Starting All Over. The politics of protest and the struggle for democratic consolidation in Albania

Florian ÇULLHAJ

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES, TIRANA, ALBANIA
flororian.cullhaj@uet.edu.al

Abstract

Experimenting with democracy in Albania has reached a quarter of a century, displaying that democratization is a complex project that begins with the transition but does not always end in consolidation. Therefore, novel approaches and theories that elucidate what occurred after the early transition as well as during it are considered necessary. In western democracies, one of the broadly accepted and well-practised forms of citizen engagement is protest participation. A plethora of authors deem that protest participation is a pivotal activity for the formation of a democratic public as well as an instrument for fostering democratic consolidation. Consequently, as on the one hand, we perceive an upsurge of protest activities in the western countries, hence, on the other, we see a gradual deterioration of protest participation in a Post-Communist country like Albania. Local studies on this topic are sporadic and not as much of participation trends is known of Post-Communist Albanian citizens. While, other sources of participation studies, which stems from western countries tend to construct their analyses based on broad formal questionnaires without analyzing the contrast between protest in democracies and protest in authoritarian regimes. Thus, in this article, we aim to shed light on the correlation between protest participation and state mobilization strategies. More concretely, how the state undertakes to mobilize measures to promote or prevent social movements activities? The answer to the aforesaid question will be in heart of this paper.

Keywords:, protest, Albania, state mobilization, democratization, Social movement

Introduction

Following the 2009 election in Albania, the defeated Socialist Party radicalized its interaction with the government by contesting the legitimacy of the elections as well as its overall policy. These contentions reached its peak on 21 January 2011, when protesters engaged in a riot against the Prime Minister's edifice. In this confrontation, four protesters lost their life and dozens of others were injured. Police forces as well count several injures among their forces. The government called for a coup d'état while the opposition blamed the government for killing innocent unarmed protesters. The events of 21 January confirmed once again the idea that right after little more than two decades of the fall of the communist regime, the experiment with democracy did not promise for any long-term success. This episode well captured the spirit of politics in contemporary Albania that mix elements of political competition with strong authoritarianism.

Theoretical background

Understanding routes of protest in Albania seem to be a key point issue for future democratic consolidation. Therefore, in this paper, our goal is to explore protest patterns in contemporary Albania, in particular at how people express themselves through acts of protest in the public space. We look at how Albanians organize collectively, what this means for their political action and what these actions mean for the character of the political system in which they live. In a nutshell, we will look at Albanian politics and think about how political institutions undertake to mobilize measures to promote or rather prevent social movements activities. The goal here is to explain the dynamics that underlie protest patterns.

Classic and modern authors stressed the idea of the unique value of citizens participation in public activities. Whereas, contemporary theorists ranging from participatory democrats (Pateman, 1970; Barber, 1984, Möckli 1994; Schiller 2002; Steiner 2012; Mansbridge-Parkinson, 2012;) to democratic realists (Schumpeter, 1952; Sartori, 1987) share the same opinion about citizen participation as a central characteristic of democracy. While according to Inglehart and Welzel (2007), protest participation is one of the prerequisites that an effective democracy to take place.

Protest movements in Albania begin to reflect and influence mainstream politics since the system collapsed. To understand Albania's political system and it's social and political world we need to pay attention to the protest. In a normative

perspective, a protest plays a significant part in the cultural, civil and political life of citizens. It encourages the spread of engaged and informed citizens and aims at strengthening democracy by enabling direct participation in public affairs. (see Inglehart and Welzel, 2007; Welzel, 2007). Protest enable individuals and groups to express dissent and grievances, to share views and opinions, to expose flaws in governance and to publicly demand that the authorities rectify problems and are accountable for their actions. (see Kaase and Marsh, 1979; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart and Catterberg, 2002).

Remarkably the interaction between protest and the democratic consolidation in post-communist Albania has not been in the focus of internal researchers. However, if we look at domestic post-communist studies we see that political orientation of citizens in areas such as nationalism, authoritarianism, and political culture have earlier been studied. To name a few see for example Feraj 1999, 2011; Sulstarova, 2003, 2006; Biberaj 2011; Kocani 2004, 2008, 2012; Çullhaj 2017. While the phenomenon of protest as important as it remains unanalyzed from domestic scholars.

The protest is a strategy employed by those who are relatively powerless. Michael Lipsky defined it as "a mode of political action oriented toward objection to one or more policies or conditions, characterized by showmanship or display of an unconventional nature, and undertaken to obtain rewards from political or economic systems while working within the systems". Furthermore he specify his definition by stating that; "if you have substantial political or financial clout, it is more common to work through the system to express your views (writing letters, giving campaign contributions, and talking to legislators); those without substantial resources resort to rallies, demonstrations, boycotts, civil disobedience, or other forms of direct action" (Lipsky, 1968, pp. 1144-1158)

Data from several studies show that those citizens who are willing to engage in protest behaviour accept the basic democratic values to a higher degree. Political tolerance is one of such values, which denotes that respondents allow the full legal rights of citizenship to groups they themselves dislike (see Sullivan et al., 1982). Accordingly, political tolerance is the "willingness to grant rights and freedoms to enemies" (Guérin et al., 2004: 371), (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Therefore, we can infer that protest activities play a crucial role in the process of democratic consolidation in post-communist Albania.

The democratization process in the post-Communist Albania involved massive demonstrations, students strikes, and other forms of collective protest as the regime began to open up to political expression and competition. However, demobilization of movement that was out of state control characterized the period after Communism in Albania. In the old communist fashion, the state institutionalize politics as a hard to die legacy. In other words, highly repressive

closed regimes first liberalized and then democratized, protest levels rose and then fell as the state still falls back in its old fashion activity as an all-controlling inhibitor apparatus.

Methodological Approach

This paper draws on qualitative methods employing an interpretive analysis of the state of citizens' protest participation and its effect on the process of democratic consolidation. In process of this analysis, we evaluate as proper to avoid complex debates about concepts definitions and the uses and misuses of methods, but, focusing on clarification of what has really happened in the country, and which of the existing theories is helpful in explaining the complexities of these developments. The paper starts with a brief presentation of a conceptual framework, followed by in-depth analyses of the country's experience with protest actions as one of the prerequisites toward democratic consolidation, as well as the role of other actor in this endeavour. However, from a standard methodological viewpoint the question what causes what could be addressed as follows: how the state undertakes to mobilize measures to promote or prevent social movements activities? In this whole perspective, the question of what is the independent variable here can also be better formulated: both the state and social movements have to be considered as independent and dependent variables (interchangeable status) to oversee more precisely what causes what.

Defining Albania's regime. From Externally Hybrid to internally Authoritarian

The main premise of this paper is to explain that the nature of the regime in Albania has an intertwined nature. Today most leaders give up to non-democratic norms of legitimation and deliberate liberal democracy without fully adopting its practices. States, in which authoritarian control coexists with legal competition for political office, are classified as hybrid regimes. (Diamond, 2002). According to Democracy index of 2017, Albania is characterized as a hybrid regime based on externally broad parameters of evaluation. Despite this fact, within the last decade, Albania's domestic environment bears a resemblance to an autocratic regime, when the state itself or state-sponsored organizations dominates the field looking to monopolize mobilization, lowering participation and competition in all levels. Consequently, protest levels stay low and rare. Those that do ensue has the propensity to escalate in direct actions or violence.

In this paper, our line of reasoning covers Albania's domestic political environment of which at least some legitimate and public political competition coexists with an organizational and institutional playing field that renders this competition unfair. We argue that within Albania, protests are likely to be manoeuvred by state strategies. The Focus on this variable can elucidate the rapid shift of Albania from its path toward a flawed democracy to an autocratic regime.

In the following, we look at protest as the independent variable, namely how politics and protest have interacted to produce the contemporary, state-of-the-art authoritarian regime in Albania.

Democracy's state-of-the-art in Post-Communist Albania

From the time when Sophocles' Antigone rebelled against her King Creon, by defending the honour of her brother, revolt toward the authority has become one of the people's peaceful political means of stating dissent. (Butler, 2000) Uprisings against authority occurred in Albania throughout history but, with the installation of the Communist regime, Albanians political culture orientation shifted toward isolation. The politics of violence, slanted towards anyone that dare to challenge regimes political power, was the veiled political culture that Albanian citizens internalized along those years. Consequently, if we want to categorize current Albanians' political culture in relation to attitudes towards authority, it classifies as a 'submissive one' which means unquestioned and unlimited subjection to those who are in power.

Consequently, it can be said that communism led to the preservation of the notion of strong state, but it defined its functions in terms of the welfare of the entire community. Liberal democratic values as tolerance and trust were almost non-existent in communist Albania. Distrust of political institutions and fellow citizens and intolerance towards different views prevailed during the communist period. (Rose, 1994, pp. 18-30_ In the terminology of the civic culture approach, there was mostly a subject culture which has characterized Albanian citizens. However, there were some participant elements in communist political culture, such as high-level popular participation in facade elections, as well as forced 'public activity' to mobilize the socialization process, save for when the system collapsed such attitudes vanished without delay.

Therefore, as I stated elsewhere, from an ontological perspective, the legacy of the communist regime destroyed any precondition for the internalization of democratic values among Albanians in the abstract sense, let alone as a political system. (Çullhaj, 2017)

However, due to the long systemic oppression exercised by the communist

regime, mobilization in Albania reached its peak between 1990 and 1992. Citizens, workers, students were marching, striking and hunger-striking in pursuit of freedom and democracy dominated the bulk of protests back in the 90s. In the March 1991 parliamentary elections, the Democratic Party failed to win the majority in parliament. In the early parliamentary elections of March 22, 1992, the Democratic Party won the absolute majority of seats in parliament. It governed until 1997. During this period, the Democratic Party's government conducted a series of reforms to liberalize the country, to build a free-market economy, to ensure rule of law, and to consolidate the democratic electoral system. At its opening to the outside world, Albania signed hundreds of cooperation agreements with European countries and beyond. This was the predominant way of thinking outside of Albania to evaluate Sali Berisha's era as one of the nascent democracy, marked by the common shortcomings that one would expect to see in a poor country. Whereas domestically the situation was quite different. Social tensions, political conflict, suppression of any kind of opposition voices and actions coupled with the financial breakdown in 1997, lead to the disintegration of the state. This kind of political style showed that tension and confusion were more suitable adjectives for the Berisha's era rather than common. Albania under Berisha was not a pluralistic immature-democracy, but a strong autocratic regime in which subordination rather than representation characterized all opposition forces. Such kind of political style followed pretty much all government since the system changed. The Democratic Party again appeared as the winner of the much contested 1996 parliamentary elections. The elections that followed the troubled year of 1997 gave power back to the Socialist Party, which tried to appease the political environment. The Socialist Party was reaffirmed in once more contested elections of 2001 failing in their democratization endeavours. A new change of government took place in 2005, the clear winner was the Democratic Party which was subsequently reaffirmed in the elections of 2009 yet contested. It was not in this way that Albanians thought that democracy was held to transpire. Three decades later that the system changed, it is not democracy that has triumphed in Albania but façade-autocratic-democracy.

After the events of 2011 that I pointed out at the introduction, which followed by the change of power in 2013 brought a new hope for Albanians. The triumph over the long-lasting transition and finally enter the road to the democratic consolidation. Citizens denounce with the vote the autocratic style of Sali Berisha, binding him to resign from party leader and to move into opposition. However, five years after the Socialist Party leader Edi Rama came into office, his political style activities seem to be far more problematic compared to his predecessor. As we earlier showed, Albania continued to organize elections but contestation concerning their outcomes always accompanied them. Opposition parties run and win seats, but ostracism deliberation toward new forces outside the mainstream of

the incumbent political-economical establishment expands. The opinions of the ruling groups dominate news and current affairs TV programs. Nowadays, there are no more critics of the government on television, because televisions owners are already part of the ruling group. Alternative media like online newspapers, blogs, social media, internet think tanks manage to construct e free Political debate, but the television remains the ultimate means of mass broadcasting, therefore the impact of the alternative media pas in a second hand, mostly for young individuals who usually don't care about politics. Thus, Albania has become an atypical case of the hybrid-autocratic regime. Namely - externally displaying a hybrid political regime while internally an autocratic one, - where political competition is officially legal but heavily twisted by the strength of neo-autocratic all-controlling leaders. To put it with Diamond "the existence of formally democratic political institutions...masks the reality of authoritarian domination, provides the base for hybrid regimes" (Diamond, 2002: 24). Or as Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt insightfully put it:

> Democratic backsliding today begins at the ballot box. The electoral road to breakdown is dangerously deceptive. With a classic coup d'état, as in Pinochet's Chile, the death of a democracy is immediate and evident to all. The presidential palace burns. The president is killed, imprisoned or shipped off into exile. The constitution is suspended or scrapped. On the electoral road, none of these things happen. There are no tanks in the streets. Constitutions and other nominally democratic institutions remain in place. People still vote. Elected autocrats maintain a veneer of democracy while eviscerating its substance. Many government efforts to subvert democracy are "legal", in the sense that they are approved by the legislature or accepted by the courts. They may even be portrayed as efforts to improve democracy – making the judiciary more efficient, combating corruption or cleaning up the electoral process. Newspapers still publish but are bought off or bullied into self-censorship. Citizens continue to criticize the government but often find themselves facing tax or other legal troubles. This sows public confusion. People do not immediately realize what is happening. Many continue to believe they are living under a democracy. Because there is no single moment – no coup, declaration of martial law, or suspension of the constitution – in which the regime obviously "crosses the line" into dictatorship, nothing may set off society's alarm bells. Those who denounce government abuse may be dismissed as exaggerating or crying wolf. Democracy's erosion is, for many, almost imperceptible. (pp-5-6)

At present, in Albania, the problem is not with extremist demagogues because they have been neutralized by the bipartisanism of the Albanian electorate, which does not easily replace the traditional political orientation, despite how lucrative and touching the narrative of the demagogues is. But, with a new event that has not happened before, the promotion of candidates with criminal records that have further eroded the fragile democracy in Albania. As the above authors analyze,

from fear, opportunism and misconception for the triumphing at any cost of their political party.

Democracy Index (2015), argue that Hybrid regimes are nations where consequential irregularities exist in elections regularly preventing them from being fair and free. These nations commonly have governments that apply pressure on political opponents, non-independent judiciaries, and have widespread corruption, harassment and pressure placed on the media, anemic rule of law, and more pronounced faults than flawed democracies in the realms of underdeveloped political culture, low levels of participation in politics, and issues in the functioning of governance. For comparison purposes, the table below shows a full democracy like Norway a hybrid democracy like Albania and an authoritarian regime like Russia. Despite there are some net differences between Albania and Russia in several political realms, in the political participation section the values are almost equal which displays that Albania has not done much progress in this political feature, so imperative for a democratic consolidation.

Democracy Index 2017								
Rank	Country	Score	Electoral process and pluralism	Functioning of government	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties	Category
1	Norway	9.87	10.00	9.64	10.00	10.00	9.71	Full democracy
77	Albania	5.98	7.00	4.71	5.56	5.00	7.65	Hybrid regime
135	Russia	3.17	2.17	1.79	5.00	2.50	4.41	Authoritarian

Listing by country is available on The Economist website http://pages.eiu.com

Managing Protest through State mobilization strategies

Graeme B. Robertson in his book The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes argue that "hybrid regimes tend to feature hybrid protest in which the isolated, direct action style of protest that characterizes authoritarian regimes is mixed with the more symbolic protest patterns of democracies" (Robertson, 2011, p. 4) According to Robertson a lot of protest in hybrids is managed; that is, permitted, controlled,

and integrated into the broader political strategies of elites. Furthermore, within these kinds of regimes, variations in protest patterns are likely to be driven by three key variables: organizational ecology, state mobilization strategies, and elite competition. As important as they are the analyzes of each one of the above variables far exceed the possibilities of this paper. Consequently, we will limit our analyzes on the variable of the state mobilization strategies which in our opinion shed light on the reasons of the actual state of low levels of public participation as well as of the scarce levels of protest activities.

According to Robertson in contemporary authoritarian regime "competition in elections and on the streets means that contemporary authoritarians are likely to seek not just to repress opponents, but also to mobilize their own supporters. Consequently, in order to pass the political test election, provide the ability of the incumbents to mobilize large numbers of supporters on the streets will be crucial" (Robertson 2011, pp 32). On the other hand, Robertson states that the danger of allowing demonstrations of opposition strength on the streets is that it might signal to regime insiders the possibility that a challenge to incumbent rulers could succeed. In Albania, there are not examples of e successful overthrow of incumbent elites by a former regime. Except in the tumultuous year of 1997 caused by the pyramidal crises when the Socialist Party and other opposition forces took advantage from people's desperation and a stubborn President who did not want to resign - calling for a mass mobilization which leads to almost a civil war and to a Pyro's victory, inheriting a devastated country. In this case, street protests helped encourage a former Prime Minister and Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano, newly released from a political imprisoning, who revived his career by mounting a challenge to the incumbents. If we bring in in this analysis the events of 2011, in the post-communist collective memory of Albanians, protesting against the government remains a risky activity similar to the communist period. According to Robertson, rulers in hybrids are likely to resort to a variety of ways of repressing opposition demonstrations while in hybrid-autocrat regimes violence is still a final resort for both incumbents and opposition forces which eventually lead to a total passivity of individuals in political involvement.

Furthermore, Robertson argues that leaders in contemporary hybrids regimes have weaker tools for mobilizing support than their counterparts in totalitarian or closed authoritarian regimes. This is not the case in Albania's reality, because even if it is not a closed authoritarian regime the leader still has that huge advantage of keeping a monopoly of political organization. In Robertson words, this monopoly was usually exercised in the context of socialist economies, which gave the state tremendous influence over flows of economic and financial resources. Albania today is not a socialist economy anymore, however, the state still controls more than a few strings in realms of employment, economic and financial resources. We

will briefly analyze this phenomenon by adding another variable to this scenario, namely, the state propaganda as another monopoly of political organization which on the long run turns to be the main one that influences all the other variables.

As stated earlier, with the coming into power of Edi Rama the internal political situation apparently changed for better in comparison to his predecessor Sali Berisha. Rama was more liberal in his political style then Berisha in relation to the contention concept, a political behaviour that promised for fostering democracy a step further. But this is not the case. Despite his liberal behaviour, Rama invested his political energy and state apparatus in constructing an all-controlling media to convey only his way of doing politics, silencing all opposite voices. Today, media in Albania is only able to act as a biased watchdog to those in power due to the control exercised through advertising industry and other interests for their owners. This control is exercised even upon the public television, which is legally required to provide coverage of public interest since it is funded by public taxes. But this television only bears the name 'public' because it is under the full control of any government in power, thus betraying its original mission. When the opposition party wins elections, the general director and employees are replaced with people loyal to the winning party, with the intention to pursue the political line of the winner. On the other hand, many other private Media count on financial resources in order to survive in the media market. Before Rama's era, the Media's environment was quite different. Those Media that were held reliable were associated either with Democratic Party or Socialist Party and when each one of them was in power Media were under their political influence. This was not an ideal situation, but at least we had an alternative view of the political situation, as well as critics towards government was possible. While, in Rama's era there are no more such divisions because media's reporting is influenced by the economic and political interests of their owners, interests, that are in the hands of the government. Consequently, the result is a hitched media environment that represents the interest of a single part, the government. Today there is no single media that play an active role in the public political debate. Independent news coverage or an independent political analysis is uncommon. The situation is so absurd as the Prime Minister has established his personal online television on Facebook, ERTV Edi Rama television and also two Facebook virtual newspapers "Good morning" and AMARCORD. The main critic on government come from online portals. One of them in a recent article argues that Rama has begun these forms of communication within what he calls 'co-governance with citizens', but in fact is a propaganda inventive, to make more noise than work. Rama, along with one or two ministers, is developing communication through a giant screen, which has cost over 100,000 euros and is used fairly throughout to make more shows then work. So, we are in the conditions when we have a cabinet closed in a box, like within ERTV, where the government successes trumpet. (lapsi.al/2018/04/16).

Today in Albania the possibility to organize exist but if you do not have any kind of support, whether political or economic the failure is guaranteed. According to Roberson in hybrid regimes the organization outside of the state is usually allowed, but then again, is this possibility exercisable in a capillary controlled political environment when any activity that dares to challenge Rama's political power is filtered through a biased media and subsequently captured and neutralized by state apparatus through means of economic or political 'seduction'. Those individuals or organization that refuse and resist such seductions are left in a mediatic obscurity and thus condemned to be politically dead.

Moreover, Robertson argues that contemporary hybrid regimes now run in market-oriented economies, which limits the extent to which the state can link participation in approved organizations with economic advantage, making it harder to mobilize supporters. In Albanian case this phenomenon is somehow equal to an autocratic regime when the state still has that kind of power to link participation with economic advantages, mobilizing a broader mass of supporters. Synthetically, in contrast to Robertson, the presence of an organizational monopoly and more state control over the economy have not reduced the extent to which economic and social advancement is tied to participation in state-approved organizations.

Today in Albania, anti-government protesters have been in some ways discouraged and exhausted, imprimis by their leader who has a different political agenda and secondly by the disregard that the government displayed towards their demands. In Albanian political environment, the general belief is that when the opposition forces that are somehow independent, well organized and enjoy enough funds does not succeed to address their demands, imagine how hard this endeavour turn to be for a modest organization. Rama created a political system in which competition is allowed but defeat is highly improbable and is beset with tensions. Today Albania bear a resemblance to a closed autocracy when contention is heavily repressed and public protests are sporadic and when they do take place shifts in violence. Actions are politically isolated, spontaneous and without the coordination of any organized social movement (Tilly 2004). In the following, I will briefly analyze social movements in Albania and their role in the democratization process.

Social Movements as a Democratization feature

According to Cohen and Arato (1992) civil society has two main democratic functions. First, associations and movements from within civil society cooperate, develop identities, offer the opportunity for participation and create networks of solidarity. Second, civil society organizations and associations try to influence or

reform the state. At times they also take on issues of corporate power and have pressed states to redress the power imbalance generated by capitalism. They also, increasingly, organize globally to promote social justice transnationally. Civil society thus has a dual function, offering a vision of a more participatory system and engaging in the public sphere to promote change. For Iris Marion Young (1999: 152), 'the critical and oppositional functions of the public spheres of civil society perform irreplaceable functions for democracy'.

> While, Charles Tilly in his book Social Movement 1768-2004 state the idea that social movement has contributed to the evolution of democracy, but on the other hand is a democracy that creates the preconditions that a social movement could arise. More concretely, he has identified a broad correspondence between democratization and social movements. Social movements originated in the partial democratization that set British subjects and North-American colonists against their rulers during the eighteenth century. Across the nineteenth century, social movements generally flourished and spread where further democratization was occurring and receded when authoritarian regimes curtailed democracy. The pattern continued during the first and twenty-first century: the maps of full-fledged institutions and social movements overlap greatly.

Whereas, in communist states, Tilly argues that the destruction of centralized superstructure would rapidly open the way to social movements, which would then help construction of a democratic civil society. However, such explosion of social movements does not happen in post-communist Albania. Why so? In Tilly's words "where democracy fell short, social movements remained sparse" (Tilly 2004, p.125). Consequently, the problem of such failure is with the quality of democracy that has been implemented in Albania rather than with social movement patterns.

> To paraphrase Della Porta
> If democratization promotes democracy via the broadening of citizens' rights and the public accountability of ruling elites, most, but not all, social movements support democracy. In fact, in pushing for suffrage enlargement or the recognition of associational rights, social movements contribute to democratization – Gains in the democratization of state processes are perhaps the most important that social movements can influence and have the greatest systemic impacts (Della Porta 245).

Social movements are fundamentally political and are based on changes in the nature of the state itself and the state has to become involved in institutionalizing these claims. In post-communist Albania, such condition has not been a priority for the leaders as long as in old communist reminiscence their political power is a target and under challenge by the social movements. The activity of the later has been seen as power threatening thus leaders keep to destroying opportunities for action, imposing restrictions on movement activities thus leaving an empty

political environment. Consequently, social changes without the support of the state will not persist. In communist Albania, the party claimed to represent the general interests of the people. While in today's liberal democracy, political parties and interest associations claim to represent social groups and the people. The question that rises her is whether the state has created today the conditions for representation resembling classic conceptions of participatory democracy, a device for representing the underrepresented through social movement activity. We want to stress that a condition that is considered to limit social movement potential is followed by political leaders by weakening movements organizational structures. New movement organizations have not emerged during the democratization process and those few that arose have not survived state domination and the decline in mobilization was comprehensible. Social movements activities and their contribution to more participatory approaches have been diminished by autocrat leaders.

To conclude, the weak civil society and the strong state authority remained the definitive characteristics of Albanian political culture in the communist period. The strong party-state made the emergence of a viable civil society impossible. In addition, communism was to a great extent responsible for the creation of another important aspect of Albania's politics: autocratism.

Conclusion

Some observers have emphasized the authoritarian nature of Albanian leaders to illustrate elements of continuity in Albanian political culture. Along these years, political leaders seem to make a virtue out of rejecting Politics and Ideology towards an extreme political pragmatism, turning into anti-politics and their ascent to power has been based on virtual platforms lacking in substantive content. Perhaps, this is the main fact that confirms people's lackadaisical attitude and low level of participation toward Politics, as compared to the 1990s when they were seemingly acclaiming for real democracy. In this sense, is not the strong hand of Albanian leadership but is their particular emptiness as politicians that drive people to disengage from the Political process.

In Albania, the tradition of the strong leader also constrained the democratic impulse when in 1996 Berisha intensified the exercising of personalist rule of political power depending upon a 'presidential pyramid' in which the president is supported exclusively by personal appointees and is able to govern by presidential decree, bypassing parliament in the process. Along these years the introduction of the new constitution helped to prevent the concentration of power in a few hands and formally speaking it is written excellently but in practice, it has had

no effect on the reduction of the autocratic attitude of political leaders. Once in power, controlling everything remains their modus operandi; every independent institution must be under their control to consolidate power and to avoid criticism as well as accountability. In a situation when civil society is not existent or better said captured by political influence, democratization process is constantly under serious threat from the inability of the elite for self-restriction and critical reflection over their holistic control tendencies. (Çullhaj, 2017, pp. 103-104)

References

Barber, B. R. (1984). Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for A New Age. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Barnes, S., H.& Kaase, M. Et Al. (1979). Political Action: An Eight Nation Study. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Biberaj, E, (1998). Albania In Transition: The Rocky Road to Democracy, Westview Press.

Butler, J. (2000). Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death, Columbia University Press

Crossley, N. (2002). Making Sense of Social Movements. Buckingham-Philadelphia: Open University Press

Çullhaj, F. (2017). Democratization from Within, Political Culture and The Consolidation of Democracy in Post-Communist Albania, Editore: Nuova Cultura, Collana: Crossroads Nr. 81, Roma, Http://Nuovacultura.It/Catalogo/Democratization-From-Within/

Della Porta, D. & Diani, M. (2000). Social Movements: An introduction. Acta Sociologica Journal Vol. 43, No. 3.

"Democracy Index 2015: Democracy in An Age of Anxiety". The Economist Intelligence Unit. Retrieved 17 February 2018.

"Democracy Index 2017 – Economist Intelligence Unit". Eiu.Com. Retrieved 17 February 2018.

Feraj, H, (2006). Skicë e Mendimit Politik Shqiptar, Sh.B Pegi, Botimi i Katërt

Gill, G (2000). The Dynamics of Democratization. Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Guerin D., Petry, F., & Crête, J. (2004). Tolerance, Protest and Democratic Transition: Survey Evidence From 13 Post-Communist Countries. European Journal of Political Research, 43:

Inglehart, R., & Catterberg, G. (2002). Trends in Political Action: The Developmental Trend and The Post-Honeymoon Decline. International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 43:

Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2007). Modernization, Cultural Change, And Democracy: The Human Development Sequence. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kocani A (2004). Survey on Values, Fielded in Tirana With 897 Respondents; Output Created On 21-May-2005 20:46:36.

Kocani, A (1999). 'Konflikti Në Shqipëri Dhe Lufta E Perëndive', Cituar nga Shqipëria Në Tranzicion Dhe Vlerat, Red. A. Kocani, Shb. Pegi,

Kocani, A (2012). Survey on Values 2012, Fielded in Tirana on 12 May With 106 Respondents; Output Created 23-Jan-2015 11:45:59.

Kocani, A, (2008). Survey on Values, Fielded in Tirana with 508 Respondents; Output Created 05-Aug-2008 19:40:11.

Larry J D (2002). Thinking About Hybrid Regimes. Journal of Democracy, Volume, Pp. 21-35

(Article) Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press Doi: 10.1353/Jod.2002.0025

Levitsky, S & Ziblatt, D (2018). How Democracies Die: What History Reveals About Our Future Publisher: Penguin Books Ltd

Lewis, P, G, (1997). 'Theories of Democratization and Patterns of Regime Change in Eastern Europe', Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics, 13, 1.

Lipsky, M. (1968). Protest as a Political Resource. American Political Science Review, 62(4), 1144-1158. doi:10.2307/1953909

McAdam, D. & Klandermans, B (2012). The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements. Oxford England: Blackwell Publishing.

Merkel W, (2008). Plausible Theory, Unexpected Results: The Rapid Democratic Consolidation In Central And Eastern Europe, Published by IPG

Pateman, C. (1970). Participation and Democratic Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robertson G. E, (2011). The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia, Cambridge University Press

Rose, R. (1994). 'Post communism and the problem of trust', Journal of Democracy 5: 18–30

Schopflin, G (1993). 'Culture and Identity in Post-Communist Europe', in Developments in East European Politics, quoted in, Stephen White, Judy Batt, & Paul G. Lewis, eds., Macmillan, London

Sulstarova, E, (2009). In The Mirror Of Occident: The Idea Of Europe In The Interwar Albanian Intellectual Discourses, Source Europolis, Journal Of Political Science And Theory (Europolis, Journal Of Political Science And Theory), Issue: 6. On Www.Ceeol.Com.

Tilly, C. (2004). Social Movements, 1768-2004. Michigan: Paradigm Publishers.

Welzel, C. (2007). Are Levels of Democracy Affected by Mass Attitudes? Testing Attainment and Sustainment Effects on Democracy. International Political Science Review, 28 (4).

Young, I. M, (1999). 'The critical and oppositional functions of the public spheres of civil society perform irreplaceable functions for democracy', In Grugel, J (2002). Democratization, A critical Introduction, Published by Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

http://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ 438/images/Democracy_Index_2017.pdf?mkt_