if elections are not free and fair. Consequently if elections are considered free and fair by independent observers, this is a good indication that the procedural minima for democracy are being met (Gill 2002, 5).

These elections were not considered regular by the international observers (OSCE) and were a big step back from democracy. After the massive protests of people, asking for their lost money on the pyramidal schemes, political institutions stopped working. Still today in Albania the consequences of 1996-1997 period are present. After 1991, and 1992 elections considered highly regular by international and domestic observers, 1996 elections were a turn-back in the process of democratization and transition. One of the main reasons behind this development in Albanian, is that politicians work with ‘tactics’ and not with ‘strategies’. Observing politicians during all these years, their activity regarding economic developments like privatization of state owned properties

²The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks countries/territories based on how corrupt a country’s public

during Communist regime, implementation of independence of institutions and other political decision regarding further development, makes clear that many of their decision turned to be wrong, leaving negative consequences in Albanian economy and social life. Short-term tactics are more preferred by Albanian politicians toward long-term strategies because during elections have more impact on the electorate. For instance the promise of leader of SP during electoral campaign of 1997, that will give back to people all the lost money in the financial scandal of “pyramidal schemes”, privatization of land that is still not resolved, privatization of energy plant, energy distributions, and other economic sectors. These policies are crucial for a country in its process of transition, because they can contribute to the transition or they may slow it down. Unfortunately in most cases the results were negative and the consequences were devastating for Albania, but when these decisions were taken they had quick electoral benefits, and that was what Albanian politicians needed.

3.3. Did Albania have a Circulation of Elites?

In the elite theory developed by Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinsky about the reproduction or circulation of elites, the best form that represents the Albanian case is “intragenerational reproduction” or called differently “vertical reproduction”. In the vertical reproduction model the

‘new elite consist of people who under Communism did not belong to nomenclature elite, but were on the trajectory to achieve such position and had the assets at their disposal necessary to reach this goal’ (Wasilewski and Wnuk-Lipinsky 1995, 684-685).

Both leaders of the main parties of the post-Communist system, after the change to democracy, had relations with the Communist regime. They were both not just

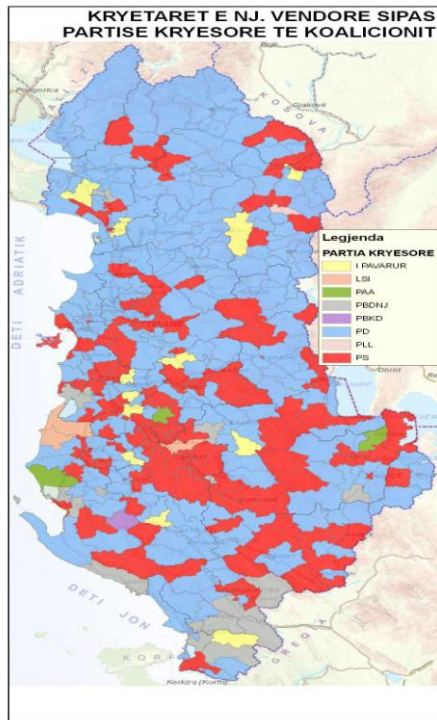
member of the party, but also working close to the leaders of that time. Sali Berisha and Fatos Nano were powerful candidates to reach the highest ranks of the nomenclature. Since the change of the system came as an agreement between the nomenclature and the counter elites, it was easier and also logical that people close to the Communist regime, but not very known before, took the stance. But ‘an elite transformation without at least some amount of circulation is a contradiction in terms’ (Burton and Higley 2010, 197). The 1991 and 1992 National Elections were considered by International observers as fair and free election, and it was in 1992 that for the first time in pluralist regime the opposition won by the free vote of people. The matter is not about just change in the ruling party, but in the persons who compose the political elite. The “vertical reproduction” model of Albania shows that people with Communist ideology replaced the Communist nomenclature. As a result circulation was not exactly as it was hoped to be.

The old theories of elites found by Mosca, Pareto etc. despite that have some small features that can be found in the Albanian case, are not completely applicable and very weak to explain Albanian political elite. Pareto describes a circulation between lions and foxes. When we observe the Albanian elite from 1990 onward, we can distinguish more like circulation between foxes, people thinking only about their own interest and with no moral for the prosperity of the general public. In the cross of these 23 years we can observe the government and the opposition, not collaborating but keeping their own stances, and any opposition that came during these years had as objective to put barriers to the government. The ‘negotiation notion that refers to the process of interaction between regime elites and non- regime elites chiefly about the contours that the political system should take’ (Gill 2002, 20)

does not exist. The aim is to intimidate their work so they could win points to the electorate. What Mosca and Pareto claimed, that elites are strongly related with the priorities of the society in general and that elites are related to the economic conditions of the country respectively, in Albanian case should also be included the high role of the mafia and criminal groups that had direct relations with people from the government (Rama 2012, 59). In his book '*Perralla te Tranzicionit Shqiptar*' (Albanian fairytale of transition) Shenasi Rama explains also Ibn Khaldun's theory of circulation of rulers which in Albanian case is applicable just in the part when he says that people with tribal mentality can come to power and even adopt themselves to the new norms of the society, which in this case Rama calls all Albanian elites as people with tribal mentality, without clear vision for the future and working only for their own interest and preserving power (Rama 2012, 398).

These are the main theories and assumptions that fit the Albanian case of political elites. In the next chapters, these theories will be illustrated with examples and more detailed information regarding political elites during these years. Most of the study will be based on the elite concept and practice within transition process and democratization. Since they are the decision makers, all politics depend on them. Shenasi Rama claims that the poor situation, in which Albania is today, is all because of the political elites and this is also confirmed by the interviews taken by the author to some important political actors (Meidani, 2013; Meksi 2013; Ruci 2013; Cela 2013; Dokle 2013; Milo 2013; Bufi 2013; Marku 2013, Veliaj 2013). Rama says that more than 20 years from fall of Communism, Albanian politicians had enough time to change the system and make it work in an effective way (Rama 2012, 47). Albania does not have the tradition of democracy and civil society movement, because the

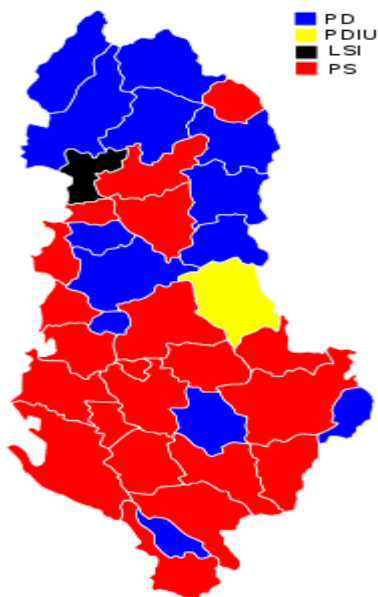
whole society is based on patrimonial structure. People go to vote, but vote for the best among the worst, and here are all the starting point of Albanian problems.



Graph.1: Local Elections 2006



Graph.2: Parliamentary Elections 2009



Graph.3: Local elections 2011

CHAPTER 2

CHANGE FROM THE ALBANIAN PARTY OF LABOR TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The transition from Communism to democracy in Albania did not resemble other ex-Communist countries in Balkans. It was not a revolution, an insurrection, or even a civil war to bring changes. What happened was a transformation. Imagine a fashion industry, when the new season comes with all new fashion clothes. However the stylists are the same, similar models to the previous season, and just the clothes change. Something similar happened in Albania too. Same people, with same mentality, transformed the names, codes and rules of the game, but the way of thinking remained untouched in Albania for many years. The same thing happened to *Partia Socialiste* (Socialist Party, SP), which was created as a consequence of fusion of *Partia e Punës e Shqiptarëve* (Albanian Party of Labor, APL). This chapter will be focused on the political elite of the APL and the SP, in order to understand what connects these two groups together and what are the consequences they had on Albania's politics in general.

1. The Decline of the Albanian Party of Labor and its Main Political Actors

Albanian Communist regime had a few regime dissidents, but they were all punished without having the change to increase opposition from the individual level. This regime was never threatened by an opposition group. Albania was one of the most isolated countries of the Communist block regarding foreign relation to other countries and movements abroad, to the extent that there were only a few people that had this right and the privilege (Biberaj 1998, 29). The only people who could travel

out of Albania were the sportsmen for competitions and a few scholars. Social scientists usually were not allowed to travel to Western countries because of the fear that they may get “infected” by western ideology and so pose in threat to Albanian Communist system. Albania had relations only with the Communist blocs for only periods of time until they stopped relations with USSR, Yugoslavia and China too. When these countries started to make some concessions and open to Western Block, Albanian Party of Labor accused them as traitor of their common ideology and declared that they would not be part of it. With this mode of thinking Hoxha stopped any kind of relation with these countries, putting the economy in a difficult embargo situation.

1.1. The Albanian Party of Labor opens to the West

After the death of the Labor Peoples Party’s leader Enver Hoxha in 1985, Ramiz Alia was his successor. The system started having many troubles, especially in the economic aspect. Alia was not like the previous leader Hoxha. He was softer and could not rule with an iron hand. This was one of the reasons that after 1985, the system started to open gradually and “the party itself started to make some changes, without any pressure from opposition forces” (Ruci 2013).

Gramoz Ruci, a Minister under Alia’s government and a prominent figure of Socialist Party during all these years, claimed that the APL wanted to give the idea of changes by taking some new figures to the party. Young people that can create the vision of something are changing (Ruci 2013). Because of this during last years of 90’s Alia promoted some important intellectual figures in politics among which were the well-known doctor Sali Berisha and the important economist Fatos Nano, whose

impact in politics during democratization process would be crucial (Progni 2009, 54). In addition all Communist countries were falling one by one, and intelligentsia started pressuring for more opening and liberalization of policies. The Albanian Party of Labor (APL) was conscious that they could not “hold the monopoly of power indefinitely” so they had no other choice as to start making these changes (Vickers 1999, 213).

In 1987, Albania opened diplomatic ties with Spain, Western Germany and Canada (Progni 2009, 29), giving way to an opening to West for the first time since the beginning of Communist system. Being in a difficult economic situation, Ramiz Alia, as the leader of the country and first-secretary of the Party, decided that it was time that more new reforms and opening policies start in 1990. During this year he released political prisoners, allowed religious services and other worship acts and took off the prohibition of foreign loans and investments (Brown 2009, 545). Moreover during this year Albania applied for membership in the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 36; Biberaj 1998, 36). During this time the university students started the protests demanding firstly better conditions for the university and dormitory, but latter these protests escalated and their demands expended and took a political character. On July of that year, Albania re-started relations with the Soviet Union, and also attempted relation with the EU. Predicting what would come next, Ramiz Alia sent abroad, to observe and understand how the Western democracies were working, academicians of Economic Faculty Fatos Nano, Gramoz Pashko and Anastas Angjeli (Progni 2009, 30). Alia was aware of the changes coming, so wanted to be prepared, as it looks like, his main concern was not to have a bloody transition but instead a gradual one,

and rescue himself in case of a judgment would be done in future if things went wrong.

1.2. Transition from the Communist Regime to the Democratic One

After the proclamation of pluralism, the first multi-party elections were to be held. The APL leaders decided that 31 March 1991 would be the date for the first pluralist elections. In those elections the APL won with a fifty-six percent of the votes collected mainly from the rural areas (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 39). The first opposition party DP, won only some of the main urban areas including the capital city Tirana, leaving Ramiz Alia, who was a candidate for deputy at this city, outside Parliament. Artan Fuga in his book *Media, Politika, Shoqeria (1990-2000)* explains the main reasons for this division of the electorate in these elections as rural and urban electorate. In rural areas nomenclature control over society was easily applicable. Foreign TV stations could not reach there and opposition newspaper could not be printed in large amounts to get distributed in those areas too. The other reason is that these rural areas were still much connected to the system because the economic effect was not felt much there since the agriculture sector was working (Fuga 2008, 203). Another reason is that people from rural areas wanted to protect themselves from the privatization of land that was one of the points in the program of the DP (Vickers 2008, 223). Voting for the old system was a decision in order to protect what could later create conflict of who would own the land. The decision for the new plural elections was taken on 18 January 1991 and the date was set for March 31, of the same year. So preparations of the newly formed opposition parties for election started in less than two months of time. This is another reason, for which

the Democratic Party and other parties strongly opposed, and blamed the time in their disposition, as factor of their defeat.

Ramiz Alia himself was a candidate in the district of Tirana, and even if all signs showed that he could lose, he refused to run in for another district. The result was that Alia lost and could not enter the Assembly as a deputy. It seems like Alia was not very much reluctant to give up his power, in the sense that he could predict what would happen and so a gradual withdraw from politics would have more positive grants.

1.3. Pluralism has Emerged, but Fear Remains

As previously mentioned, Ramiz Alia was not as harsh as Enver Hoxha was. However nobody dared to oppose him or go against him. Neither the Party's Bureau had the courage to take any action or at least to give different opinion to his, even when Alia removed some of them from the Party. Previously opposing the party or its leaders meant throwing yourself in prison. People were feared and scared. Even when the students went to meet with Alia and ask him to allow them to create a political organization, in their words you could state the fear because they were hesitating in their determination of their demands. When reading the debate between Ramiz Alia and the students, you cannot find a single sentence where these students stated in clear and insisting way, the need for pluralism and creating opposition parties to the APL (Meksi 2010, 28-59). During those times, another group named as "the Intellectuals" (*Inteligjencia*), were working and lobbying in order to bring pluralism. However, those, same as the students, were afraid to defend clearly their requests. Even Alia was surprised by this attitude of them since he was looking

forward to hear from at least one of them the clear sentence where they require bringing pluralism in the country, but unfortunately he did not (Progni 2009, 57-59). It is important to underline here that it was the nomenclature and specifically Ramiz Alia himself that brought the political pluralism and pluralism of thought. This was a way to take precautions and anticipate what would come next, since people were getting revolted and bloodshed could happen if the government would go against them. Everywhere people were talking about pluralism, demonstrating, and organizing themselves in groups. But when coming in front of the regime, since the leader of the APL was considered the regime itself, demands were softened and very carefully expressed.

1.4. From 1991 to 1992 Elections, the Alternation of Three Governments

After the elections of March 1991, Fatos Nano was appointed as Prime Minister by Ramiz Alia. During that time Alia himself was still President of the country. Albania was following the constitution of 1976. This constitution was not suitable for a democratic regime, but until the constitution would change, it was the base for new coming regime. Based on this constitution, the President had more competences than the Prime Minister, and at the same time he could be part of any Political Party. Although the elections were considered free and fair by international observers, Democratic Party did not accept the results. Protests of people were increasing and the Nano's government could not possibly work so there was no other alternative just to change the government. Instead of it the 'national stability' government was formed headed by Ylli Bufi, a vice-Minister and then Minister under Communist rule. The new government composed by people from some of the main parties,

decided that new elections will be held on 22 March 1992. The fact that Ylli Bufi was appointed by Ramiz Alia himself created discontent among other parties and especially the Democratic Party which had seven portfolios in this new government. This made the just formed government to fall and so a “technical government” came instead of it. The Prime Minister Vilson Ahmeti, an ex-minister of Ylli Bufi’s government, was chosen in consent with all the represented political parties in Parliament.

Interesting is the fact how Ylli Bufi and Vilson Ahmeti were chosen to be Prime Ministers for few months each of them. Ylli Bufi was an Industrial Chemistry graduate working in the Committee of Science and Technique in Tirana. In 1984, he was vice Minister in the Ministry of Food Industry and then was appointed Minister in the same place in 1990. According to him, before nineties working in Ministry had not the same political meaning as it has now, because on that time governmental positions and ministerial posts were appointed according to the professional achievements and those positions had more administrative role than political one (Bufi 2013). The fact that the PM Bufi was appointed by the APL leader was strongly rejected by the opposition, so he could not maintain his position for so long. Then Vilson Ahmeti’s government was formed. He had a longer ‘political’ career during the Communist regime. He was one of the few persons who had moved abroad several times because he was in charge of Albanian economy and economic relations to other countries. Ahmeti led the ‘technical government’ because his name was unanimously chosen by all the parties, and his job was to prepare the country for the new forthcoming elections. According to what Ahmeti says his government did not have much difference with the previous one. The Ministers were

more technicians than politicians (Harito 2011, 36-37). Albania was in pre-transition period and people with at least technical experience were needed to make the transition. The politics during Communist regime was orchestrated by a single person, so there were just a few persons close to the leader of APL that could have politicians' characteristics.

1.5. End of the Albanian Party of Labor

In one year course of time from the elections of thirty-one March, 1991 to twenty-two March, 1992, three governments were changed together with their cabinets. New parties were created and the main party in Albania, the APL was transformed to Socialist Party. Although SP took all the party structures from the APL, it changed its name and did not allow the nomenclature be part of the newly formed party, here including Ramiz Alia himself. The 'new' party was announced in the tenth Congress of the APL in July 1991. So many events happened so fast, and so many people came in and out of politics. In general during this year people entered politics being called by the leaders of the parties and assumed political responsibilities, being motivated by patriotic feelings. Almost all of them were people with integrity and competent in their profession, but Albania did not have a tradition of democracy, neither people had seen the Western democratic countries how operated, so many mistakes were done that slowed down the process of democratization and transition.

2. The Socialist Party

The transformation of the Communist Party to the Socialist Party was a very unique case among all other ex-Communist countries. The main questions regarding

this transformation were if the SP detached itself entirely from the APL, and if yes, when this separation happened? Opposition parties and politicians still accuse the SP as being a Communist party even after more than 20 years of democracy. But the point in this chapter is not be exactly answering this question. The focus will be on showing who are the Socialist Party's political elite since it was formed until today? What are their mentality, and the impact they had in Albanian politics. This may clarify their reasons behind their political decisions and the impact they had in democratization and transition process.

2.1. The Establishment of the Socialist Party

Some of the initiators of the Socialist Party were Ismail Lleshi, Fatos Nano, Anastas Angjeli, Moikom Zeqo, Kastriot Islami, Ditero Agolli, Ethem Ruka, Namik Dokle, Gramoz Ruci and Ermelinda Meksi. The main figure, as history showed later, was Fatos Nano, a very well-known economist, very capable in his job and a polyglot, which for the time was an advantage. As far as we know Ramiz Alia was the one who perceived his political role and his character of a future leader so it was him who took Nano close to the party, firstly in the APL.

From the beginning of the SP, there was an attempt to make the clear cut from the APL by not accepting within the party any of the members of the Bureau, including here Ramiz Alia himself (Vickers 2008, 228). Comparing the names of the candidates and members of Central Committee of the APL, with the Higher Committee of the just formed the Socialist Party, we can see that there is only one common person who is part of both these committees and he is the well-known Albanian writer Ditero Agolli. During the APL period, being member of the Central

Committee or the polite bureau was very difficult. You had to be very loyal and work hard for the party in order to deserve a position like that. So being a candidate for the Central Committee meant that the party appreciates you. Among the candidates of the Central Committee of the APL that passed to the Higher Committee of the SP were Gramoz Ruci, Kosta Kajolleri and Spiro Dede (Meksi 2010, 114-117 and 165-166). Gramoz Ruci, as the only political figure among them, that survived all these years in politics, has always been criticized and named as “Communist” because of his close ties to the APL.

The first attempt to dissociate from the old regime was by selecting the members of SP as less related to the APL as possible. People were all educated under Communist regime, and in order to get an education people had to have good or at least normal relations with the regime (Ruci 2013). More or less they were all Communist, even because of the fact that Albania did not have dissident groups. The ones that opposed the regime, by mostly using the speech as a method of expressing opposition, were imprisoned or even condemned by life. This is also the main reason that Albanian Communist regime was considered one of the harshest regimes in all Eastern Communist blocs.

When you see the lists of deputies and the founders of the Socialist Party, they were all people who had some successful carrier in their profession. Many were well known academician, engineers, doctors, and people of different fields. Regardless of this in 1992 elections the ‘newly formed’ Socialist Party could not gain the majority to form the government. The Democratic Party, as one of the main parties of the time, faced an historical victory; for the first time a party other than the APL or its offspring had the possibility to govern the country.

2.2. The Socialist Party from 1992 to 1996

From 1992 to 1996, the Socialist Party had a very dynamic course of events; in fact all the country had a very dynamic course of events. Now the Socialist Party, as continuity in many aspects of the Albanian Party of Labor, was facing for the first time being in opposition. This was the first confrontation of Albanian politics with the system of democracy, where there is place for governing party and opposition to work together and demonstrate their goodwill in favor of the community and society. Albanian politics during 1990s had necessity for intellectuals so, this was the golden chance for them to be part of political life. Today entering politics is much more difficult since the competition is stronger. Many of them claimed during the interviews that it was a moral obligation for them to accept some role in the political system Albania was constructing (Ruci 2013, Meidani 2013, Meksi 2013, Cela 2013, Dokle 2013). If during nineties politic was a ‘moral obligation’, today is a necessity to stay in power.

The leading party, the Democratic Party, instead of focusing entirely in managing the country’s difficult economic and social situation, was at the same time accusing and attacking the opposition. The fear from the Socialist Party was very obvious, since it was not clear if this was a new party or the APL with a different name. One of the strongest conflicts between the SP and the DP was the imprisonment of Fatos Nano, the leader of Socialist Party. The DP accused him for corruption during the time he was Prime Minister in 1991. The judges found him guilty, but many people, politicians and even international factor considered this as a political imprisonment and an attempt to block the SP (Vickers 2008, 239; Progni 2009, 201). Regardless of being in prison, he did not give up his post and was trying to head the party from

there. This was a two-side-medal since leading from prison created space for the opponents within the party who aimed his position, but at the same time, victimization of the head of the opposition, imprisoned by the government, gave to them credits and increased the solidarity toward the SP. The Socialist Party in the other side was making a constructive opposition. The main concern within the party was to make the complete separation from the old APL, and give the vision of a new democratic party, but this was not easy since many of the SP members were more conservative and reluctant to make changes.

2.3. The “War” within the Party

Despite the fact that the Socialist Party made an attempt to separate from the Communist APL, there were many conservative voices within the party who could not embrace these changes easily. The reformists, including here Fatos Nano, at the other hand demanded quick and radical changes in the ideology and structure of the party. According to them, this was the only way the SP could survive the democratization of Albania. Hidden under the argument of what’s best for the party, there was also the aspiration to have an important role in this historical moment for Albanian history and the Socialist Party. The lust for power within the party created many conflicts and separation of its members into groups.

One of the largest cracks inside the SP during these years was related to “Nano Motion”. From prison Nano compiled a motion composed of propositions to change the statute of the party from a Marxist-Leninist ideological party to a social-democratic party. There were proposed even some other changes that would make the difference of this party from the old one. However within the party there were

two main groups, the conservatives and liberals. The conservatives or the ‘Old Guard’ were mainly people still connected to the previous regime and refused to give up some ideologies of the past like Gramoz Ruci, Servet Pellumbi and Luan Hajdaraga, but also there were some young people that as main reason to join the conservatives were the ambition for power as for instance was Ilir Meta. As we will see later, Meta was a different case because he maintained a flexible stance toward conservatives and liberals. There was a tough battle within the party for the role of the leader but Nano after getting in prison was attributed the role of the “hero” so his supporters increased within the party and within the electorate.

Nano despite the fact of being educated in a Communist regime and without the opportunity to travel abroad like some other politicians was liberal in ideas and with vision. He had mental capacity and strong intellect to maintain his political power, but unfortunately he did not have the good-will to work for people and this country.

But of course politics is not done by a single person, neither by a single party. During the foundation of the Socialist Party the youngest and less educated persons that were within this party were Pandeli Majko, Ilir Meta and Ndre Legisi and the three of them had university degrees (Dokle 2013). As one of the most important actors of the Socialist Party said in an interview:

During these more than 20 years of democracy, I have nostalgia only for two parliamentary groups, Democratic Party’s 1991 legislative group and Socialist’s Party 1992 legislative group, because these groups were really dedicated to work and concerned about the fate of the country (Ruci 2013).

Education was not a problem for Albanian political elite in the beginning of democracy. While within the DP the debate was mainly done for political position, the Socialist Party was suffering for differentiated ideology among its members. While the old generation was quarreling for ideology as were Servet Pellymbi and

Gramoz Ruci, the fight for position was merely done by the young generation as Ilir Meta for instance. In politics the lust for important posts and domination in politics, seem like a hidden virus under people subconscious. It does not need to pass from one person to another, it just shows up when it finds convenient environment.

2.4. The Elections of 1996 and 1997

In the period between 1996 and 1997 were decisive historical events not just for the Socialist Party, but for entire Albanian politics, economic and social life. The Elections of 1996 cannot be called elections at all, since the SP candidates and commissioners withdraw in the middle of the day, protesting the immense irregularities that were happening. Many important figures within the SP could not even participate in election because they were restricted by the new law passed in parliament by the DP, which says that no one that had have any position of power within the Communist Party can be elected in any judicial, or parliamentary position (Vickers 2008, 242). The results of the 1996 election were just ten deputies from the SP and the rest were from the Democratic Party and other small parties (Ligjevenesit 1920-2005). The decision to withdraw from elections was taken from the party structures, and the ones that opposed the order, was expelled from the party as it happened with Sali Rexhepi. The Democratic Party asked for recognition of the elections as free and fair, regardless of international factor and what the OSCE observers said that these elections had many irregularities (OSCE/ODHIR 1996). In addition the effect of pyramidal schemes started to be felt and this was the moment the SP was waiting to intimidate the DP and gain support of people.

In 1997, situation in Albania got even worse. People were frustrated and started protesting all over Albania. This was the worst situation Albania has faced during all years of democracy. Protests were so massive that many institutions stopped functioning. Although the situation was very bad, political elite was more fragmented than ever. Instead of working in behalf of situation, calming the masses, and putting the rule and order, their main concern was how to preserve the power (DP) and how to get the power (SP). This was the time when the elite should have been united, thinking how to get out of the situation and leaving aside their personal ego, but it did not happen.

The Berisha's government had to resign and a coalition government headed by Bashkim Fino, a Socialist mayor. The new government was called the "National Reconciliation Government" and its duty was to prepare the country for the new elections. In a situation like that, general electoral programs were meaningless; people were concerned only to the money they lost. The Socialist Party based its electoral program in attacking the DP, and accusing it as the main responsible actor of everything had happened. Besides, the leader of the SP, Fatos Nano, promised the all the money lost will be returned to the people as soon as they would take the power. This promise was impossible to keep, and the SP knew that very well, but people were in desperate situation so they could believe anyone who promised them something like that. All of this was done for electoral campaign (Cela 2010, 380) and the fact is that this money never was given back, even if SP was in power for two consecutive terms. The DP had lost credibility of people and no matter of what they would say would make sense to people, however neither from the SP nobody refuted the claims of Fatos Nano. As a result deceiving in this way the electorate was not just

the fault of the leader, but to the all political elite of the Socialist Party. After 1997, the main struggle for different groups of political elite was to be in power, and we can barely re any collaboration of elites even in national matters.

The Socialist Party, for the first time, came in power after elections of 1997. There was a clear victory of the SP despite that the election process had many regularities. This was a very difficult period for Albania. People had lost the confidence in the Democratic Party and at the same time were skeptical about the Socialist Party as the continuance of the APL. People were devastated by the lost in pyramidal schemes, were frustrated with the disorder and not functioning of institutions. But most important, people were furious because voices started spreading that some important politicians were involved in the pyramidal schemes and that is the reason that neither the government neither the opposition, stopped them.

2.5. Opposition Groups Within the Socialist Party after its Formation

The Socialist Party in comparison to the Democratic Party did not have just the ambition for power, but within this party the ideological differences were more obvious. The Democratic Party was more composed of renovators and people that wanted democracy, and on the other hand Socialist Party had to make clear separations of conservatives with the renovators. The DP was mainly composed of ex-political prisoners and did not had many members that were closely affiliated to Communist regime, on the other hand for the SP, the fact that was a continuity of the APL had its own consequences in the mentality of people. The conservatives like Servet Pellumbi, Namik Dokle and Gramoz Ruci were for a gradual change within

the party and several times rejected changes. Fact is that the renovators group was stronger and to a certain extent the growth of popularity of Fatos Nano from prison, “forced” some of the conservatives to pass to the renovators side.

Dokle, vice president of the SP during 1996 was, during the II Convention of the SP, supported “Nano Motion” in changing the reference to Marx in the statute of the Party. Also Gramoz Ruci, an ex-Minister of the APL considered to be on the side of conservators, became one of the supporters of Nano (Progni 2009, 218). Dokle has been a member of the SP since it was founded. He is a journalist and publicist at the same time. Dokle says that being a journalist during Communism, and not being part of the Communist Party was impossible. Despite that he was not on the nomenclature group, he was working on behalf of it as a journalist and close to the party of that time (Dokle 2013). On the other way Gramoz Ruci being in the rank of Minister, in the Communist party, is normally considered to be a conservative to the old regime during the first years of the SP. He did a smart move, to pass to the group of the reformists, and so to maintain a considerable power within the party and in Albanian politics during all these years.

1996 was the year when, inside the party, discussions for change were done in separated perspectives. In their consideration for change, Nano’s group was concentrated in changing the program, statute and ideology of the party, so making a complete separation from the old regime. But the opposition group, that of Meta, Hjdaraga etc, insisted in removing all the people that had something to do with the old regime (Progni 2009, 217). These pretenses of the Meta group and co., were understood as seeking for post and power within the party, since in this way they could remove Nano and their supporters. Maybe this was the reason why these ex-

Communists like Ruci and Dokle joined Nano group, since with him, they were more protected.

When the turmoil started in 1997 and the government of Meksi fell, the National Reconciliation Government was formed headed by Bashkim Fino. This government's main activity was to ensure new elections and normalize the situation on the ground that was out of control. Being Prime Minister in that situation was very difficult and when Fino's name was proposed to him he hesitated, but as he says, he put the necessity of the country before the fear of confronting a political situation like that (Harito 2011, 42). Like him, there were many other important politicians that found themselves morally obligated to take responsibilities toward the society and the country's needs. One of them also was Rexhep Meidani, ex-Albanian Presidents between 1996 and 2001.

The victory of the Socialist Party in 1997 brought another change in the government. They had a weak opposition, now Democratic Party, so they had more freedom and space to compete for power with each other since the opposition was not a problem during these years. In the list of deputies of 1997, eleven of them were also deputies of the 1991-1992 legislation representing Albanian Party of Labor, and from the 38 deputies that Socialist Party had in the period 1992-1996, twenty-eight of them were reelected again³. When we see the list of reelected deputies, we can observe that many of them had relations to Communist regime and also had

³ Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 1920-2005, (2005), Kuvendi I Shqiperise.

From the list of 1991 there were: Banush Gozhdari, Ditero Agolli, Fatos Nano, Fehmi Abdiu, Leontiev Cuci, Lush Perpali, Namik Dokle, Sabit Brokaj, Shaqir Vukaj, Shkelqim Cani and Ylli Bufi. From the list of 1992 there were: Anastas Angjeli, Bardhyl Agasi, Bashkim Zeneli, Ditero Agolli, Ermelinda Meksi, Et'hem Ruka, Fatos Nano, Fehmi Abdiu, Gramoz Ruci, Halil Lalaj, Ibrahim Baci, Ilir Meta, Kastriot Islami, Leontiev Cuci, Luan Hjaraga, Lush Perpali, Maqo Lakrori, Musa Ulqini, Namik Dokle, Ndre Legisi, Pnadeli Majko, Sabit Brokaj, Servet Pellumbi, Shaqir Vukaj Shkelqim Cani, Theodori Bej.

important role in the Socialist Party. Also the founders of the Euro-Socialist Albanian Youth Forum (*Forumi Rinor Euro-Socialist Shqiptar*, FRESSH) managed to have continuity in Socialist Party and re-elected in Parliament from 1992 every consecutive term.

2.6. Socialists in government for the first time

Fatos Nano, elected Prime Minister after the 1997 elections, could not manage to keep that position for long time, competition within the party reappeared again and the opposition's attacks were more severe. After Azem Hajdar, one of the founders and most important figure of the Democratic Party was killed in front of the Parliament on 12 September 1998. DP accused the government and Socialist Party as responsible for the crime and so started protests that generated an attempt of "coup d'état" (as Prime Minister Nano labeled it) (Bideleux and Jeffries 2006, 60). The result was that Nano escaped abroad, abandoning the government and coming back when things were put in order. Meanwhile Pandeli Majko was appointed Prime Minister. Majko started political career when he was young among the founders of FRESSH together with Ndre Legisi and Ilir Meta. He was the youngest Prime Minister Albania had of all times and also the only one that had no relation with the Communist regime (Bideleux and Jeffries 2006, 60). In comparison to Meta, Majko was not as hoggish as he is, and this will be shown even in the events coming in the preceding years. Debates and conflicts within the party continued between the group of Meta and Nanno, accusing each other for corruption, but in times when these two

politicians could reach any compromise in their profit, were naming these debates as ‘democratic debates within the party’ (Progni 2009, 241).

Nano was the person who had many strong opponents, but at the same times many other strong supporters. Maybe because of this fact that Nano took the liberty to give up the role as the head of the party in January 1999 and later been invited by forty members of the Socialist Party to return again in the same position. Despite the fact that Majko did not support the resignation of Nano, in the III Congress of the SP, Majko was his opponent to become leader of the SP, supported by Meta’s group. Nano could win just with 36 votes of difference (Progni 2009, 229). In a few days Nano and Meta managed to make peace in the name of ‘collaboration between the SP and FRESSH’ (since Meta was leading FRESSH). They asked for Pandeli Majko’s resignation form the post of Prime Minister and instead, Ilir Meta becomes the next Prime Minister of the country. This was a clear sign of the “collaboration” of the SP leader and the FRESSH leader with position ambitions hidden behind.

2.7. Edi Rama: a new prominent figure of the Socialist Party

During the Local Election of 2000, a new figure started political career inside SP and that was Edi Rama, a painter and professor at the Institute of Arts. Even if he has been Minister of Culture in Nano’s government, he did not have a very important role within the party. Rama has been always considered a maverick. During the fall of Communist regime he was a lecturer at the Institute of Art, and he was one of the strongest opponents of the old regime and one of the strongest supporters of democracy. But he had conflicts with the Democratic Party since the beginning because of his not-compromising character. In the first meeting of DP, Rama accused Berisha for the acknowledgements he did to Ramiz Alia in the first public showing

of DP in front of people and for the words he said ‘Long life to the President’ (Rrofte Presidenti) (Zaloshnja 2012). Rama could not accept the authoritative mode of ruling the party by Sali Berisha so for a few years he left the country and stayed out of politics. Rama was recalled by Nano to join the Socialist Party firstly as Minister in the cabinet of Nano’s government and later appointed as candidate for the Municipality of Tirana, the capital city. Rama is a very hardworking person and made Tirana a livable modern city. He changed completely the face of the city not just in infrastructure but also visually by painting all the apartments and buildings according to his artistic creativity. He held the post of the Major for three consecutive terms until he lost in 2011 against the DP candidate Lulzim Basha only with a few more votes in a very dubious process. In 2004, Rama was chosen “World Major” among 400 other candidates. His political career would not end up as a Mayor, but he got to become leader of the Socialist Party in 2005 and a candidate for Prime Minister in the elections of 2009 and 2013.

2.8. 2001 Parliamentary Elections

In the elections of 2001, Nano and Meta joined forces together and won these elections taking 73 out of 140 seats on Parliament. Since the SP had in its inside regulation that the leader of the party could not become Prime Minister, Nano could not be elected, so Ilir Meta was elected Prime Minister of the country. Conflicts between them restarted with very hard accusations for corruption and inefficiency, accusation that were never sued and forgotten as soon as they reached an agreement. When Nano declared openly that he would support Meta’s government if he would support him for Presidency, Meta gave up the post of the PM (Bideleux and Jeffries 2010, 64) and he proposed again Pandeli Majko for Prime Minister for the second

time. In 2002, Nano managed to convince the committee of his party to change the rules of the party and to allow the leader of the party to have the right to become a Prime Minister. When this became possible, Majko gave up his position of the PM and in his position now belonged to Nano. The conflict Nano-Meta ended just when Meta decided to separate completely from the party and create his own party Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) in 2004. Together with Meta several other party members left with him, separating in this way even the electorate of the SP, which will see the consequences of this separation in the next coming elections.

In 2003, Nano-Rama and Meidani competed for the position of the leader of the party, in which Nano won. During these years we see a crack also in the relations between Nano and Rama, which not few times Rama accused Nano as he was putting obstacles in his job as Major of Tirana and in his reelection. The fact is that Rama was getting each day more involved in the inside problems of the SP, giving his support or opposing certain issues or persons within the party. In this way Rama became an important figure in the Albanian politics not just as a successful Major, but as a politician too, until he took the party in his hands. In 2005, Nano lost the parliamentary elections so he had to give up the post of the leader of the party as a sign that the one who loses, should leave. In this way Edi Rama became the second Party leader since 1992 when the party was created and the first leader of the party that changed in all these years of democracy in Albania. Rama brought several changes in the inside regulation of the Party. He ‘inherited’ a separated party and also had many problems with the “Old Guard” which were still at the top of the party (Biberaj 2011, 384). He changed the way of voting for the leadership of the party with “one member, one vote” and if the leader of the party loses the elections, he had

to give up his position as a leader. The second rule he imposed for the party, he did not follow for himself when he lost elections of 2009, pretending that elections were stolen so he would not recognize these elections. The fact is that during 2009-2013 Socialist Party went very rarely in the Parliament, doing opposition only from outside the parliament.

These conflicts and confrontations within members of the same party did nothing else than to weaken the power of the party.

Socialist rule was characterized by political instability, infighting within the Socialist Party, a lack of cooperation between the government and the opposition and a dramatic rise in corruption and organized crime activities (Biberaj 2011, 378).

Despite that Albania had passed the 1997 crisis, the rule of law was not working as it should. Albanian politics depends very much on the opinion of the international factor, and so they have a great impact on Albanian political elite. According to Meksi, in Albania is always the government who wins the elections, and the reason that in 2005 there was a change in the government, is because America wanted so. According to him there was after the talk of Nano with the Vice Director of the CIA, which is he neglected the elections and did not care who was going to win and that was the reason they lost the elections (Meksi 2013). With all the inside problems SP had and without the support of USA, Nano would have had a very difficult path of governing the country.

2.9. The Socialist Party's Political Elite

As it is shown, during the history of the Albanian Socialist Party, there are several names mentioned continuously. The reason is that that these people occupied a crucial role in the party and in politics. Many names came in and out of the politics

during all these years of democratization, but the ones who managed to keep their positions for a considerable long period will be analyzed in depth in this section, since their impact in democratization and transition process is greater. In every group, organization or political party, the ambition for power within the same party is normal. In a political party, the consequences of division are greater. There is a big difference between a 'democratic debate' within the party and accusations toward each other, since a democratic debate is done for certain ideology, idea, status or program, but accusations have different impact. If a politician accuses another for corruption, then what they should do is to find facts and denounce them since having a corrupted person within the party does not help democratization within the party, but just affects the party and society in a negative way. However, as seen in this chapter, the SP debates and discussions within the party did not brought anything to the democratization process since all the accusations remained just unproven words.

When we see the Socialist Party names that compose the Albanian Parliament during all these years of democracy, it is obviously noted that the power is circulated among a few names. As a result there are several people that had a seat in parliament from the beginning, but these people were with great influence even within the Party. Namik Dokle is the person who has been member of the Parliament after all election, six legislative terms from 1992-2009 (Ligjevenesit Shqiptar 1920-2005). He has been one of the founders of the Socialist Party and remained an important politician during all these years holding important positions within the party. He has been member of the Headship of the Party, Vice Chairman of the party, chairman of the Parliamentary Group (1992-1997), secretary of organization and secretary general (1999-2000), and also Vice Chairman of the National Assembly of the Albania and Vice Prime

Minister of Albania (Dokle 2013). Two other politicians within the SP that has been Member of Parliament since the beginning of democracy are Ermelinda Meksi and Ilir Meta. Meksi has been a candidate member of parliament also in the elections of 1991 representing the APL. She had and still have an important role in the Socialist Party being one of the women who has been part of politics more than any other one. On the other hand, Meta started his political career with the SP and was Member of Parliament during all his years with the party. However, even when he left the party and created his own political party he still managed to get elected. For the first time, Meta was able to create a party that would change the balance of a two party system. In the Parliamentary election of 2009, Meta's party deputies had a crucial role in deciding the fate of the new government. If his party would join a coalition with the SP, then since this coalition would not have the enough seats to form the government, the country would go to elections again. What Meta did was to join the strongest opposition party the DP, and rule the country for four years. This one unexpected move form Meta, since he considered the DP and Sali Berisha his political enemies. Because of this Ilir Meta obtained the role of the king-maker in Albanian politics.

Six members of Parliament served in the Albanian Parliament for five times: Et'hem Ruka, Gramoz Ruci, Kastriot Islami, Musa Ulqini, Pandeli Majko and Erion Brace (Ligjevenesit Shqiptar 1920-2005). Islami and Ruci were also candidates in the elections of 1991 for the APL and are still today parts of Albanian Parliament after more than 20 years of democracy. On the other hand Musa Ulqini and Et'hem Ruka were on the first Leading Committee of the Socialist Party so they were among the founders of the party (Meksi 2010, 151-154). As mentioned before Majko came

with the student movement and his political career improved gradually with his involvement within the FRESSH structures. Erion Brace or as he is called differently “the voice of opposition” started his political career with the elections of 1992, but he was not even among the founders of the party. Brace is a journalist, of the one that never is afraid to say his own opinion and that instead of empty words uses facts. Brace is the kind of “investigative voice” for the party and for the politics in general, because he opposed his party and his leader many times and rejects conformism when he thinks differently.

From all deputies of the SP in the Albanian Parliament since 1992, being elected for four legislative terms are six people. It is worth mentioning these persons by name since despite their contribution as Member of Parliament, they also had significant contribution within the Party. These people are Arben Malaj, Arta Dade, Bashkim Fino, Fatos Nano, Vangjel Tavo and Ylli Bufi. Among them we have two ex-Prime Ministers, Bashkim Fino and Ylli Bufi, that no matter the short period of time in this post, they had significant role because of the importance of the situation when they assumed their role. Despite this, Bashkim Fino also had an important position in the SP since he was part of the leading group, and Bufi because was one of the founding members of the Socialist Party. Arta Dade and Arben Malaj despite being just deputies had also ministerial posts so were part of the government when SP was in power.

With three legislative terms in Parliament there are only eleven people. Several of them had significant contribution to the party like Ben Blushi or Blendi Klosi, because of their active involvement in almost every political issue. Blushi is

journalists and a writer, so his media involvement gave him influence and power in politics.

Another thing worth mentioning is the low percentage of women in Albanian Parliament. Since 1992 to 2009 parliamentary mandate there have been only 26 female women among 213 male men in parliament from Socialist Party (Ligjeveresit Shqiptar 1920-2005; Legjislatura XVII; Legislature XVIII). This is drastic number taking in consideration the role of women in political decision making process and their impact in democratization and transition process. There have been several discussions on imposing quotas for women in the list of deputies, but this was not welcomed very much by the women since they saw competition with men as against their women's role.

As it is shown in this chapter, the people that have been mentioned so far are the ones that occupied the longest period in Albanian parliament from the Socialist Party. If somebody is part of the Parliament for three, four, five or six legislative terms within more than 20 years of democracy, automatically 'hold top position' and 'directly influence national political decision-making' process, these people can be directly considered part of Albanian political elite. Among the people with four, five, and six terms in legislature mentioned, there are only four of them that were not elected Member of Parliament in the last legislature of 2009. These are Musa Ulqini, Fatos Nano, Vangjel Tavo and Ylli Bufi, other ones are still part of it. Among the ones with three legislative terms in Parliament from eleven people, six of them are still MPs. The most influential figure among them, Fatos Nano, since his withdrawal from political scene appears only when he aspires an important position. He expressed

several times his willing to become President of the Republic of Albania, but it seems that the supporters he had in politics, is diminished.

In total, there are only 25 people from 213 deputies, the SP had during all these years that are re-elected more than three times to the Albanian Parliament, and the other ones are just one or two times elected. Observing these numbers we may think of a circulation of the Socialist Party elites, but sixteen people that are still member of the Parliament hold the top positions even in the Party since the beginning of democracy. The thing is that Albanian politics is concentrated in the hands of a few people, and are these people that decide who will be member of the Parliament, and how the party should work. Member of the party, are not significantly influential in the decision making processes, not to mention in the Politics in general. So the problem regarding the SP is not circulation, but concentration of power in the hands of a few for very long period of time.

CHAPTER 3

DEMOCRATIC PARTY

1. Democratic Party

1.1. The Establishment of Democratic Party

When all Eastern Communist bloc countries were falling one by one, Albania was the last to fall. With much consolidated network of secret police, dissidents or opponents of the system had many difficulties to operate. There were several reasons why Albanian Communist regime felt, but definitely was not a revolution from the people, neither a bloody transition. It was a controlled transition. Students and a group of intellectuals made a request: they asked from the Communist Party and the President of the country, Ramiz Alia, give way to pluralism of ideas and opposition parties. Thinking in retrospective it is not clear what would have happened if Ramiz Alia would have acted differently, but it is certainly known that he allowed pluralism and made these changed under different factors, like a devastated economy, pressure from international pressures and fear of a bloody transition, but he never felt threatened by the new born opposition groups.

The waves of changes were not initiated by the Democratic Party. It was the group of student that initiated the movement and the opposition to the system. Later a group of intellectuals started discussing about the situation and joined this group of students. The Democratic Party was formed on 12 December 1990 by a combination of intellectuals and students (Biberaj 1998, 66). Interesting is the fact that even if the protests initiated by the students, just a small group of students took place in the leading structures of the party, making this the 'stolen revolution' (Fevziu 1993, 60-61, quoted in Biberaj 1998, 67). Among the first 285 members of the DP, 141 were

students, and just one of them was involved as a member of the ruling structures of the party and he was Azem Hajdari (Meksi 2010, 99-107; 137). Hajdari was a senior student when demonstrations started and he was distinguished by his bravery while leading the masses of students.

Sali Berisha, a successful cardiologist, became the leader of the party. He had all the characteristics that a leader could have, charismatic, self-confident, expressed a clear vision for the future, and was very good at making conceivable speeches to the masses. Berisha was from Northern Albania, mainly known not for the big support Albanian Party of Labor's regime gave to this zone, but he was a lucky one. He graduated from the medicine school and also specializes in cardiology in France. He had close ties with the APL and even was candidate for membership in the Central Committee of the Communist regime (Vickers 2008, 238). When students started protests, Berisha was appointed as intermediary between the students and Ramiz Alia (Biberaj 1998, 65). His duty was to tranquilize the students, but what he did was to join them. The Democratic Party considered itself a right-wing party, supporting capitalism, free enterprise and private property. They formulated their own party program, they had their own party emblem, and party statute. The Democratic Party was the first opposition party of a newly pluralist regime. Among the founders of the party which had an impact in Albanian politics during the preceding years, were also Aleksander Meksi, Gramoz Pashko, Arben Imami, Genc Ruli and Prec Zogaj. Directly or indirectly these people are part of Albanian politics even today, except Pashko that died in 2006.

1.2. 1991- First Parliamentary Elections in Pluralist System

First elections of Democratic Party were that of 31 March 1991, in which Democratic Party managed to get only 75 seats of the 250 seats of Parliament, within the Communist electoral law (Cela 2010, 51; Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 40). When DP was formed many people were skeptical about it. The fear from the old system was still present, and many were afraid to join the newly formed parties. The wave of change was more present in the capital city, Tirana, and a few other big urban areas. In the rural areas was more difficult to penetrate in terms of electoral campaign and also of media influence. This is the reason that the Democratic Party's parliamentary seats came mainly from the urban areas (Vickers 2008, 222-223). The government was formed by the APL and Fatos Nano was appointed as Prime Minister. The DP refused to enter the Parliament when four protesters were killed in the city of Shkoder on 2nd of April while they were protesting and accusing the ruling party for manipulation of the elections. The DP demanded that the persons guilty about the incident get in front of the court, so they boycotted until Parliament decided to create a special commission to investigate those killings (Helsinki Watch 1991, 9). The government was unable to work because of the pressures of the opposition parties and opposition groups. So instead of Nanos government, government of stability was formed by several parties headed by Ylli Bufi, a Prime Minister appointed by Ramiz Alia (Harito 2011, 35). However, the government of stability's main duty was to lead the government through the urgent economic situation Albania was facing. Democrats were asking for quick reforms in terms of privatization and economy, neglecting the fact that the APL was against this kind of transition and what they were supporting was a 'gradual program of land privatization relying on foreign

investments (Vickers 2008, 222). People and even deputies had not much knowledge about the capitalist system and democracy. They were conscientious that privatization is the main feature of capitalism, but privatization without clear criteria and measures would bring negative consequences. For instance, privatization of land keeps producing problems even today, and the first reforms on this issue were taken during the first years of pluralism. Taking in consideration the Albanian political situation, and observing the discontent of the people, the DP decided that it was better to leave the government. This was one of the decisions that brought the first crack within the party among Sali Berisha and Gramoz Pashko, number two of the DP. Pashko had close family relations to Communist Party so he had even the opportunity to travel abroad and take a western education (Biberaj 1998, 68). His idea of not leaving the government because of the assumption that it would create anarchy was not taken in consideration while he was in London signing the pact of Albania with European Bank for Development and Reconstruction (Cela 2010, 143).

Like the Socialist Party, even the DP had its internal problems between its members, but here the walkouts from the party started from the beginning. The first who left the party was Neritan Ceka. He was vice President of the party and one of the founders of this party. He left the party after Berisha's ministers withdraw from the Bubi's cabinet. Ceka and Pashko's supporters saw this move negatively for the critical situation in which Albania had. Without taking in consideration the situation of the country, DP's politicians were more concerned about political and personal gain. A separation of Pashko from the DP on this time would be meaningless, so he revoked everything he said about leaving the Government of Stability (Cela 2010,

151). This of course was just for a short period. As soon as Pashko created a proper environment, he was deported from DP and created his own party.

1.3. 1992 Elections: Democratic Party gets the Power

It was obvious that a coalition government could not work, so a “Technical Government” was formed instead with independent intellectuals whose main duty was to prepare the country for the next coming elections. Meanwhile a new law was passed by Parliament about the new electoral code. From 250 deputies that Parliament had, now it would have only 140, and from a first-past-the-post electoral system was changed to a mixed system of elections (Çeka 2012, 530). Before as the APL was supporting the first-past-the-post system and the DP proportional one, but now after the fast drastically changes Albanian society was facing they alternated their preferences and they finally agreed in a mixed system of election and the date on 4th February 1992 (Biberaj 1998, 128). The Democratic Party got the majority of seats in Parliament after the March 1992 elections. With the majority of the parliament owned by the DP, Ramiz Alia was forced to resign his post of President and instead of him Sali Berisha was elected.

I do not want to be Enver Hoxha, leader of the party and President at the same time. I fought for the ideals of democracy and not to take all the power in my hands, because much power is not good for any one” (Cela 2010, 174).

These are the words that Berisha said when he was elected to be the next President of the country, according to the notes of Blerim Cela in his book “*Deformimi I Partise Demokratike*”. As Prime Minister, was appointed Aleksander Meksi and leader of DP now belonged to Eduard Selami. Meksi was an engineer, without relation to the Communist system and was activated among the first opposition groups (Meksi

2013). On the other hand Selami was much sympathized person among people and had the support of them. He remained “*de jure*” leader of the party until he conflicted with Berisha. Even if Selami was considered the leader of the party, the real leader with the highest support among its members was Berisha. So in the first conflict between these two Berisha managed to expel him from the Party. Selami went abroad not to come back again, but surprisingly he appeared in the lists of candidates for deputie of the DP in the elections of 2013.

The Democratic Party had the opportunity to rule the country from 1992 to 1996. These difficult years for Albania, the DP had the chance to demonstrate the good will of change and separation from the old regime, but good politics is done by the collaboration of government with the opposition. In fact there was never such a collaboration because as Shinasi Rama says their ‘backward mentality’ (*mendesi katundare*) does not allow them to see beyond their personal interest (Rama 2012, 394). It was the first time Albania was ruled by a democratic party for so long. Albania saw Fan Noli’s Democratic Party in 1920 which governed only for 6 months, and in fact was not real democratic in its full meaning (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 30). Albania now had the chance to change the course of history, but politics is a difficult sport to practice.

1.4. Berisha Turned to be an Autocrat

Sali Berisha’s authoritative way of ruling had started since the beginning of democracy (Vickers 2008, 237). He started suppressing the opponents within the party, the ones that opposed him or the ones that had a chance to gain the sympathy of electorate and replace him. Albanian politicians had a lust for power, and as it

happened in the Socialist party with the “Nano Motion”, in the Democratic Party his opponents drew the “Motion against Berisha”. This motion was not successful but it became the reason to expel its initiators and at the same time Berisha’s opponents (Cela 2010, 191). Among the ones, who left the party in 1992, were: Gramoz Pashko, Arben Imami, Arben Demeti, Ridvan Peshkepia, Frrok Cupi, Prec Zogaj, Perikli Teta and Edmond Trako and Shahin Kdare (Zogaj 2009, 42-43; Cela 2010, 215). These people created the first opposition party as a fraction of the DP, named the Democratic Alliance and led by Gramoz Pashko. The North (Gheg) people’s attitudes are mainly based on the attitudes of the clan or the kin they belong, so Berisha, originally from North, had the strong support of “Gheg clans” (Bideleux & Jeffries 2007, 42). Berisha could maintain the power within the party and now strengthen it as a result of the ‘clan’ that supported him blindly. People from the north mainly have voted for Berisha and his Democratic Party. The city of Shkoder, the biggest Northern city of Albania, since 1991, has always been ruled by democrats. But Berisha’s main support from North came from his city of birth, Tropoja. Supporters from Tropoja did not leave Berisha alone when he was in difficult situation like in 1997 when his offices were about to be destroyed (Balla 2010, 32).

Fear of losing power converted Berisha in much more authoritative politician. One by one he started ‘eliminating’ all his opponents from the political spectrum. The war for maintaining power was not done only with the opponents inside his party but also political opponents as he did with Fatos Nano, imprisoning him with accusation for corruption. Imprisoning Nano decreased very much the credibility of people and of International factor in his democratic credentials (Vickers 2008, 237). After removing from the party people mentioned before, the turn was to Eduard

Selami, the *de jure* head of the party. He was asked to leave the party because he opposed Berisha's decision to support the referendum for changes in the Constitution. If this referendum had passed, President's powers would have been stronger so Berisha would have absolute power over the government. His autocratic means of keeping power started as soon as he felt being threatened by politicians within his party and other political opponents, breaking in this way his ideology of democracy, of respect for the opponent, free speech and free and fair elections (Biberaj 2011, 377).

Mr. Berisha does not have any habit, but if wanting power more than anything else can be called a habit, than he has abundant desire for power to the point that he became an obstacle to the development of democracy in the party and Albanian society (Cela 2010, 341).

However it seemed that these disagreements and discussions within the party were because of differences in ideology and perception of politics, the truth is that all of them were seeking for power, and that was the reason of this 'war' within the party (Cela 2013). Sali Berisha is still the main and most important figure of the DP, and it seems that he has 'privatized' the role of the leader of the party for life. As the actual Chairman of Parliament Jozefina Topalli, as one of Berisha's main supporters, said: "Berisha is the party himself" (Tema 2013).

1.5. 1996 and 1997 Elections and Turmoil

On 13 July 1995, Albania was accepted as a member of the Council of Europe, CE (Linden 2011, 126). The Democratic Party had done several reforms to move Albania ahead, but several things slipped consciously or not, without calculating well their consequences. A clear example of this was the pyramidal schemes operating in Albania. These imaginary financial systems with a very high rate of return were the

main reason for the 1996-1997 turmoil in Albania. Many important state officials and politicians are believed to be involved on these schemes for self-monetary profits and it is supposed that some of these firms were financing the electoral campaigns of the DP (Jarvis 2000). The consequences of these financial systems were devastating for Albanian economy and their negative effect started to appear since 1995, but the government neglected them and did not warn the population about the danger that could increase despite the warnings of the International Monetary Funds and the World Bank in 1996 (Vickers 2008, 245). In 1997, all these pyramidal schemes declared bankruptcy one by one and declaring that they could not reimburse the lost money of the people. Many people had sold their houses and many of them had invested all their savings, so bank's bankruptcy created panic, and frustration among people. They started demonstrations accusing the government and Democratic Party as responsible for allowing these kinds of firms to operate and steal all people's money. The leader of the party, Sali Berisha and government accepted that they were morally guilty for the fact that they did not ban these firms before, but they did not accept the accusation that they had anything to do with those firms for personal monetary profit (Cela 2010, 381). This was the moment the Socialist Party was waiting to attack the government and take political credits for themselves. The main problem for Albanian politician was not the lost money of people, but the results it would have in the electorate's political division. The government was working on not losing the credibility in the eyes of people, and taking in consideration the situation that was very difficult. On the other hand this was a golden moment for the Socialist Party, to discredit the DP and return to power.

Parliamentary elections of 1996 are considered as the ones with the highest number of irregularities. According to the OSCE/ODIHR report, out of 79 articles regarding the pre-election and election day, 32 of them were violated (OSCE 1996). In the middle of the day of the elections, the Socialist Party taking in consideration the irregularities decided that they would block the elections and withdraw all their commissioners from the constituencies. This gave free hands to the Democratic Party commissioners so the result was ten deputies for the Socialist Party and a hundred and twenty-two for the Democratic Party (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005). Socialist party together with other opposition parties organized several protests which also created many incidents. This time against the Democratic Party there were also some of the important personalities that founded the party like Arben Imami, Prec Zogaj, Gramoz Pashko, Edmond Trako, Peshkepia, Shahini Kadare and Neritan Ceka, who protested against the elections in clashes with the state police (Zogaj 2009, 107-126). Because there were protests everywhere, it was impossible for the government to work on these conditions. The police stopped working, the military bases were attacked and robbed by people, the judiciary system disappeared and the prisons doors were opened. The situation in the country was paralyzed and controlled now only by some criminal groups. So leaders of the main parties decided that a new government should be formed and new elections to be held. In this way, the ‘national reconciliation’ government was created so it could put some order in the country and lead the new elections.

The Elections of 1997 were decisive for the Democratic Party since they turned this party in opposition again. From 140 seats on Parliament, the DP could take only 22 seats (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005). People were frustrated with the previous

government, so regardless of what the leaders of the DP were claiming, trying to excuse themselves or accusing the SP as the ones behind these turbulences, they could not gain people trust again. This defeat was worse than the one of 1991, because if they lost the in 1991 was because of not having time and right preparations, now it was because of bad managing of their political situation.

1.6. The Democratic Party in Opposition (1998-2005)

The Democratic Party was in opposition again, then, and the Socialist Party formed a government for the first time. Sali Berisha could not do otherwise as to resign his post of the President of the Republic. He was substituted by Rexhep Mejdani, a well-known academician, and close member of the Socialist Party.

The most shaking event regarding the DP during the first years in opposition was the killing of one of its founders and one of its most important figures, Azem Hajdari. Hajdari was among the students that started protests in 1991 and leading their demands for pluralism. He is well known for the bravery, courage and self-confidence he had to confront the regime in change of the system (Biberaj1998, 66). The Democratic Party accused the government and the SP for being responsible for the death of Azem Hajdari and, in a massive protest, he asked the resignation of the government. Protesters occupied the National Television, the Prime Ministry and paralyzed the National Guard (Zogaj 2009, 452-470). As a consequence the DP refused to enter in parliament, until the real responsible for this crime were brought in front of justice. After a special commission was appointed to investigate his death, DP in its Special Convention in September 1999, decided that it would be better they join the Parliament again and make the opposition where it belonged. The one who

shot Hajdari was found and gave life prison, but the ones who gave the order are still unknown.

Berisha has never been substituted by another leader. In fact in the statute of DP, the leader could maintain the same position for life. He may leave the post only if he is not voted by the delegates of the party, but since Berisha had converted the party in a clan of his own supporters, there was no chance that he would leave the power as leader of the party to another one. The ones that tried to override him were forced to leave the party or even being expelled. This was the case of Genc Pollo who 'dared' to compete with Berisha for the post of the leader of the party. The result was obvious; he together with some of his supporters like Leonard Demi, Dashamir Shehi and Ferdinand Xhaferri left the party (Cela 2010, 472). Pollo formed his own party the 'New Democratic Party' as a fraction of DP so in the next coming elections they managed to take 6 seats in parliament (Biberaj 2011, 378). In the 1999 Convention of the DP, when the Headship of the party was elected, among the founders of the party that were not present anymore were: Gramoz Pashko, Eduard Selami, Neritan Ceka, Aleksander Meksi, Arben Imami, Edmond Trako, Prec Zoga, Agron Cika, Arben Demeti, Merita Zaloshinja, Ylli Vejziu, Dashamir Shehu, Tomorr Dosti, Genc Ruli, Tomorr Malasi, Leka Toto and Agron Cika. Also at the same time important figures but without much role, who will have significant impact in the history of the DP, were promoted with high position within the party like Jozefina Topalli, Bamir Topi, Edi Paloka and Uran Butka (Cela 2010, 474). There is nothing strange in leaving the party, or becoming part of it. The problem is that these changes within the party are not done in a democratic way, but according to the preferences of just one person, the leader of the party.

In the elections of 2001, the Democratic Party formed a coalition with a few other small parties like *'Levizja per Legalitet'*, *'Partia Republikane'*, *'Bashkimi Liberal'* dhe *'Balli Kombetar'*, under the name *'Bashkimi per Fitore'* (Union for Victory) (Cela 2010, 496). The politicians mentioned before that left the party, created a vacuum within the party because of the fact that now they were on the side of the opponents (SP), and they were substituted by some unknown people that were increasing very fast in political career. Meanwhile people were still skeptical about the DP since they still believed that the DP was to be blamed for the 'pyramidal scheme'. These were the main factors that this party remained in opposition again and could not obtain the necessary seat to lead the government.

Even if many people entered and left the party, Berisha was always there. His role kept dominating the party, with his increasing authoritative methods. When ex-Prime Minister Aleksander Meksi proposed a platform for changes within the party, that would increase the interior democracy, was rejected because it was not in the interest of Berisha (Meksi 2013). It is interesting the fact that all those who opposed Berisha or went against him, could not manage to get support within the party for their ideas or aspirations, and what they did was to give open way to him. This makes very clear how Berisha has under his power all his supporters in a 'patriarchal' way. When he speaks, the others obey, otherwise must leave the party.

1.7. The DP in Power Again (2005 - 2009)

The effects of small parties in Albania never had a leading role, so in this sense Albanian political system can be considered as bi-polar. However, in certain moments, not the votes of electorate, but their politicians had decisive roles and an

impact in the political game of the two most important political parties, that of the DP and the SP. So when Socialist Movement for Integration Party (SMI) was split from the SP, it brought the hope to the DP because now it would be easier to defeat a separated Socialist Party and a separated socialist electorate. On the other hand, Arben Imami, Gramoz Pashko, Prec Zogaj and Genc Ruli who left the party in its early stages, now that their small parties stopped existing, returned to their “old mother”. This rapprochement came as a call of Berisha to wider the alliances in order so to win the elections (Biberaj 2011, 380). Allegedly only a united electorate could defeat the SP. All the insults and accusations between politicians were ignored. In this way the Democratic Party was in power again to rule the country.

In the elections of 2009, the difference in Parliamentary seats between the SP and the DP was very small. But this time the “kingmaker would be a secondary party, the SMI. The DP managed to take 68 seats, the SP 65 and the SMI only four seats (Biberaj 2011, 385). The Democratic Party was not able to form the government alone because they did not have the 72 seats majority. In this way they joined in a coalition with the SMI, avoiding new elections in case the SMI joined the SP. The main reason that the SMI, a left party joined a right wing party was the continuous conflict they had with the SP. Although small right parties have collaborated even before with the left the SP, this time was different since the Democratic Party could not rule otherwise and that increased the importance of the SMI in Albanian political area. This brought a separation of the Ministerial Portfolio and every position in the public administration in the proportion 82 percent, in which 20 percent would belong to the SMI and all his supporters.

1.8. The Political Elites of the Democratic Party

As mentioned in the previous chapter, political elites in Albania should not be defined only on the moral values, but also for the power they hold, for their capacity to be the decision makers, and for the fact that they are directly elected by the people. The Democratic Party entered in Parliament for the first time after the elections of 1991. According to the report published by the National Assembly “Ligjvenesit 1920-2005” and “Legislature XVIII”, DP has elected 338 deputies since 1991 until last elections 2009. Among them 15 deputies were elected three times for the National Assembly, 13 of them were elected four times, four of them were elected five times and three of them were elected six times. In the 12th legislature (1991) and 14th legislature (1996) deputies held their positions in parliament only for one year, since the consequent elections were held in 1992 and 1997. There were 38 deputies from 1991 legislature that were reelected in 1992, and there were 12 deputies among 22 that the DP had in 1997 that were reelected from 1996 parliamentary group (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005; Legislature XVIII 2012). These may not be very large numbers, but taking in consideration the time these people were part of the Albanian Parliament and the fact that they were elected directly by people, their importance in politics is very significant. Decision making process is under their responsibility and so it is also the compilation of law, and its implementation.

During the last two legislatures, that of 2005 and 2009, some other figures gained importance in Albanian politics and especially that of the Democratic Party’s politics. These were Jozefina Topalli, Bamir Topi and Lulzim Basha. Topalli originally coming from Northern city of Shkodra, has been one of the most important supporters of Berisha. She is Member of Parliament since 1996 and her name has

been considered for the post of President of the Republic several times, but since her name is very close related to the DP has been always difficult to take the consent of all political parties. Today she is Chairman of the Albanian Parliament. Bamir Topi was number two of the DP, when he was elected President in 2007 with the votes only of the DP deputies and five votes from the SP deputies. He was obliged to give up his party affiliation since the role of the President should be apart from any political party. Topi was not a consensual President because for the fact that the SP refused to vote him. The main concern of the SP was that since he was an important figure of the DP, he would be very much under pressure from his own party. The fact is that ex-President Topi has a very strong character and so refused to play the role of the 'puppet President' in the hands of Berisha. His attitudes brought many clashes between the Presidency and the government during his years as President of Albania. After his mandate finished, not officially but obviously, Topi was not welcomed to the DP again. However, he did not give up his political career and now he with him some of the deputies elected under the DP, has their own party, New Democratic Spirit (*Fryma e Re Demokratike*, FRD). On the other hand Lulzim Basha is one of the young people Berisha got close to the party in order to give the impression of a renewal of the party before the 2005 parliamentary election. Educated abroad, he holds strong support from Berisha and even occupied important positions like Foreign Minister, Minister of Public Work, Transport and Telecommunication and Minister of Interior, until he was chosen as a candidate for Mayor of Tirana in 2011. The Municipality of Tirana, after three consecutive terms ruled by Rama, now was taken by the democrats, with a very small margin of votes and very suspicious results (OSCE/ODIHR 2011, 24-26).

The importance of women in Albanian politics does not change much from one party to another. As in the SP, the Democratic Party's women representation was very low during all these years of democracy. The highest number of women representative deputy of the DP in parliament is that of the elections of 1996 when 13 deputy women were elected. In total, there have been 36 women Member of Parliament under the DP since 1991 elections until 2009 (Legjevenesit Shqipetar 2005; Legislature XVIII 2012; Legjislatura XVII 2007). Albanian electoral law does not recognize any facilities or quotas for the representation of women in Parliament. When the electoral law was reformulated and changed in 2008, in order to increase the representation of women in Parliament, the law presumed that 'each candidate list include at least 30 percent of candidates from each gender, or one of the top three candidates must be from each gender'. Only 43 percent met these criteria and in the case of violation most of the women were listed at the end of the list, where getting elected was like impossible (OSCE/ODIHR 2009, 18). The result of this is that Albanian political elite is composed mainly of men gender.

1.9. Conclusion

Politicians within Democratic Party come and go, but he, remains always there. Berisha seems that will be the eternal leader of the party. Taking in consideration the role of the leader of the party, we can say that at least one time in Socialist party the leader has changed, bringing another perspective to the party, but unfortunately we cannot say the same about DP. The lust for power goes beyond people integrity, their personality and moral. The dogmatic excuses of their nasty political actions are not acceptable by people, but Albanian electorate for years voted for the 'best of the worst' as the only thing remained to be done. Understanding the electorate choices,

many factors should be taken in consideration, not to underestimate 50 years pressed under a Communist regime, a low quality civil society, and the close ties Albanian people have with their families, clan or kin they belong.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL POLITICAL PARTIES

When pluralism began in Albania, many political parties were established. The first opposition party was the Democratic Party that keeps being one of the most important parties in Albanian political system. Since elections 1991 until the forthcoming elections of 2013, many political parties aimed to join government coalition, but it seems that Albania has a strong two-party system, in which the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party lead the Albanian politics. However the roles of those small political parties are not without significance. Credibility in those two main parties, several times has been shaken, because of several political events, so in order to have a better representative government and a wider range of power, coalitions were needed. So the role of these political parties had its importance in the formation of coalitions, pre-election coalitions, or post-election coalitions. Secondly, those secondly political parties are not formed only by interest groups or civil society groups, but in several cases these parties came as a result of fragmentation the two main political parties the SP and the DP. Conflict between members of the same party, as in the case of the Democratic Alliance (*Aleanca Demokratike*, DA) from the DP and Socialist Movement for Integration from the SP, and some other examples will be mentioned in the next coming paragraphs, not just separated the members of the party, but at the same time brought separation of electorate and consequently weakening the DP and the SP powers.

1. Secondary Political Parties and Their Most Important Figures

In the first multiparty elections held in 1991, the parties that managed to enter Parliament were mainly some Communist based civil organizations converted in political parties. So despite the APL and the DP, the parties that could get a seat in parliament were *Komiteti Veteran* (Veteran Committee), OMONIA (minority based political party), *Partia e Punes dhe Bashkimi I Grave* (Labor Party and Women's Union), *Partia e Punes dhe Bashkimet Profesionale* (Labor's Party and Professional Union) and *Partia e Punes dhe Fronti Demokratik* (Labor's Party and Democratic Front). All these parties together could take only 26 seats in the parliament which consisted of 250 seats (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005). Pluralism was accepted on December 1990, and the first pluralist elections were held on March 2013. So having just a couple of months, other opposition parties like Republican Party and Social Democrat Party could not get any parliamentary seat. Except OMONIA all other small parties that entered parliament were organization of the Communist Party converted into political parties but without any relevant ideological difference from the APL.

OMONIA changed the name to Human Rights Unity Party (*Partia Bashkimi per te Drejtat e Njeriut* PBDNJ) because parties based on nationalistic feelings were not allowed, but still this party remained a representative party of the Greek ethnic minority (Lewis 2000, 58). PBDNJ had its representatives in every legislature since 1991 (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005; Legjislatura XVI 2003, Legjislatura XVII 2005; Legislature XVIII 2012).

On the other hand, the Republican Party in some legislatures could not get any seat in Parliament. This party was founded by the "wise old man" Sarbri Godo. Godo

was called with this name because of his maturity and intellect he showed in difficult political matters. He has great contribution in the changing amendments of the new constitution. Even when he left the place of the leader of the party to Fatmir Mediu, Godo remained as the “leader of honor” of Republican Party. Until 2005 election, PR had 21 deputies in total elected in Parliament (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005; Legjislatura XVI 2003, Legjislatura XVII 2005; Legislature XVIII 2012). In the elections of 2008 its leader Fatmir Mediu entered as an independent candidate, because of the difficulties the new electoral code brought to the small parties with the three percent threshold.

As regarding to the Social Democratic Party (*Partia Social Demokrate*, SDP), as one among the first created political parties at the beginnings of pluralism, its impact in Albanian parliament and politics in general has been quite significant. The leader of the party is Skender Gjinushi, a mathematician who created the party and never gave up the role as the leader. This party managed to take seven seats in 1992 election, ten seats in 1997 elections, then reducing to four seats on 2001 election and again seven seats on 2005 election and losing all its seats on the elections of 2009 (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005). The results of 2009 was because of the new electoral law proposed and passed by the two main political Parties that made the change from majoritarian electoral law to a Proportional and imposed the threshold for small parties. The party was separated in 2003 and a new party was borne from the members of this party. Paskal Milo number two of the SDP, decided to create a new party, Socialist Democracy Party (*Partia Demokratia Sociale*, SDP). These two parties were considered leftist parties and joined a coalition with the Socialist Party.

Coalition governments started after the 1996 elections. During 1997, there were 11 small political parties that got at least one seat in Parliament and the largest number of seats belonged to the PBDNJ. During 2001, there were eight parties that got each five deputies elected and the New Democratic Party got six deputies. In total there were 46 parliamentary seats occupied by small party representatives, so the coalitions were a necessity in order to form the government, but these coalition came as a result of pre-election agreements. The same happened during 2005 elections where small parties managed to get 31 seats in Parliament (Ligjvenesit Shqiptar 2005; Legjislatura XVI 2003, Legjislatura XVII 2005; Legislature XVIII 2012). Until 2009, where except the DP and the SP, even the SMI managed to enter in Parliament, coalitions had an important role in the Albanian politics. Usually in the areas where they have the greatest support, the leader compete for himself, and that is the reason that the leader of the party is almost all the time representing the party in parliament.

2. Fragmentation of Two Main Political Parties in Albania.

In Albanian politics formation of new political parties does not depend only on differences in ideologies and mentality, or protection of different groups of interest, but many times politicians in Albania created fragmentation of their parties in some other small parties, in order to keep being in politics. As we saw competition within the party is very harsh and beating the leader is almost impossible if he does not resign himself, so the other way of confrontation and competition is done by separation from mother party, and create their own party.

The first fragmentation was done by the opponents of Berisha after being expelled from the DP. Pashko and his supporters decided to form a new party with the belief that they would beat Berisha and his clan. So, Democratic Alliance Party was created. This party was not a shelter for people with different ideologies than that of Berisha, but a shelter for people who wanted to get in his place. The DA was composed by Pashko, Imami, and Zogaj whom in 2001 joined pre-election coalition with the Socialist Party and shared Ministerial portfolios.

Other parties' worth mention that were separated from the DP was the party formed by Genc Pollo after losing election for the leader of the party with Berisha. His party was named the New Democratic Party (*Partia Demokratike e Re*, PDR) and was formed on 2001. Pollo not as members of DA, never joined the opposition parties, but he entered in elections 2005 and 2009 in coalition to its "mother party" obtaining in this way Ministerial portfolios.

The only party separated from Socialist Party was *Levizja Socialiste Per Integrim*, (Socialist Movement for Integration, SMI). After long discussions, accusations and debates with Nano and his supporters, Ilir Meta left Socialist Party to form his own party. This created a separation of socialist electorate that brought the defeat of this party in the elections of 2005. Meta can be considered as the most influential leader of a small party in Albanian politics. He is considered the "kingmaker" of Albanian politics. In the elections of 2005 he brought the defeat of SP and brought in power the DP again. In the elections of 2009 made a post-election coalition with the DP, avoiding in this way repetition of elections since neither the SP nor the DP had the necessary seats in parliament to form the government. In this way since 2009 until 2013 a left wing party together with the right wing party ruled the

country. A union that nobody could ever imagine because of the strong accusations Meta had toward the DP and its leader Sali Berisha. This coalition gave SMI twenty percent of Ministerial Portfolios and same amount of Public Administration to recompense his militant supporters.

3. Conclusion

On the elections of June, 2013 there will be 71 parties registered for election at the Central Elections Commission (Hoxha 2013). Albania is a free country where everybody can create a political party, but winning votes and getting the support of the electorate is very difficult. The parties that I mentioned upward are the ones that had more influence in the political spectrum during all these years. Their leaders' role is not different from the one of the two main parties, since the rules of the game are similar for every party. The difference is only on the case which they sustain the creation and maintenance of their party. Godo, Mediu, Gjinushi, Milo and Dule did not maintain only the role of the leader of their respective parties, but at the same time when joining coalition with the two main parties they obtained even minister portfolios and as in the case of Godo, had the chance to be Chairman of Parliament. If in the two main political parties except the leader there are even some more important persons with impact in politics, in the small parties only their leaders are important.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The process of transition and democratization has passed through several stages during all these years of pluralism. Albania has made many efforts to end the transition process and consolidate democracy as the basis for a strong state. The electoral process, economic conditions, independence of institutions, and behavior of political elites are all indicators of where Albania stands regarding these two reforms. This chapter will demonstrate that despite the fact that Albania has been member of NATO since 2009, citizens can travel freely to Schengen Area since 2010 and has signed the Stabilization Association Agreement with EU since 2006, and the process of democratization has many empty gaps that need to be filled. In order to fill those gaps, political elites should behave in a more responsible way, collaboration between opposition parties should increase and national interest should prevail against personal political gains.

1. Parliamentary Elections and Presidential Election

Albania learned the culture of voting very late, in comparison to other Western European Countries, and is still at the same pace with some Eastern European countries. Today, after 22 years of democracy Albania, even if has made progressive steps toward free and fair elections, still could not reach the full standards suggested by OSCE/ODIHR, neither the ones prescribed by the Albanian Constitution and Electoral Law. The reason should be found in the law, since it should be 'above everyone and anything', but when the law is not enforced properly and gives space to misinterpretation and misuse, then the result is consequently biased. The point is that

the law is compiled, proposed and passed by the parliament, by the representatives of people. So the miss functioning of the law, and the volatile spaces for interpretation, are as a result of not taking in consideration of all options for meliorating this Electoral Law.

However, the results of the elections are not based only on the irregularities of the law, but also in its implementation. Albanian history of election has shown that, Albanian politician has as priority getting positive result from the election, not obeying the will of people. Manipulations with the commissioners, with the lists of voters, with the necessary identification documents to vote, with population movement just before the Election Day and frauds during the counting of votes are some of the main irregularities regarding the voting process. Other obvious irregularities by the politicians are the intimidation of opponents during the Election Day through the exercise of physical force and the visual one.

1.1. The Electoral System

Albanian political elite that emerged after the fall of Communism, did not had the experience of competitive elections, like all other ex-Communist countries political elites. So it was obvious that the first multiparty elections were to be held within the old system, with mainly the same electoral law. However, most of the post-Communist countries politician have tried to “manipulate the electoral system” for their party or personal political gain (Birch 2003, 17). The same happened in Albania too. A single member district (SMD) with a simple majority was the system Albania used in its first multi-party elections of 1991. This system was the old system used during the one-party era. The largest opposition party, DP, opposed the

system, sustaining that it favored the party in power, but when the electoral law was to be discussed for the elections of 1992, after the DP and the APL re-made their calculations, their opinions changed and decided that the electoral system more appropriate for them; so the APL was defending the proportional system and the DP the majoritarian system. In 1992, parties entered into the elections with a mixed system where 100 deputies were to be elected by a majoritarian system and 40 others according to the proportional system.

Since the ruling party from 1992 to 1996 was the DP, for the elections of 1996 they decided that the seats would be distributed as 115 seats with majoritarian system and 25 with the proportional one (OSCE/ODIHR 1996). Since the DP influence and support was dropping because of the enormous economic problems Albania was facing, changing the electoral system was a smart move to their benefit. The Democratic Party had the necessary votes to change the law and the President, Sali Berisha with his authoritative methods, made possible to pass any law he proposed without transparency and without consulting parties in opposition (OSCE/ODHIR 1996).

On the national referendum held in November 1998, where people voted for the changes in constitution, one of the points referred to changes was the creation of a Central Election Commission (*Komisioni Qendror I Zgjedhjeve*, CEC). CEC was created as an independent institution, with members not affiliated with political parties, that's main duty was to ensure the electoral process. There were seven members composing commission where two of them were appointed by the President, three by the High Council of Justice and two by the Assembly. In 2000, two more members were added to this commission appointed by the Assembly.

When the electoral code was mainly changed in 2008, the number decreased to seven again, elected for four years and all appointed by the Parliamentary groups (Central Election Commission-CEC 2013). Despite the CEC's necessity to be independent, the fact the commissioners are elected by the parliamentary groups, does not allow them to keep neutrality from their party affiliations. Meanwhile the electoral code amendments are changed before each parliamentary or local election in order to make improvements to this law. For the laws that only a simple majority is needed, there is no agreement of different political parties, but the governing party decides.

In 2008, the Electoral Law and system changed almost completely. From a mixed system of election, the proportional system was chosen for the elections of 2009. The two main parties the DP and the SP thought that with this kind of system and with a three percent threshold for small parties and five percent threshold for coalitions, the government would be more consolidated since this system hindered the entrance of small parties in Parliament (Biberaj 2011, 383). Despite that this electoral law was better compiled according to the suggestions of OSCE/ODHIR, failed to reach the "highest standards of democratic election", this because the members of the commission were strongly affiliated to the political parties that appointed them (OSCE/ODHIR 2009). Although the members of OSCE, after being appointed by the respective political parties, their commitment should be regardless of their party and in affiliation to the rules and laws prescribed by the constitution. As these members are appointed by political groups, it is very difficult that this commission stands above political parties.

No matter the fact that the last Electoral Code, is considered to be the best among the old ones, still there are several gaps that give way to misinterpretation and

violation of the law. In Albania since the members of CEC are appointed by the parties in Parliament and since the majority belongs to the Government, these members even if their role is to be not politicized, the influence of the respective parties is very obvious. On the 2011 local elections, because the law did not state what should be done to the ballots thrown in the wrong box, created many discussions and debates of what should be done with these votes (OSCE/ODHIR 2011). This problem appeared in the elections of the municipality of Tirana and since the government held the majority in the CEC, its members decided in favor of the candidate from the governmental party, the DP, without taking in consideration that the law did not state anything about the issue. In situations similar to this one, the independence of institutions like the CEC is, is very doubtful, and polarization is very obvious, which created distrust to people on these institutions. What political elite should do is to leave this institution do its job, so the real will of people gets represented in Parliament.

1.2. Electoral Campaigns

Electoral campaigns in Albania usually have been more like dogmatic speeches by the leaders of the party, than proper political programs. So, public gatherings by political parties during electoral campaign are mainly done in the form of a concert or for the purpose to show the “great support” these parties had. These gatherings were good indicators to show which party are you affiliated with so when the party takes the power people take the “reward” or at least not getting fired from jobs. So intimidation of the opponent started from the supporters and militants to the highest level of the party hierarchy.

The highest level of intimidation of the opponent was during the 1996, but even 1997 Parliamentary Elections. During the election day of 1996 four people were killed and several others injured (Vickers 2008, 248). According to the final report of OSCE/ODHIR after 1996 election, opposition parties faced many difficulties since the police, media and government security apparatus were ‘closely affiliated with the ruling party’ and worked for them. So the opposition was banned from rallies, had limited cover on television and other state media, and during the Election Day there were several incidents of intimidation of members of opposition by the police and DP supporters (OSCE/ODHIR 1996). Taking in consideration the situation in Albania 1997, with the bankruptcy of the “pyramidal schemes”, fall of institutions and the tensed situation among people, the elections were considered acceptable by the OSCE observers. The dogmatic speeches of the leader of SP, promises to return all the lost money back to people and his promises to increase economy, resulted to be clear electoral promises without any base on reality. The fact is that even if Albanian economy was more or less stabilized, there were small steps forward, and the lost money never was given back. The 2001 and 2005 electoral campaigns were more or less same in terms of intimidation or violence, with only some small irregularities occurring. The difference of 2005 election was that for the first time election campaign were focusing on party program and political platforms than on insulting the opponents (OSCE/ODHIR 2005). One thing should be strongly pointed out is the critics and the assistance of the international observers, like OSCE assistance gave to Albania to change the situation, is one of the reasons why Albania made positive important steps toward free and fair election during these years.

Election campaign of 2009 was mainly characterized by stressing the achievements done so far by DP and the achievements of the leader of SP Edi Rama as a Mayor of Tirana (OSCE/ODHIR 2009). Both parties spoke in general terms about their aims, but neither of them had a clear electoral program covering all aspects of society. Still elections were not fully free and fair because of the small irregularities. These irregularities are as a consequence of the urge parties have to form the government so this limits very much their collaboration in the benefit of democracy and Albanian society in general. If parties and especially their leaders would accept more collaboration and if at the principal core was the desire for free and fair election in a consolidated democracy, and not their aspirations for personal power and gains, things would be much different in Albania.

1.3. The Presidential Elections

The President in Albania is elected by the Assembly and so it was since 1992. However the President's role has changed during those years. Today, the President has a symbolic role in the decision making process and politics, and also he is the head of the High Council of Justice according to the Article 147 of the Albanian Constitution. As soon as he assumes the responsibilities of this post, he should give up his political party affiliations and be the President that stands above all parties.

The only President, elected as a result of compromise between main political parties and without a strong affiliation to any party, was Alfred Moisiu (Biberaj 2011, 374). He became President on 2002 replacing Rexhep Meidani, a prominent academician and important figure among Socialist Party. Even if the role of the President is unifying, clashes between institution of President with the government or

the opposition have always been present. When the President approved the amendments proposed by the government, he was attacked by the opposition and when he rejected their propositions he was accused by the government as a supporter of the opposition.

The last two Presidents Bamir Topi and Bujar Nishani were closely related to the Democratic Party. The first one was the second most important figure of the DP, and Nishani was a Minister in the cabinet of Berisha. Both of them were elected without the support of the opposition, so none of them was a consensual President. When the DP deputies required from President Moisiu the removal of the General Prosecutor Theodori Sollaku from its post and he rejected to do so, Berisha's government attacked him and the SP supported him. When Topi received the post of President the first thing he did was to remove Sollaku from office and thus took the grant of the DP. But relations between the President Topi and the Prime Minister Berisha got spoiled when Topi refused to play the puppet role. There were several occasions which froze the relations of these two, like not approving the amendments of government, dis-approval for the members of the High Council of Justice, opposing the law the DP wanted to make regarding the Albanian Information Service and the vote Topi gave to Rama during the local elections according to what media presented to be true (Tirana Observer 2012). But the largest crack happened after the event of 21 January 2011, when four people were killed during an opposition protest from the National Guard, and Topi tried to take a neutral role to the situation created between the opposition and government. This attitude had its costs, since he lost the confidence Berisha had on him and was labeled as a "boulevard rat" (*horr*

bulevardi). From one of the greatest supporter, now Topi became the worst enemy and all this because of disrespect for the institutions they represented.

One more thing Albanian political elites should change is the way of perception for the state institutions. The institutions belong to people, are there for the people and that is why they should remain untouched in their duties and responsibilities. Separation and independence of institutions from each other is one of the main criteria for a democracy to work as it should and because of this, politicians should demonstrate more respect toward them. Disrespect toward independent institutions demonstrates only that the lust for power of Albanian political elite stands beyond their commitment to democracy and rule of law, and what is more important it shows that political elite of each party does not have the support of people and that makes them use their power to get this support by force.

2. Attitudes Toward Opposition and Opponents

There exist two arguments regarding Albanian politicians and relations between each other. One of them is that they work very close to each other, collaborating together and with the same purpose; get rich and powerful on the back of people. Shinasi Rama, one of the harshest critics of the entire political elite, defends this idea by making no distinction between each politician, either from the left or right. The other argument in which I will stand more is that the war for power is so extreme that we can barely see any kind of collaboration between especially opposition party politicians. Reaching agreement between two main opposition parties should be considered an event to remember since these moments are very rarely. However the problem is not just the collaboration between opposite parties,

but also the democracy within the party, acceptance of diversity of thought, of ideas and opinions, and the extreme powers of the leader of the parties. When there is no democratic attitude and behaviors within the party, then these behaviors are absolutely reflected in the larger spectrum of Albanian politics.

2.1. Attitudes Against Communist Elites

Suppressing the opponents of regime during the Communist era was a normal attitude like in all Communist regimes. The number of political prisoners was very high and they were not released until mid-December 1990 (quoted in Biberaj 1998, 84). After the declaration of pluralism, Ramiz Alia himself declared that the political prisoners would be free (Vickers 2008, 218). With the fall of Communism, in some ex-Communist countries the “witch-hunting” phenomena occurred as in Romania. In Albania this happened a bit later since the transition at the beginning was collaboration between the elites and counter-elites. After DP took the power, they made possible the removal of the tomb of Enver Hoxha and twelve important senior Communist officials to a sub-urban cemetery (Vickers 2008, 232). On 12 September 1992, Alia was given house arrest for crimes against humanity, and the widow of Enver Hoxha, Nexhmie Hoxha was prisoned with the accusation of corruption and “misappropriation of state funds” (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 45).

With the change of the name from Communist Party to Socialist Party, many of the members passed from the previous regime’s party to the new formed one. Since these people were to a certain extent powerful, their elimination from the political spectrum would ease the war of Berisha for power and would facilitate his victory. In this way the DP government amended two laws, stopping anyone who has been a

member of the politburo, Sigurimi (Secret police of Communist regime), or held any important position within the Communist party, to hold governmental or judiciary posts. “The Law on Communist Genocide” was made for the prohibition of the ex-officials of APL to candidate for deputy or in local elections until 2002. On the other hand the “Law on Dossiers” prohibited all agents of *Sigurimi*, to hold any political or state position until 2002 (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 46). Both of these laws were passed on 1995 and were a good method for the DP to eliminate from political competition some important figures of SP on the Parliamentary elections of 1996. The “war” with the Communist history in Albania was present not only during the first years of democracy but still today during electoral campaigns or during political speeches, accusations with the connotation “Communist” or the “son/daughter of a Communist” are still present. As Gramoz Ruci says in the interview: ‘Even if my grandson or granddaughter will want to be politicians in the future, they will still be label as grandson/granddaughter of a Communist’ (Ruci 2013).

2.2. Attitudes toward Political Opponents

Being a political figure, despite the positive aspects it has, bring also some dangers. Sometimes unfortunately political competition can be so dangerous that physical violence happens. Even in Albania, politically motivated crimes were and still are present. Away from these troubles are not only politician but also journalists and analysts. One of them was the journalist of the Democratic Alliance Party, Theodor Keko, that was attacked in the street that according to Vickers Berisha Government used the services of SHIK (National Security Services) to intimidate and discriminate his political opponents (Vickers 2008, 238). Similar was the

behavior of the SP after the turmoil of 1997. The SP demanded the arrest of six ex-officials of the DP government together with the Minister of Defence Safet Zhulali. They were accused for “crimes against humanity” during 1997 troubles (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 59). The Democratic Party assumed this as an attempt for revenge. Among one of the people arrested was also Blerim Cele, ex-head of the Supreme State Audit, who did an investigation to imprison Fatos Nano (Cela 2010, 460). On November 2000 the head of DP and ex-President, Berisha was arrested and kept in custody for couple of hours without any clear accusation. This was just a pressure from the government by criminal groups says Blerim Cela in his book “*Deformimi I Partise Demokratike*” (Cela 2010, 487). However the crimes against politicians were not always politically motivated, especially when the authors are not found were difficult to label this way. The same we can say about the deputy of Fier district, Fatmir Xhindi, who was killed in a mafia style homicide in front of his house on 2nd of May 2009 and still today the authors has not been found (Thano 2003). Since the authors are not found, it is difficult to say if he was killed for political reasons or some personal vendetta.

The most influencing political actions against politicians were the imprisonment of Fatos Nano and the killing of Azem Hjadari. These two events had great impact, not just in the political spectrum but also in the public opinion. Nano used the prison years to play the role of the victim, gaining in this way the sympathy of people and at the same time turn the game at his side not just in the eyes of public opinion, but at the same time of his party colleges who supported him. Nano was considered the ‘needed capable leader of the party, who was unfairly and politically prisoned’. On the other hand, assassination on 1998 of Azem Hajdari, one of the founders of

democracy and the Democratic Party, was a big shock in the fragile democratic system Albania had on that time. The reaction of this action was greater than expected, since it was a good opportunity for the DP to accuse the ruling party, the SP, and get the power back. The situation was so tense, that there was an attempt for coup d'état at the Prime Ministry, while the head of the government Fatos Nano fled his post. Despite that the shooter was found and prisoned, the accusation for other people behind the scene and political motivation act did not miss during all these years. However, neither when the DP was in power, neither when the SP was in power, these accusations was not proved. So when the DP was accusing the SP for killing Hajdari as a strong political opponent, also the SP was accusing the DP for killing him as Berisha feared with his popularity he could get his place, were just dogmatic speeches to confuse people. This seems to be one of the mysterious political killings that will never be revealed.

3. Economic and Social Development

Passing from a centralized economic system to a liberal capitalist one is dangerous and difficult process if the necessary measurements and precautions are not taken. For this knowledge and experience is needed, that Albanian political elite did not had neither of them, since the country was one of the most isolated countries of Eastern Communist Block, had a centralized economic system and knowledge and experiences were based on this kind of system.

Albania had a complete embargo with all other countries because of the 'self-reliance' principle imposed in the Constitution of 1976, so the economic situation had sharply decreased during the last years of 1980s (Tarifa 1995, 137). Re-

establishment of relations with Soviet Union, USA, UK, other European countries and some international organizations like OSCE and signing Helsinki Final Act, gave way to the opening of Embassies and branches of these organizations in Albania (Biedeleux and Jeffries 2007, 36, 38, 42; Tarifa 1995, 140). Together with the embassies the exodus started too. The largest waves of migration happened, during 1991-1992 and during 1996-1997 after the bankruptcy of the “pyramidal schemes”. In a survey done in 2002 the results demonstrated that Albanians preferred migration because there were better conditions for living abroad, and with the earnings they could even open business in their country (Kule et al. 2002, 231). One fifth of the Albanians lived abroad according to the census of 2001 and most of them were concentrated in Greece (Carletto et al. 2006, 782). Remittances composed around 14 percent of the GDP and were important and necessary in order to escape the poverty and the difficult economic conditions Albania was facing (Carletto et al. 2006, 783). As years passed the situation should have changed, but the political climate Albania had because of the political elite, their small cooperation and tough political dialogue, created a distrustful environment for the emigrants and hopes for the future (Raporti SA 2004, 24).

Albanian economy marked significant increase during those years especially after recovering from the 1997 economic bankruptcy. So according to World Bank Albania had an increase from 5.56 billion dollar GDP in 2003 increased to 12.96 billion dollar of GDP in 2011, but still ranked among low middle income countries (World Bank 2013). Albania has potential resources to be exploited, especially taking in consideration only the tourism sector. With a costal line lying from north to south of west part of Albania, high mountains to the East part and beautiful historical

places, tourism could be the main economic source for all seasons. But the absence of the proper infrastructures, unplaned territorial regulations, problems with the property owners because of the law of privatization and high bureocratic procedures, make the investments in this sector difficult for Albanian investors and especially for the foreign ones. The privatization issue of state enterprises especially after the fall of Communism has passed through many stages, always 'in attempt for improvment', but the result was not as expected since many problems arose from this one. The reason can be found at the involvment of politicians since the law was implemented by the decisions of the Council of Ministers and not by the privatization law giving way to political favorization (Hashi and Xhillari 1999, 117).

In addition, another important issue to be mentioned is the problem of corruption. Unfortunately corruption is a problem that needs urgent measures to be minimized since it affects different parts of society. But when corruption starts form politicians to the lowest level of governance and public services, then there are strong reason for urgent measures to be taken. Corruption is a disease, difficult to cure and needs strong commitment by state and civil society, in order to get rid of it, but when the state does not take the necessary precautions, people create a symbiotic relation with corruption. It turns to be a way of life at the end. In the evaluation of Transparency International for 2012, Albania had a score of 33 and ranked in 113th place among 176 countries. Also Albania has a -0.43 point in the Control of Corruption Index that means that the level of state and public power is at very high level under the political elites (Transparency International 2012).⁴ The biggest

⁴ *Control of Corruption* reflects the perception of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain. This includes both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as capture of the state by

problem of corruption is because it is strongly related to political elite. According to the European Commission on the report of 2011, Albania's corruption problem is very much related to politics, since public administration nominations were based on political affiliations grants, civil services are polarized by politics and immunity of deputies is a big barrier for corruption investigation (Komisioni I Europes 2011, 9,12,17).

Despite the fact that accusation for corruption, appropriation of public funds and favoring public procurements of politician to each other, no legal measure have been taken against these accusations. Strong accusation were done in the name of Lulzim Basha, now Mayor of Tirana, during his career as Minister of Interior for appropriation of state funds during the construction of a national road that connects Albania to Kosovo, "*Rruga e Kombit*". Another case where high state official is accused for corruption was the "Meta case", when his party colleague Dritan Prifti accused him of favoring a public procurement with his own profit of 70,000 euros. This accusation was shown with a video registration to the public, which of course was declared as manipulated by the accused part. To prove the veracity of the video, American experts were called by the Prosecutors office, but despite the fact that they claimed that the video was not touch or manipulated, Albanian experts showed the opposition so the judges of the case claimed Meta innocent (Shqiptarja.com 2012). Despite the decision of the judges, public opinion was not convinced and this decreased very much the trust on the Albanian judiciary system, because of the influence the politicians had on it. But the judiciary system credibility and political pressure it had was also showed by the events of 21 January 2011, when four people

were killed protesting against government and Meta's case in front of the Prime Ministry. There is still not found who ordered the killings and the shooters were declared innocent, pretending they shot in order to protect the Prime Ministry (Tema 2013). These examples show the strong affiliation of politics even in judiciary system, and the credibility to the justice system keeps decreasing.

CONCLUSION

Albanian politics during the period from after-communism until today has been characterized mainly by the attempt to terminate with transition process and consolidation of democracy as the main game in town. Without taking into consideration the economic and social environment and political history of Albania, these two processes are very much related to the behavior of the political elite. In order to end as soon as possible with the transition and consolidation of democracy, a common good-will and dedicated effort had to be made by the society in general and the political elite in particular. The level of democracy in Albania according to the Democracy Index of 2012 is 5.56 and is ranked on the -90th, the same place as Tunisia. The indicators for this result are electoral process and pluralism with the score of seven, functioning of government with the score of four, political participation and political culture with same score as five and civil liberties scoring 7, 35 (Intelligence Unit 2012, 7).⁵ Considering these data and taking into consideration the past 22 years, Albania's level of democracy is very low compared to what it should have been. Comparing to the results of some ex-Communist countries and Balkan ones, like Bulgaria with a score of 6.72, Romania with 6.54, Poland with 7.12, Serbia with 6.33, Macedonia with 6.16 and Montenegro with 6.05, these countries have reached the level of Flawed Democracies and all have better results than Albania in terms of democracy (Intelligence Unit 2012). There are several indicators that affect the democratic process like economy and human

⁵ The score is measured from 1 to 10, with ten the highest score. There are four levels of democracy the Intelligence Unit categorizes the countries as full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regime and authoritarian regime. Albania with the score of 5, 56, is ranked among the hybrid regimes.

development, but taking all these indicators together including democratic process and transition, the political elite is the only factor to blame for this situation.

Political elections as the main pillar of democracy are not one hundred percent free and fair as they should be so the will of people is not completely represented in Parliament. As mentioned in previous chapters, Albania has failed to reach the standards of democratic elections, and this created a gap in the democratic system Albania is trying to construct. The reason is the lack of cooperation and collaboration between different political groups. Unfortunately the role of the opposition in Albania is not perceived as a force that can balance the government and so Albania during all these years of 'democracy' has not had a constructive opposition, since its role, whoever opposition it was, was to block and hinder the government (Biberaj 2011, 376). During the first years of democracy, intimidation and even violence against opposition political groups, was very common, but this started being reduced. The fact is that politics is getting further concentrated in the hands of a few people. Especially with the changes in the electoral code in 2008, the role of the leader of the party has increased a lot. Power of the political elite stands as a hierarchical vertical line, and does not lie horizontally, sustained by respective clans of each powerful politician or political group (Bideleux and Jeffries 2007, 72). Identification with family ties and origin, say a lot about political party affiliation. However, this is not just because of the strong affiliation with belongingness, but also because of the polarization according to political parties, of every aspect of life. For instance in order for your relatives and families not to lose the job, voting according to family preferences is an obligation and necessity.

Even if Albania has made several improvements, political and economic reforms are going with slow steps. This is because Albanian political elites are concentrated more on short-term goals, with quick rewards, basically using momentary tactics. This is seen especially in the construction of the law, as the supreme power, however taking in consideration changes in constitution, Electoral Law, Judicial Law, and also law for private property and economy, Albanian politics have made several ‘mistakes’ and the law has been changed according to the preferences of the party in power. Having a heavily personalized party system, where the leader of the party is not considered a leader but an owner, political gain is converted into a personal gain. In a situation like this, democracy within the party is like impossible to be developed. Albanian political parties do not support individuality, there are group attitudes in any kind of matter, but the problem is that the decisions are not taken exactly according to the adequate organs, but from the leader of the party. In this way political parties have been converted into ‘organizations with owner’. The Albanian political elite are not very affiliated to party ideology, program or whatever makes this party different from other parties. The fact is that movement from one party to another, and coming back to the ‘mother party’ has happened a lot since the beginning of democracy and still happens today. Movements like this happen because party members are not strongly affiliated with the party, they are more interested in personal political and power gain than serving the people who have voted for and trusted them, and this is because parties have “no deep philosophical differences and their approach to most issues is pragmatic and non-ideological” (Biberaj 2011, 376).

The lack of improvement and development is also a result of non-cooperation of opposition parties with each other. This comes because of an absence of trust toward each other, and mainly because the role of the opposition is to block the work of government. However, we should bear in mind that Albanian political elites are enormously rich and powerful compared to the rest of society. So opposition groups, no matter which party they are, do not work to stop individual gain and profit, but to stop reforms that are for the society in general. Many accusations for corruption and relations with the organized crime are done toward each other, but none of them has been arrested or left politics for this reason.

The composition of Albania's political elite has changed during the years since the establishment of democracy. During the 1990s, politicians who climbed political career were the ones who were well known in their professional life, because politics needed capable people in order to get out of the difficult situation it was. All of them were well-educated people coming from different spheres of society. But this changed as years passed. Political elite started to get converted to a bunch of people whose main characteristic was loyalty to the leader, and people who have constructed their own political power and removing them would be like impossible. Observing the CVs of deputies in Parliament, it is easy to see that there are many of them with two, or three university diplomas, mainly graduated in Albania. When education system in Albania contains many problems and the quality has decreased enormously during the years of democracy, these diplomas do not have much significance. In the legislature of 2009-2013, there are 5 deputies graduated from University Kristal, an university in which the son of an Italian Politician, Renzo Bossi graduated from without ever coming to Albania (Shqiptarja.com 2012). As regarding the circulation

of elites and replacement of old politicians with new ones, there was an attempt after 2005 to include young people on the list for deputies. However their role was relatively small, because they remained under the shadow of the leader, they were too much committed to the leader. Another feature of the Albanian political elites is the small number of women involved in the decision-making process, and the difficulties women have to advance in political career. Even if with the last Electoral Code they were given quotas for representation in Parliament, these quotas were never applied. Albania's patriarchal tradition is clearly reflected in politics, where it is seen as a field of battle between men, and where women are not as capable as to afford these battles.

As a result, Albania has much to change, and this not just in terms of political and economic development, but also in terms of the mentality and perception the Albanian political elite has for power. Political power should no longer be considered a mean for personal profit, but as a right given by people, to rule and govern in the favor of the people and society. Without denying the veracity of the expression "every society deserves the government they have", it is important to add that Albanian society until now has been choosing "the best among the worst" option. So without taking into consideration a "revolution change", circulation and perception in politics should gain different meaning in the society in general and among the political elite especially.

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