

The Difficult Relationship between the Kosovo Political Parties and Conservatism

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Abstract

The presentation of various party / program stances in the Kosovo political scene, tells us about the parties' level of orientation in favour or against conservatism. Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze and discuss the empirical validity, respectively the relations of Kosovo political parties with the pragmatic conservatism. In what areas, Kosovo parties have similarities or differences with pragmatic conservatism, such as Religion, patriotism and property.

In order to find an answer for this research article, different qualitative methods will be used, such as comparative, content and document analysis, as well as interviews. All this with the sole of collecting and analyzing the data found.

The findings of this article are very significant because, based on substantive analysis and party documents, we can conclude that the attitudes or approaches of Kosovo political parties regarding pragmatic conservatism are only "Partially pragmatic conservative" or "Beyond - Pragmatic Conservator". This means that the parties take the ideology of conservatism into account only partially or only within the program points that suits them.

In this regard, the importance of this research has to do with the facts and with a realistic situation to understand the complexity, the issue and the importance of pragmatic

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conservatism as well as the idea of social transformation by curbing destructive tendencies. In this context, the stances of Kosovo political parties go beyond party ideology, because they include social transformations, religion, tradition and nation / patriotism. So in this way, through such attitudes, political parties convey / transmit into the society of Kosovo a social awareness and inter-religious tolerance.

Key words: Kosovo; political parties; pragmatic conservatism; tradition; program policy;

1. Introduction

When in everyday life we refer to conservatism, we automatically prejudice that we are talking about something old, traditional, and sturdy. Based on this perception, nothing new is accepted. But when we refer to Edmund Burke's conservatism, then the impression regarding this ideological phenomenon changes. Because, in fact, the conservatism of Edmund Burke goes beyond old prejudices, in essence conservatism protects property, religious traditions associated with individual freedom, family, etc. But, in different occasions it also promotes the uprisings that fight tyranny. This political ideology is ready to support evolutionary processes in a silent way. However, let's get back to the party/ practical reality, since this article will give us an insight into the relations and attitudes of Kosovo parties towards conservatism. This implies that the research objective of the article has to do with the analysis and comparison of program positions and points of relevant political parties in Kosovo, which in one way or another have influenced the policy making, especially in the years after the Kosovo independence declaration.

In this case of research it is necessary to elaborate the party stance of the two main Kosovo parties such as the Democratic League of Kosovo (DLK) and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK), regarding points such as patriotism / nation, religion and property. Thus, the purpose of this research will focus mainly on: which are the program stances or attitudes taken by Kosovo political parties in regards to pragmatic conservatism and to what extent have they been affected by the conservatism ideology? In this context, it will become clear: if those political parties in Kosovo are determined for conservative democratic values? This aspect will determine their position in Kosovo.

1.1. Research methodology

Daily comparisons almost constitute or make up a significant part in peoples' everyday life, because people of different levels make different comparisons (Landman, 2005), *starting* from things like for example: which cars are better, German or French, Japanese or American; comparison of different countries based on the political, economic, social aspects, etc.

There are also comparisons, for example, in terms of identity, ethnicity, political parties, ideologies, (Mathews & Liz, 2010), to different languages, religion, cultural aspects, music, art, sport etc. While the academic level compares universities and research, issues such as which university is the most qualitative in the world, which university invests more and does more research etc (Sokoli, 2009).

In this context, Kosovo parties' approaches to property, religion, nation, etc. will be analyzed and compared, with the aim to understand better which are the differences and similarities, and what these programs represent in regards to conservatism. Qualitative content analysis has been selected as one of the methods for this research, because the primary aim of this method is the interpretation of a given research text. Thus, readings of certain given texts, re-articulating, understanding those texts in the perspective of assumed contexts, and allowing research questions and answers to emerge along with given texts (Mayring, 2002). Through content analysis will be determined how are various political, economic and social problems addressed in Kosovo party programs, and which positions have been taken by political parties in relation to conservative pragmatism. The interview will have a crucial role in achieving a substantial outcome and also have a direct impact on the results of this research. For this reason, it will be used as a good source of data in order to get to a more accurate result.

2. Defining the Conservatism

Conservatism became part of the political and philosophical vocabulary by the late 18th century, referring to the publicist and politician Edmund Burke. It all happened as a fierce backlash against the French Revolution, which seriously damaged the ecclesiastical tradition, the private property, and the individual (Nisbet, 2002.) In this regard, it did not have to do with the revolution as an idea, because Edmund Burke even earlier had a completely different approach to the American colonists and their right, the

Indians and the Irish, against "arbitrary powers". But in the case of the French Revolution, E. Burke argued that the Jacobins abolished all the traditions that France had built for years, and consequently, according to him, France under the rule of Jacobins was almost "a conquered country" (Nisbet, 2002: 34-35). It means that the most powerful criticism lies in the fact that this "so-called revolution", according to conservative tradition, did not bring any positive things.

On the contrary, according to Burke, it destroyed the French property and tradition, and the most palpable case was the attitude of the new government towards the 'nationalization of the Church' (Nisbet, 2002: 40), by creating somehow a greater loyalty for the revolution than for the spiritual faith. (Nisbet, 2002) This resulted in restricting the historical rights of groups such as family, church, property, etc. (Nisbet, 2002) In this regard, viewed from the typical conservative prism, even the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in some way "replaced Jacobinism" (Nisbet, 2002: 42). So, because of the violence that has been exerted on the family of the tsar, the members of that system, the society, the property and the religion in general, the Bolshevik revolution has been criticized immensely. From this it turns out that conservatives do not prefer "revolutions" that bring a deep blow to the society, spiritual space, property etc. In this context, on the other hand, conservatives are very willing to support evolutionary processes such as American and Irish colorizations, because according to them, these processes make societies fight tyranny, protect property, morals, church, and so on. Also, from the ideological point of view, the conservatives see 'socialism' as the opposite of 'conservatism', while 'liberalism' is viewed as something in between (Nisbet, 2002). Precisely for this point of view, when referring to the theoretical approach to pragmatic conservatism, political scientist Lacey Robert calls it Edmund Burke's inheritance (Lacey, 2016.)

Pragmatic Conservatism means that social transformation is possible, and that societies should focus on curbing destructive tendencies. In order to achieve this, the tradition and the collective experience of the society should be promoted (Lacey, 2016.) The supporters of pragmatic conservatism are also inclined, in case the results are unsatisfactory, to even change tradition. Therefore, when necessary, pragmatic conservatives are also crusaders of change (Lacey, 2016). From this point of view we can say that Pragmatic Conservatives insist on minimizing the division of tradition and social stability. Because sometimes, even good intentions can produce

bad results, and precisely for this reason they are favourers of evolution rather than revolution (Lacey, 2016). One of the reasons why the Pragmatic Conservatives override ideologies is because it is more important for them to preserve tradition, peace and stability, general well-being than any desire to defend any particular ideology that harms stability or general well-being (Lacey, 2016). For example, as was the case of NATO intervention in the Kosovo war, when the German Green Party, at that time (1999) led by Joscha Fischer, for the first time accepted to be part of the coalition where Germany participates in a war outside Germany, for humanitarian reasons and the stability of the Balkan region. Or if we take the example of the Social Democrats in Poland at the beginning of the 1990s, they were known as the most powerful promoters and supporters of privatization and acceleration of economic liberalization, something that contradicted the program principles of the Polish social democrats, but the Polish voters did not feel betrayed at all (Keating, 2010).

Also, if we look at the German Christian Democratic Union (CDU-Christliche Demokratische Union), especially since the arrival of Angela Merkel (the first female party president and later in 2005 as the Bundes Chancellor) since 2000 and onwards, there is a pragmatism and a completely different approach from its predecessors. It happened because CDU has changed its intentions, although the program has remained unchanged. But in the context of social reality Germany has also changed, for example: in the German family there is room for unmarried couples, single mothers, homosexual couples, and so on (Hockenos, 2010). Even in this case, neither the conservatives nor the majority of German society opposed the German Chancellor Angela Merkel for changing policies in German society, but rather they voted her four times in succession for Chancellor of Germany 2005, 2009, 2013 and 2018 (Bundesregierung, 2018).

This means that Conservatism is not just a lack of change, but in some systematic way represents the theoretical resistance for change (Huntington, 1957). As Benjamin Disraeli would say that a politician is basically a practical character. (Nisbet, 2002) The goal of pragmatic conservatism is that social transformations occur without any significant change or slight change, and political decisions are in line with the general social welfare, regardless of political ideologies.

3. Kosovo political parties and the difficulty being a pragmatic conservator

The establishment of conservative parties has had only one purpose, to defend the so-called traditional privileges that relate mainly to the interests of industry, religious values, and so on (Erik-Karl, Mellebye, & Tranoy, 2006). Conservatives are usually called pragmatic and patriotic because of what was already said, for example, that they are the guardians of traditional values, institutions such as the Church and the family (Lucardie, 2013). For example, in the United Kingdom, they have received support from agricultural interests, as well as from the church dominance (Bale, 2005). However, conservative ideas are that the state should be limited to some extent (Criddle, 2003). Also, especially in Britain, conservatives have paid particular attention to reducing state subsidies to the industry, at the same time reducing the role of trade unions and selling state assets (Bale, 2005).

While referring to the Kosovo parties created during the 1990s, regardless of ideological beliefs whether they are leftist or rightist, conservative ideas exist in each party, when referring to key points such as patriotism / nation, religion, and property or privatization (See Table 1.).

In most cases, Kosovo parties often have significant misconceptions regarding the definition or their stance, for which ideas they stand. But all this has to do with the conditions created in Western Balkans since the beginning of the Cold War up until the independence of Kosovo. The political situation in Kosovo has been fragile, especially after 1989 with the abolition of the autonomy, until the beginning of the war between the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian forces. It was the intervention of NATO forces against Serbia in 1999 that brought the liberation of Kosovo from Serbian forces, and later in 2008 the declaration of Kosovo independence. Although most of Kosovo's population is 90% ethnic Albanian, Kosovo under the Constitution is a multi-ethnic state^[1].

Today, the Albanian nation lives in a large part of the Western Balkans, precisely in 5 states like Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Also, the Albanian nation is characterized by two monotheistic religions: the Muslim and the Christian, the first in the Sunni and the Bektashi, and the second in the Catholic and the Orthodox (Constante, 1997). For this reason, there is also a peaceful coexistence, because Albanians belong to European civilization (Berisha, 1997). Historically Albanians did not have inter-religious conflicts.

Major political, economic and social changes have predisposed Kosovo / Albanian parties to adapt to the facts and the reality on the ground, not just according to political / ideological beliefs. All this has caused misconceptions and difficulties in relation to conservative tradition. Depending on the circumstances, political program decisions are taken, regardless of what they have written in their program. Here we shall present a short description of two main Kosovo political parties, what they are and what they represent:

Democratic League of Kosovo - DLK -In 1989, the former Yugoslav regime allowed the formation of political parties. In Kosovo, we have for the first time such an organization formed by Albanians, the establishment of the Democratic League of Kosovo, which at that time was the first Albanian party in the entire Albanian space in both former Yugoslavia and Albania (Bugajski, 2002). Therefore, it can be considered as the first Albanian party formed after the collapse of communism.

So, if we refer to post-war and independence period, then the DLK ideology identifies itself as a political subject of the right centre and with strong features of conservatism (Arifi & Nuhiu, 2018). They have also joined the EPP, the European People's Party. (EPP, 2018).

Democratic Party of Kosovo - DPK- This party was established after the Kosovo War (1999) initially as the Party of Democratic Progress (PDPK) until the First Assembly Elections in 2000, changing its name to the Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK), where the chairman was elected Mr. Hashim Thaçi. Since the establishment, the chairman of DPK has been Hashim Thaçi, until March 2016.

Since then, Kadri Veseli leads the party. DPK is considered to be successor of the political and military structures of the KLA or in some ways may be identified as the soldiers, although in its leadership there are many members of the circles of academic and civil society (Arifi & Nuhiu, 2018).

3.1. Patriotism / Nation

In this segment, we shall differentiate the views of two Kosovo/ethnic Albanian political parties, regarding patriotism / nation. DLK does not mention the Albanian issue as ethnic or unresolved, but in its program it points out that when it comes to foreign policy, DLK and Kosovo should be coordinated with the Republic of Albania, and further it emphasizes that this would have been done by taking into consideration the best strategic

interests of Albanians, in the region and in Europe (LDK, 2012). We can note that this statement requires deeper foreign policy of Kosovo and Albania in favour of the Albanian nation. In an implicit way it can be understood that by strengthening the position of these "two Albanian states", it can be very much contributed to the rest of the Albanians who are stretched out in the Western Balkans region. As far as the Albanian nation as a whole is concerned, DLK presents it in the section 'Albanian Integrations', which according to DLK, it will promote the democratic policies in the Albanian circles. This would definitely have an impact on the reconciliations of the nations in the region of Western Balkans. (LDK, 2012).

While in the DPK program, the subject of the Albanian affair is nowhere to be found, so it is neither mentioned nor there is any particular section about it. Only in respect of the Statute, article 3 paragraph 3 states that "DPK is a continuation of the values of the liberation war and continuously engages in their promotion, strengthening the state of Kosovo and aiming at national integration and protection of the legitimate rights of Albanians who live outside the state borders of the Republic of Kosovo " (PDK, 2014). This way of treatment of this issue, means that for DPK, it does not have any program relevance. Also, Vice-chairman Mr. Kuçi believes that issues of ethnic minorities should be approached more carefully, because in the Balkans it is not only the Albanian issue, but there are other ethnicities as well. Hence, according to him, this issue needs to be resolved progressively, and he believes that European integration would be the best way of solving ethnic problems in the Balkans; it would make them feel more integrated with each other (Kuçi, 2017).

3.2. Religion

While the subject of religion is always perceived as challenging in the social / public debates, the opinions of Kosovo parties are more tolerant than usual. Namely, when confronted with the subject of religion as a program point of the relevant Kosovo/ ethnic Albanian parties, they have expressed a stand for an inter-religious tolerance, given that the Albanian nation itself is made up of two great religions such as Islam and Christianity.

Party attitudes regarding this subject, even according to party functionaries, have been based on the idea that religion is considered a national treasure for Albanians, based on the fact that amongst Albanians

there never was or is any inter-religious conflict. Therefore, it is understandable that when it comes to the subject of religion, all parties are unanimous, but at the same time they are proud of the tolerance and religious diversity that exists in Albanians, and not only, because the intention is also to respect the belief of other ethnicities. This is a very significant point that characterizes Kosovo/ ethnic Albanian parties.

If we discuss them separately, it turns out that DLK is based on the human vision of society and on the general provisions of human rights, both individual and collective, that should be nurtured in a secular state guaranteeing the right to religion and belief, and where religious tolerance would triumph. So, according to DLK, religious tolerance is deeply embedded in our Kosovar culture and society and should be further nourished in the future (LDK, 2012:7).

While, for DPK, the issue of religion does not occupy an important place in the DPK program, it is only mentioned in Article 3, paragraph 2, stating that it supports the religious diversity of the society. So, in principle, they are for the cultivation of religious values, but also for the strengthening of the secular state. But as for the political standpoint on this topic, Mr. Kuçi says that Kosovo should take the examples of the Western world, and how they deal with this topic, and Kosovo to reflect on this issue in a similar way (Kuçi, 2017).

And it also shows that the debate on religious instruction in public schools should not be a debate on newspapers, but it must be a debate about the future of the country. He also states that the debate on religious teaching in public schools should not be a debate of newspapers, but it must be a debate about the opinion on the future of the country. On this subject DPK is very cautious, but at the same time wants to use examples from EU countries concerning the way of dealing with religion.

3.3. Property

DLK and DPK's property approach is typical conservative. In a very straightforward way, they link property with the freedom of the individual. In this regard, we can say that out of three party stances or approaches, property is the only party / ideological standpoint that meets the criteria of a political ideology identified with conservatism. If we analyze it even more specifically, in the DLK program is explicitly indicated that: everyone's property should be respected and protected (LDK, 2012:6).

This implies that there is no conjecture and confusion on this subject. Also, the DPK's position is extremely clear in relation to the subject of property, where it is accentuated that: Property and property rights will be at the main issue of our policies (PDK, 2014:11). So from all of the above mentioned, we can say that at this point these two Kosovo political parties do not differ from the European Right / Conservative parties.

Table 1: Pragmatic Conservatism and Kosovo political parties

PARTIES	PATRIOTISM/ NATION	RELIGION	PROPERTY/ PRIVATI- ZATION
DLK	Beyond -Pragmatic Conservator	Beyond - Pragmatic Conservator	Pragmatic Conservator
DPK	Beyond -Pragmatic Conservator	Beyond - Pragmatic Conservator	Pragmatic Conservator

Source: Author's own work

4. Conclusion and Discussions

Referring to the three fields / points of research: Patriotism / Nation, Religion and Property, it turns out that, according to the comparative method, starting from the very first point, we need to make a more distinct difference, because we are dealing with two almost identical perspectives, for example: DLK and DPK argue the issue of Patriotism / Nation precisely from the pragmatic point of view and further on, because these two parties have understood the circumstances in which the Albanian nation is, as well as the political circumstances in the Balkans and out of it, a fact which makes it impossible to think of any other alternative that could unite the Albanian nation, or more precisely Kosovo with Albania.

In regard to this, DLK and DPK may be well identified as "Partially pragmatic conservative" or "Beyond -Pragmatic Conservator". Their best argument for patriotism and the Albanian nation is interlinked with the integration of the Albanian nation into Euro-Atlantic structures. Also in regards to the subject / point of religion, both parties have almost the same attitude; they are much more moderate or liberal.

This shows that even at this point there are extraordinary problems concerning religious traditions, but also the very idea of pragmatic conservatism. As far as patriotism and religion are concerned, it is noticed that in these two points DLK and DPK have the utmost care not to transmit policies of nationalism and hatred in the society, but are more inclined to maintain a social balance not only in Kosovo but also outside of it. As for property and property rights, there is relatively a typical conservative ideological outlook.

From this research, it turns out that Kosovo political parties have a difficult relation with Conservatism. Also in this segment of difficult relations with Conservatism, a significant role has the length of time of these parties that have been functioning. In comparison to European right / conservative parties, Kosovo parties haven't had yet the opportunity to establish themselves into strong parties with conservative ideas. However, political, economic and social factors in the post-war Kosovo should not be forgotten. But under certain circumstances such as Patriotism / Nation and Religion, Kosovo parties do not take into account political ideologies. Therefore, in all this vortex of conservatism, it is clear that Kosovo political parties have difficulties, especially with the coherence of attitudes and mentalities / outlooks.

Notes:

[1] According to the population census in 2011 and the 2016 assessment, Kosovo has a population of 1,783,531, with over 90% ethnic Albanian, while the other is composed of the Serb, Turk, Bosnian, Roma, Ashkali communities (Source: <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/3385/vleresimi-i-popullsisë-se-kosoves-2016.pdf> (27. January 2018)).

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