

## Long transition in Albania as a consequence of a communist heritage system

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### Abstract

This study has in its focus bringing up a new approach about the consequences of the communist period in Albanian society in some fields like : economic, politics, education, social-cultural etc. Eventhough have passed almost 30 years from the collapse of the comunist system, the effects of this system are really sensitive in the postcomunist society, which is still leaded from the old political cast, there is a significant lack of independence between powers, a high degree of corruption in all levels and also an impunity disapproving of this terrifying frightening phenomenon.

Almost throughout the party pluralism period , administration and state institutions have suffered pattern follow- up the party – state model. Movements in public administration have weakened state institution role and have produced a weak state, depending from the ruling parties. The concept of running the state and country from the parties in power its really distorted which has done state and its institutions to depend on politics and not the other way round. This wrong menagement and direction approach of the country from political forces continues to reflect comunist legacy of state capture from the ruling partyheritage.As result of the ex former regime, Our Country inherited a serious social wound, the victims of class warfare.Due to the class warfare our people had been divided as never before. The class warfare had divided people as never before in its history.Political polarization reflected the polarization which egzisted in the Albanian society.

Our duty as researcher and historians is to bring up new prospects of past events with an extraordinary efect in our days.What is learned from the past, right or wrong is really difficult to underestimate/to give up/unaccustomed in order to follow the right way.So its not an accident why Albania suffers the communist regime’s consequences more than any other country in region.

**Keywords:** transition, post-comunist society,Class warfare, the model party- state, the legacy of the communist system, ideology.

### Introduction

The aftercommunist transformation, which is widely called transition, theoretically and practically is thought to be like an effort with two essential/basic components, which are really connected with each other: substitution of totalitarian/authoritarian regimes with democratic regimes also the substitution of the centralized socialist economy with a market economy. But, if the purposes of the transition were in common for the most part of the ex communist countries, the success and the time

of realization of these goals firstly was dominated from the economic and political heritage not only under the communism, but also from the state tradition, the level of economic developmen , idustrialism level/scale and also from the modernism scale of society. Albania entered in transition in really hard/difficult inside and outside conditions Shqipëria hyri në tranzicion në kushte shumë të vështira të brendshme dhe të jashtme. The Communist handed” to the democratic forces the poorest country in Europe as a result Albania has suffered under one of the most absurded communist system in the world. Three decades from the fallen of the communist regime and Albania still seem to be in chaos and still hasn’t realized to produce a functional democratic system. Eventhough all the respective institutions of the liberal democracy, also the formal existed procedures, the functional scale is too far from the substancial, consolidate democracy. If still after thirty years in Albania can’t be talked insured about the end of the transition, the first and basic reason will be found at the democracy function in our country. If we agree with the definition that firstly, the transition is completed when a sufficient agreement is reached about the political procedures to form an elected government, when a government comes to power as a direct result of the popular vote and when the transfer of power from one party to another through uncontested elections has taken place several times<sup>1</sup>.

Albania of 2021 has not been able yet to emerge from the transition of the contested elections, despite the progress in fulfilling most of international standards for free and fair elections<sup>2</sup>. Contested electoral proceesses, keeping a permanent political conflict alive, as well as lack of conensus and compromise, unfortunately continue to remain the basic features of political Albanian in post communism.

## 1. Efforts for Albanian transformations during the transition

In years ‘90 Albanians came out of the communism and entered the path of changes, facing with all dramatic consequences of their past. Autarchic Albanian communism had left behind a real economic catastrophe. The Albania of the years 1990 was missing a lot of those preconditions that a country must complete and its people should be able to adapt the western model of modernity. First of all was missing that minimum modern economic development that was needed to set up a liberal democratic system based on a free market economy. Albania of the beggining of the years ‘90 was not only the most backwards country in Europe, but also a country lacking a consolidated civic middle class, which as it is known constitutes the column on which is supported the social stability of a country. A true and inherent bourgeois and civic tradition was missing. Independent institutions were lacking, which could provide the necessary level of social stability for a somewhat smooth transition from one political system to another one. Also was missing an elite capable of running such a poor and backward country on the path of modernization towards a liberal democracy. Political and intellectual Elite since the year 1991 took over the running of the country, it came out almost entirely from the elite of the communist era, which means in general , the way of behaviour and thinking remained largely conditional from the past, reflecting directly their previous experience. What was important , was missing every kind of democratic experience. The most important thing was

missing everykind of democratic experience<sup>3</sup>.

Comparative easy avoidance of “old guard” from social life of our country is explained with the fact that in parallel with the renewal of the party was fought and against the privileges of the state party elite. In Albania, as well as any other country of “victorious socialism” a narrow caste of nomenclature was created, living by the communist principle: “Everyone according to possibilities, each according to needs”<sup>4</sup>. At the beginning of the year 1990 these social classes had to face the collapse of the “bloc” and distribution of families in ordinary apartments, leaving the nomenclature paradise reluctantly.<sup>5</sup>

The ideal example for political and social economic development of Albania was the achievement of the European average level of development. But the ways of achieving this goal were unclear. In the frequent calls published in the press for the civilized ways of involving the European integration process the subtext was clear: did the average level Albanian have the proper cultural and psychological preparation for this, that for 50 years he was forced to live in conditions of intellectual and economic degradation<sup>6</sup>? Apart from this fact we should not forget that in 1990 Albania was mostly a rural country, with the highest percentage (in fact quite higher) of the rural population in Europe (officially, the population living in the village in 1990, was counted 70%). A fact, that distinguished it obviously from all the other ex/former communist European countries. Indeed this fact explains also the reason why in Albania the system change wasn't merely a transformation of a political and economical nature from dictatorship to capitalism and democracy, from a close society to an open society, from a centralized economy to a market economy, as happened in most other former communist countries. It was precisely this composition of the population the reason why, as the pressure of dictatorship was removed, were messy immediately set in motion a series of other transformative processes of a socio-cultural, psychological and of course, demographic nature, who brought problems, strain, dilemmas quandary/hesitation of a nature and even a specific pathology, creating that general state of social anarchy which is one of the most significant and dramatic features of the Albanian post-communist transition.

The society went quickly into degradation. Mass unemployment would make the able bodied population either flee the country or become a reserve for rapidly strengthening mafia structures. The Country was plunged into chaos and more and more often people remembered with nostalgia: “In Enver's time there was order and tranquility”.<sup>7</sup> In fact this expression we find widely used even today in our society, as to show that Albanian society has not really found peace even after thirty years since the fall of communism.

Referring to the data of a study conducted by the OSCE in 2015 as part of the project “The platform of national dialogue on human rights violations during the previous communist regime in Albania”, according to the survey on public “knowledge and

<sup>3</sup> Piro, Misha. “*Shqiptarët dhe modeli social evropian, mangesitë, pengesat, sfidat, vizionet*”, Tiranë, 2015, 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> Nina Smirnova, “*Historia e Shqipërisë përgjatë shek. XX*”; Tiranë, Ideart, 2004, 432.

<sup>5</sup> N. Smirnova, vep.e cituar, 433.

<sup>6</sup> N. Smirnova, vep.e cituar, 434.

<sup>7</sup> N. Smirnova, vep.e cituar, 438.

perceptions about the communist past in Albania and their expectations for the future "Enver Hoxha's role in Albanian history is seen as positive by almost the half of the citizens<sup>8</sup>. But this perception exists even for other issues such as education, health, order, social-cultural life etc. The above study referred to three age groups 16-35 years old, who were born during the period of democracy or lived during the communist period in Albania when they were young. The second age group is 36-55 years old, who have longer experience with the communist period in Albania, mainly at a young age. The third age group is over 55 years old, who have full experience with the communist period in Albania. The purpose of the questionnaire consisted of the legacy of the communist past in Albania, the knowledge that each age group has and the impact that this past has today, especially on young people, where the first age group 16-35 years did not receive the necessary knowledge about the communist past, excluding cases of personal information on specific issues<sup>9</sup>.

Citizens do not see the legacy of the communist past as a major issue facing the country today, compared to other major issues such as the economy, corruption, misgovernance, impunity and health<sup>10</sup>. Some interesting findings of this report are in the areas such as: A very acute problem in fact remains the role that schools should have in teaching history to young people.

And according to this survey, the school plays a very limited role, compared to the impact of visual media (TV), where young people have the opportunity to learn about the communist past<sup>11</sup>. This fact is a serious concern for which the governing institutions should take immediate measures to create spaces for strengthening the role of the school in educating young people about the communist past. The perception that during the communist period education was better, more functional makes the situation even more worrying, where it seems that changes in pre-university education curricula are not based on sound studies in parallel with democratic changes and socio-economic needs of Albanian society.

G. Santayana's statement "People who forget their past are forced to repeat it", is not a novelty for the case of Albania and especially for the mutilated /cutting off knowledge of young people about the communist past, which like no other former communist country was more harsher, more striking, more oppressive. And that is why today, after so many years, it is just as difficult to eradicate such a system that still has deep roots.

## **2. The change of political Elite in transition /Changing political elite in transition**

One of the most problematic elements that is evidenced not only by the internationals, but also by the Albanian society is the political class. The study of the political class comes as a necessity not only of the negative perceptions that society has of this class, but it is also a consequence of the strong criticism that the internationals have

<sup>8</sup> Njohuritë dhe perceptimet e publikut për të shkuarën komuniste në Shqipëri dhe pritshmëritë e tyre për të ardhmen, OSCE..., 2015, 75.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 74.

addressed to it. The object of the study of the elite in transition is to examine the structure of power, the state-building activity and the impacts on the vital sectors of society. How much has it been renewed over the years? How much and how has the ruling political class influenced the realization of the transitional processes? If there have been delays in this process, what has been the weight of the ruling elites in them? If power is in the hands of a minority, has this been a random or predictable outcome? In the opinion of/According to the European Commission of 2010, among other things, is emphasized the fact that "Political dialogue is confrontational and destructive also due to the political stalemate since the June 2009 elections".<sup>12</sup>

Referring to the above assessment of the European Commission in 2010, but also the study of the survey by the OSCE in 2015 for the political class in the country, the data are worrying in terms of the permanent power of the ruling political class in overcoming the protracted transition phase in Albania. Regarding the questions whether the leaders of the communist system are still in power and that they hold hostage the implementation of radical reforms to overcome the transition in Albania; about 80% of respondents state that it is the same political class of the past that runs today the most important institutions and that these political figures, who are accused of crimes against communism already confirmed by the State Authority responsible for opening secret files of the former Security in Albania, currently hold high state positions. Apart from this fact they have a great influence to prevent the opening of the file and the publication of information about them<sup>13</sup>. What is striking is the fact that the majority of citizens, 80% of them think that such politicians, who also served in the communist system, should resign from the political positions they hold or otherwise be fired and do not have the right to exercise public functions for life. They even support the drafting and implementation of a lustration law in the future to dismiss people currently in office who have held leading roles in the institutions of the communist regime.<sup>14</sup> It should be kept in mind that, despite the changes after the overthrow of the communist regime and the significant change of the political elite, in reality the current elites have very much in common with their communist predecessors.<sup>15</sup>

Today, Albania no longer has the problem of lack of democratic institutions, or of a modern legal framework, or democratic procedures, the problem now lies in the misuse of laws and institutions for personal or political gain, which directly affects the entire political, economic and social environment of the country, with serious consequences for the functionality of the system itself.

This is exactly the reason why the citizen continues to be distrustful and dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Albania. The challenge becomes even more difficult, because, unfortunately, it must be said that the culture of non-implementation of the law has already taken root in the Albanian society and mentality.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union, European Commission Brussels, 9.11. 2010, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Public knowledge and perceptions Njohuritë dhe perceptimet e publikut...vep e cituar, 35.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>15</sup> Elez Biberaj, "Shqipëria në tranzicion, rruga e vështirë drejtë demokracisë 1990-2010", AIIS, Tiranë, 2011, 478.

<sup>16</sup> Piro Misha, 35.

## Conclusions

The process of Albania's transition from a communist dictatorship to a democratic system and a market economy has been fraught with many obstacles, some of which were predictable and some of which were completely unpredictable. These obstacles, both of an economic and social nature, were related to both the historical heritage and the implementation of the wildest version of the communist system in Albania.

Albania, on the limits of transition, faced unimaginable economic difficulties, which were widely linked to its communist legacy. The strict implementation of the Stalinist model of economic development had very bitter consequences for the country's economy. Extreme centralization, the disappearance of private property, and self-reliance policies wiped out small entrepreneurs and the managerial class and left the entire economy in stagnation.

Albanians had vague ideas about democracy. Their historical heritage greatly hindered the creation of the right climate that would allow the successful construction and without much difficulty of democratic institutions. Their historical isolation from developments in the West made it even more difficult to absorb the values and rules of democracy.

Indeed, the lack of tolerance and willingness to cooperate as well as the peaceful resolution of problems were not very present in Albania. The presence of the authoritarian past continued to be quite strong. The fact that the communist regime in Albania had been the most brutal in Europe, in the country, after the '50s, there were no dissidents and a large part of the political elite of the transition period was part of the intelligence of the communist period. The anti-communist political elite of this period, driven also by the pressure of the political segments coming from the strata of the persecuted, a policy rightly filled with much anger, aimed at removing the country from the Stalinist past, often acted in a non-violent way democratic.

The Albanian communist regime, with its extremely violent nature, had eradicated the culture of the rule of law and had created an insurmountable gap between the government and the people. In this way, from the beginning there was a deficit in the people's trust in public institutions. Combined with the Albanian patriarchal tradition and the harshness of the transition period, this lack of trust created opportunities for the revival of authoritarian actions, jeopardizing the progress of reforms and the strengthening of democratic institutions. He had also lost the sense of respect for the law, thus paving the way for the spread and spread of crime on a large scale.

Also, a heavy burden of the communist legacy was the moral crisis that had involved Albanians. There was a marked decline in national pride and dignity and a decline in civic morale. The conviction that the solutions to the problems that had involved the country had to come from abroad made the Albanians have the task of building a new identity from scratch, which made the transition process even more difficult.

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