

The constitution of a 'new politics beyond left and right': From ideological ambiguity to populist political communication

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Abstract

This article examines the political discourse of the Albanian Socialist Party from 2005 to 2009 during which it established a new profile under the leadership of Edi Rama. The article is intentionally constrained in scope and time as it seeks to zoom into the interrelation between the chairman's political discourse and the political profile of his party. More concretely, this article investigates to what extent does Rama's core theme of a 'new politics beyond left and right' frame the profile of the Socialist Party of Albania (SPA) in terms of: (i) political identity; (ii) political program; and (iii) relationship to constituents. Through discourse analysis of the SPA manifesto and Rama's speeches, the article argues that the ideological ambiguity of Rama's political discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right' gives way to a political party, which moves sometimes on the right and other times on the left, without constituting a clear political identity and thus conducting a politics of avoidance. The article concludes that the SPA suffers from the absence of a coherent political program and is losing its representative function, by pretending to be the 'party of all citizens'. The politics of avoidance and the ideological ambiguity have led to an increase in the use of populist political communication.

Key words: *political discourse, ideological ambiguity, politics of avoidance, populist political communication, Socialist Party*

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Introduction

‘It is time for a new synergy among all Albanians, above the divisions and prejudices of the old politics. It is time to give an end to the old politics of hatred and cynicism. It is the time to give life to a new union beyond the left and right wing’.

Edi Rama, Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania

This article analyses the political discourse of the socialist leader, Edi Rama, since he was elected Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania (SPA) in October 2005 till the parliamentary elections of June 2009. The main aim is to identify and investigate the central themes of the political discourse of the socialist leader in regard to his project for a ‘new politics beyond left and right’. In this light, the article is interested in exploring the implications that the discourse for a ‘new politics beyond left and right’ has on the profile of the Socialist Party of Albania in terms of: (i) its political identity; (ii) its political program; and (iii) the relationship to its constituents. Second, the article is concerned with the relations between such a political discourse and ideological struggles. Third, the article looks into the implications that a political discourse beyond left and right may have on the democratic processes in Albania. To do so, discourse analysis is applied on a data set consisting of party manifesto and leader’s key speeches and interviews. The article proceeds as follows: the first section sets the background of the political party system in Albania; the second section provides an overview of the conceptual framework in terms of ideological struggles and third way politics as well as populist political communication; the third section provides an overview of methodology approach and methods applied to collect the data and the following sections present the findings, conclusions and a critical assessments of the research itself.

The paper argues that the ideological ambiguity of Rama’s political discourse for a ‘new politics beyond left and right’ gives way to a political party and to a model of future government, which moves sometimes on the right and other times on the left, without constituting a clear political identity and without leading a predictable course on political, economic and social issues. In addition, the ideological ambiguity of Rama’s political discourse for a ‘new politics beyond left and right’ creates a vacuum in the constitution of the SPA identity. Rama’s project for a ‘new politics beyond left and right’ suffers from the absence of a coherent political program, which opens the way to a politics of avoidance. This political discourse for a ‘new politics beyond left and right’ significantly alters the SPA relations to its constituents by appealing to all citizens, rather than mobilising its loyalties, members and historical allegiances or even new members around

a common vision of the world. Following the not-successful electoral results in 2009, the SPA Chairman in the recent campaign for the parliamentary elections in June 2013 abandoned his political discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right' and focused on a 'rebirth of the left' and 'rebirth of Albania' and increasingly employs populist political communication strategies. However this would be the scope of another research.

Political parties in Albania: Polarized and conflictual political patterns

The fall of the communist regime in 1991 opened up the road to pluralism and democratic process in Albania along with all-encompassing socio-cultural, political and economic transformations. The multiparty system that emerged with pluralism in the early 1990s was challenged in the starting point by the lack of political parties legacies in Albania prior to the communist regime similar to other post-communist countries and by the frustrations with the democratization of the country (Lewis 2000: 6). The formation of party system in post-communist Albania can be understood in line with Kitschelt (1995) explanatory framework of the following determinants: (i) pre-communist legacies, which in the case of Albania account for little, if not none, tradition of democratization in pre-war; (ii) the type of communist regime, which in Albania under the Enver Hoxha rule was fiercely totalitarian and inward-isolated; (iii) the pathways of transition from communism to democracy characterized by conflictual, antagonist and polarized politics; and last, institutional differences such as the electoral system, which till 2008 was a mixed first-past the post majoritarian with proportional and was then changed into full regional proportional system.

In the first fifteen years after the collapse of the communist regime, two main political parties have dominated the political landscape in Albania, thus shaping a bipolar party system with a minor influence of small parties. The prevailing players of this bipolar or dual party system were, and to a large extent still are: the Democratic Party of Albania (DPA), the first opposition party after the fall of communism, and the Socialist Party of Albania (SPA), a reformed version of the former communist party, Albanian Party of Labour. In the first phase the bipolar post-communist party system was crystallised around three main programmatic cleavages: anti-communism, market liberalisation and Euro-Atlantic integration (Barbullushi 2014). This configuration was interlinked with an increasing role of charismatic party leaders.² The political parties in the first period seem

² For instance, the historic leader of the DPA, Sali Bersha or the former party leader and Prime Minister Fatos Nano of the SPA. Currently, DPA is run by Lulzim Basha and SPA by Edi Rama, at the same time the Prime Minister of Albania since 2013.

to be characterized by internal fragmentation due to almost non exist internal democracy rules, authoritarian organization and the personal conflicts of major political figures within the party with the ambition to be leader on their own right and thus forming their own political parties. A direct result of fragmentation was the creation of new political parties as offshoots or separation of subsistent groups from the two major parties.

The SPA in this sense has been less vulnerable to fragmentation than the DPA. The latter has been subject to several subdivisions and creation of new parties, but which nevertheless have not effected much its position as the major party in right spectrum. Three parties in particular have challenged the primacy of the DPA in the right spectrum, the Democratic Alliance (DA) in 1992, the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 2001 and the New Democratic Spirit (NDS) in 2012. The political struggles between DPA and the offshoots parties resulted from the internal conflicts regarding the general management of the party by the leader of the DPA, Sali Berisha. These parties though, despite an initial partial success of DA and NDP in 1997 and 2001³, have not managed to achieve electoral success. The first two offshoots, DA and NDP did not maintain their political profile and electoral support and thus declared a reunion and fusion with their birth political party, DPA. While the fusion with the DPA makes political and ideological sense considering their inability to succeed alone, the recently emerged offshoot from DPA, the NDS, after the failure in 2013 general elections has joined forces with the SPA on the opposite political spectrum. None of these parties had any substantive effect on the electoral and political position of DPA.

While DPA has suffered from several smaller fragmentations, the SPA underwent in 2005 a major party fragmentation, which lead to the formation of the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI). Inheriting to a certain degree the structures and organisations from the Party of Labour of the communist regime, the SPA has maintained party unity through its party structure and local units. In addition, the SPA has also retained a degree of continuity in electoral support and success.⁴ In the first phase of the party system, the SPA demonstrated a higher degree of internal party democracy, for instance changing its leader and three prime ministers from 1997 to 2005. The SMI was the product of the failing of the continuity of internal democracy pattern within the SPA after a bitter conflict between the party leader, Fatos Nano, and one of the most successful former prime ministers of the left, Ilir Meta. SMI was one of the key players arguing for a simple proportional system in Albania and abolition of the first-past the post majoritarian electoral system, which was disadvantageous to small parties. With the electoral reform in 2008, currently Albania has a regional proportional electoral system.

³ The NDP has been the only party within the right wing spectrum to have gained a considerable success, gaining 6 seats out of 140 in the parliament in 2001.

⁴ See Table 2 for electoral results.

The change in the electoral system marks the second period of party system in Albania, i.e. the shift towards a quasi-bipolar system with an expanding role of third parties. Although, studies (Stojarova & Emerson 2010) on party politics in Western Balkans show that the assessment of the impact of electoral system on party systems is difficult considering the frequent electoral reforms, election alleged frauds, boycotts of elections and conflictual politics, in the case of Albania the recently introduced regional proportional system, coupled with internal party conflicts and new political parties as offshoots of the established ones, account for the shift towards a quasi-bipolar party system. With the introduction of the regional proportional system and the new political configuration in Albania after 2009, Albania has now a quasi-bipolar party system with an increasing role of the SMI, which has proven to be the kingmaker in government coalition formation both in the general parliamentary elections in 2009 and 2013.⁵ The new electoral system has benefited other smaller parties such as the Party for Unity for Human Rights (PUHR), representing the Greek minority in southern Albania and more recently the Party for Justice, Integration and Dignity (PJID), representing the cam community.

In this second period of party system consolidation in Albania, the party system is centred on clientelistic or charismatic parties rather than programmatic cleavages (Kitschelt 1995: 447). Initially, the DPA main political programmatic narratives were: anti-communism, market liberalisation and the nationalistic aim of uniting all Albanians in the Balkans, eclipsing the so called historical right parties as the National Front or the monarchist, The Legalist (Biberaj 1999). While the SPA main programmatic narratives were: commitment to regional and pan-Balkan peace and democracy; a commitment to parts of the communist legacy such as National Liberation War and modernisation/industrialisation of the country during the communist regime; European integration and regional cooperation (Biberaj 1999; Ilirjani 2005). In the second phase, the programmatic position of the two main political parties started to converge more. SMI presented itself as a non-ideological party and emphasised the importance of EU integration for Albania as a technical, economic and social process.

Scholars (Kajsiu et.al. 2002; Ilirjani 2005; Kajsiu 2008; Kajsiu 2010) agree that ideology has not been the foundations of Albanian political parties' programmes in the past two decades. Political parties, in spite of being part of the right or left spectrum, cannot be easily distinguished from one another based on their stance on essential topics as EU integration, free market and privatisation, public services, education and health, agriculture and tourism. This has led to what Kajsiu refers as "*democracy where political pluralism has lost its meaning due to ideological*

⁵ In 2009, SMI aligned with DPA and was part of the government led by Prime Minister Sali Berisha. In 2013, SMI aligned in a pre-election coalition with the SPA and is currently part of the government led by Prime Minister Edi Rama and the leader of SMI, Ilir Meta, is the Speaker of Parliament.

monism” (Kajsiu 2010: 233). The reasons for this lack of political identity are interrelated to the political process as such in Albania in post-communism towards democratization and EU integration such as the transforming of parties into catch-all to gain wider electoral support, the EU conditionality on reformation of the country, the personalized conflictual and polarized political processes, leader-centric parties, a de-alienation and disengagement of the electorate. Although this is not exclusively a sui generis Albanian phenomenon, in Albania ideology has been instrumentalised by political actors and used simple as a tool to serve to power only when conveniently so (Kajsiu 2010: 234). The SMI is a clear example of a political party with no defined political ideology, which also does not represent or constitute any particular social group in Albania.

TABLE 1: Election results in parliamentary elections in Albania 1991-2013

Albania	Vote share %						
Parliamentary Elections	SPA	DPA	SMI	PHUR	PJIU	RBA (AKZ)	NDS
2013	41.36	30.63	10.46	0.85	2.61	0.59	1.7
2009	40.85	40.18	4.85	1.19	⌘	⌘	⌘
2005	48.2	51.8	8.4	4.13	⌘	⌘	⌘
2001	41.44	36.89	⌘	2.6	⌘	⌘	⌘
1997	52.75	25.7	⌘	0.29	⌘	⌘	⌘
1996	20.37	55.53	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘
1992	25.73	62.09	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘
1991	67.6*	38.71	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘

*In 1991 the Socialist Party of Albania had still its former name: the Labour Party of Albania (PPSH)

* Source: The Central Election Commission

A positive development in this regard was the electoral campaign for the parliamentary election in 2013, whereby political parties conducted a more ideological debate and articulated their standpoints, which were also picked up and covered by the media. Therefore, as during the first period, the programmatic competition remains low in Albanian party system and the content of the programmatic cleavages is determined by the aim to attract the support of the electorate.

In terms of inner party politics, political authoritarianism is the norm despite the fact that each party has approved democratic statute in paper. *‘A strong identification with the leader of the party remains a hallmark of post-communist Albanian parties, and, in general, of Albanian politics’* (Barbullushi 2014: 87). Phenomena such as

party members exclusions, no-challenging policy to the party leader, attempts to silence opposing voices within the party, efforts to control political rivals, contested internal party elections, internal party struggles and personalised conflicts are a few examples of the clientelistic and charismatic leader centred party system in Albania. In term of the inter-party relations, Albanian political landscape has been characterised by generalised distrust and zero-sum logic, which means that Albanian political parties have *'blatantly shown a tendency to put individual or party interest(s) ahead of any other considerations related to the EU accession process'* (Barbulushi 2014: 86) and democratization. Consequently, the political discourse has been characterized by antagonist, diametrically opposed positions as embodied by the main parties (Jano 2008). It is within this political context, that the populist party, the RBA, emerged in 2012.

Ideological struggles in contemporary politics

Ideology is probably one of the most controversial concepts in social sciences. The discussion on ideology ranges from the possible definitions of the concept to its functions and its impact in political systems and public opinion. From an etymologically perspective ideology means 'the science of ideas' (Brock 2005: 38). Ideology is conceived as a coherent system of ideas or as Adams puts it: 'ideology means simply a set of political beliefs about how society ought to be and how to improve it, irrespective of whether those ideas are true or false, or good or bad' (Adams 1993:3). Another way of defying ideology is that of 'political ideologies as providing central organizing frameworks for political debate and action, which contain three elements: critique, ideal, agency' (Schwarzmantel 1998:2). In this sense, political ideologies offer a criticism of existing society and its problems, which is contrasted with a vision of 'the good society' that is to be achieved.

The central issue of the discussions on ideology is the question whether or not the ideologies of modernity are still relevant and meaningful for contemporary politics. Schwarzmantel (1998) argues for a double crisis of ideology and modernity: the question whether the ideologies of modernity are still valid as frameworks for political thought, discussion and action in the changed circumstances of the contemporary world; and the crisis of modernity itself as presented by postmodernism. Since the French Revolution in the end of the 18th century, political conflict has been expressed through the distinction between the ideologies of the Left-Right continuum. Nowadays this approach is being questioned. The debate of the relevance of the ideologies of modernity, expressed as the Left-Right spectrum, can be divided in two main lines: (i) the problem with Left-Right spectrum and its (ir)relevance for contemporary politics; and (ii) the

problem with the concept of the ideology itself. Is it the case to dismiss ideology itself or to argue for the irrelevance of Left-Right spectrum of political ideologies? The answers to this question vary.

In the 1960's the thesis of the 'end of ideology' emerged. Seymour Martin Lipset and Daniell Bell were the proponents of the end of ideology thesis. They argued that in the West there was a general consensus among political parties over the broad framework of policy, thereby eliminating the need for ideology and reducing politics to the process of declining the best means of policy implementation. The main idea was that there was no ideological or intellectual battle left to fight and the rest of the world would eventually follow the path of the western liberal democracies. Thus 'the age of ideology was over' (Adams 1993:348). The fall of the communist regimes in former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989 seemed to confirm the idea that free market economy of liberal representative democracies was the 'only game in town'. In this light, Fukuyama in his article 'The End of History' in 1989 declared that 'what we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post war history, but the end of history as such; that is the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government' (Fukuyama 1992:3). Again it was claimed the 'death of ideology'.

Another line of criticism on ideology comes from postmodernist perspectives, which undermine the grounds of ideological struggles. As Schwarzmantel argues ideologies of modernity have been criticised on three bases: (i) the assumptions they make about a coherent and conscious agent of political and social change; (ii) their unitary assumptions and failure to recognize diversity; (iii) their connection with totalitarianism; (Schwarzmantel 1998:187). The ideologies of modernity - based on the industrial society, class identification and the nation-state - cannot remain indifferent to the changes of contemporary society and ignore the critiques of postmodernism. Thus Schwarzmantel concludes by maintaining that ideologies are still relevant for democratic practices, but 'that the ideologies of modernity, with their universalist assumptions and core ideas developed on the ground of modernity are not up to the task, that new ones are needed as addition to the Left-Right spectrum' (Schwarzmantel 1998:198).

Furthermore, Brock and his colleagues argue that ideology is critical to democracy and that there is a need for coherent, consistent and contrasting ideologies (Brock 2005:3). Bobbio (1996) also argues for the validity and the relevance of the ideological Left-Right spectrum. According to Bobbio, left and right are not fixed terms, rather they may change over time. The main characteristics of this division are: (i) left and right are exclusive in the sense that no doctrine or movement can be both left-wing and right-wing at the same time; (ii) they are exhaustive in the sense that a doctrine or a movement can only be either left-wing

or right-wing (Bobbio 1996:1). However, ideological struggles and the left/right continuum have been strongly challenged by the Third Way, as is explored in the following lines.

A politics beyond left and right and its critics

The main assumption of the 'Third Way' is that there is no alternative to neo-liberalism and thus legitimating consensus at the centre, beyond left and right. This implies: (i) the denial of the relevance of collective identities in the name of individualism; (ii) the denial of the relevance of adversaries in democratic struggle in the name of consensus and dialogue; (iii) blurring frontiers between left and right and the abandon of ideological struggles. The ideas of the Third Way helped drive the policies of the New Democrats in US under the Clinton administration and in Britain under Blair's leadership of the Labour Party. In the late '90s there was a considerable agreement among Anglo-Saxon and Continental leaders - Clinton, Blair, Schröder, Kok and D'Alema - on Third Way politics as progressive governance for the 21st century (Giddens 2000: 4-6). The argument here is that Third Way politics emerged as a necessary response to the changes that post-traditional societies are going through in the area of information technology. Giddens claims that Third Way politics 'represents the only effective means of pursuing the objectives of social justice and solidarity in this second stage of modernity' (Giddens 2000: 9). The Third Way can be seen as the attempt to arrive at a consensus at the centre of the left – right continuum and as a break point between social democracy and market neo-liberalism.

Giddens (2000) maintains that Third Way politics represent the renewal of social democracy in the post-traditional society. First, the Third Way implies that the model of politics structured around collective identities has become out-dated due to the growth of individualism in the second stage of modernity – reflexive modernity (Giddens 2000: 48-49). Second, as a consequence the 'democratization of democracy' can occur without having to define an adversary. Third, with the advent of risk society and the individualization of political conflicts, the old times of conflict and partisan controversies have lost their relevance and the past clarities of politics are no longer effective (Giddens 2000: 48-49). Based on the idea that the left and right distinction is obsolete and not relevant anymore, the main claim of the Third Way is of politics 'beyond left and right'.

The first critique is related to the ideological ambiguity and the absence of a coherent system of ideas. Jeff Faux argues that the Third Way is not developed as a coherent political philosophy and that it has not proven adequate in relation to: (i) a coherent analysis of the declining relevance of the 'old left'; (ii) providing

an effective basis for rebuilding the fortunes of social democratic parties; (iii) a plausible strategy for dealing with issues of the post-Cold War age. The third way has not proved to be a philosophy that moves political policy-making 'beyond left and right'. It is a rationalization for political compromise between left and right, in which the left moves closer to the right. Furthermore it is argued that Third Way politics is a project within Anglo-Saxon origins and that the 'Giddens-Blair' concept of the third way is a largely unsuccessful attempt to develop a 'big idea' for our times (Giddens 2000: 20). It is a politics that speaks of the need for hard choices, but then avoids them by trying to please everyone.

While Giddens argues for the loss of relevance of collective identities and the obsolescence of the adversarial model, Laclau and Mouffe (2001) recognize the relevance of collective identities, the role of power relations as constitutive of the political, the struggles for building a new hegemony by defeating an adversary. The Third Way aims to establish a world 'beyond left and right', 'beyond hegemony', 'beyond sovereignty' and 'beyond antagonism'. Mouffe argues that such an anti-political approach 'reveals a complete lack of understanding of what is at stake in democratic politics and of the dynamics of constitution of political identities and it contributes to exacerbating the antagonistic potential existing in society' (Mouffe 2005: 2). The conflict between left and right as legitimate political positions is necessary for the political identification of voters and for the mobilizing of passions in politics. If one does not acknowledge the clash of legitimate democratic political positions between left and right, then 'the democratic confrontation will be replaced by essentialist forms of identification or non-negotiable moral values' (Mouffe 2005: 37). Furthermore Mouffe argues that 'the case of New Labour makes clear that the refusal to acknowledge that a society is always hegemonically constituted through a certain structure of power relations leads to accepting the existing hegemony and remaining trapped within its configuration of forces' (Mouffe 2005: 63).

Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 21) argue that society is discursively constructed; it is a field of meaning where identities do not have an inherent positivity or essential core, but are relational, constituted in a system of differences. 'We can conceive the social agent as constituted by an ensemble of "subjects positions" that can never be totally fixed in a closed system of differences, constructed by a diversity of discourses among which there is no necessary relation, but rather a constant movement of overdetermination and displacement' (Mouffe 1993: 77). The concepts of discourse, hegemony and social antagonism are central to the work of Laclau and Mouffe. They define discourse as a decentred structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed. When it comes to the constitution of collective identities, such as political identities, there is always a creation of a 'we' as opposed to a 'they'; the 'we' is created by the presence of the

'other'. This relation may be one antagonistic, i.e. a friend/enemy relation, which means that the 'they' is perceived as threatening the identity of the 'we'. Populism fits very well into this framework.

This populism can be seen as a type of political dynamic that is entwined with other political positioning without offering itself a coherent and comprehensive set of ideas. It is thus a manifestation of political style or as Laclau puts it in a post structural approach as an "empty signifier" (Laclau 2007). He argues that populism is based on an antagonistic division between empty signifiers whose meaning is fully determined by their antagonistic relationship, i.e. the people are the antithesis of the elite (Laclau 2007). This focus on the gap between elite and the people allows populism to unite different sets of ideas (Kriesi, 2014). Based on this, other scholars have argued to conceptualize populism as discourse and to completely dismiss the link to ideology, albeit thin ideology (Aslandis 2016). Drawing from Mudde's definition and taking away the link to ideology, than populism can be conceived as in terms of a purely discursive definition: "*populism modestly becomes a discourse, invoking the supremacy of popular sovereignty to claim that corrupt elites are defrauding 'the People' of their rightful political authority; it becomes an anti-elite discourse in the name of the sovereign People*" (Aslandis 2016:96). This reflects not only the recurrence of populism in reality, but also the most common methodology operationalization of populism, i.e. through discourse analysis of political communication of party leaders and political parties.

Research design

This article adopts a qualitative methodology to identify the main themes of the SPA Chairman's discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right'. Discourse analysis is a method to challenge common knowledge and taking for granted thinking, focusing on an interpretation warranted by detailed attention to the 'text', which in this article refers to party manifesto and political speeches. The discourse analysis is particularly relevant in the analysis of Rama's discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right' for it implies the study of discourse as the 'use of language' and as a 'social practice' (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 13). Also language is not a neutral means of reflecting and describing the world; rather language is a 'form of life' and has an important role in constructing social life (Wodak & Meyer 2001: 141). Discourse analysis aims at latent meaning, it is not descriptive, and it conceives discourse as socially constitutive and socially shaped. Discourses do not exist in a vacuum, but are in constant conflict with other discourses and social practices, which inform them over questions of truth and authority (Mills 1997: 49).

While discourse analysis is an appropriate instrument to examine the implications of Rama's discourse on the SPA profile as presented in the research question and hypothesis of this project, it is not adequate for investigating other areas of interests including in this research, such as: the implications of the discourse in terms of the party relationships to its constituents. As such survey/questionnaire method could have been used so as to explore how voters identify themselves politically and how has the discourse affected their political engagement. In this sense, one of the main objections to discourse analysis is that 'it tells us nothing about the agents of the actions, about their place and time' (Leeuwen 2005: 17). It does not allow us to study the reaction of the public to both the political discourse and the way in which it is represented and covered by media. Leeuwen argues that to discuss this we have to research the production and reception of the texts ethnographically. However, since the research question is specifically related to a certain political discourse, the discourse analysis method was important to utilize in order to interpret the core dimensions of Rama's discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right'.

Another potential objection to discourse analysis is that it is not able to produce empirical generalization as other social research methods do, such as surveys, questionnaires and so on. Discourse analysis does not set out to identify any universal processes. Discourse analysts are critical of the idea that such generalizations are possible, arguing that discourse is always constructed from particular interpretative resources and always designed for specific interpretative contexts (Gill 1996: 155). Thus, this research paper does not pretend to offer generalization on political discourse and its implications, rather it has target a specific discourse and its narratives and aims at scrutinizing it in-depth so as to capture the main dimensions and the implicit or explicit political themes. As Foucault (1998) have pointed out all discourse is occasioned: there are no trans-historical, trans-cultural, universal accounts, expects those that might be 'produced' by the artificiality of research context.

Another limit of discourse analysis concerns the issue of representativeness. Sometimes the selection of a certain talk or text may not be representative. Also, it is argued that the choice of the research goals, the methods of inquiry, the theories, the objects of analysis cannot be independent of researcher own socio-political positions and interests and of the wider social context of research. The issue of objectivity and researcher's autonomy is a very complex one and for consideration of space it will not be dealt here. However, this article draws from the principle that researchers cannot be fully independent from their own values and thoughts, but they thrive to adhere to research ethics and scientific practices.

This article takes into consideration both strengths and limits of the discourse analysis as a research method. However, the recognition of the limits by no means

implies that discourse analysis is not adequate for examining the research question. The discourse analysis is applied for it is the most appropriate method of research for investigating the research question which main interest is in political discourse. The aim is to analyse how the discourse is constructed, the kinds of rhetorical recourses used, the dimensions and the core political themes of Rama's discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right'. The main categories of analysis as per the political discourse of the SPA Chairman are: old politics vs. new politics; change and union; left and right ideology; party political identity; political program; party relations to its constituents.

The SPA new Chairman and his political project

When Rama became the Chairman, the SPA was facing hard times. The former historical leader had resigned after losing the parliamentary elections and the party had no clear vision for the future. For many Edi Rama was the only one who could bring the SPA to life. He promised he would renew the SPA and would design a new project for the future government of Albania once the SPA would be in office. When Rama was elected Chairman, he had only been part of the SPA for a short period of time. On one hand, this helped him to distance himself from the party's past performance and failures and to mark a new beginning for the SPA. On the other hand, in the framework of these transforming processes, Rama faced these main challenges: (i) renewing the SPA in terms of its structures, organizational capacities and its political identity; (ii) consolidating his own position as the Chairman of the SPA; (iii) keeping up with the influences of the former leader and the pressures of his supporters; (iv) shedding light on the SPA's position in the left parties coalition; (v) designing a new political project and introducing the new manifesto. It took him two years until he finally launched his ideas for the future project of the SPA in June 2007, three months after he was re-elected as the Mayor of Tirana. Meanwhile, Rama had already started the process of transforming the SPA.

Rama successfully managed to renew the SPA in terms of its structures and organizational capacities. First, he brought in new individuals, who did not have any historic background with the SPA, but who had studied in western universities and were well known for their expertise and professionalism. Second, Rama strongly supported and encouraged the participation of women and young people in the SPA. Third, Rama initiated the implementation of the 'One Member, One Vote' principle to select party leaders and determinate the party program by the direct vote of the party's members. Fourth, he established contacts with the international left organizations. Also these steps helped him to consolidate his position as the

leader of the SPA and to hold back the pressures of the former leader and his supporters. Moreover, the running of a permanent political campaign, travelling the breadth and length of the country, has consolidated his political position within the party and his political image. The media has played a crucial role in this process, for Rama is using news media coverage of his activities as the Chairman of the SPA, as the Mayor of Tirana and as the leader of the opposition as free political marketing.

While, Rama was relatively successful in renewing the SPA in terms of structures, organizational capacities and manners of doing politics, he struggled to reconstitute its political identity and to design its new political project. Rama's first attempt was to propose the creation of a Left Federation in Albania so as to join together the political parties of the left spectrum and to prepare for the next parliamentary elections. Rama (2007) declared that:

The SPA would like to make this first step towards the creation of the Left Federation and all other left political parties are invited to join. Being united will help us to win the next parliamentary elections and to implement the changes that Albania needs.

For consideration of time and space, I will not examine in details the relationships of political parties with the left spectrum and the conditions that made it impossible for the Left Federation to be founded. However, it is worth mentioning that Rama soon gave up the idea of unifying the left parties and launched the new project of the SPA, i.e. the project of a 'new politics beyond left and right'.

Main themes and interpretations

New vs. old politics dichotomy

The discourse analysis of Rama's political speeches made it possible to identify the core themes and then to move on with exploring their implications on the SPA profile, identity and role as a representative institution. One of the most important political speeches of the SPA Chairman was the one delivered on June 2007, when he introduced his political project for the SPA. Since then Rama's political speeches as well as the SPA manifesto have been constructed on these main themes: (i) new vs. old politics dichotomy; (ii) a new politics of change and union; (iii) a new politics beyond left and right; and (iv) an 'anti-political' approach to politics. I will start the analysis and interpretations with the first core theme of Rama's discourse.

The main theme of Rama's discourse is the 'new politics' vs. 'old politics' dichotomy. The categories of 'old politics' as opposed to 'new politics' can be found in every three sentences of Rama's political speeches. He characterizes the 'old politics' as the main source of the problems that Albania is facing during the democratization. Rama stresses that:

'There are 18 years that the politics speaks over and over again and the words differ from the deeds. The old politics is responsible for the negative image of Albania in Europe as a country of crime, corruption and informality' [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the tour of meetings throughout Albania to introduce the New Governing Program of the Socialist Party, (April 2009)].

The same approach towards the 'old politics' is also reflected on the SPA manifesto. The later underlines the necessity of the SPA to differentiate itself from the 'old politics', a manner of doing politics that has dominated Albanian political scene since the fall of the communist regime. The 'old politics' is again characterized as a politics which:

'Does not pay attention to citizens' daily problems and which has not offered any valuable solution to the major problems of the country, such as: corruption, unemployment, poverty, rural underdevelopment and lack of infrastructure' (The SPA Manifesto August 2007).

'The new politics' is conceived as the force of change, the one that will bring prosperity and progress to Albania. The discourse analysis of Rama's political speeches identified the main dimensions of the 'new politics'. The first dimension of the 'new politics' is that it differentiates itself from the way politics has been conducted in Albania in the 18 years of transition, thus it pretends to be different from 'old politics'. Second, it is a politics that aims change and union of Albanians despite their political positions, thus focusing on the centrality of the citizens. This leads to the third dimension, i.e. maintaining to be a 'politics beyond left and right'. The discourse of the SPA Chairman takes the form of a political rhetoric for an election campaign, i.e. full of emotional appeals and full of promises with general attraction such as progress, prosperity, respecting human rights and so on. For instance, this is how Rama defines the 'new politics':

'The new politics will facilitate and increase the citizens' participation on decision-making processes; the central focus of the new politics is guaranteeing and protecting human rights and freedoms; the new politics will offer more chances for

each and every citizen; it will create a system of meritocracy and offer equal chances for everyone; it will protect the environment and develop the rural areas; the new politics represents a set of reforms which will build up a new and modern Albanian state; [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, on the conceptualization of political parties and politics, (April 2007)].

Despite this emotional and general appeal in the form of promises and wishes for the future, Rama falls short to offer a clear and detailed political program of how he and the SPA are going to realize these in practice. Instead, Rama's discourse is constructed on the distinction between new vs. old politics as the distinction between good vs. evil. For instance, Rama strongly emphasizes in his speeches what has been stated on the SPA manifesto:

'The new politics marks the end of the hatred and cynicism; the decline of the party nepotism and interest walls; it marks the opening of the parties toward the society and the novelty; it marks the end of the long-lasting history of words that are not reflected into works' (The SPA manifesto August 2007).

The discourse on a 'new politics' pretends to hold the key to the salvation of the future of the country:

'The answers to the problems Albania is facing today can be found on the "new politics"' [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the protest 'Pro NATO, Against Berisha' (April 2008).]

The discourse on the 'old politics' as the one to blame for the problems that Albania is facing implies the identification of the 'old politics' with certain politicians who have governed Albania since the fall of the communist regime. When Rama refers to 'old politics' as the worst thing ever happened to Albania, he is pointing to: (i) the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Democratic Party of Albania; (ii) the Chairman of the Socialist Movement for Integration; (iii) other politicians who have been in office during the transition in Albania. Thus the confrontation is based on an individual level, rather than on programs, ideas or ideological standpoints. This approach leads to the rise of personalization in politics and political discourses. It also implies that what the 'new politics' is offering is just the replacement of some 'old politicians' with 'new ones' with no reference to political programs and ideologies.

The way Rama constructs the discourse on politics leads to the confrontation of two different approaches to politics. The 'old politics' is deemed as wrong and evil, the one which is '*impeding the progress of Albania*', whereas the

'new politics' is the right one, the one that will bring change and progress to Albania. The discourse on the opposing 'old' and 'new politics' constitutes the relationship between 'them' and 'us', which is a friend/enemy relation, which means that the 'they' is perceived as threatening the identity of the 'we'. This kind of discourse does not recognize any legitimacy to the political positions of 'the other'. The confrontation 'old' vs. 'new politics', as implied in Rama's discourse, is not a confrontation between two legitimate competing political positions, rather it is the confrontation of two different positions on moral values of right and wrong, good and evil. This is problematic for these positions are based on essentialist assumptions and are non-negotiable moral values (Mouffe 2005: 30).

A new politics of change and union

Rama's discourse is constructed on two other themes - change and union, which are both related to 'new politics' vs. 'old politics' dichotomy. 'Change' and 'union' are attributes of 'new politics'. The analysis of Rama's political speeches showed the high frequency of using phrases like:

'The union beyond left and right'; 'the union in the name of change'; 'a new union of Albanians'; 'the children of both left or right families suffer the same'; 'we all face problems, despite being part of the left or right'; 'it is time for a new synergy among all Albanians'; 'it is the time to give life to a new union, for the sake of our children, beyond the right and left wing'.

The necessity for change is not articulated just as an electoral promise, 'change' is articulated as a signifier that constructs through language the 'new politics' vs. 'old politics' dichotomy. The articulation of this dichotomy signifies the discursive constitution of the antagonistic relations between two different political positions, i.e. the 'new politics' of Rama and the SPA and the 'old politics' of the 'other'. With the 'other' Rama refers mostly to the Chairman of the Democratic Party and the Socialist Movement for Integration. 'Change' as an attribution of 'new politics' implies progress, prosperity and good governance. Thus 'change' is articulated as opposed to regress, failures and bad governance, which Rama refers to as 'old politics'. In the same light, 'union' is also an attribution to the 'new politics' and it is in contrast with fragmentation, divisions and hatred, which are all characteristics of the 'old politics'. In this way, he is discursively constructing an antagonistic relation with the 'other', i.e. political competitors and challengers. The change that 'new politics' will bring is the union of all citizens despite their political positions, i.e. the union beyond left and right.

A new politics beyond left and right

The other main theme of Rama's discourse is that of a 'new politics beyond left and right', i.e. blurring frontiers between left and right and the abandon of ideological struggles. Drawing from the Third Way politics, Rama argues against ideological struggles and appeals to the denial of the left/right distinctions. The ideology is deemed to be obsolete and the left/right distinction as problematic for the development of Albania. For instance, Rama declares the 'death of ideology':

'The SPA will be the party of ideas and values, not the party of ideologies. The epoch of ideology is now over once and forever. We will do what is best for Albania. Thus we will never hesitate to take actions, even though they may be considered as a belonging to the right spectrum' [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the National Assembly of the SPA, (April 2008)].

What is more the SPA manifesto also states the abandon of ideology and of the left/right distinctions:

'We are linked together by some ideas and values, not by an ideology. Our approach to politics is not based on ideological prejudices' (The SPA Manifesto August 2007).

At the same time, the SPA manifesto accepts that there is no alternative to free market economy:

'We strongly support the idea that the free market is better than state interference concerning economic development' (The SPA Manifest August 2007).

However, the SPA alternative to left/right politics is unclear and ambiguous. This is how the SPA manifesto demonstrates this ambiguity:

'However, we do not believe that the free market logic and the competition can resolve the complicated problems of education, health, culture, environment and urbanization. We endorse the free market economy, not the free market society. The new social Albania would be based on the balance between free market economy and the state as an expression of collective will.' (The SPA Manifest August 2007).

Therefore, after declaring the end of ideology, Rama appeals to all citizens to be joined together in an allegiance beyond left and right, which is represented by the SPA and its political program:

'I ask you today not to join new political parties, but to be united in an alliance beyond left and right. It is not time for us to be divided in dozens of political parties. It is time to be united for the sake of our children, to be united despite the frontiers of different political parties. It is time to say goodbye to the old politics and to embrace the new politics' [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the meeting with the Network of the Volunteers of the New Union for Change, (December 2008)].

The SPA Chairman discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right' implies that the new political program of the party is based on two assumptions: (i) the irrelevance of ideology; and (ii) the abandon of the left/right distinctions. Thus the 'new politics' appeals for a union of all citizens beyond left and right. This discourse is problematic for the SPA profile in terms of its political program and political identity. First, by declaring the end of ideology, the SPA political project suffers from the absence of a political program based on a coherent system of ideas. This means that the SPA once in office might move sometimes on the right and other times on the left, without establishing clear political standpoints.

Second, Rama's project on a 'new politics beyond left and right' strongly affects the SPA profile in terms of its political identity; i.e. the SPA is abandoning its political identity as a left party by appealing for a union beyond left and right, thus creating a vacuum in the constitution of its own political identity. If the SPA is not based on ideology, if it refuses the left/right distinctions as political categories and if it appeals for a union beyond left and right politics, then the question is: What is the political identity of the SPA and how can citizens identify themselves with the SPA? In this way, the SPA moves away from partisan politics and it appeals to a wide range of citizens by claiming to become the party of all citizens. This tendency is showed by the other theme of Rama's discourse, which is the anti-political approach to politics.

The anti-political approach

The final main theme of the 'new politics' as explored by the discourse analysis of Rama's political speeches and the SPA manifesto is the anti-political approach to politics. The anti-political approach is implied in the way Rama conceives the SPA

and himself as the Chairman of the party. Rama conceptualizes the SPA as an instrument in the hands of citizens for achieving change:

‘The SPA should be an instrument in the hands of every young people who want to change his/her life, an instrument in the hands of every woman who wants to change her social position, an instrument in the hands of every entrepreneur who wants to change the quality of services or technologies’ [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, on the conceptualization of political parties and politics, (April 2007)].

Thus, not only the party, but the Manifesto as well is open to everyone, despite their political views:

‘This text is unfinished, it is open so as to leave space for others’ commentaries, critiques and suggestions’ (The SPA Manifesto August 2007).

Rama not only conceives the SPA as an instrument to achieve change and its Manifesto as open to everyone, but he also declares that he is not a politician:

‘I am a citizen like you, I am not a politician, and I am a citizen who does not give up the idea to change his country’ [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the 16th Anniversary of the Forum of Euro-socialist Young Albanians, (January 2008)].

‘I am the Chairman of SPA, because I want to be part of the efforts to change Albania, to change the life of each citizen and to be proud of having the Albanian passport. I am the Chairman, but I am not a politician’ [The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the 17th Anniversary of the Forum of Euro-socialist Young Albanians, (January 2009)].

Rama’s discourse implies a ‘new politics’ that is in essence ‘anti-political’. The anti-political and anti-ideological approach has significant implications for the SPA profile, identity, functions and relationship to its constituents.

If the SPA is just an instrument in the hands of citizens for achieving change, despite political cleavages and if the Chairman is not a politician and does not have any ideological bond with his own party, then the question is what is the SPA left to? It seems that for Rama there is no difference if he is the Chairman of the SPA or the Chairman of any other political party, as long as what he is appealing for is the unification of citizens despite their political views. Thus the party loses its role as a representative institution and the relationship of the SPA to its constituents

is strongly affected. The SPA claims to represent every citizen and to join them together in the allegiance beyond left and right, which undermines the principles of political pluralism, party competition and political representation.

The decline of the SPA as representative institution of certain segments of society and its appeal for 'politics beyond left and right' leads to a political party which does not rely anymore on its loyalties, members or historic allegiances. As Swanson and Mancini (1996) argue, when the fortunes of political parties rest on opinion rather than membership the means for cultivating and shaping public opinion become crucial to electoral success, i.e. mass media, which move to centre stage in politics. Therefore, Rama's discourse on a 'new politics beyond left and right' is strongly transforming the relationship of the party and its constituents. The effort to reach as many citizens as possible is based on the implicit consideration of citizens as voters: the more voters you reach, the greater the chances to win elections. The SPA has become a 'catch-all' party, whose main goal is to win elections, rather than to implement a political program and certain public policies, based on a coherent system of ideas.

The deliberate design of the manifesto and political program as an open text, the appeal for a union beyond left and right as well as the abandon of ideological struggles are based on the party's ambition to reach as many voters as possible and is an expression of Rama's project for 'a new politics beyond left and right'. Therefore the implications are: (i) the SPA does not embrace any ideology, i.e. a coherent system of ideas. At best its political program resembles a mishmash of ideas gathered here and there and at worse it is vague and ambiguous; (ii) a vague and ambiguous political program makes it impossible to predict the manners in which the SPA is going to react to certain issues if elected in office. This leaves space for a politics of avoidance, i.e. the party offers no answers or possible solutions to certain problems and at the same time, once in power, it can easily change its standpoints for there is no binding link with a coherent system of ideas.

Limitations and further research

Since the research has a qualitative nature based on discourse analysis, one may question the generalizability of the findings. However, it is precisely the qualitative nature of the research project and its focus on discourse that does not consider generalization as relevant because discourse is constructed from particular interpretative resources and designed for specific interpretative contexts. Thus, the merit of the research results is that they further advance the understanding and deepen the analysis of Rama's political discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right' in a given context. To be able to have some quantitative insights into the SPA

manifesto and Rama's political speeches in terms of the frequency of the categories of analysis, then content analysis need to be conducted. A combination of content analysis with discourse analysis will certainly help to a better understanding and interpretations of the findings.

It is important to point out that the data analysed is not sufficient to produce a firm conclusion about the SPA relationships to its constituents, but it will be enough to attempt an initial answer to this issue. While discourse analysis is an adequate tool to analyse the implications of Rama's discourse on the SPA profile as presented in the research question and hypothesis of this project, it is not adequate for investigating the implications of the discourse in terms of the party relationships to its constituents. As such survey/questionnaire method could have been used so as to explore how voters identify themselves politically and how has the discourse affected their political affiliation with the SPA. The research focused on the ways in which the SPA political identity, political program and relations to its constituents was altered by the discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right'. Additional research would be useful to further investigate the implications that such a discourse might have on the democratic processes of Albania.

Concluding remarks

The need to differentiate himself and the SPA from the past, the failure of the foundation of the Left Federation, the goal of winning the parliamentary elections through appealing to a wide range of voters led the SPA Chairman to his project for a 'new politics beyond left and right'. Through using discourse analysis as a method of research and through the interpretations of the findings, this research project attempted to show to what extent Rama's discourse for a 'new politics beyond left and right' affected the SPA profile in term of: (i) its political identity; (ii) its political program; and (iii) the relationship to its constituents. The discourse analysis of Rama's political speeches and of the SPA manifesto shed light to the main themes of the political project of the SPA for a 'new politics beyond left and right', which are: (i) new vs. old politics dichotomy; (ii) a new politics of change and union; (iii) a new politics beyond left and right; and (iv) an 'anti-political' approach to politics.

The article showed that the SPA Chairman's project for a 'new politics beyond left and right' implies that: the new political project considers the ideological struggles to be irrelevant in Albanian contemporary politics; the abandon of the left/right distinctions as political categories and replacing them with the 'new' vs. 'old politics' dichotomy; appeals for a new politics of change, which will be based on the union of all Albanians beyond the left and right boundaries; has anti-

political approach to politics. The SPA is deemed to be an instrument in the hands of every citizens and the Chairman does not conceive himself as a politician, but as a citizen who wants to achieve change and union of all Albanians through the instrumental use of the SPA.

The first main implication of the SPA Chairman's discourse on a 'new politics beyond left and right' in terms of the SPA political identity and program is that the SPA suffers from ideological ambiguity and absence of a political program based on a coherent system of ideas. This means that the SPA, through abandoning its political identity as a left party and by appealing for a union beyond left and right, is creating a vacuum in the constitution of its own political identity. Furthermore, without being able to construct its political identity clearly and suffering from an ideological ambiguity, the SPA will conduct a politics of avoidance. The project for a 'new politics beyond left and right', despite emotional electoral appeals, does not offer a coherent political program as a possible alternative to the incumbent party in government. Thus, the party offers no answers or possible solutions to certain problems and at the same time, once in power, it can easily change its standpoints for there is no binding link with a coherent system of ideas.

The second major implication of the SPA Chairman's discourse on a 'new politics beyond left and right' is related to the SPA relationships to its constituents in the sense of political representation. Rama's concept of the SPA, as implied in his discourse and in the party manifesto, is that of a political party that claims to represent every citizen and to serve as an instrument at the use of every citizen despite his or her political views. By definition a political party in a pluralist party system cannot pretend to represent all citizens for this would undermine the principles of political representation and political pluralism. What is more, such a claim of being the 'party of all' leads the SPA to lose interest in its members and loyalties and to appeal to wide range of citizens, thus shaping more and more the profile of a 'catch-all' party. This creates a vicious circle: from ideological ambiguity and absence of a political program to a 'catch-all' party, which aim is to win elections, rather than to implement certain policies based on certain coherent systems of ideas.

Another implication is that the confrontation between political actors is based on an individual level, rather than on programs, ideas or ideological standpoints. The discourse analysis of Rama's political speeches and the SPA manifesto showed that the confrontation 'old' vs. 'new politics' is not based on political categories like left and right, rather it is based on moral values of right and wrong, good or evil. Also what the 'new politics' is offering is just the replacement of some 'old politicians' with 'new ones' with no reference to political programs and ideologies. Thus, the political confrontation of the SPA with other political actors is not based on contrasting political programs and ideologies, but is based on individual

confrontation and non-negotiable moral values like good vs. evil, right vs. wrong. This approach leads to the rise of personalization in politics and political discourses.

The democratic processes in Albania cry out for substantial political confrontation between different political programs and ideologies, rather than individual confrontation full of personal attacks and accusations. However, the impact that Rama's discourse on a 'new politics beyond left and right' have on the SPA profile in terms of political identity, program and representation can serve as a starting point for further research on the implications that the 'new politics beyond left and right' and populist political communication have on the democratic processes of Albania.

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Appendix

The speeches of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania - Edi Rama

- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, on the conceptualization of political parties and politics, (April 2007)
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the 16th Anniversary of the Forum of Euro-socialist Young Albanians, (January 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the protest 'Pro NATO, Against Berisha!' (April 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the National Assembly of the SPA, (April 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at a local rally with the youth of Lushnja Town, (May 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the Forum of the Albanian Newspaper (Gazeta Shqiptare): 'The Challenges of Kosovo after the Independence Declaration', (June 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the Forum of Discussions of the Qemal Stafa Foundation, (July 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the round table with the Ambassadors of NATO member states, (September 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the meeting with the *Network of the Volunteers of the New Union for Change*, (December 2008).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the 17th Anniversary of the Forum of Euro-socialist Young Albanians, (January 2009).
- The speeches of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the tour of meetings throughout Albania with *Volunteers for Change*, (February – April 2009).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the tour of meetings throughout Albania to introduce the *New Governing Program of the Socialist Party*, (April 2009).
- The speech of the Chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania, Edi Rama, delivered at the meeting with journalists for presenting the SPA political program, (April 2009).