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PRESIDENTIALIZATION OF PARTIES IN SERBIA[1]

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Presidentialization of Parties in Serbia

Abstract

Presidentialization of parties is observed through the executive, party and electoral "faces". A presidentialist style dominates over the executive regardless of whether we are talking about an elected head of a state or a prime minister elected in the parliament. Parties are faced with internal leadership tensions and the party leader's ambition to accumulate in his hands as many competences as possible and to mount up and distribute the party's power. The party can benefit from this as well, particularly at elections, due to personalization and candidate-centric campaigns, where everything revolves around the leader. He is the main pivot, support and epicentre of events. This is particularly visible with parties that have strong candidates in presidential elections. In parliamentary elections under proportional representation, the lists' titles more and more frequently bear the names of the party leaders. This trend is further contributed to by the medialization of politics.

Keywords: presidentialization, parties, executive, elections, semi-presidential system

Presidentialization of parties refers to the concentration of power in the hands of the leader or the people around him. Above else this depends on the different models or organizations of power: parliamentary, presidential or semi-presidential systems; and the behaviour of the leaders in different institutions, such as the parliament or the government. The common denominator supporting the tendency towards presidentialization is the trend and/or tendency towards the supremacy of executive power, i.e. the supremacy of the executive over the legislative branch. Prime ministers elected in parliament behave as if they were directly elected presidents (e.g. Silvio Berlusconi and Tony Blair).

The leader is the top of the pyramid in political parties. He is the seat and the centre of power, he is the most exposed, the most visible and the most attractive element of

the party to the public. What adds significance and weight to the discussion about the presidentialization of parties is the other side of leaders' behaviour, in the broader context of the institutions outside the party itself. The presidentialization of parties is directly connected with the personalization of politics. This trend is also influenced by changes in the manner in which politics is conducted, caused by the development of the media – the medialization of politics. All this shows that the presidentialization process determines the leaders' practice and behaviour independent of changes in the formal structures of political institutions or types of regimes. (Poguntke & Webb, 2005a: 1)

In their conceptualization of the presidentialization of politics, Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb point to three important dimensions: 1. Leadership power resources, deriving from the legitimization of direct election and no accountability to the parliament; 2. Autonomy of leadership, meaning that in the context of the division of power the head of the executive is protected from his party's pressures; and 3. Presidentialization of the electoral process. These authors call this the three "faces" of presidentialization: the executive face, the party face and the electoral face. My paper will analyse the process of the presidentialization of the parties in Serbia through these three "faces".

These dimensions point to a certain tension between political parties and their leaders. In a certain sense, they reflect the power of a party leader understood in Weber's words as "the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others." (Weber, 1976: 31) For Franz Neumann, politics is "both the fight of ideas and the fight for power." (Neumann, 1974: 719)

1. The executive face as an indicator of the presidentialization of parties

The executive face refers to the mandate of the party leader being extremely personalized. His rule is not only "partified" through the party; the rule outside the party is presidentialist as well. A presidentialist style dominates the political executive. (Poguntke & Webb, 2005a: 337) The presidentialization of parties expressed in the executive face is monitored through both dimensions in which the executive appears – the president of the republic and the prime minister. Since 1990 Serbia has had a semi-presidential system which can be defined as a system in which a directly elected president serves for a fixed term of office alongside a prime minister and a government that are accountable to the parliament. (Elgie, 1999: 13) The spectrum of such systems is broad, from an effective head of the executive to a president who is only a figurehead.

The position of a directly elected president is, among other things, measured by the relationship with between the prime minister and the parliament. This system, although

it "oscillates" between the presidential and the parliamentary phases, shares certain similarities with out-and-out presidentialism. In new democracies, a semi-presidential system faces additional challenges and tests.

Presidentialization of parties in a semi-presidential system unfolds and appears in several ways. For the functioning of a semi-presidential system the following issues are important: 1. Whether the directly elected president is at the same time the party president and if his party has the highest number of MPs, that is, if it is a ruling party or an opposition party; and 2. The "mechanism" of functioning of that system of government and its performance. Strong candidates in presidential elections bring significant credibility to the party in parliamentary elections. This is particularly visible in cases where parliamentary and presidential elections are held simultaneously. Presidents usually appoint weaker prime ministers if their party is in a position to form a government. In that sense, this system oscillates between the presidential and the parliamentary phases.

We shall spend more time on the characteristics of a semi-presidential system, or a diarchical executive. According to Giovanni Sartori, a semi-presidential system (semi-presidentialism) is a two-engine system. These two engines should not be running at the same time, as there is a danger that they will pull in opposite directions. As long as one is working it can move, but if that one fails, the other engine is turned on and the system can function. (Sartori, 2003: 175-6) Empirical examples of semi-presidential systems depend on the constitutional rules, political tradition and culture, political context, the party composition of the parliament and relations between the state president and the parliamentary majority. Direct election is an important source of power, but above else it is a source of legitimacy for the president. The head of state and the head of the government have disproportional power and legitimacy. (Shugart & Carey, 1992: 56) Several authors emphasize that a strong president is characterized by being a party leader and the party being a part of the ruling majority. According to Raymond Aron, the president of a republic is the supreme authority for as long as he has a majority in the national assembly, but if the prime minister's party has a majority, the reality is different (Aron, 1981, cited in Lijphart, 1994: 95). As interpreted by Mirjana Kasapović, a strong state president is not created by direct elections but by the fact that he is the leader either of the majority party or of the party necessary for formation of the government, or that the parliament has more or less renounced the exercising of its functions (Kasapović, 2007: 27-54). Juan Linz claims that "it is impossible to analyse the performance of bipolar regimes independently from a larger political system" and in this respect he singles out two particularly important factors – the party system and historical circumstances.

The relationship of the state president and his membership of and/or connection with a certain political party brings several issues of theoretical and practical importance (Orlović, 2015: 159-60):

1. Should the president of the republic (who is the president of all citizens) be, at the same time, the leader of the party?
2. Should the president of the republic be elected without his party's support?
3. What is the power of a directly elected president if he is or is not the leader of the party.

Table 1: Presidents of former Yugoslav republics and party leaders

State	President	Term of office	Party leader?
Serbia	Slobodan Milošević Milan Milutinović Boris Tadić Tomislav Nikolić	1990-1992 1992-1997 1997-2002 2004-2008 2008-2012 2012-	Yes No Yes Yes (two months)
Croatia	Franjo Tuđman Stipe Mesić Ivo Josipović Kolinda Grabar - Ki-tarović	1990-1999 2000-2010 2010-2015 2015-	Yes No No No
Montenegro	Momir Bulatović Milo Đukanović Filip Vujanović	1990-1992 1992-1997 1998-2002 2003-2008 2008-2013 2013-	Yes Yes No
Slovenia	Milan Kučan Janez Drnovšek Danilo Tirk Borut Pahor	1991-1997 1997-2002 2002-2007 2007-2012 2012-	No No No No No
Macedonia	Kiro Gligorov Boris Trajkovski Branko Crvenkovski Igor Ivanov	1991-1999 1999-2004 2004-2009 2009-2014 2014-	VMRO-DPMNE SDS No No

Source: *Orlović, 2015: 160*

Where the presidents of the republics were at the same time the leaders of their respective parties, they were strong presidents (Slobodan Milošević, Boris Tadić (second term of office), Momir Bulatović, Milo Đukanović, Franjo Tuđman and Tomislav Nikolić at the beginning of his term of office (2-3 months) (see Table 1). As Juan Linz emphasizes, "personalization of leadership is not an exclusivity of presidentialist politics." (Linz, 1994: 11) For certain leaders it can be said that the power moved with them (Slobodan Milošević, Milo Đukanović and Vladimir Putin). If they were state presidents, this is where the centre of power was as well. If they were the president of the government or of a federal state (Milošević), the power went with them. It is unique to Croatia that President Ivo Josipović was not the leader of the party which supported him for president, but he enjoyed higher popularity than the prime minister, Zoran Milanović, who was the party leader.

According to some authors, presidentialism has advantages in that it ensures accountability of the elected persons to the voters, the identification of the winner, as well as a balance between the legislature and the executive. (Shugart & Carey, 1992: 44) It is important to note that there are cases of multi-member presidencies: Cyprus, with two people, or the three presidents in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The leaders of the strongest parties in this system aspire to two positions: to become the head of state (president) or the head of the government (prime minister). Party leaders did not become prime ministers when their respective parties gained a majority only in cases where they were in the position of a directly elected head of state (the President of Serbia): Slobodan Milošević from 1990 to 2000, Boris Tadić from 2008 to 2012 and Tomislav Nikolić at the beginning of his mandate (mid-2012). The party which won the highest number of seats and participated in the formation of the government gave the position of prime minister to the candidate of another party on two occasions. Firstly, in 2007 the Democratic Party (DS) gave the post of prime minister to the leader of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), and then the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) gave the post of prime minister to the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). In both cases this was the price (condition) for forming a government with a party which had an offer from "another block" as well. Firstly, in 2007 the DS gave the position of prime minister to the DSS to prevent it from forming a government with the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). And in 2012, the SNS (since 2008 the party created by the splitting up of the SRS) gave the position of prime minister to the SPS to prevent it from forming a government with the opposing camp at that time – the DS.

The stronger presidents were those who were at the same time the presidents of their respective parties and whose parties had the highest number of mandates and formed a ruling majority in the parliament: Slobodan Milošević 1990-1997, Boris Tadić 2004-2008 and Tomislav Nikolić in 2012, for the first two months of his mandate until he resigned from his position as SNS president (see Table 1). The weaker presidents were those who were not party leaders: Milan Milutinović 1997-2003, Tomislav Nikolić from September

2012, and those whose parties were not part of the ruling majority – Boris Tadić in his first presidential mandate 2004-2008.

The stronger prime ministers were those who were the leaders of the parties which had the highest number of MPs in the parliament and which formed a ruling majority: Zoran Đinđić 2001-2003, Vojislav Koštunica 2004-2007 and Aleksandar Vučić 2014-2016 and from 2016 on (see Table 2). The weaker prime ministers were those who were not party leaders: Dragutin Zelenović, Radoman Božović, Mirko Marjanović, Zoran Živković, Mirko Cvetković and Ivica Dačić. Above else, the point is that the weaker prime ministers were in the shadow of directly elected presidents whose respective parties were part of the ruling majority.

Table 2: Parliamentary and presidential elections; prime ministers and presidents 1990-2016

Parliamentary election, prime minister, party, leader	Presidential election, president, party, leader
1990 Dragutin Zelenović (SPS) (1991) Radoman Božović (SPS) (1991-1993)	1990 Slobodan Milošević (SPS) **Leader** (1990-1992)
1992 Nikola Šainović (SPS) (1993-1994)	1992 Slobodan Milošević (SPS) **Leader** (1992-1997) *
1993 Mirko Marjanović (SPS) (1994-1997)	
1997 Mirko Marjanović (SPS) (1997-2000)	1997 Milan Milutinović (SPS) (1997-2002)
2000 Zoran Đinđić (DS) **Leader** (2000-2003) Zoran Živković (DS) (2003-2004)	
2003 Vojislav Koštunica (DSS) **Leader** (2003-2007)	
	2004 Boris Tadić (DS) **Leader** (2004-2008)
2007 Vojislav Koštunica (DSS) **Leader** (2007-2008)**	
2008 Mirko Cvetković (DS) (2008-2012)	2008 Boris Tadić (DS) **Leader** (2008-2012)
2012 Ivica Dačić (SPS) **Leader** (20012-2014)	2012 Tomislav Nikolić (SNS) **Leader** for 2 months, followed by resignation (2012-)
2014 Aleksandar Vučić (SNS) **Leader** (2014-2016)	
2016 Aleksandar Vučić (SNS) **Leader** (2016-)	

* Slobodan Milošević was the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1998 to 2000.
** Vojislav Koštunica was the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 2000 to 2003.

One of the questions regarding the government's position is whether and to what extent the executive is accountable to the legislature. If a party or parties composing the government have a stable majority in the parliament, the party leaders sitting in the government control the parliament through the heads of their parliamentary groups, instead of the parliament controlling the government. Sir Sidney Low was surprised how a parliament could dominate the organization of government and the government itself if the same party was represented in the government with its generals and in the parliament with its troops.

2. The party face of the presidentialization of parties

The party face of the presidentialization of parties points to different dimensions of the manner in which the benefit from this leadership is reflected in the power within the party. Candidate-centric electoral orientation, even within different electoral systems (majority system towards the name of the candidate or proportional representation towards the candidate's name on the list's title) is favourable for this trend. The tendency towards centralization seems to increase in line with the development of parties. The organization of political parties mostly has a centralized, hierarchical and pyramidal structure, with the leader on the top. Michels notices the personal moment as an important characteristic of every leadership. Personal rule by the leaders often gains forms of self-will which the members can resist by using the right to step in or replace the leaders. If someone has a different approach, he can either align himself with the party leaders, perhaps with "grumbling" or an air of despair, or he can change the party, or, fearing ending up branded a "dissident" or "traitor", he can give up on any activity whatsoever.

Operational skills in conducting party politics require fast decision making; therefore the members cannot always voice their opinion, despite not always having the same opinions as their leadership. When the possibility arises for consulting the party "base" about some issues (horizontally and/or vertically), top-down proposed solutions are generally accepted. This only confirms the factual power of the party leadership to decide about the most important issues. Higher party organs are authorized to control the work of lower organs, and in some cases, stipulated by the statute, they can even replace collegial and independent organs at the lower levels.

Almost all parties face leadership tensions and the aspiration of the head of the party to accumulate in his hands as many competencies as possible to make key political and human resource decisions, as well as to mount up and distribute the party power. Robert Michels (1990) describes the emergence of leadership whereby a leader gathers like-minded people

around him and founds a party, and in the process, right from the beginning, he decisively influences the most important party decisions and holds the most power in the party. This process of establishing party leaders accompanies the establishment of parties in post-communist societies. The goal of the organization's leader, in Michels's opinion, is not to achieve the goals for which the organization was established, but to ensure the survival of the organization and therefore the survival of his position of power. The party organization must ensure good leadership based on participation and support. Party leaders compete for control over the organization and generally for power within and outside the party.

No matter how internal party relations are regulated in a formal sense, it is the informal structure that hides the actual mechanisms of functioning of the party and its actual relations. These are more hidden and more difficult for researching and analysis. (Goati, 1984: 24) Every organization is a hierarchy and every hierarchy implies a relationship of supremacy and subordination. For Franz Neumann, every group fighting for power is hierarchically structured. The larger the group, the more rigid the hierarchy, i.e. "growing hierarchization leads to a concentration of power at the top." (Neumann, 1974: 76) In other words, every government has a pyramidal structure, from a broad base at the bottom, to the apex at the top. At the top of the party pyramid is the party leader. The organization is at the same time both the source and the means of redistribution of power. Political parties are more recognizable by their internal structure (anatomy and physiology) than by their programme, but most of all by their leader. For ordinary citizens, unclear and similar programmes of political parties simply force them to recognize parties by their leaders. In making important political decisions, leaders can deviate from the programme, as well as from the statutory provisions and members' will. These tendencies are facilitated by *passivity of membership*, when care of the party is left to the leadership, particularly in issues they are not directly concerned with.

The leaders of political parties in Serbia have broad competences, which can be concluded by looking at the evolution of the status of political parties from the early 1990s onwards. Almost all parties increased the competences of their leaders, allowing the leader to appoint up to one-third of the main board, influence the election of MPs, etc. (Orlović, 2006) Leaders carry out human resource policy, interpret the programme and statute of the party, redistribute power, negotiate with coalition partners and most often hold the channels of party financing in their hands.

Party presidents remain in their leadership positions for a long time. The majority of party leaders have been in these positions since the parties' founding. In the last 26 years after the renewal of the multi-party system, the presidents of the leading parties in Serbia remained in power in the party regardless of election defeats. Only a few leaders even offered their resignation or the possibility of a vote of no-confidence due to poor election results. Only in some parties was an electoral loss followed by resignations. After defeat in the parliamentary elections of 2014, when their parties remained below the threshold,

the DSS leader, Vojislav Koštunica, and the URS (formerly G17 plus) leader, Mlađan Dinkić, resigned. The DS experienced changes of leaders several times – after the assassination of the party's president, Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić (2003), Boris Tadić was elected to his position. After presidential election defeat and failure to form a government in 2012, Dragan Đilas was elected party president. After failure in the elections in 2014, Bojan Pajtić was elected. After he lost both the parliamentary and the provincial elections in Vojvodina in 2016 (where he was the president of the provincial government), Dragan Šutanovac was elected party leader (2016).

Within political parties there are stronger or weaker, more silent or louder struggles between members and leaders, aimed at acquiring positions of power and influence. These attempts can cause internal party disputes and conflicts. Conflicts within parties are most often the result of the leader's actions. The reasons can vary: from fighting for prestigious positions (in the party and/or the state), fighting for "limited resources", disagreements about attitudes to the party's programme, competition and competitiveness in internal party elections to the personal vanity of the leaders. The party leader significantly influences internal conflicts by the force of his authority and his competences, depending on his role in actual disputes. The winning group comes out of the conflict strengthened and uses the opportunity to centralize and discipline the party, even to fight with "dissidents". The defeated party usually fractures, and the new oligarchic core uses its stronghold among the supporters to form a new party. Sometimes leaders do not even anticipate, nor are they aware of their influence on the masses, so it happens that the transfer of a particular leader from one party to another is accompanied by a high drop-out by members or withdrawal from membership. Splits in parties "are always the act of leaders". Mostly the initiators or causes of conflicts are those who, for particular reasons, are not satisfied with their status in the party. By its internal nature, the party is usually intolerant against people who think differently and who dissent from the party line.

In internal fights with intraparty dissidents, leaders mostly manage to impose their will and come out as winners. Oligarchic conflicts within opposition parties during the 1990s (fractions, splitting, division) and between parties (personal vanities, fighting for the opposition leadership, intolerance, a lack of readiness for broader alliances) consumed a lot of time and energy. Internal party conflicts can also be externally initiated. Periodic "purges" in parties have had several dimensions. Firstly, they confirm the monocratic leadership of a party, in which everyone except the leader is replaceable and less important. Secondly, in this manner the party is "disciplined" by warning and intimidating potential opponents. Thirdly, a periodic change of the leader's entourage always brings in "fresh blood". Fourthly, frequent changes of the leaders' entourage do not allow anyone to get too close to him (either in the volume of information or levers of power or public rating). However, the leader includes a circle of loyal associates ("people of trust") in the first team or places them on the bench as substitutes, depending on the nature of the particular matches, type of game or other circumstances.

In the majority of political parties in Serbia, the defeat of a candidate for party leader is followed by division and splitting, and the emergence of a new party. (Orlović, 2015) The leaders of political parties aim to achieve those goals for which the organization was originally established, but above else at ensuring the survival of the organization and hence the survival of their positions of power.

Elections in general, meaning internal party elections as well, force the party leadership to respect and acknowledge the attitudes of the members and voters. Among other things, for these reasons, there is maximum openness and sensibility for impulses from the bottom (from the grassroots). Sometimes there are dilemmas regarding to what extent, for practical reasons, they should respond to the requirements and fulfil expectations, or stick firmly to attitudes which might be appropriate but cannot attract broader support. Fear of not gaining re-election and anxiety about the future reactions of voters are represented by Friedrich's so-called "law of anticipated reactions". Namely, political leaders, and parties as well, adjust their behaviour not only to what they did at previous elections but also towards the future preferences of voters. Politicians and political parties worry about their re-election and therefore "fear of elections is a political constant". Rather than fulfilling the promises made in previous elections, for which citizens' expectations are high, a position is built and an atmosphere prepared and tuned for the next elections; it seems that the daily barometers of the leaders' ratings, in the form of public opinion polls by various specialized agencies, are the only thing that matters. In a democracy, everything is in the voters' hands, and a political party is an organization of voters.

People perceive a party through the policies it enacts, through its organization and also through its representatives (personal composition), particularly the one leading the party. Despite building an image of a democratic organization from the outside, political parties in their internal structure are undemocratic. The central figure in a party organization is the party leader.

3. The electoral face of presidentialization of parties

The electoral face best represents all the dimensions of presidentialization because party domination is transformed into domination by the leader through personalization, presidentialization and candidate-centric campaigning revolving around the leader, where he is the main pivot, support and epicentre of events. The media is focused on the leader, voters are focused on the leader, the programme and electoral messages are personalized through the leader which symbolizes them. This is undoubtedly contributed to by the medialization of modern politics through transposition of major ideological and programme adjustments into messages that are simple, operational and clear to the broadest audience and understandable. The electoral decisions of the voters are based on the choice of a particular leader. Following the logic of this tendency, the presidentialization of the electoral process is transformed into the presidentialization of power.

Within the so-called "electoral face" of the presidentialization of parties, right at the outset I will highlight some dimensions of the leadership's personalization of politics, the fact that the leaders are the most important holders of election campaigns and a significant element in voters' decision at elections. This was influenced by the development of the media and its influence on the transformation of political parties and the evolution of the type of party into professional electoral organizations. In the second part I analyse the important role of the party leader, bearing in mind the institutional characteristics of the semi-presidential system and proportional representation.

Maurice Duverger highlights the fact that governments in poorly developed societies are very personalized, and that in them parties are mainly formed around a person. In his opinion, in the last few decades even the most developed societies have been evolving towards an individualization of authority, saying: "It is very probable that the nature and the importance of leadership are different in these two types of countries (although it is difficult to precisely determine these differences), but it can be assumed that the personal character of the government is stronger in one case than in the other. It is rather another form of personalization." (Duverger, 1966: 93)

Party leaders are the most important holders of election campaigns. The leaders are usually more popular than the parties and their "image" and personality play an important role in voters' electoral decisions. When voting for a person, the candidates' characteristics are decisive, while when voting for a party or a party list, the emphasis is on its complete image in the form of symbols, ideology, programme and principles. The party leader is important in both cases.

The book *The American Voter* (Campbell et al, 1960) was among the first to identify three kinds of influences on voters' decisions: parties, issues and candidates. This opinion emerged at the same time as the theory of party identification and leads to the conclusion that voters assess leaders through the filter of their party affiliation. (McAllister, 1990: 292) This approach, characteristic of America, takes into account the personal characteristics, mainly of the presidential candidates, as the central component of voters' behaviour. On the basis of a survey of the 1950 elections it was observed that the level of experience and voters' perception about the capacities, qualifications and personal characteristics of the candidates were of the highest importance. This means that a good leader is strong and decisive, with a sense of responsibility and appellant. The increased role of party leaders in political communication does not necessarily mean that leaders have become more important than the parties in voters' decision making, but their role is very important. According to McAllister, some surveys show that the sight of candidates' calming and happy faces more often leads to a change in voters' attitudes. These impressions are linked with the candidates' manners, their personality and personal past, while political parties mostly concentrate on leadership capability, their position on certain issues and their political past. (McAllister, 1990: 293) Part of the explanation, according to this author, is shown in the fact that voters identify more with the power and authority of political figures than with abstract institutions or political ideals, i.e. voters can more easily assess people than policies. (McAllister, 1990: 287-94) As McAllister emphasizes: "This theory is based on the assumption that citizens do not have the time or 'cognitive sophistication' to find out the meaning of the political world; they need shortcuts and simplifications (Nisbett and Ross, 1980), particularly when they should vote." (McAllister, 1990: 294) Assessment of the leaders is certainly one of the central components of democratic selection in liberal democracies.

Leadership campaigns are typical for presidential elections and for majority electoral systems which like "maximally personalized campaigns". However, there is a trend towards an "Americanization of election campaigns" and the tendency to hold televised debates between the most important candidates (and in the parliamentary elections) in proportional representation systems and also in mixed systems. Televised debates, which were a novelty of American presidential elections (from Nixon and Kennedy in 1960 to Obama and Romney in 2012 and Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in 2016), today are almost unavoidable in parliamentary elections as well (Angela Merkel – Gerhard Schroeder, Angela Merkel – Walter Steinmeier, Romano Prodi – Silvio Berlusconi, and even in Great Britain: Gordon Brown – David Cameron – Nick Clegg). It is considered that the televised debate before the parliamentary elections in Great Britain in 2010 in which Nick Clegg dazzled, took the Liberal Democrats into government. Campaigns are media events where the potential candidates for prime minister conclude their campaigns with a final televised debate. The election race for prime minister or chancellor is personalized, although their election is not direct but indirect. (Kasapović, 2014: 123)

A kind of "presidential debate" is becoming common in parliamentary systems due to the increased focus on party leaders. In presidential systems the election of leaders directly by voters dominates, whereas in parliamentary systems it is the selection of leaders in the parliaments that dominates. Parliamentary elections include a much more complex intertwining between the parties, issues and leaders. Political leaders have an importance which exceeds their election performance.

A citizen voting at the election chooses not only a party and its political programme but also a person he trusts. Although, in accordance with the paper's theme, the focus is on the leader, it is worth remembering that voters' decisions are influenced by several factors which might be long- or short-term factors. Factors influencing voters' long-term choices include the social composition and structure of the society, the class structure and their identification with a certain social group, their ideology and identification with a class, party affiliation, social background, regional effects, educational structure, gender structure, national affiliation and ethnic background. Factors that have a short-term (immediate) influence on voters' moods include the strong influence of the election campaign, decisions based on the personal characteristics of the candidates and the success or failure of the former government.

The leader's personality is particularly emphasized in the case of an institutional design based on direct election and voting for a person. This is contributed to by a system with the direct election of the head of state (president). A semi-presidential system, just as pure presidentialism, has a twofold legitimacy. Both the president (executive) and the assembly (congress, legislature) have democratic legitimacy (or are competing for legitimacy) that derives from the direct manner of the election. A directly elected president latently feels called to speak "in the name of the people". Presidentialism and, along with it, systems with a directly elected head of state, tend to reduce multipartism. (Lijphart, 1994: 15) The gravitational field for this reduction in multipartism consists of those candidates entering the second round of the presidential elections. Electoral blocs are usually formed around them, in which they are the pivots.

The nature of the position of a directly elected head of state enables his popularity to be much higher than the popularity of his party. That is an important trump card for all elections. The simultaneous holding of parliamentary and presidential elections opens up room for a synergetic effect and for the possibility for strong presidential candidates to bring their advantage into the parliamentary elections, above all to their respective parties, and also to those gathered around them. In Serbia, direct elections for president of the republic have been directly reflected in party ratings and their electoral results in parliamentary elections. This trend existed also during the 1990s, when Slobodan Milošević, as the SPS president, was twice elected president of the republic (in 1987, under the previous Constitution, and in 1990 and 1992 under the new one) and Milan Milutinović was similarly elected in 1997. During the 1990s, the SPS won the highest number of votes.

The winner of the elections for president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 2000 was the DOS candidate Vojislav Koštunica. Vojislav Koštunica (DOS) won 2,470,304 votes or 50.24%, while Slobodan Milošević (SPS) won 1,826,799 votes or 37.15%. At that time, Koštunica's rating was 60-70%, which was higher than Milošević's at the peak of his popularity. In the first "democratic" elections for the President of Serbia in October 2003, Miroljub Labus (G17 plus) with 921,094 votes or 31.4%, and Vojislav Koštunica (DSS) with 1,991,947 votes or 66.8% entered the second round. Due to the high threshold in the second round, neither of them was elected. Koštunica also participated in the rerun elections in December 2002, gaining 1,699,098 votes or 57.6%. The presidential candidatures of Labus and Koštunica significantly contributed to both G17 plus and the DSS at that time having the highest popularity ratings in their history. Koštunica's party, the DSS, after his victory over Slobodan Milošević for FRY president in 2000, rapidly started to "grow", which was reflected in the electoral result in 2003 when it won 17.7% of the votes (678,031). With the loss of prestige that followed failure to be elected Serbia's president and the unavoidable weakening of his popularity after two terms of office in the position of Serbia's prime minister (2004 and 2007), Koštunica's popularity decreased, together with that of the DSS. At the parliamentary elections in 2008, the DSS, in coalition with New Serbia, won 480,987 votes. Labus's exit from G17 plus and the participation of this party in all post-5 October governments since its foundation has also led to a decrease in its rating. At the 2008 elections, G17 plus participated within the Coalition for European Serbia and so there is no confirmation of their individual popularity with the electorate.

In the presidential elections of 2004, 2008 and 2012, the DS candidate, Boris Tadić, and the SRS candidate (2004 and 2008) – the SNS candidate in 2012 – Tomislav Nikolić, entered the second round of the presidential elections as the strongest candidates. Tadić won 1,681,528 votes in 2004; 2,304,467 in 2008; and 1,481,952 in 2012. Tomislav Nikolić in 2004 gained 1,434,068 votes; 2,197,155 in 2008 and 1,552,063 in 2012. At the same time, their respective parties, the DS and the SRS, won the highest numbers of votes at the parliamentary elections in that period: the SRS won 1,153,453 votes in 2007 and 1,219,436 in 2008, with the SNS winning 940,659 in 2012; the DS won 915,854 votes in 2007, 1,590,200 in 2008 and 863,294 in 2012. It can be clearly concluded that strong presidential candidates significantly influence the results in parliamentary elections.

Other presidential candidates have also contributed to the ratings of their respective parties. The first example is the candidature of Dragoljub Mićunović (DS) in 2003, when he won 893,906 votes (35.4%). The rise of the SRS was influenced first by the candidature of Vojislav Šešelj in the presidential elections, who won 23.24% (845,308 votes) in September 2002 and 36% (1,063,296 votes) in December of the same year. In the parliamentary elections the SRS won 27.6% (1,056.256 votes) in 2003, 28.59% (1,153,453 votes) in 2007 and 1,219,436 votes in 2008. Some presidential candidates used these elections to increase or halt a slide in the ratings of their respective parties (Bata Živojinović, Dačić, Mrkonjić, Velja Ilić and Čedomir Jovanović) or to homogenize the electorate in their communities

(Ištvan Pastor, 2008). The parties with the strongest presidential candidates, particularly those whose candidate won the presidential elections, achieved the best election results in simultaneous parliamentary elections as well. Party leaders can also harm their party by supporting another party's presidential candidate. Thus Slobodan Milošević, although still the SPS leader, albeit in custody in The Hague, supported the SRS presidential candidate Vojislav Šešelj in 2002. It is considered that a number of SPS voters at that time were irretrievably lost to the SRS.

Victory in presidential elections has also facilitated the obtaining of an agreement to form a government after the parliamentary elections. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held at the same time in 2008 and 2012. The victory of the DS president in the presidential elections of 2008 enabled him to form a government after the parliamentary elections. A similar situation occurred after the 2012 elections. Tomislav Nikolić, at that moment the SNS president, won the presidential elections and in those circumstances made an agreement with the SPS to form a government after the parliamentary elections. From the above it can be concluded that strong presidential candidates, most of whom were also party leaders, significantly influenced the improvement of the election results of their respective parties in the parliamentary elections. This is particularly visible when presidential and parliamentary elections took place simultaneously.

Another institutional dimension which I analyse is the electoral system and its influence on the presidentialization of parties. The voters' decision about whether to vote for a person or for a party is to a large extent conditioned by the electoral system.

The nature of the electoral system and the structure of the ballot are reflected in the way the campaigns are conducted. Electoral campaigns are differently designed in majority systems than where there is proportional representation. Usually it is considered that in majority electoral systems the campaign is more oriented or directed towards the candidates, whereas in proportional representation it is more directed towards the party. In electoral systems based on voting for a person, the campaign is most often personalized as well. Voting for a person, i.e. for a candidate, is characteristic of majority systems with single-member constituencies (*single-member plurality* – SMP and *single transferable vote* – STV), including two-round majority systems. When the electoral system revolves around candidates, rivalry may occur between them within the party itself (STV), and the party campaign is decentralized and turned towards individual candidates. Candidates are more guided and motivated to lead independent campaigns, they collect money themselves and are less loyal to the party. In proportional representation systems (PR – party list systems), voting is for the party, so the campaign is more party-oriented and ideological, i.e. programme-oriented. Where the system is candidate-based, the party is more reliant on its links with the constituency, and internal party democracy is higher, i.e. the internal party structure is more decentralized. In systems based on voting for a party, the campaign is more centralized, with established top-down control.

In its first multi-party elections (after the multi-party system was renewed) Serbia used a majority two-round electoral system. The focal point of the elections was the then leader of the SPS and President of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević. Considering his popularity at that time, dual personalization was used in the campaign. Election posters showed images of Slobodan Milošević and the candidate of the particular constituency – so-called double-headed candidates. Serbia has been using proportional representation since 1992. Since 2007 the parliamentary elections have shown a trend and tendency by the electoral lists to include the name of the party leader in their title (Table 3).

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Table 3. The leaders' names in the titles of electoral lists with the highest number of won votes

Party	Year of parliamentary elections	itle of the list with the name of the party leader	Number of obtained votes	Number of obtained mandates
Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	2007	Serbian Radical Party – **Dr Vojislav Šešelj**	1,153,453	81
Democratic Party (DS)	2008	For a European Serbia – **Boris Tadić**	1,590,200	102
Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)	2012	Let's Move Serbia – **Tomislav Nikolić** (Serbian Progressive Party, New Serbia, Association of Small and Medium Enterprises and Entrepreneurs of Serbia, Coalition of Refugees Associations in the Republic of Serbia, The Movement Strength of Serbia – BK, People's Peasant Party, Bosniak People's Party, Democratic Party of Macedonians, Roma Party, Vlach Unification Movement, Socialist Movement, Movement for the Economic Renewal of Serbia)	940,659	73
Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)	2014	Aleksandar Vučić – A Future We Believe in (SNS, SDPS, NS, SPO, PS)	1,736,920	158
Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)	2016	Aleksandar Vučić – Serbia Wins	1,823,147	131

In the parliamentary elections of 2007, out of the 20 submitted electoral lists, 18 lists contained in their title the name of the party leader, while the title of one of the lists even had the names and family names of the leaders of both parties which composed that list. In the parliamentary elections of 2008, out of the 18 submitted electoral lists, the titles of 13 lists included the name of the party leader. In the parliamentary elections of 2014, out of the 19 submitted electoral lists, 14 lists had in their titles the names of party leaders. In the parliamentary elections of 2016, out of the 20 submitted electoral lists, the titles of 17 lists included the names of party leaders, while two electoral lists even had the names of both the leaders of the constituent parties (Table 4).

Table 4: Number of submitted lists and lists with the name of the party leader in the title

Year of elections	Number of submitted electoral lists	Number of lists with the name of the party leader in the title	Number of lists with the names of two party leaders in the title
2007	20	18	1
2008	22	19	
2012	18	13	
2014	19	14	
2016	17	17	2

Analysing the topics in the electoral campaigns in Serbia in the period 1990–2014 Zoran Slavujević and Siniša Atlagić conclude: 'No matter how bad they are, party leaders nevertheless remain the dominant element in the electoral offer in the relatively frequent electoral cycles, each of which is proclaimed as "decisive".' (Slavujević & Atlagić, 2015: 165) In an atmosphere of deep crisis, in an atmosphere of insecurity, uncertainty and fear, language like "strong hand", "strong leader", "reformists" and "saviours" is used. As these authors emphasize, "this manner provokes an emotional-affective attitude in people towards the personalities of party leaders." This is contributed to by the layers of authoritarian political culture. In this manner, the electoral decision is the result of the value and emotional attitudes of voters towards the leaders, transforming thematic campaigns into leadership ones. (Slavujević & Atlagić, 2015: 166) Hence, voters know for whom, rather than for what, they voted.

Besides these institutional reasons, the presidentialization of parties, particularly in electoral campaigns, has been significantly influenced by the development of media (Orlović, 2011: 299-323) which is necessarily also reflected in the change in the way electoral campaigns are conducted. The process of modernization of political

communication has led to an increase in the personalization of politics. It is much easier to communicate through the projection of a person than through a discussion or debate with complex ideas or abstract political issues. This is expressed in two ways: on one hand, there is a permanent aspiration by party leaders to identify entirely with the party ("*The party is me!*"), while on the other hand there is the citizens' aspiration to recognize the party first in the face of its president, while also seeing in him the embodiment of the entire party programme. As parties are generally leaders', the party leaders are mostly the communicators of the most important electoral messages. Leaders use press conferences to directly address the public, instead of communicating through spokespersons and other representatives of the party leadership. A person is always more attractive for the media. In his study *The Anatomy of Power*, Galbraith illustrates this in the following way: "… a person is certainly more interesting than an organization. More than an organization, a person attracts newspaper journalists and television reporters and commentators and all those who deal with the phenomenon of power, and he connects it with something that speaks, walk on two legs and sees. Observed strictly practically, people can give interviews and appear on television, while organizations cannot." (Galbraith, 1987: 46) According to Galbraith, it is in the nature of social rituals to dramatize personal roles.

In a time of media-oriented campaigns (electioneering), the role of parties has changed as consultancy firms and experts increasingly become involved. What can be important for the electoral decision of voters is mediated through the election campaign. Professionalization of political campaigns is reflected in media-orientation, the personalization of politics, the weakening of the importance of party programmes and in the carrying out of a permanent campaign with the party leader at its centre.

Conclusion

The trend of presidentialization of politics is reflected, to a significant extent, in the presidentialization of parties. These tendencies are under the influence of several factors, from institutional (the type, kind and nature of the institution), cultural (the type of political culture), to technological (the technological development of media) factors.

Presidentialization of parties is most obvious when the party leader is the head of the executive, regardless of whether this is a directly elected head of state or the head of a government elected in parliament. Within the parties these tendencies are increasingly present due to the centralization of parties and their pyramidal structure. The leader is at the top and distributes power, interprets the statute and the programme, and makes key decisions in concluding pre-election and post-election coalitions. The party leaders remain

in that position for a long time, independent of electoral success or failure. Party fractures, resulting in the division and splitting of parties, happen as a consequence of the actions of their leaders. The election losers establish new parties.

Almost everything at the elections revolves around the party leaders. They are the focus of the media, the election messages and the voters. Campaigns are personalized and candidate-centric. Leaders to a high extent influence the opinions and electoral decisions of voters. Strong candidates in direct elections for the state president have a strong effect on the strengthening of support for their respective parties. This is particularly visible when presidential and parliamentary elections are held simultaneously. The leaders are usually more popular than the parties. Candidates entering the second round of the presidential elections increase the ratings of their respective parties, but the other presidential candidates can keep their voters and stop the fall or homogenize their electorate. Supporting other parties' candidates can lead to harming their own party. Victory in the presidential elections makes it easier for the party leaders to form a government and convince other parties to form a government with them rather than with a competing bloc.

Presidentialization of parties changes the role of party programmes because the parties in fact pay more attention to building the image, reputation and impression which leaders leave in public than to the programme itself. The impression and image of parties, as an idea about them, are to the highest extent reduced to the figure of the leader. Leaders perform the greatest portion of communication with public. The media influence changes the nature not only of politics but of politicians as well. The main task of public actors is to be "media favourites". Skills in handling the media go hand in hand with the personalization of politics. Journalists are more focused on individuals than on situations, more on people than on ideas and institutions. A person is more attractive for the media than an idea or a programme. Part of the explanation for this is found in the fact that voters prefer to identify themselves with the power and authority of political figures than with abstract institutions or political ideals, i.e. voters will more easily assess people than politics. (McAllister, 1996:294)

The danger lurking in the taste imposed by the media is the latent populism as the measure of the taste of the mass public. When mixing the "popular barometers" of pink televisions, "circulations" of tabloids and "quasi" surveys of public opinion, we get inflated ratings, political actors, fakers and manipulators: parties without programmes, politicians without ideas or characters, and policies without content. Instead of marketing – propaganda; instead of campaigning – lies; instead of a programme – demagogy; instead of a candidate – megaphones and exponents of suspicious money owners. This is the silent assassination of politics by media marketing.

As Poguntke and Webb conclude, "Leaders are stronger in victory but weaker in defeat." (Poguntke & Webb, 2005a: 355) The political communication which a contemporary

leader undertakes enables him to be stronger, but also weaker as he survives as long as he is capable of attracting public support himself ("Go it alone"). The personalization of leadership brings benefits both to the leader and to the party, as long as his prestige produces results and he is successful in the elections. Otherwise, it is time to change the leader.

Abbreviations:

SPS – Socialist Party of Serbia
SRS – Serbian Radical Party
DS – Democratic Party
SPO – Serbian Renewal Movement
DSS – Democratic Party of Serbia
SNS – Serbian Progressive Party
ICTY - International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

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ON THE CAUSES OF INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY IN MACEDONIA: PARTY ORIGIN AS AN EXPLANATORY FACTOR?

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On the causes of internal party democracy in Macedonia: Party origin as an explanatory factor?

Abstract

What can explain variations in internal party democracy across the party system in one country? In other words, why do some parties have more, while other parties have less, internal party democracy? We follow the theoretical model and research strategy proposed by Goran Čular (2004) to measure internal party democracy in Macedonia. We use empirical results as a starting point to discuss the variations in internal party democracy. We follow the seminal theoretical model of Angelo Panebianco (1988) to suggest that a party's origin can successfully explain the level of internal party democracy. In the analysis we include parties created through penetration and those created through diffusion, as well as one party that has mixed origins (elements of both penetration and diffusion). The study finds that parties created through penetration have lower levels of internal party democracy and that parties created through diffusion have higher levels of internal party democracy, while the party with mixed origins has a medium level of internal party democracy.

Keywords: political parties, internal party democracy, party origins, Macedonia

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Internal party democracy is an elusive concept. It is difficult to conceptualize and even more difficult to measure its existence. Susan Scarrow (2005) proposes looking at three dimensions: 1) inclusion (concentration versus dispersion of power in decision making); 2) autonomy (centralization versus stratarchy in party organization and the level of decision making); and 3) institutionalization (respect for formal rules and structures). Scarrow's model for internal party democracy is comprehensive; however, it would require investigating both a party's formal documents and its practices, which might be a challenge considering that most political parties remain "black boxes" for researchers. Goran Čular (2004) made a more parsimonious proposal: to look only at autonomy, as a dimension of the vertical distribution of power (party members' rights, autonomy of local branches and influence of local branches on national-level decision making) and at inclusion, as a dimension of horizontal party relations (participation of members in decision making, the competences of representative versus executive bodies and the competences of the party president). What makes Čular's approach more appealing is that he suggests a conservative strategy: to investigate only the rules in the party's statute as the highest legal document that regulates internal party affairs.

Notwithstanding the differences in the theoretical concepts and research strategies, both Čular and Scarrow offer only a model to measure internal party democracy. Their theories do not answer the question of why some parties have more internal democracy and others have less. In other words, what can explain the variations in internal party democracy across the party system?

To answer the question, we look at the parties in the Republic of Macedonia. Doing a county analysis across the party system, we can adjust for important variables at the

national level. Society and the party system are ethnically divided in Macedonia (Shahla, 2005; Hislope, 2013). The country experienced an armed inter-ethnic conflict in 2001. After the conflict, the electoral system was changed to a closed electoral list PR system in 2002 and a consociational democracy (Ljiphart 1977), or power-sharing, was established as the governing mechanism. The changes to the electoral system, coupled with the acceleration of the European Union (EU) integration process, created a need for new party regulations and party finance legislation. New laws governing political party regulations and party financing were enacted in 2004 and changed frequently until 2013. The criteria for party registration and public financing increased, which had a restrictive effect on the party system format (i.e. the number of parties decreased) and the remaining smaller parties had greater incentive to join the ruling coalition (Casal Bertoa and Taleski, 2016).

On the other hand, research on internal party democracy in Macedonia shows diverging results. Some studies claim that left-oriented parties have more internal party democracy (Georgiev, 2007), while others find that all parties have a similarly low level of internal party democracy (Cekov and Daskalovski, 2011).

In our analysis, we are not considering all the registered parties. Instead, we have selected those parties that had the highest numbers of MPs in parliament between the national legislative elections in 2002 and 2014. This selection criteria yielded six political parties, of which four appeal mainly to ethnic Macedonian voters (VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, NSDP and SP) and represent both sides of the political spectrum (i.e. left and right). The two remaining political parties mainly appeal to ethnic Albanian voters, of which one claims to be on the left of the political spectrum (DUI), while the other claims to be on the right (DPA). Of the six parties, only three were selected for a further in-depth analysis of their genetic model. The parties selected represent the largest parties in the country, and three of them represent different modes of formation. The study includes a qualitative and a quantitative analysis of the party statutes. The quantitative approach is helpful in establishing a clear comparative landscape for the different parties. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, is necessary in order to understand the real extent of the influence that the party leaders have within their parties.

For this study we perform a two-step analysis. In the first part, we determine the level of internal party democracy in all six parties, following the theoretical model of Goran Čular (2004). This reveals which parties stand where in terms of internal party democracy. In the second part, we follow the seminal model of Angelo Panebianco (1988) on the origins of party organization in order to analyse in depth the genetic model of the parties. Panebianco suggested that parties are formed by penetration (i.e. a central party creates local branches, top-down) and diffusion (i.e. local branches come together and there is a supporting external organization, bottom-up). He argued that the former will have a more cohesive and centralized structure (i.e. will have less internal party democracy) and the latter will be less cohesive and centralized (i.e. will have more internal party democracy). In the second section, we trace the origins of three different parties, one created by penetration, one by diffusion and the other a mix of both penetration and diffusion. We

apply this variation in party origins to explain the variation in the parties' internal party democracy. In the conclusion, we summarize our findings on internal party democracy in the political parties of Macedonia.

1. Internal party democracy[1]

Following Čular's (2004) model we analysed the statutes of six parties. For both of the overall dimensions (autonomy and inclusiveness), there were three sub-dimensions. Each of the sub-dimensions were graded on a scale of 0 to 3. A score of 0 was given if there were no statutory provisions and/or if the issues of the sub-dimension in question were not specifically mentioned. Conversely, a higher score denoted greater possibilities for internal party democracy to be present. For example, a score of 3 means that all possibilities for the sub-dimension are present in order to contribute towards greater internal party democracy; 2 means that some possibilities are present, and 1 means that only a few basic possibilities are present.

However, the direction of the grading scale was reversed for the sub-dimension of the "concentration of power in the party president". This is the last sub-dimension within the "inclusiveness" dimension. Namely, a higher score denotes that there is a greater concentration of power in the hands of the party president. Since this is a condition that lowers internal party democracy, the scale was reversed. This means that a score of 1 denotes that the party president has the highest concentration of power; however, this is the lowest score for this sub-dimension to contribute toward internal party democracy. Similarly, a score of 3 denotes that the concentration of power with the party president is low, which is a contributing factor towards internal party democracy. This reversal of the grading scale was needed in order to have all the grades contributing in the same direction in relation to internal party democracy. Tables 1 and 2 below show the comparative evaluation for all parties in both sub-dimensions.

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1   This section of the paper builds on the policy paper that the authors wrote, titled "The Influence of Intra-Party Regulations on Intra-Party Democracy in the Republic of Macedonia". The policy paper was written in the framework of the project "Balkan Comparative Electoral Study: The Presidentialization of Political Parties – Limiting Internal Party Democracy", coordinated by CEMI and supported by RRPP. For more information on the analysis and grading, please see the policy paper.

Table 1. Evaluation of the dimension of autonomy among political parties in Macedonia

Autonomy	VMRO-DPMNE	SDSM	NSDP	SP	DUI	DPA
Members' rights and protection	1	3	3	2	1	1
Autonomy of local branches	1	3	3	2	2	2
Local branches' influence over decision making at the national level	0	1	3	1	3	3
Total	2	7	9	5	6	6

It is important to highlight at the outset the major caveat stated in the introduction: the analysis and evaluation takes into consideration only the formal rules that are written on paper; however, it does not analyse the extent to which parties follow the rules that should govern their behaviour in practice. The total results show that the NSDP has the highest possibilities for autonomy in its statute. The possibilities are present to the fullest extent in each of the sub-dimensions. In second place is the SDSM, which provides full possibilities for members' rights and the protection and autonomy of local branches. However, it gives local branches very limited possibilities to influence decision making at the national level. The DUI and DPA have a similar intra-party pattern of regulation. They have low possibilities for members' rights and obligations, a slightly higher level of autonomy of local branches and afford greater possibilities for local branches to influence decision making at the national level.

According to the SP's statute, members' rights and obligations and the autonomy of local branches are moderate, while the possibilities for local branches to influence decision making at the national level are lower. According to the VMRO-DPMNE's statute, this is the party with the least possibilities for autonomy. The VMRO-DPMNE's party statute gives very limited possibilities for members' rights and obligations and limited autonomy to local branches. At the same time, the statute is silent about the possibilities for local branches to influence decision making at the national level. It specifies that this should be regulated in a separate document that would outline the rules of procedure. It is unclear why the party has not specified its procedures in the highest legal act and has opted for an act with lower power to govern this behaviour; the VMRO-DPMNE received 0 for this sub-dimension due to the lack of any written provisions. This additionally lowered the VMRO-DPMNE's score for autonomy.

Table 2. Evaluation of the dimension of inclusiveness among political parties in Macedonia

| Inclusiveness	VMRO-DPMNE	SDSM	NSDP	SP	DUI	DPA
Direct participation of members	0	3	3	0	2	2
Privileges and competences that representative bodies have in regard to executive bodies	1	3	3	3	2	2
Concentration of power with the party president	1	1	1	3	1	1
Total	2	7	7	6	5	5

In regard to inclusiveness, the evaluation produced the same score for four of the parties; however, the intra-party patterns are different. For example, the SDSM and NSDP in their statutes provide the highest possibilities for direct participation by their members and for the privileges and competences of the representative bodies in regard to the executive ones. On the other hand, the concentration of power in the hands of their party president is very significant. The DUI and DPA give moderate possibilities for the direct participation of their members, and for privileges and competences of the representative bodies in regard to the executive ones; however, the power concentrated in the hands of the party president is high. The SP has no statutory provisions for the direct participation of members; however it provides the highest possibilities for privileges and competences of the representative bodies in regard to executive ones and the power concentrated in the hands of the party president is very low. On the other hand, the VMRO-DPMNE does not have any provisions about direct participation by members. The party also gives very limited possibilities for privileges and competences of representative bodies in regard to executive ones, while the power concentrated in the hands of the party president is very high.

To summarize the findings in Tables 1 and 2, we have produced a graph that shows the positions of the parties in Macedonia in regards to autonomy and inclusion as the main dimensions in Čular's (2004) model. Figure 1 is displayed below. The political parties in Macedonia provide relatively high possibilities for inclusiveness, while most of them provide moderate possibilities for autonomy. This means that they are willing to expand and integrate, however they are less willing to support a diversity of opinions and actions. According to their statutes, the parties seem open to diversity, but would like to have more unified political positions and actions. Finally, the analysis shows that parties of self-identified left orientation have the statutory conditions for the highest level of internal party democracy, followed by ethnic Albanian parties, while parties of self-identified right

orientation have the lowest statutory conditions for internal party democracy.

The graph shows that the NSDP and SDSM provide the highest statutory possibilities for internal party democracy, and that the VMRO-DPMNE has the lowest. The NSDP and SDSM are at the same level when it comes to inclusiveness – meaning that they have an equally high level of horizontal party relations, and the NSDP has the highest score for autonomy – which means that they have the highest distribution of power within the party. The DUI and DPA are around the middle in both dimensions. They are at the same level and provide more inclusion than autonomy. To continue with the second step of the analysis we take the SDSM as a party with higher internal party democracy, the VMRO-DPMNE as a party with lower internal party democracy, and the DUI as a party in the middle. With these three parties, we cover the entire spread of internal party democracy.

Figure 1. Positions of political parties in Macedonia on the dimensions of autonomy and inclusiveness
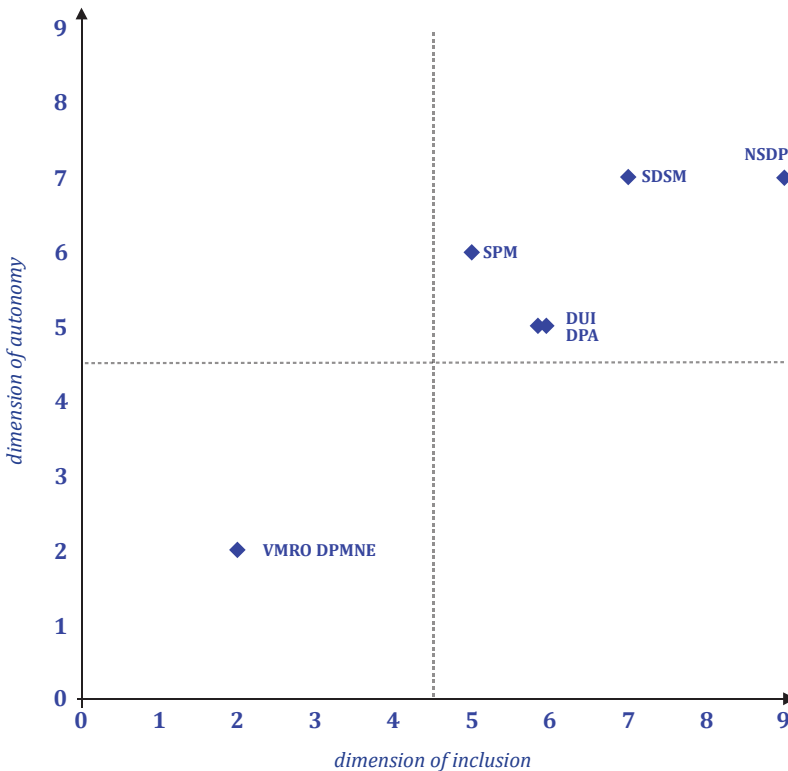
2. Party origin: An explanatory variable[1]

In this section we discuss party origin as a potential explanation of the variation in internal party democracy. We selected the SDSM, a self-identified centre-left party, the VMRO-DPMNE, a self-identified centre-right party, and the DUI, the dominant Albanian party. The SDSM is a party created through diffusion, according to Panebianco's (1988) model. The SDSM was the successor party of the communist system in 1990. As the ruling party it introduced political pluralism and managed a peaceful regime change. On the other hand, the VMRO-DPMNE is a party created by penetration, according to the model developed by Panebianco (1988). The VMRO-DPMNE was created on the basis of social movements that demanded Macedonian independence in 1990 and resurrected a historical national romanticism. The DUI represents a special case as it is a case of guerrilla fighters transforming into a party. The party was founded on the basis of the National Liberation Army (NLA) that took part in the armed conflict in 2001. In addition, the existing political parties and actors merged in the process of formation. Therefore, the DUI is a case of mixed party origins – it has elements of both diffusion and penetration.

2.1. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE)

The VMRO-DPMNE was founded in 1990, claiming to be a reincarnation of the legendary, nineteenth-century VMRO (the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) a national liberation movement in the Ottoman Empire. Its creation was the outcome of the long-lasting efforts of part of the Macedonian Diaspora and the new generation of Macedonian intellectuals when the Yugoslav federation was falling apart and new independent states were emerging. The initial balance combining both internal and external actors in the act of its formation, moved towards a predominance of internal actors with the election of the first party president, Ljupco Georgievski.

After the first multi-party elections in 1990[3], the VMRO–DPMNE became the strongest

2   This section is based on the chapter that the authors wrote titled "The Presidentization of Political Parties: The Case of Macedonia", to be published in Gianluca Passareli's (ed) T*he Presidentialization of Political Parties in the Balkans* (in press, Routledge, 2017).

3   The Republic of Macedonia has experienced four major changes to its electoral system since 1990. The 1990 and 1994 parliamentary elections were held under a majority system (120 MPs/120 constituencies). A mixed-majority/PR system was adopted for the 1998 elections (85 MPs under the majority system, and 35 MPs under PR). A closed-list PR system was introduced in 2002 (six electoral constituencies with each constituency covered by 20 MPs). Since 2011, three extra seats have been added to the parliament representing Macedonian citizens in the Diaspora (majority system/single-member constituencies).

party in the Parliament but it did not gain a majority of the seats. It failed to form a government, after refusing to form a coalition with one of the ethnic Albanian parties. As none of the other parties or coalitions had a majority, a technical government was formed with half of the ministers close to the party. This government was dismissed 17 months later. This step (taken in September 1992) initiated a long period in opposition, since the party boycotted the second round of the 1994 parliamentary election, claiming fraud in the first round. The coalition between the VMRO-DPMNE and the left-centre Democratic Alternative (DA) won the 1998 parliamentary election and formed a new government with Ljubco Georgievski as prime minister. The government also included the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), which played a pivotal role in the 1999 presidential elections by supporting the VMRO–DPMNE candidate, Boris Trajkovski, who was elected president. Also in this period following rising ethnic tensions and the 2001 armed conflict, the VMRO-DPMNE led a "government of national unity" headed by Ljupco Georgievski that was formed under international mediation and included the major opposition parties[2]. This government negotiated a resolution to the ethnic crisis by signing the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

In the parliamentary elections in 2002, the VMRO-DPMNE campaigned in coalition with the Liberal Party, but lost the election and became part of the opposition. Upon a change of leadership in 2003[3] a coalition led by the VMRO-DPMNE won the 2006 parliamentary elections and the party formed a government headed by Nikola Gruevski, and included the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) again. The party managed to expand its support at the 2008 elections and proceeded to govern, this time in coalition with the ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). Gruevski remained in the position of prime minister until January 2016, managing to win in continuity the 2011 and 2014 early parliamentary elections[4].

According to its statute "the VMRO-DPMNE is a national party with a democratic Christian orientation, which implies the Christian idea of mankind and provides an ethical basis for responsible politics". Despite its centre-right ideological orientation, the VMRO-DPMNE (like the other Macedonian political parties) often implemented policies that were not fully compatible with its declared orientation. This has been particularly evident in the last 10 years when the party has promoted a wide spectrum of social/leftist policies (increased pensions, subsidies for farmers, etc.).

According to Panebianco's (1988) basic categories (of the genesis of parties), the VMRO-DPMNE developed essentially by penetration. In the first decade of its existence it was very closely identified with its young and charismatic leader, Ljubco Georgievski, and later with his successor and the current leader, Nikola Gruevski. While the party faced both demo-

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2   The Social Democratic Alliance (SDSM) and the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP).
3   At the Party Congress held in Ohrid.
4   As well as the 2009 and 2014 presidential and 2011 and 2013 local elections.

cratic and presidentialized experiences in the period of Georgievski's leadership, it has been presidentialized during Gruevski's mandate.

According to the party statute, the VMRO-DPMNE's president nominates the holders of (almost) all important party functions (candidates for the party's vice-presidents, for the secretary general (SG), for members of the Executive Committee and for members of the Statutory and Supervisory Committees. He also proposes the members of the Central Committee, the presidents of the Youth Union and the Union of Women, as well as the presidents of the municipal committees. His role with the election results is decisive, although formally these functionaries are voted in/out by the Central Committee or the other relevant organs of the party. It should be noted that the party statute gives the president the power of veto (he may stop the execution of decisions and other acts of the Executive Committee and of the other organs of the party and notify the Central Committee).

The rise in intraparty power benefitting the party leader coincided with nearly one decade of the VMRO-DPMNE governing in Macedonia. The above-mentioned level of centralized party leadership and the style of governing mirrored the overall processes in the country. After the initial proclamation of the party's measures for economic development and for the soothing of inter-ethnic tensions, which were widely accepted, more and more numerous allegations were made against the VMRO-DPMNE for nepotism, corruption, suppression of media freedom and above all, as noted by the EU Progress Report (2015, 2016), blurring of the line between the party and the state[1].

2.2 Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)

The Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) entered the Macedonian political scene in 2002 and it is, at the time of writing, the party that has won the majority of the ethnic Albanian vote. It has been a governing coalition party since 2002, with a brief period as an opposition party between 2006 and 2008[2]. The circumstances that gave rise to the DUI were very important both in its formation and the values and manner of operation which the party has adopted since. Indeed, Panebianco argues that "[e]very organization bears the mark of its formation, of the crucial political and administrative decisions made by its founders, the decision which 'moulded' the organization." (1988: 50) and this principle holds true for the DUI to a significant extent.

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1   In the last two years, following the emergence of a mass wiretapping scandal (in 2015), the country entered a serious political crisis, with the ruling party and its leader playing a central role, which resulted in international involvement and a mediation process with the goal to find a peaceful way out.
2   In the elections of 2006, the DUI won the majority of the ethnic Albanian vote; however, its rival party, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) was selected as a coalition partner, as stated in section 2.1.

The DUI was established after the 2001 inter-ethnic conflict in Macedonia, as an amalgamation of those actors that had been key in the representation of the interests of ethnic Albanians in the period of the conflict and the ensuing negotiations for the cessation of hostilities. This included actors involved in the structures of armed groups and the ethnic Albanian political party structure of the time. The conflict was waged between the Macedonian state and the [Albanian] National Liberation Army (NLA). The leader of the NLA, Ali Ahmeti, became the leader of the newly established DUI. This transition from leader of the NLA, a military group (with set political aims), to leader of the DUI, a political party, is key in the overall narrative of the leader and of the party. Due to this transition and the popularity that the NLA's cause and its leader had among ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia, the newly formed party had a seemingly swift formation, with clear ideals and goals: that of protecting the interests of ethnic Albanians through the newly signed Ohrid Framework Agreement, and with a strong pro-European agenda.

The genetic features marking the formation of the DUI, due to the particular environment in which it arose and the actors which it involved, were atypical. While its formation did hinge on the mobilization of different actors, which, as noted by Ait-Aoudia and Deze (2011), is the manner in which new political parties establish themselves initially, when considering its mode of construction the model fits neither that of penetration nor of diffusion. Nor can the construction of the DUI be considered to be a proper mix of the two, considering that it is a party which transformed from an organized armed group to a political entity; however the two terms do partially explain it. The leadership of the DUI was quite centralized and not "turbulent and complex" (Panebianco, 1988: 51), like a party developed by penetration. However, unlike a party developed by penetration, and more like a party developed by diffusion, it developed initially in the periphery, where the fighting happened, in coalition with some centre parties which were in Parliament in 2001 and other central and peripheral actors.

The manner in which the DUI was constructed also had an effect on the second factor which forms a party's genetic model, namely the existence, or lack thereof, of an external sponsor (Panebianco, 1988: 51). While for the NLA the support of external sponsors was crucial in its legitimization, it was less crucial, though present, for the DUI. The NLA had external sponsors in another ethnic Albanian political party, the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), through whose members the NLA and its leader were able to broaden their forum and influence. However, with the establishment of the DUI, with its strong ideology and narrative, being constituted by the "winners" of the struggle for more rights, the new party established stronger loyalties and a stronger sense of "collective identity" (Panebianco, 1988: 54). In addition, there was a spill-over of PDP members to the newly formed DUI, making the initial external sponsor less salient, due to a newer, stronger ideology and leadership.

The manner in which the DUI has operated since its inception is largely consistent with the ideologies that it outlined in its formation. The central role of the leader was evident

since the formation of the party, its post-conflict legacy created a strong ideology which continues to feed the party's current ideology. Of the party's initial actors, the president continues to be the most prominent in setting its agenda, while the other actors have either taken a passive role or are not part of the party any more. The DUI displays a strong personalization of the party based on its leader; however, due to the power-sharing arrangement and the fact that the DUI has been in power for 13 of the 15 years since 2002, it also shows signs of presidentialization, and despite being an unconventional party, it fits into the power-sharing arrangement.

2.3 Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)

The SDSM is the successor to the Communist Party, and therefore, according to Panebanco's (1988) model, diffusion is the main genetic feature of the party. When political pluralism was introduced, the party was already represented in the institutions. In addition, the party had branches and members in all municipalities, including organizational structures in all public institutions and companies. It had a strong and rooted organization. However, democratic party legislation banned party branches in institutions and companies, and introduced a territorial principle of organization. The new rules cut out some of the organizational structures of the party; however, the party already had local offices in many municipalities across the country.

The party went through several waves of changes, including changing its name from the Communist Alliance of Macedonia – Party for Democratic Prosperity (SKM-PDP) to the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) in 1991, changing the party cadres and the party programme to become a modern social-democratic party. The SDSM considers itself a centre-left party. However, the position of the party on socio-economic issues has been volatile. For example, it has pursued some right-wing economic policies, most notably the choice of privatization model. On the other hand, it has been socially progressive, most notably in the promotion of multiculturalism.

The SDSM formed the first political government based on a multi-ethnic coalition in Parliament in 1992. They formed a coalition with a couple of centre-left parties to win the elections in 1994, which the opposition boycotted. In the 1994 term, the SDSM initiated a process of economic transition by restructuring the economy and pursuing a privatization model which resulted in high social costs. Unemployment rose, leading to widespread workers' strikes and protests. Besides domestic political instability, the country was facing many negative externalities[9].

The SDSM subsequently lost the 1998 elections and went into opposition. The change of government and the transfer of power were peaceful. The party made some internal changes which gave them traction while in opposition. The SDSM made a come-back in the local elections in 2000. The government at that time was marred by corruption scandals and there was inter-ethnic conflict in 2001, during which the SDSM played a very constructive role. It took part in the government of national unity, was strongly against territorial separation, advocated a peaceful solution and actively participated in the Ohrid Framework Agreement's (OFA) negotiations.

After the resolution of the conflict, the SDSM formed a large multi-ethnic electoral coalition and won the 2002 elections. It managed to regain stability, implement the OFA and win the country the status of EU candidate member. However, the implementation of the OFA was met with ethno-national resentment that empowered the right-wing parties. Following a party split, discussed further in section 3.2 below, the SDSM lost the elections in 2006. Since then the party has gone through turbulent times, including several leadership changes. It lost all the elections up until 2014, including parliamentary elections (2008, 2011 and 2014), local elections (2009 and 2013) and presidential elections (2009 and 2014). The power of the party was weakening and its resources were decreasing.

The president of the SDSM played a strong role in the first decade of the party's existence; however, there were limitations that prevented him from fully centralizing power. On one hand, the party's president was also the prime minister, and the communist legacy and strong role of Crvenkovski were a contributing element. On the other hand, other strong power-brokers, including a strong and popular president of Macedonia and majoritarian elections enabled politicians to maintain local personal strongholds. After Crvenkovski left his position as party president, the SDSM went through several leadership changes. They were not able to consolidate power. The party was in opposition and weak. Crvenkovski, the long-standing party president, returned to the helm in 2009. He might have had opportunities to introduce party centralization; however, the conditions for doing that were unfavourable (i.e. the party was weak, lacked resources and experienced several defeats). It was even more difficult for Zoran Zaev, who succeeded him in 2013, to centralize power, even though there were statutory changes that gave more power to the party president (e.g. to appoint and dismiss heads of local party branches – Article 31). However, Zaev did not use this competence exhaustively, because he needed to reach out for support within the party and to build wider civil society support.

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9   The conflicts in the former Yugoslavia destroyed the markets, and there were no alternatives nor possibilities to trade. The borders to the north and south were shut. Serbia, its northern neighbour, was under a UN embargo and Greece, its southern neighbour, closed the border with Macedonia due to the "naming dispute". Albania, to the west, was a failing state, and only Bulgaria, to the east, enjoyed relative stability, with all perils they had in the 1990s.

Conclusion

The first part of the article followed the theoretical model of Goran Čular (2004) by measuring the level of internal party democracy. It provides a snapshot based on analysis of the parties' statutes. Notwithstanding the various problems of this theoretical approach and research strategy, it does provide a starting position for an empirically substantiated discussion about the variations in internal party democracy.

We pursued this discussion in the second part by taking three parties that had the lowest, a medium-level and a higher level of internal party democracy. By following the seminal theoretical model of Angelo Panebianco (1988) on a party's origins, we expected that those parties created through diffusion would have a higher level of internal party democracy and that those parties created through penetration would have a lower level of internal party democracy. In addition, the analysis includes one party that has mixed elements of origin (both penetration and diffusion) and displays a medium level of internal party democracy (measured as statutorily provided possibilities). Discussion confirmed these expectations further, as we found that the party created through diffusion had higher provisions for internal party democracy than the other two parties.

For example, the VMRO-DPMNE was formed through penetration. It was a new nationalist party that was being built while Yugoslavia was breaking up. Its charismatic leader played a strong role in its inception. Later, there was a sponsored leadership replacement and even statutory changes to give more competence to the party president. The previous formal internal party democratic practices were annulled. This happened from 2006 onwards and coincided with the party's long term in office. During this period the party president was also the prime minister. The party president has dominated in internal affairs since the party's very origin, and this practice has continued over time to become a major obstacle to developing internal party democracy.

The DUI has a specific genetic feature directly connected to the ethnic conflict in 2001. It is a party that was built around the wartime networks of the NLA. The political leader of the NLA became the party leader of the DUI. This genetic process is not fully captured in Panebianco's framework. It is more closely associated with penetration; however, the legacies of conflict, in terms of organizational capacities and dispersion of power, play a very important role. Due to the party genesis, the leader of the DUI has the strongest position and authority in the party. His position was reinforced with formal changes in the party's statute and practices in resolving day-to-day political issues. The party decided to place extraordinary competences in the hands of the party president. In addition, there was the DUI's position as a junior coalition partner in a consociational government in 13 out of the 15 years of its existence. However, in all of this period, the leader was never in

government, but always held a position in parliament, which did not affect his access to power. The DUI, as a case of mixed origins, has a medium level of internal party democracy.

Last but not least, the SDSM was a successor to the Communist Party, which by electing a new, young leader in 1991 attempted to change the party's image. However, the legacies of the past shaped the party's organization. Incentives to centralize power in the hands of the party president were highest when the party was in government. When the party president was prime minister (1992–1998 and 2002–2006) the greatest opportunities were present for him to dominate the party. But even then, the party president needed to balance power-brokers within his party. In addition, there was a leadership change that was detrimental to the party. Not being in government weakened the party and decreased its resources. Even when the formal competences of the party's president were increased, he was not able to fully centralize decision making, because he needed to be open and inclusive in order to strengthen the party. The SDSM, as a party created through diffusion, has a higher level of internal party democracy.

These findings are not a definitive answer to the question of why some parties have more and some have less internal party democracy. First of all, internal party democracy is an elusive concept. The theoretical model and strategy that we have assumed have provided us with empirical results and show variations across the party system; however, they are themselves weak and open to criticism. On the other hand, departing from the empirically defined starting position, we posit that a party's genetic origin can provide a satisfactory explanation about the level of internal party democracy that each party has. This stands for the whole party system in Macedonia. We do not aim to extend our conclusion beyond this single country. Future research into other countries should be done to show whether this conclusion stands in a different context. However, it seems plausible that a party's genesis, if we regard the organization as a living organism, contributes to the development of the internal rules, norms and practices – which are not always written – that shape the standards and levels of internal party democracy.

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ORGANISATION OF PARTIES AND INTERNAL DEMOCRACY OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

This paper explores the internal democracy of political parties in Albania and their current organizational structure. It examines the evolution of political parties from their creation after the fall of communism, to the complex functioning structures of today. Political parties in Albania emerged as a new trend in 1991, opposing the single party-state model of the communist era and promising boundless democracy and freedom to citizens. Twenty-six years on, these promises are still pending as the political parties have continuously failed to embark on serious reforms. This paper examines the main elements within the political parties' structures, functioning models, organization and internal democracy, as well as Albanian legislation regarding political parties and the parties' own statutory documents, thus providing an overview of the level of the internal democracy of political parties in Albania. The study makes a qualitative comparison of the autonomy, involvement and participation in the decision-making processes within party structures. The paper argues that the popular parties of a horizontal nature are now replaced with clientelistic parties of a vertical nature. Furthermore, the study provides important recommendations for a new democratization process of the representative system, in which political parties have an important role to play.

Keywords: Albania, political parties, internal party democracy, elections, transition, leadership

Introduction

Analyses of the statutes of political parties in Albania provide a clear picture of their internal democracies and the various forms that the term "internal democracy" takes in the practice of each political party. The analysis in this paper is based on both the parties' statutes and the parties' actions in practice. Despite the fact that the statute is the most important document of the political parties, which regulates the party's actions and conduct, this study argues that these regulations are not being put into practice by the political parties in Albania. The representative sample selected for this paper is based on the highest number of seats won in the parliamentarian elections, from 1998 to 2013.

This selection criterion generates the two main political parties to be the Socialist Party (SP, left-wing) and the Democratic Party (DP, right-wing) and to a smaller extent, the Socialist Movement of Integration (SMI, left-wing), thus representing both sides of the political spectrum. The analysis of internal democracy of political parties was done following the theoretical model of Goran Cular (2004). Two dimensions were analysed: the first dimension is the *decision-making process* within the party and the second dimension is *internal competition and elections*. The paper first analyses these two dimensions and then provides a comparative assessment of the possibilities for internal democracy for all the other parties.

1. Legislation regarding political parties

At the start of political pluralism in Albania, the first legislation dealing with political parties began to be developed in the country in autumn 1990. Initially, political life was based on the decree of 17 December 1990, which regulated the activity of political parties based on four main elements: creation, expansion, funding and a number of imposed constraints. The decree stipulated that an initiative to create a political party could be launched by "at least 100 citizens, in cases where the party's activity or association would be extended to one or a few districts, and over 300 citizens in cases where its activity would be extended all over the country". (Krasniqi, 2009) The request to establish a party was to be addressed to the Ministry of Justice, as the assigned government body responsible for the new political scene at that time. The decree contained restrictive elements for the members and party activities, which were deliberately designed to exclude specific groups from the new political life in Albania, specifying that "foreigners and Albanian citizens who do not have permanent residence in the territory of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania (RPSSH) cannot be party founders or party members" and that "the party's

activities can be extended to one or a few districts, or to the whole territory of the RPSSH".

This demarcation measure excluded all Albanian emigrants from possible or desired involvement in political parties. It also placed a legal limit on the territories where the parties could operate, excluding the opportunities for party sections and branches outside the country.

Restrictions were thus tight in the new political life in Albania. Legally, the Ministry of Justice could still reject the creation of a political party "if its programme demonstrates elements of fascism, racism, warmongering, an anti-national spirit, or incitement to national hatred. It is forbidden for a party to aim for the violent overthrowing of the government which is established as per the country's Constitution."

These restrictions appeared even tougher when combined with the limitation on the financial aspects of political parties. The new legislation banned the financing of new political parties from external sources, preventing contributions from outside the Republic of Albania, especially from the new wave of Albanian emigrants that had gone to Western Europe and the USA. The decree specified that "it is prohibited to accept any financial assistance from abroad, from sources such as states, political parties, organizations, institutions, foreign individuals or Albanians who are not permanently resident in Albania. If such cases are observed, the state is entitled to seize the aid."

The decree on political parties acted as the legal basis for the first six months of political pluralism, between December 1990 and May 1991, which is also the period when the first multi-party elections in Albania were prepared. Many elements of the decree revealed deep contradictions between the limitations it applied and the democratic standards which Albanians aspired to achieve. One contradiction stood out most and was quite significant for the new democracy in the country: the decree was unconstitutional. Although the new decree on political parties was approved at the governmental level, the fundamental legal document in Albania was still the 1976 Constitution of the communist dictatorship, which recognized the "Workers' Party of Albania (PPSH) as the sole leading political force of the state and society" (Omari, 2008), a fully legal status which remained valid until April 1991.

There was thus a legal inconsistency regarding approval of the decree, which was not in line with the Albanian constitution. This profound paradox helps in understanding the significant difference between political developments in practice and their initial legal basis and grounds. The development of legislation regarding political parties remained theoretical, unsupported and experimental in Albania, where for over 46 years of the totalitarian party state regime, the directives of the Communist Party prevailed over the Constitution and the legal system.

Only after the first multi-party elections in 1991 was there a moment of reflection on the need for a change in the legal system. Following the creation of the first "transitional

government", composed of the representatives of all major political parties, the majority (still communist) and the parliamentary minorities (anti-communist forces) agreed on a package of constitutional laws known as the Main Constitutional Provisions (DKK). This set of provisions replaced the communist-era constitution from 1976. Article 6 of the DKK defined the new principles and legal basis for the political parties. It stated: "Political parties can be established and can exercise their activities in accordance with the law. They are completely separated from the state. It is prohibited to exercise activities of political parties in military units and institutions of the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic representations abroad, in the Prosecution Office, investigation offices and court offices. De-politicization and depolarization of the public institutions is regulated by the law." (DKK, 1991)

Furthermore, as per Article 8, in order to create a new relationship between the government and the political parties, it was stated that "the implementation of strict and uniform juridical norms is mandatory for all state bodies, political parties, other organizations and employees, as well as for all natural persons and legal entities."

1.1. The first Law on Political Parties in Albania in 1991: restrictions, exclusion measures and unclear provisions for financial transparency

Upon legalizing political parties in the DKK, the ruling majority and the opposition continued their joint work to elaborate and approve a draft for the first law on the organization of political parties, which was the first law regulating this area in Albania. The Law on Political Parties, approved in 1991, conveyed a broad base of the concepts, principles, norms and practices relating to the existence, activity, decision making, financing and role of political parties. The main element of this law remained in effect for 19 years, despite amendments in 2001 and 2011. During these 19 years, intense political developments took place in Albania, including two political rotations, six political elections (three parliamentary and three local elections), as well as, and more importantly, two national referendums for the constitution held in 1994 and 1998.

The first Law on Political Parties, (No. 7502, dated 26 July 1991) was based on the temporary unconstitutional decree of 1990 (decree No. 7442, dated 17 December 1990). In contrast to the decree, it introduced new elements of freedom for the creation and functioning of political parties, and defined them as "voluntary associations of citizens on the basis of mutual ideas and common political views and beliefs, aimed at contributing to the country's development through participation in elections and representation of the

people in elected governments" (Article 1). Article 3 stated that the parties are "an integral part of the constitutional and democratic system, free of government control" and that they may only use democratic means and methods to achieve their goals.

The concept of limitation regarding the territorial activities of the political parties unfortunately remained unchanged. In the meantime, there was an increase in the series of restrictions on the creation and functioning of political parties. It was, for example, prohibited to create political parties "whose internal organization is in contradiction with democratic principles, such as building a bottom-up party, democratic internal elections for party forums, freedom of expression for each member, freedom to join or leave the party, ensuring transparency of financial support, audit and control statements in the use of resources and funds." (Law on Political Parties, 1991)

Among the main changes, the law also introduced: a prohibition on establishing political parties based on, or functioning along, ethnic, religious or regional grounds (Article 6); the obligation for each party to have identifiable and unique names and symbols (Article 7); and the prohibition of political parties from creating youth or children's organizations (Article 15). The restrictions regarding religious political parties were justified with the potential risks that they carried and the conflicts that might emerge due to the existence of four oppressed religions in Albania, and their survival in a country where the majority of the population declared itself as atheist. (INSTAT Census, 2011) Religious-oriented parties carried the risk of creating a parallel configuration of the new political system and a perceived risk of being a source of new social conflicts. (Omari, 2008) The second restriction, the prohibition of youth and children's organizations, was based on the negative experience of the country during the dictatorial regime and the misuse of youth in political propaganda during the communist time. (LPP, 1991)

Looking at the new elements of the law, it can be argued that the law brought a late but welcome change to the political sphere in Albania. The law preserved the concept of a minimum number of citizens signing a legal request to form a party, remaining at 300 signatures; it also preserved the exclusion of foreigners and non-residents (including Albanians in the diaspora) from establishing political parties (Article 14); it introduced financial support from the government for the initial stage of founding a party, (Article 19); it recognized the parties' right to profitable economic activity (Article 18); it defined the formula for eligibility for and the amount of state funding from the state budget (Article 21), etc.

On the financing side, it introduced a change and innovation regarding accepting finances and aid from abroad, defining that political parties in Albania can accept such aid "only when it comes from either parties or international unions of parties, and not exceeding the financial assistance granted by the State" (Article 23). On the other hand, for internal financial resources inside the country, it prohibited aid, whether financial or material, "from national public entities as well as entities with state capital participation" (Article 24).

In the meantime, a new feature was introduced: auditing and transparency of financial resources. The parties' financial auditing would take place once a year and be carried out by a team of experts appointed by the National Assembly (Article 26).

1.2. The first legal changes: the Communist Party is outlawed

One year after approval of the new law, in 1992, new parliamentary elections were held, bringing the first political rotation in the country. The main opposition party, the Democratic Party (DP), won the elections. During the first months of its government, without any political consensus or consultations, the DP initiated fundamental legal and constitutional changes. The most prominent was the legal prohibition of communist parties (outlawing the Communist Party, an extension of the Communist Party since 1941).

Over the four years of its governance, the DP initiated a number of not-so-democratic changes to the funding formula for political parties (1992 and 1996), allowing unclear interpretations on how the parties could be financed and by whom. It also changed the competences of the financial auditors, diminishing the accountability measures for political parties (1992 and 1995). Furthermore, it changed the composition formulas for political representation in the structures responsible for the administration of political elections, as well as new restrictions on electing candidates from the former secret police and leading figures from the communist regime (1995 and 1996).

1.3. Constitutional changes and the effects on political parties

In 1998, the Albanian people officially approved the new constitution through a referendum, the second plebiscite since the fall of communism. The new constitution introduced for the first time since the Second World War an article dedicated to political parties in Albania. Article 9 of the new Constitution stated: "Political parties may be created freely. Their structure and functioning shall comply with democratic principles. The law prohibits the creation of political parties whose programmes and activities are based on totalitarian methods, inciting and supporting racial, religious, regional or ethnic hatred, using violence to take power or influencing state policies, as well as parties of a secret character." Furthermore, the Constitution emphasized principles of financial transparency.

It provided a specific constitutional article dedicated to financial transparency, obliging political parties to make public at any given time "… and to disclose their financial resources and expenses" (Article 9, Constitution of the Republic of Albania, 2008).

The Constitution also recognized the political parties' right of appeal to the Constitutional Court, as well as recognizing the right of this court to decide on the "constitutionality of parties and other political organizations and their activities, under Article 9 of the Constitution."

The new Constitution required a revision of the legal basis and organic laws of all constitutional institutions, including political parties. The new Law on Political Parties was hence adopted after two years (2000), reviewing most of the existing criteria and bringing new features into the lives of political parties. For example, the new law increased the minimum number of signatory citizens who could ask to legalize a political party from 300 to 500 citizens; it changed the administrative procedure for legalizing and registering a party, which was switched from the government to the district court (in the capital Tirana). Political parties were now allowed to conduct public events even prior to court approval, and the government had a new defined obligation to financially support the establishment of a political party, by allocating ALL100,000 (about €710) (Article 18) on the day of its legalization. On the other hand, it prohibited commercial and profitable activities of political parties, funding and finances from public entities within Albania and private and public entities from abroad; it defined the government's obligation to support parties with administrative costs and offices, as well as to assign to the State Supreme Audit Institution (KLSH) the competences to conduct financial audits of the political parties.

Despite the changes and competences assigned, some institutions encountered new obstacles in implementing the law. Specifically, the State Supreme Audit Institution (KLSH) did not exercise its duty to financially audit the political parties, mainly due to the political affiliations of the institution's staff with the political parties in power. Additionally, there were a considerable number of flaws in interpreting the new Constitution, predominantly in the section related to financial transparency. These difficulties in interpretation and implementation led to further legal adoptions in 2010 and 2011. The most notable changes to the amended law in 2011 related to an increase of the number of signatory citizens who could put forward a request to create a political party. The number went up from 500 to 3,000 signatories.

Furthermore, a radical change was introduced regarding the formula of party funding and financial transparency. The financial aid from the state budget was cancelled and a new minimum threshold was set for the value of financial gifts accepted from Albania and from abroad. There was also a change regarding the government's responsibility to provide political parties with public premises. With the revised law, only those parties with representatives in the last three local or parliamentary elections can benefit from this provision.

1.4. Final assessment of the legislation on political parties in Albania

After careful examination of the main legal documents and political developments in Albania, it can be argued that the overall legislation on political parties in the country is incomplete, it does not solve the main problems of the political parties, it has failed to provide a reliable and effective financial control formula, it has not influenced the internal democratization of the political parties and it has not fostered a solid foundation for sustainable democratic principles, upon which the old and new political parties could build their new identities and activities.

On the contrary, the legislation created legal loopholes and opportunities for the misuse and abuse of political parties by their own leaders. The legislation on political parties does not set clear provisions on the separation and balance of the decision-making structures and powers within the political parties. There are no provisions on the methods of internal selection and decision making, or in the binding norms or practices for the better internal democracy of political parties. The constitutional concept of 1998, stating that political parties shall "get organized conform democratic principles" proved to be incomplete, inadequate and non-functioning.

As a conclusion of the main elements of the development to the legislation on political parties in Albania, it can be summarized that changes and amendments are made during every government rotation, with constant revisions and annulments as per the political wish of the parties in power. In 1992, the parliament made amendments that outlawed the Communist Party. However, in 1998, after another political rotation, the left-wing Socialist Party, a derivate or "daughter" of the Communist Party (Abrahams, 1996), overruled the 1992 decision and the communists' right to political existence and activity was restored and made legal.

The Law on Elections (1992) banned political parties associated with ethnic characteristics (targeting the "Omonia" Association, representing small ethnic Greek minorities in Albania). This decision forced the Greek minority to create a new official party, the "Union for Human Rights" (PBDNJ). In a similar scenario, in 1991, religious affiliated parties were banned, whilst the revised law of 2000 does not specifically prevent such an affiliation between political parties and religions or religious groups. Regarding the political activity of former prominent communist figures, in 1996 the law banned individuals who had been part of the secret police, as well as senior officials from the communist regime from being able to run for office. However, with the political rotation and a new government that came one year later, this law was annulled in 1998.

On the financial side, unlike in 1996 when most political parties' were engaged in profitable economic activities, after the new legislative amendments of 2000 these activities were no longer legal.

Taking into consideration the developments in the legislation on political parties, as well as the overall analysis made within the framework of this paper, it can be observed that a final bottleneck for Albanian political parties is the lack of a National Registry of Parties and legal provisions than could stipulate the monitoring of political parties and reflect their frequent updates and changes. Under the current legislation, political parties are obliged to submit to the court only the results of internal elections for the party leader and a copy of their political programme.

This superficial layer has generated the current glut of political parties in Albania, where there are currently 130 legitimate political parties registered, of which more than half are fictitious. In at least five cases the party leaders are deceased. Nevertheless, since the law does not require the verification of updated registrations, these parties and their deceased leaders continue to appear as "active" and are officially considered eligible to stand in elections. As examples of the inactive parties of deceased leaders still wrongly listed as active are: the Liberal Party of the late Valter File and the Monarchist Movement of the late Guro Durollari.

2. The fragile internal democracy of Albanian political parties

Albanian political elites inherited the communist model of party unity, where criticism and fractions were seen as punishable acts and were subject to severe sanctions. However, efforts were made to guarantee the freedom of thought and speech, as well as fair competition within the party. All parties made successful progress on the theoretical and administrative sides, and most political parties adapted their statutes and internal regulations in this regard. The statutory documents claim to fully guarantee respect for criticism, to enable decision making based on voting only, to accept new and different ideas, to encourage candidacy for leadership positions and to allow free entry into and exit from the party.

In practice, things are different. One indicator confirming the inconsistency between the statutes and the reality is the high number of current political parties that derive from the two major political parties in Albania. Almost 80% of the small parties have been created as a result of sanctions, limitations and exemptions within the SP and the DP, showing

the low level of effectiveness of pluralism within the parties and how fragile the internal democracy of these parties is. Table 1 below shows the main derivates of the political parties in Albania, originating from the two main parties, the SP and the DP.

Table 1: New political parties deriving from the main parties, the SP and the DP in Albania, 1991-2017

Originating from the SP	Originating from the DP	Year
Social Democratic Party (PSD)		1991
	Democratic Alliance Party (PAD)	1992
	Party of Democracy and Justice (PDD)	1995
	Rimëkëmbja (RK)	1995
The Real Socialist Party (PSV)		1996
	The New Democratic Party (PDR)	2000
The Demo-Christian Party (PDK)		2001
The Party for Social Democracy (PDS)		2003
Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI)		2004
Party Justice, Integration and Unity (PDIU)		2009
The Real Socialist Party '91 (PSV91)		2009
The Moderated Socialist Party (PSM)		2011
	The New Democratic Spirit (FRD)	2012
	Movement for Albania (LPSH)	2015

It can thus be argued that the wide political spectrum and excessive number of political parties in Albania are not a sign of political freedom and democracy; they are instead a reflection of a deeply fragmented share of the two main parties (the SP and the DP), as a consequence of the deficiencies in internal democracy and the increasing influence and control of authoritarian party leaders.

2.1. The organizational structures and development of political parties

The Albanian political parties have almost identical structures and organizational styles. Their structures are largely based on the classical approach of the former communist parties, i.e. aimed at national coverage and presence; being structured into territorial units; with formal structures for youth and women's forums; divided into sub-sections and with ad-hoc regional organizations, etc. All political parties have an executive body and a dominant leader. Party chairmen in Albania are regularly seen and referred to as the "leader" by the supporters and the media.

On a bottom-up analysis, the party's base (the voters and supporters) play a minor role in the decision-making process and are expected to simply implement the decisions imposed from "above" (a term of authority known and widely used during communist-party rule in Albania from 1945 to 1990).

The analysis shows that the *elected party chairmanship* has lost its power to the *executive chairmanship* which is directly selected by the party's chairman. Other national structures such as the Congress or the National Assembly represent ad-hoc structures, which simply serve as decorative ornaments during election campaigns. (Krasniqi & Hackaj, 2015) Their role in the debates and decision-making structures of the party remains largely unexercised and unknown.

Regarding critical, organized fractions within the party, research shows that such a practice is not allowed in political parties in Albania. The experimental existence of such fractions in the Socialist Party (SP) in 1992–1999 and in the Democratic Party (DP) in 1991–1993 led to internal political conflicts and the expulsion of minorities which expressed critical views. Consequently, more than half of the political parties created after 1992 are formed of individuals or groups of individuals who are former members of the SP or the DP, and who were excluded for their critical views on the party (see Table 1).

Another example of the authoritarian power and control held by the leader can be observed in the process of electing institutional representatives, who by law are nominated by the political parties (political nominations such as the president of the republic, the prime minister, government ministers and city mayors). The analysis shows that the vast majority of these officials are directly appointed by the leader of the party, and represent those who are loyal to the leaders and closer to him politically.

This approach was best illustrated in the presidential elections between 1991 and 1998. During these years, the president of the republic was the strongest political figure in the

country, and as such the three presidents appointed during these years were also the leaders of the parties in power (Alia, Berisha and Meidani, who were respectively the leader of the Communist Party (1985–1991), the leader of the DP (1990–1992) and the Secretary General of the SP (1996–1997).

The new Constitution (1998) introduced considerable limitations to the competencies of the president of the Republic, and therefore, the balance of power shifted towards the stronger figure of the prime minister. Consequently, while before 1998 the prime minister was a secondary figure in the political parties, after 1998 the position of prime minister started to be allocated to the party leader, with very few exceptions (Majko in 1998, who was the Secretary General of the SP, and Meta in 1999, who was an MP with the SP).

In a closer examination of the authoritarian stature of the political leaders, the analysis shows that today it is difficult to survive in a party if one's views are not compatible with those of the leader. This marks a deterioration in the internal democracies of the parties, and the trend has had some variations over the years. After the fall of communism and up until 2009, the electoral system contributed positively to critical voices surviving in political parties. How? The electoral system during these years was majoritarian in 1991, and majoritarian with proportional correction between 1992 and 2009. These systems allowed individuals to strengthen their support around their constituencies. Therefore, their strong position and high number of votes enabled critics of the leader to still have a voice, whilst continuing to serve the party and their voters. The situation changed in 2009, when a new proportional system with a "closed list" approach was introduced. The new move gave complete power to the party leader to decide on the candidates' names. As a result, internal critical voices soon disappeared at a very fast rate.

In a clearly non-transparent approach, candidates running for the national assembly have not been elected via democratic practices, contests or internal voting. Since the end of 1992, no cases are recorded of internal contests for candidates. The dominant and accepted practice is the one where the leader and the party members who are his loyal individuals and closest allies decide on and nominate the candidates (and the names for all other leading structures).

One isolated example marks an exception to this rule from as long ago as 1991 and the beginning of 1992, when the new political parties still believed in the decision-making roles and internal democracy of their political organizations. During the initial stages of democratic life in Albania, contests and voting in the decision-making structures were considered very important, and were exercised initially at all levels, with specific importance given to elections to the National Assembly. This short-lived good practice unfortunately faded away very fast, and the political parties started to apply new practices for their structure and functioning style.

Political parties in Albania have one special characteristic, which they share with many

other political parties in the Western Balkans: continuous changes to their internal "constitution", which includes the statute and other internal regulations (Democratic Party (DP) 1990, 1996, 2005, 2014; Socialist Party (SP) 1991, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2015; Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) 2004, 2009, 2015). The most frequent changes are linked to two main elements: firstly, with the mandate and the election of the party chairman; and secondly, with the formula for electing the internal executive bodies (the chairmanship and the secretariat).

In 1991 all the parties, including the two main parties, the SP and the DP, clearly defined in their statute that the chairman could not be elected for more than two consecutive terms. The terms varied between two and four years, setting the maximum chairmanship of one person at no longer than eight years. By the mid-90s the political parties changed their minds and made statutory changes, removing these restrictions for party leaders and granting themselves indefinite chairmanship mandates (SP 2015, DP 2005, SMI 2009). In a snapshot of analysis on the leaders, it can be observed that the SP leader, Fatos Nano, chaired the party from 1991 to 2005 with a short interruption in 1997, while the DP leader, Berisha led the party uninterrupted from 1991 to 2013. Overall, of the 20 political parties with parliamentary representation, none held regular internal elections. There has been no progressive change to the mandates of their leaders either. The usual practice observed is: the same individual runs the party indefinitely, and in some cases, until death separates the party from its leader (in the cases of the PKB, PLL, PBDNJ, etc.).

2.2 Party chairmanship and decision-making structures

In the early years of their political lives (1991–1992) the leading structures of the parties enjoyed a strong political mandate, as these bodies were elected by a competitive secret ballot and in some cases (e.g. the PD in 1991) the chairmanship bodies were elected by the same electoral structure that elected the leader of the party. In the early 2000s the formula changed and elements of a co-opted chairmanship were introduced (e.g. gender quotas, provincial shares, religious representation and power representation quotas). Currently, the chairmanship bodies represent a spin-off model of the co-opting approach, rather than direct or open competition. For illustration, in 2013, the DP (in opposition) created what it called a "super-chairmanship structure" with about 55 members; however, 90% of its members were selected because of their previous official functions and not through a competitive vote. The creation of such a chairmanship makes them powerless and weak in their legitimacy towards the political will and preferences of the party leader. Thus, these new forms bear more of a resemblance to the electoral and political staff of the party leader than to a chairmanship structure.

Similar developments also arose in other organizational levels: in National Assemblies and in regional and local leadership structures.

When the SP started its internal reform in 2005–2006, 90% of its existing front-runners were dismissed *de facto* and their successors appointed directly, at the personal preference and will of the party's new leader, Edi Rama, who won the elections in 2013 and became prime minister (ISP, 2016). The right-wing DP, upon losing the electoral elections in 2013, also initiated an internal reform, applying the same practice as SP and dismissing most of the existing front-runners. The new leader, Mr. L. Basha, temporarily appointed successors, who were individuals and party members closer to him (ISP, 2016).

The new internal election process shifted the power of electing candidates from the base and constituencies to the capital, where the central role and power plays with the party chairman. This change has led to a dramatic decrease in the role and importance of the local structures, and proportionally it has increased the political power of the central leadership figures, of the leader himself and of his closest partners and internal associates.

2.3. Privileges and competences of the party leader and representative bodies

Societies experiencing complex transitions, such as Albania, have consistently debated about the selection between two priorities: democracy or stability. This situation explains the need for continuous reforms on one hand, and political consistency on the other, with notable stability required in the decision-making processes. Political parties are part of the stability required to enable the democratic reforms. "Democracy "and "democratic governance" were the major promises made by political parties to Albanian voters during the first decade of transition (1991–2001), followed by promises regarding stability, a much needed component in the fragile democracy in Albania.

The need for stability has overshadowed the calls for a more liberal democracy in the country, and stability is the term most misused by the leaders of political parties to justify the enforcement of indefinite mandates for their leadership position.

One of the challenges, mostly ignored by the political parties, is the frequent and non-transparent change in the internal regulation and decision-making structures in each party. For more than two decades, the public has put pressure on political parties and has encouraged them to conduct direct elections for important decisions. In the most recent years (2012–2016), the four main parties (PP, DP, SMI and PDIU) have held direct elections for party leader, but the contest has been unfortunately merely a formality, as there has

been either only one candidate, or a "fake" second candidate ran, or in most cases the winner was "appointed" (SP, Lakrori 2015; SMI, Rrokaj 2016; DP, Basha 2013).

This distortion of the principles of direct elections has yielded no positive effect in improving the representative level of political parties or in attracting new members. The practice of these quasi-bogus elections for party leader was however described as being "politically correct" by the political parties, who claim that this practice is in line with the modern trends of political parties elsewhere, without referring to specific examples.

The privileges and competences in the decision-making processes in political parties in Albania continue thus to lie with the party leader. There has been no change or development in this approach since 1941, when Enver Hoxha became the leader of the Communist Party and, subsequently, the dictator of Albania for the rest of his life.

The cult of the individual and the role of the parties' founders as "historic leaders" remain intact. During the last 26 years, since the fall of communism, Albania's political life has been dominated by two main parties: the Socialist Party (SP) and the Democratic Party (DP), and their respective leaders Berisha, Nano and Rama. New political entries into the political spectrum have been minimal, with only the SMI, a fraction from within the SP, being positioned as the third player and enjoying a significant increase in the number of its MPs, as well as in the government coalitions with whichever party wins the elections. Liberal groups and central-right parties have failed to survive.

In 2016, the SP held a referendum to decide on the mandate of its party leader. The decision states: "When elections are won and the party leader becomes prime minister, there is no need to vote on the winner. He remains in the position of chairman."

The unique voting process in the Albanian parties' context introduced a number of political decisions, such as: one individual cannot hold two public positions at once, those of MP and minister; the chairman of the party shall undergo a vote of confidence every two or four years; the chairman shall resign if the party loses the elections, etc.

These themes emerged upon the announcement of the results of every parliamentary elections, and the party assemblies conducted national meetings after each political rotation in 1995–1996, 1998–1999, 2001–2002, 2005–2006, 2009 and 2016. However, no changes were made until the General Assembly of the SP in 2015, where it was formally decided to restrict the public positions that can be held at once by one individual.

The present statutes of the political parties are adapted to serve the needs of the current leaders, and parties have failed to introduce new standards that would be useful for party democracy, regardless of the individual name of the party leader (SP, 2015; DP, 2013; SMI, 2015).

Regarding the traditional role of representative bodies and party structures, no significant adaptations are made in the statutes or programme documents, and yet public perception is somehow positive and its does associate the party structures with some degree of privilege and power, especially the party assembly, the secretariat at the central level, and the coordinators, sections and group sections at the local level.

2.4. Other changes in the internal functioning of political parties

More changes have occurred in other aspects of political life, especially in the forms of communication within a party. New online communication patterns have triggered a visible change in the organizational and decision-making processes of political parties.

In the first decade after 1990, communication with party members was made through the party newspaper and regular monthly meetings at the national, local and section levels. Almost three decades after the traditional practice of monthly meetings and face-to-face communication was established, today the main channels are social networks. The internet has changed not only the form, but also the content of communication and the frequency of exchanges between the central power, the local representatives and the supporters.

Daily statements on certain political topics are now made via Facebook and Twitter accounts, or Viber and WhatsApp groups. Political communication is instant, online and frequent, and therefore the former weekly or daily meetings, especially in local units and sections, are now perceived as bureaucratic and unnecessary.

An illustration of the change in communication and in the way political parties reach their supporters is the case of both major parties: between 2009 and 2013, the Democratic Party held only one meeting of the National Council, instead of at least 12 meetings, which should have been held according to the statute. Between 2012 and 2016, the SP held only four meetings of the leading structure, out of the 36 meetings which should have been held as per the SP statute (ISP, 2017). On the other hand, the chairmen of these parties, Berisha (before 2013, and Basha since June 2013) and Rama, are the most active politicians on social networks, with approximately one million followers. Their posts and updates are frequent and their exchanges with supporters and commenting followers is also active.

The final element analysed in this section is the mandate and competences of parliamentary groups. Although the mandate of MPs has a distinct significance, parliamentarian groups have a minor role in political decision making. Parliamentary groups usually implement

the decisions of the respective party leadership and they do not express any individual or independent opinions. In a monitoring report for the Albanian Parliament, ISP (2017) concluded that MPs appear not to have as much information on the political party they represent as the active party members. MPs also have fewer representation opportunities compared to party officials. Political parties justify this practice by the fact that most MPs are not career-oriented politicians, but are just new entries in each parliamentary legislature, and might not continue to serve the party at the end of the legislative term.

MPs are considered *ex officio* members of the national assemblies or the national councils of political parties, as well as members of the leading structures in electoral branches of the constituencies they represent. This privileged status was initially applied in 2007 by the SP and the DP, but it soon became challenging, especially for the parties in power, as the high number of MPs augmented the number of party individuals aiming for representative privileges at all levels. These privileges mean that as an MP, an individual can at the same time also be a member of the assembly, of the national leading structures, of the general secretariat and of the government (minsterial position).

The SP applied the separation between ministerial and MP positions in 2013, however, the experience of this separation of roles for the current term (2013–2017) highlighted a new development in the way authority is envisaged within political parties: the individuals who serve/have served as ministers, are considered more authoritative within the party compared to MPs or other members of the chairmanship structures.

3. Comparative summary

Following the work of Cular (2004), an evaluation was conducted of the political parties in Albania. The Albanian system of political parties includes a number of distinct differences from other parties in the region. Some Albanian parties have a specific nature (i.e. the PBDNJ – representing the Greek minority party; and the PDIU – representing the Chams, an Albanian community expelled from Greece before the end of World War II). These parties tend to have strong links with their members, since their votes depend on the membership and the two are interlinked. This scenario strengthens the local autonomy of these parties. However, when it comes to decision-making process, these political parties do not differ from the other political parties in Albania.

Table 2: Evaluation of the dimension of autonomy among political parties in Albania

Dimension of internal party democracy	SP	DP	SMI	PDIU	PR	PDK	PBD-NJ	PAA	PKD
1. Autonomy									
a. Members' rights and protection	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	1	1
b. Local-level autonomy	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	1
c. Local-level influence on central party	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	1	1
Total	3	3	2	5	3	4	5	3	3
2. Inclusion									
a. Direct member participation	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
b. Conventions vs. executives	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
c. Presidential powers	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	3
Total	6	6	6	4	3	3	3	3	4

On the other hand, the two main parties, the SP and the DP, have the same aggregate scores for the levels of autonomy and inclusion. Each of them has held elections for party leader and for the members of the leading structures. The third main political party, the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI), has the same scores for the components of inclusion; however, it scores low for the level of local autonomy. The party has a pyramidal structure and its decision making is directly related to the willingness of the party chairman, (the former prime minister, I. Meta) who exercises his power through the centralized mechanisms of participation.

For the other political parties, the scores show a weak internal democracy, a fragile consultation process, an unstable means of representation and unclear decision-making processes; however, these parties do not hold any specific significance in this study, as they only have a symbolic representation in parliamentary and public life (i.e. no seats in the parliament and no leading positions in local governments).

During the last five years, each party has embraced a new form of decision-making control by the leaders and their loyal party members, (ISP, 2017) by expanding the structure of the party chairmanship. From 19–21 members (between 1991 and 2005), the number of members in the party chairmanship has now expanded to 30–55 members, a more than twofold increase in the structure, which is filled with co-opted individuals,

who became members because of their previous political functions, i.e. being MPs, city mayors, spokespersons, directors of international relations organizations, heads of partner organizations, the heads of major departments of the party, national coordinators, etc. In this context, political parties have also applied fixed quotas for women and young people in the leadership and decision-making processes – a positive development at first glance, but *de facto* these quotas represent a further restriction on competition and the meritocratic system within the political parties.

Another crucial organizational feature of Albanian parties is their concentration in the capital, Tirana, thus enforcing the vertical focus of political debate and decision-making processes. Out of the 130 active political parties in Albania, only 0.5% have their registered headquarters outside the capital (ISP, 2017). None of the eight parliamentary parties has its headquarters outside Tirana. On a horizontal comparison rate, more than 80% of the leadership members as well as 95–98% of the secretariat members of the parliamentary parties live and reside in Tirana, and not in their constituency. All parliamentarian parties have central offices provided for free from the state budget, which also covers operation costs. The Law on Political Parties states that the government, through the state budget, must provide offices not only in Tirana, but also in 11 other cities, which are the central working points for the 11 administrative regions in the country.

3.1. CONCLUSIONS

In 2008, the two main parties, the SP and the DP, amended the Albanian constitution and the electoral system, experimenting with a new regional proportional system with closed lists and a constructive motion for the prime minister. Both changes led to an increase in the importance and power of the leaders from the two main political parties in their race to become the next prime minister of the country. This new development was a relapse in the internal democratization of political parties. After almost two decades of efforts to strengthen the political parties, the new constitutional changes, made in secret and overnight by the SP and the DP, cancelled all hope of having democratic political parties in Albania.

The rejection of the model of popular parties with horizontal extensions was immediately replaced by the introduction of the model of electoral parties, with a *vertical* extension of decision making, which is now the main feature of political parties in Albania.

The second issue of the political parties is the intense difference between the legal basis (Law on Political Parties, party statutes and regulations, the Constitution and the Electoral Code) and the actual picture in practice. In selected elements, almost all of the political parties in Albania are operating in violation of the law in instances such as: ignoring periodic internal elections, not exercising functional democracy, allowing religious and ethnic identification, etc.

The legitimacy of Albanian political parties remains unknown. No monitoring report or any other report that evaluates *official* political parties has ever been compiled or published. This is due to the missing legal basis to ensure a controlling mechanism and to conduct official monitoring of the political parties.

After a long and severe dictatorship, Albania has managed to accumulate only a modest level of experience in its democratic life. This inexperience has generated the main negative features of the internal democracy of political parties, together with the tendency to create absolute majorities, strong parties and strong leaders with excessive power, privileges and competences. This approach has created an elite of "untouchable" leaders who control the political parties and, through them, the whole political system and decision-making processes in Albania. Furthermore, this development has strengthened the model of parties associated with one individual and operating with a clientelistic candidate list, with members adapted to the leader and a party with no functional structures as per the standards required by Albanian law and by the parties' own statutes.

The periodic fragmentation of parties is a by-product of the internal democracy and lack thereof, as well as proof that Albanian political relations are not based on relations between ideology, alternative and voters, but in relations with the leader of the party and the party in power.

3.2 Recommendations

Based on this analysis, this paper makes a set of recommendations addressed to those political parties whose practice does not address issues that are important for autonomy and inclusiveness. The statutes of the main political parties analysed in this paper are silent on the dimensions of inclusiveness and, to a significant extent, on the dimension of autonomy as well. It would therefore be advisable to regulate these issues in their statute, since it remains the highest formal legal document for the party.

• Once the statutes are revised, in an era of technology and internet access, the political parties should make their statutes public and update their websites, since their websites remain the only official communication channel with the public. A public statute is a basic element to empower party members and keep the public informed.

• The main challenge for the Albanian political parties remains internal democratization. Parties should make every effort to make their political practice compatible with the statutory and legal norms. The Law on Political Parties requires a comprehensive review, and together with the law, a review should also be made of the list of identification of and legitimacy of the political parties.

• Closer attention should be paid to the internal election system of political parties, as only internal elections can foster competitiveness, attract new members and promote a new system based on merit and results.

• The concentration of power in the hand of the party chairmen should be revised, as it represents one of the most significant impediments to the internal democracy of political parties.

• Similarly, the autonomy of the local branches, sections and leading structures should be revitalized, as it gives more power to the other structures of the party, making it stronger at all levels.

• Citizens in Albania are still regular voters and they place confidence in political parties. Political parties must convey this trust in the quality of their reforms and representation, just as citizens expect them to.

• The political parties must have closer and more intensive communication with the citizens, to address citizens' concerns and to reflect their expectations in official policies and reforms.

• Albania needs a direct democracy and the Albanian political parties need to apply

direct use of the primary systems in parliamentarian elections, as well as in the local government elections.

All these changes require a strong political will and a stable environment to allow significant improvements to the internal democracy of political parties, and subsequently, to democracy as a whole in Albania.

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