

Paradox of the Mission of Albanian Political Parties

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Abstract

While everyone has a negative opinion on political parties, they are all powerful because, when they win the elections, they all win. They have a paradoxical mission: only political parties can hire anyone who helps them win the election. There are political parties of the majority who "appoint" the President of the Republic. Despite the large number of political parties, as a sign of the country's normal democratization, the parties remain divided into two categories: the main party and the partisans, which survive thanks to the main parties. The worst thing is that the "party equal employment" tradition is being taught, as every member or party militant calls the normal job demand after the victory of political elections by the coalition where his "party". Generally, in Albania there is a negative opinion about political parties, but the high poverty and unemployment, as well as the fact that work finds easier when you join one party and win the elections, have made many people become party members. This has also led to a "pragmatic" view of political coalitions. It is up to the opinion that coalitions are good to be post-election, that parties and party parties should measure their real strength, but also program, so that everyone with a single tongue and within their family.

Keywords: political parties, democracy, coalition, stability

1. Introduction

Albania's political and economic progress following the political changes of 1991 is enormous, though its democracy is still considered to be dysfunctional. Political parties have their important role in this process as representative institutions of the political will of the people, with a maximum ambition to win political elections and to run reforms and rule the country.

The basic framework for political parties in Albania is clearly defined in the Constitution and in a special legal framework adopted by the Parliament, which is considered as incomplete by special articles¹. Because political pluralism and free and programmatic membership have been the aspirations of Albanians since the time of a single communist system. Political parties exist as there are different views and desires among people.

All of these have been typical features for all the countries of the former communist East and represent the essence of the democratic reforms of their transition. Albania does not seem to make any exception, though it is part of a group of countries called the Western Balkans, where Europeanization is considered to be difficult² and opposition parties find themselves very difficult³.

The common of the Western Balkan countries is that a lot of mentalities, methods, or styles of governance continue to be significantly affected by previous mentalities, methods and styles. Such is the case of the Albanian Constitution, which stipulates that the President of the Republic of Albania is elected by the Albanian Parliament with the proposal of the party that chairs the governing coalition. Up to here everything is fine. But the problem starts right here. Because the election in this case is legally replaced by "appointment". The election of the President by the Parliament is done in 5 rounds, of which only 50% plus one vote is needed⁴. For this purpose, the Constitution has been amended with the agreement of political parties in Albania, and its implementation has degraded to the point where it is overcome 3 the first raquets only to be solved by a simple majority the candidate-elect proposed by the ruling majority. In the case of Albania, special importance

¹ Krasniqi, A., "Albanian political parties, undemocratic and non-transparent structures", *Javanews*, 30.05.2016.

² Vuckovic, Vladimir., *The Europeanization of Political Parties in Montenegro*, *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 2016.

³ Zajc, Drago., *Role of the Opposition in Contemporary Parliamentary Democracies- The case of Slovenia*, *Journal of Comparative Politics*, January 2016, Vol. 9 Issue 1, p19-35.

⁴ *Constitution of the Republic of Albania, Tirana, 1998.*

is given to the democratic culture of the people, because the Albanian society is generally distrustful of political parties and is an apathetic society. This political apathy is based on the rooted mentality of the past when membership in the Labor Party, which was the only existing political party, was very advantageous at that time, which in democracy suddenly turned into a great personal handicap for many people.

Poverty and unemployment turned into the main characteristics of Albanian transition. These encouraged people to join political parties with the hope of hiring them because the mentality that membership in a political party could be the only way they could get a job was rooted. This mentality began to further promote people towards membership, creating a misguided idea of the role of political parties. Simplifying the role of political parties in employment tanks instead of leading the reforms testified to a deficient democratic culture in the people. This mentality has also been reinforced by the winning political parties themselves, arguing in many cases as a necessity for the implementation of their political programs.

From an ideological point of view, the space of political parties in Albania is limited by the political and economic transition of the country. Because some common and unchanging fundamental objectives are already clear, such as the establishment of a democratic system, a market economy, integration into the European Union, partnership with the United States of America. The political debate thus focuses on more fundamental issues, without affecting these very obvious principles.

The issue of political coalitions remains the most fundamental issue to be debated in Albania and related to the very existence of political parties. Although Albania is a small country, in the last political elections 60 political parties have been registered, out of 118 registered in court, whereas the threshold for the Parliament has never exceeded six. In fact there are only two main parties, while the others are simply the partisans who "feed" on the largest and exist on their own. From an ideological point of view, most of the Albanian parties are alike, because their base is the same: the democratic system, the market economy and the progress of the individual. There is also a party that supports communist ideology, the past system, and collectivism. Parties usually have realistic structures both at national and local level. While the parties usually have only national organization and find it difficult to have a real local organization while it is easier to have only national bodies. Since the most active contribution of the party membership is expected at the local level, there is a great contradiction in the partisanship of the parties in Albania. Frustrated by the past, many people join a major party only to secure a job in the public sector. The rank of the function depends only on the will of the party chairman. In the case of small parties with only national structures, it is sufficient being prominent by shouting louder than others and you have a good position because there are not many people, so the competition is almost non-existent. Usually political parties are based on their membership and sympathizers. The latter are integrated into political parties as "independent members". The identity of a party is usually expressed in its program. It is a party program that legitimizes its existence, illustrates its basic goals and values, provides an orientation for citizens and voters, and promotes membership. Therefore, the parties usually have general political programs and special programs that express the party's views on various economic issues, reforms, etc.¹. However, they all agree that, a strong political party system is a necessary condition for democracy and that the stability of the democratic system is closely related to the stability of the political party system. That is why the degree of democratic progress of countries in transition is much better measured by analyzing and evaluating the system of political parties.

The skepticism and distrust of the population for parties and political leaders is a timely phenomenon that will soon be replaced by the necessity for even more qualitative solutions. They are the basis for high poverty and high unemployment, which is expected to be the most temporary occurrence of political and economic transition.

2. Methodology

We have thoroughly reviewed all domestic and foreign literature on political parties, as well as the relevant legal framework in Albania, starting with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania of 1998.

The political and electoral programs of each party have been studied in detail, and also the results of their election or political coalitions.

To clarify the perception of the public on political parties, an on-line survey was conducted with direct questions, to create opportunities for each to respond without spending time. The average number of responses to each question was over

¹ Hofmeister, W., Graliov, K., Krasniqi, A., *Political parties: function and organization, Foundation Konrad Adenauer, 2017.*

5000, most young people, given that young people are thought to be massively frequented by social networks. According to the data, the largest number of responses and explanations (87%) were given by young people under the age of 30.

3. Analysis of Results

The opinion of the majority who answered the questionnaire were of the opinion that political parties in Albania are unconstitutional. Over 85% of responses from 5763 responses correspond to this opinion and only about 5% of them have a positive opinion about them (see Figure 1)

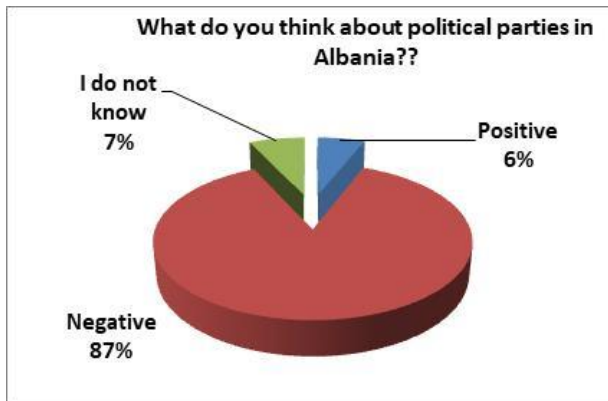


Figure 1: Negative majority opinion on political parties

We tried to deepen on this clearly disbelieving response to the political parties and we think that this mistrust is not only Albanian, but at least in the Balkan. It comes from the concrete activity of these parties and, secondly, by the mistrust of the political elites of the country (see Figure 1).

The concrete activity of the parties is related to their disrespect of political programs, because in Albania no one is surprised if the "right" parties are left to the left. The former ask for taxation, while the latter require their establishment and further growth. This is common in Albania, where it is enough to be reformed from the political standpoint and immediately the political opposition opposes it, without any particular amalgies whether this is a right or a left reform.

In fact, in transition countries such as Albania, it is required to consider a package of reforms necessary to transform the system into a democratic system and economy in a market economy. These are necessary reforms already accepted since the system was changed, so they should not be considered either right or left. So, the opposing spaces of the political parties remain limited.

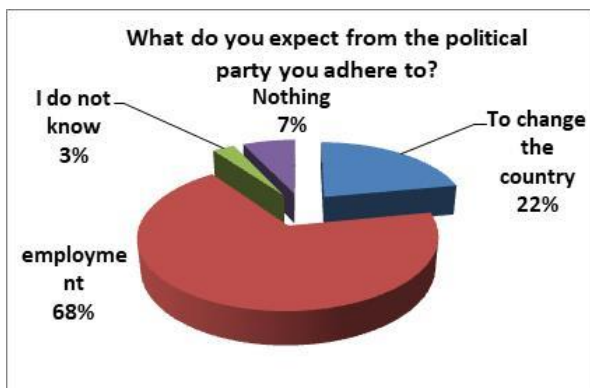


Figure 2: The main expectation is employment

The employment is another very important aspect of interest to join a political party. The principle "Party Equal to Employment",¹ has now become a genuine theory of expectation. Employment after the election victory is considered a normal thing as something that belongs to you because of that you have participated in any political action of your "party". It is now the party's turn to reward you with at least an appropriate job this contribution you have given to.² It seems surprising to us that only 22% of the 5128 responses are "idealistic" because they seek the coming of their "party" party with the claim to change the country. Because the expectation of 68% of people is employment (see Figure 2). Employment has become the subject of life and political choices in Albania. Three in every four people who have responded to the relevant question consider it necessary to adhere to a political party. Even about 41% of people, out of 5364 answers in total, consider this to be very necessary. But one in every four people does not value membership at all in the party, as it calls in vain this membership (see Figure 3).

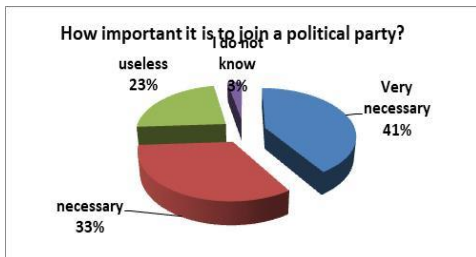


Figure 3: Necessity of adherence to a political party.

If we answer this question with the answers to the foregoing question on the expectation of adherence to a political party, it is obvious that the same level of response: to be employed it is imperative to adhere to a political party. The pragmatism of the members is clearly seen. Because, on the one hand, most have no faith in the political parties, on the other hand, most people adhere, because they consider this to be the only employment opportunity in the case of his "party" victory. So, this little by little is turning into law in Albania, the controversial measures being taken and the reform of the civil service.

We also have a lot of interest in the opinion given to the group of questions related to political coalitions. In fact, political coalitions should be based on two pillars:

- (i) *Number of voters or votes they win.*
- (ii) *Party Political Programs.*

A political coalition can not be done, on the bases of words. Only program coalitions can last longer. So, there is no need for political coalitions simply to win a "coup" vote more. This opinion is clear in the answers to Questions 4 and 5 of the Survey, where 5624 and 5431 responses were received (see Figure 4 and Figure 5).

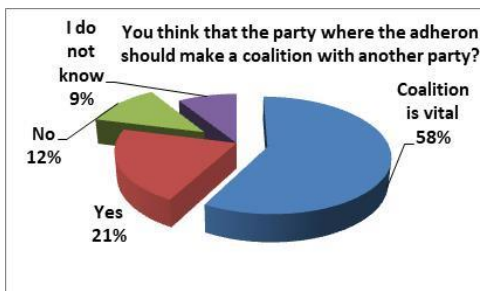


Figure 4: The coalition is indispensable

¹ Cabiri. Y., *Shqipëria mund të bëhet . Me Qeverisje të vërtetë. Onufri, 2018, (publishing process).*

² *Ibid.*

This is a matter of fact because around 58% of the responses consider the coalition as vital and there are some 21% of the respondents who say yes, it seems that the coalition is recognized by about 79% of the responses and is opposed by only about 12% of them. The large number of positive responses shows that the word is more about partisans, who can not cross the electoral threshold without the "help" of big parties.

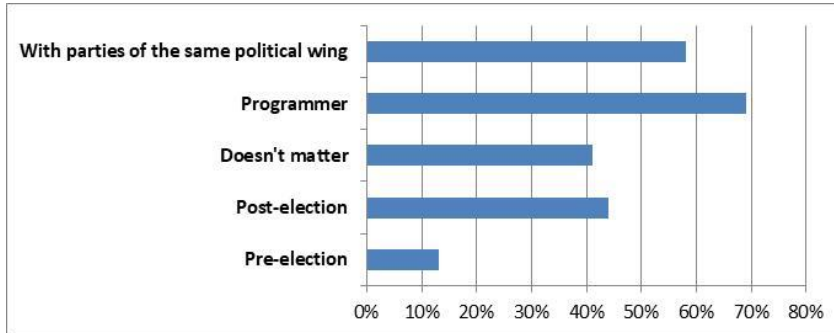


Figure 5: "Pragmatic" Opinion on Coalitions

A significant number of responses, about 41% (see Figure 5), are of the opinion that they earn quite a lot, regardless of which party becomes a coalition. This mentality is typical of the members of the partisans, who know that they can not win single. This "pragmatism" is also related to the answer to question 2: the expectation of the majority is employment in state structures. People join in to hire. The "Pragmatism" is further emphasized given the answers to question 6 regarding the responsibility of governance (see Figure 6). Party members do not think that while they are in government they are responsible for how they have done their duties.

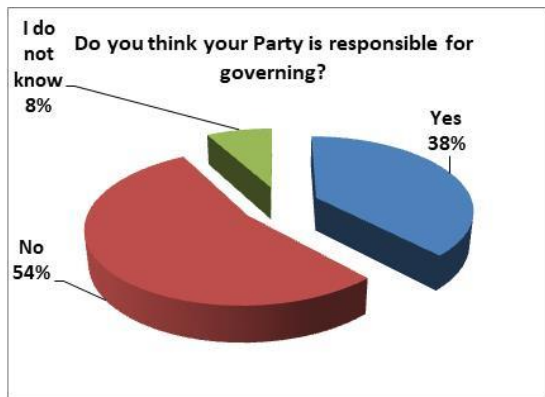


Figure 6: There is no responsibility for the past

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The level of democracy It is unfair that the level of democracy of "new" democratic countries be measured by the level of "old" countries and with consolidated democracies such as the United States, France, Germany, Great Britain, etc. Moreover, the path that the "new" countries had to follow after the political changes they made was clearly unknown to anyone, even to the "old" countries. A two-grading grouping of countries, would be more realistic for determining any calculated indicator. So, the progress of democracy in the "new" democratic countries will be measured within the list of these countries.

The "right" and the "left" In Albania, the right-wing parties are considered left-wing than left-wing and vice-versa. This is related to the fact that there is still no absolute agreement on the types of reforms that need to be undertaken to meet the

political and economic transition. Consequently, political opposition parties oppose any political majority initiative, while the latter undertook reforms in line with its position in the Albanian political spectrum, often dictated by international institutions. A political agreement on Albania's integration reforms in the European Union will have to be put in place to never contradict their substance. Political debate should focus more on the process of implementing reforms, as well as on secondary issues of political and economic transition.

Election of the President of the Republic Today's way of electing the President of the Republic, even though it is under the Constitution of Albania, it's a clear appointment of the President and not his choice. On the other hand, this appointment focuses everything on the chairman of the ruling coalition's main party. That is why the wrong change of the Constitution should be done boldly. Changing the basic constitutional law should be made even with a popular Referendum.

Coalitions of parties Coalitions of parties should be within the spectrum, where political parties are involved. They should be selective, rely on party political programs, and give up once and again from theories of the value of parties in exchange for parties with a considerable number of voters. This should also be the basic criterion of a political coalition. Political parties involved in coalitions should feel equally responsible for the problems of government. They should remain responsible even later.

The party equal to employment The problematic system of "party equal to employment" has its source in political coalitions. This system unknowingly creates "playmaker" parties, without which it would be impossible to become the number in the Parliament for the creation of the government. Coalition parties require positions in government because they have "values", not votes. So, it is true that in the last parliamentary elections the "condition" of the partisans to be included in the opposition coalition was that their mayors were on the safe list of candidates for deputies of the main opposition party.

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