

Sustainability of “Vetëvendosje” Movement in the Political Sphere

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze how “Vetëvendosja” movement has preserved its legitimacy since its creation and its actions, firstly as a movement and now as a political representative within the political system. Based on the analytical model of Constructivist Theory, Social Movement Framing Theory, data gathering and elaboration from interviews done to Albin Kurti as the first leader of this movement, The Ahtisaari’s plan, the political program and different public discourses, this paper will create a clearer research picture on this topic. This movement, born to contradict categorically and systematically the Ahtisaari’s Plan that stressed out the judicial, military and political sovereignty under the international protectorate, developed more and gain strength thanks to the thesis of national union. It organized a number of protests that caused the murder of a number of supporters and the imprisonment of the leader from the international forces. These new conditions led to the creation and put into action a number of strategies and techniques that brought the institutionalization of the movement within the political system as a political and parliamentary representative. In contrast with other movements who lost their legitimacy in the moment they entered the political system, this paper analyses how the “Vetëvendosja” movement managed to preserve its legitimacy, in both positions, in and out the political system.

Keywords: Contradicting the Ahtisaari’s Plan, National Union, (political –parliamentary) Institutionalization, Legitimacy

1. Introduction

Different schools of social and political thought that have dealt with the causes and organization of social movements, agree that the activities of these structures are characterized by four main developmental stages that happen through the sudden appearance, accession or unification of different groups among them, bureaucratization and formalization (in the organizational meaning within the movement) and its suppression and achieving or not their aims in the fourth stage in which it function as a movement (Christiansen, 2011), skipping the fact that a social movement can achieve its goals even if it functions as a political party. Based in similar studies that are based on the analysis of pure empirical data, this article, based on the Constructivist Theory of Action, aims to claim that inside and outside the institutions, even in the case of “Vetëvendosja” exists a legitimate relationship within this movement in the past when it functioned as a social movement and now that it functions as a political party. Given that every social movement is created and develops its activity opposing the pressure that state or other institution exercise in relation with the lack of knowledge or non- acceptance and different social or cultural, physiological, gender, racial and political behaviors of these groups, Vetëvendosja, after the end of war and non-recognition of the Republic of Kosovo from Russia that gave a veto in the Council of UN, was born as a result of the opposition against the International Plan offered by Ahtisari, which was perceived and considered from some groups as an International Protectorate that affected that political, judicial and military sovereignty of the Republic of Kosovo.

Since its creation in 2004, this movement was characterized by a continuous number of demonstrations that stressed out their opposition not only against the exercise of international power through the Ahtisari Plan, but they also accused the national political actors that agreed with this agreement. This was a focal point that gave life to the articulation of the national unity within the movement as a tactic to attract and engage a large number of people in their actions. The organization of protests and demonstration for several years in continuance peaked with the murder of two of its activists in 10th February 2007 and the imprisonment of the ex-leader of Vetëvendosja, Albin Kurti. These new conditions led to the creation and use of new tactics and strategies, without changing the goals of the movement and getting closer to the institutionalization of movement as a political party and a legislative representative of its supporters since the general elections of 2010. In difference with other social movements that have erased their intentions and lost their legitimacy after they became a

political party, this article takes in consideration the case of Vetëvendosja, that now it functions as a party, will prove that it has preserved the goals of its creation and the legitimacy of its cause.

2. The creation and development of the movement thanks to its opposition to The Ahtisari's Plan and supporting national unification

In difference with the ideological and rational structure of political parties, social movements are characterized as "efforts by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem that they feel they have in common" (Toch, 1965, pp. 5). Defining such formula means not only the perseverance and the amelioration of active relationships that are based on different sociological, physiological (race, color, sex) and aesthetic (common language, faith, national consciousness, etc.), but also the contradiction of those governmental policies that discriminate or choose not to respect these features. Based on these premises that manage to show the meaning and explain the inner nature of social movements, it means that in one side we have to deal with social movements that are oriented towards "contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (Tarrow, 1998, pp. 2). On the other side, the approach of social movements shows "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and the authorities" Tarrow, 1998 a, pp. 4).

The above description gives us a chance to deal with the creation and the development of the social movement through its opposing continuity. To make clear all these opposing meanings of the social movements, this article tries to analyze the case of Vetëvendosja movement, as a movement that took place in Kosovo. Finding itself in a non-favorable position in terms of the continuity of the political, economic, cultural and social relationships and due to the war with Serbia and its consequences, Kosovo was obliged to accept and submit itself to the protectorate of international states and authorities. In the second article of the 9th appendix of the Ahtisari's Plan (UN representative elected to create a legal package on the ways how the state of Kosovo should function and that would serve as a basis for the creation of the Constitution) that has to do with the exercise of power of the International Civil Representative, is said: "as for the general surveillance of the application of this solution, ICR has the supreme power in Kosovo in interpreting different civil aspects of this solution" (the Ahtisari's Plan, 2007, Appendix IX, pp. 58)

The incapacity, maybe the incapacity of the political elites in Kosovo to create an independent state, - thanks to some conjectures inside and outside the country, made possible that in "12 June 2005" (The history of Vetëvendosja movement), to create the movement that in its foundation defended not only the independence as a cause and its legitimated sovereignty, but it proclaimed as the unification with Albanian, despite the general dispositions of the Ahtisari's Plan, that turned out to be also a Constitution for Kosovo. In the article 1.7 and 1.8 is stated that: "Kosovo will have its special national symbols, the flag included, its emblem and anthem, as a reflection of its multi-ethnic character. Kosovo will not request any unification with any other state or accept to be part of any state (the Ahtisari's Plan, 2007 a, General Dispositions, pp.3)

Unfolding such a thesis was a big problem not only for the international representatives but also for the national political actors "that in meetings they have had with the prime minister Berisha in 1991-1993, insisted more on the idea of a state than to the idea of national unification" (Kurti, 2010, December 2). In this sense, it could be said that Vetëvendosja started its activity through a complete opposing policy, articulated as a counter action against international policies and their national supporters, because for this movement "the Kosovar identity is geographical, far away from a national identity; it is stronger the Drenica identity than the Kosovar identity and above all these stands the national one" (Kurti, 2010 a, December 2). Embracing such an initiative that lies on the protection and empowerment of a national consciousness and memory, requires the formation of strong symbolic signifiers to stress out that "collective action frames deny the immutability of some undesirable situation and the possibility of changing it through some form of collective action. They define people as potential agents of their own history" (Gamson & Meyer, 1996, pp. 285). On the other side, is necessary to find and use means that make possible the further progress of this issue, because even though exist such a generalizing discursive code, according to Meyer and Rochon (1997), the social movements are compound by coalitions of actors that act simultaneously through elements created by common goals and also by the encounter of predefined claims and tactics. Based on this the independence and Kosovo sovereignty is described by four elements and according to Vetëvendosja these four elements are: "the recognition from the UN, the creation of military army under the rule of the Ministry of Defence of Kosovo, leaded by Albanian Kosovars, territorial integrity and the creation of the Foreign Ministry with complete decision making power" (Kurti, 2008, January 3).

According to Vetëvendosja and its claims, the international factors, through a plan written by Ahtisari, decided to create a state of Kosovo, led by and under the custody of international actors, leaving apart the above four points, because in the article 1.3 and 1.4 of the Appendix 11, that defines the competencies of an international army and in the article 13.1 and 13.2 of Appendix 3 on decentralization is stated:

The international military representative (IMR) will survey and monitor the Kosovo Security Forces and will have executive authority on it, till the moment when IMR in collaboration with ICR will notice that this force is self-sufficient and capable of fulfilling its duties in accordance with international standards. IMR in collaboration with ICR has the executive power on Kosovo Defence Body (KDB) and will decide for the time when it will cease to exist as is foreseen in the article 6 of Appendix 8 of this solution. (the Ahtisari's Plan, 2007 b, Appendix XI, pp. 64-65)

In the actual territory of Mitrovica will be created two new districts, the North Mitrovica and the South Mitrovica, boundaries defined in the Appendix 3. It will be created a common board of North and South Mitrovica that will develop a functional collaboration within their competencies and according to the agreements between them. (the Ahtisari's Plan, 2007 c, Appendix III, pp. 35)

For Vetëvendosje, more or less, this meant:

Adapting such a plan gives the right to Serbs to create 11 ministries with Serb majority in the north of Kosovo, giving the chance to create official parallel structures with Serbia and the unification of this mini districts will lead to the create of Serbian enclaves in the north and as a consequence to the creation of a kind of federation among them, reflecting also the vertical connection with Serbia. (Kurti, 2008 a, January 3)

Given that the movement conducted its activity in the edges and outskirts of institutional boundaries that were controlled by the international actors, the application of this plan, according to Vetëvendosja, could lead not only to complete loss of sovereignty of the state but also to the absence of a real participation in the life of the public sphere, knowing that "only 37% of the population took part in the elections of 2007 and where Hashim Thaci was elected primeminister with only 104.000 votes" (Kurti, 2010 b, December 2). This fact could lead to the claim that political discussions include not only the confrontation of political parties on influences on public sphere, but also it could define the special conditions for intentional interventions by the government, problematic or responsible, the use of legitimated means of power and the dictation of final objectives against any non-institutional intervention (Stone, 1997 a). It looks like that these two conditions motivated Vetëvendosja to ignore any conversation or any decision that encouraged this political direction, because big political issues (national and public policies) as says Burstain (1991) are controlled by political monopolies that are made of a large network of groups and individuals that operate in and out the government and that are connected by mutual acquaintances that have to do with a special group of policies.

In a certain way, this means that the attempts for reforms, articulated outside these central institutions (Vetëvendosja for example) could be easily ignored and also the appearance of a conflict between these actors that will lead to a cramp that produces side changes in the field of public policies (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). As consequence, the activity of this movement found itself locked by international pressures and inner political influences, things that would lead to continuous strong reactions against these decisions or to the respect and acceptance of these initiatives that would practically mean the failure of the movement. Between these two alternatives, Vetëvendosja chose the first. Even though in the beginning taking such a risky and opposing action against UNMIK and Kosovar political actors, had to be focused in the context and different events within and outside the country, because in a large part the process of opposing movements is characterized by the creation of networks and coalition among groups and individuals that do not act in complete synchrony with one another and for this reason it is important to take into consideration the circumstances in which is made possible for these actors to collaborate (McAdam, 1982).

Adapting this tactic, that emphasises the relationship between central politics, public policies and opposing politics (Tilly, 1978) was not possible in that moment and as a result led to the murder of two activists of the movement by the international forces, during the protest of 10th February 2007 and the imprisonment of the leader and many other activists, as sign that political reforms could happen as a result of change in the political power balance within a triple monopoly.

The right to demonstrate, freedom of speech and of movement are given to us by the Universal Human Rights Declaration, in the article 20 and in the International Pact of Political and Civil Rights, article 21. The violation of these rights in favour

of political interests is unacceptable. In the demonstration of 10th February these rights were denied collectively while in my case individually are denied human universal rights (Kurti, The judicial process against AlbinKurti, 2007-2008)

These were the words of AlbinKurti in one of the hearing processes after his arrest. Despite that fact it is unmoral and not human to kill unarmed people in the middle of the street, what counts for central monopolies of power has to do with issue that as long as these movements reflect and are created not only thanks to the acknowledgement and emphasis of certain problematic, but also thanks to people who oppose such problems (Schneider and Ingram, 1997 b). This means that these activities have to be isolated together with their activists, either through arrests or physical extermination, either by the "trade of lost lives". In a letter for the lawyer of one of the victims, the special representative of General UN Secretary says:

In your letter of 27th August 2009 to the special representatives of General UN secretary, who has sent it to the Board, you declare that you continue to follow your appeal in the Consulting Panel on Human Rights for a full criminal investigation. We inform you that the condition for compensation payment, in accordance with the standard procedures of UN, you will be required to sign an obliging document that frees UNMIK and UN of every other obligation that comes from the death of ArbenXheladinii. (Hearing process in the Consulting panel of Human rights)

This for the fact that "repressive may be defined as legitimate by the state" (Miller, 1999, pp.305), because such a counter response creates political, social and psychological obstacles against actual or future engagement of such movements. Although it can be considered as unimaginable taking such an action by the international forces, for Vetëvendosja this made obvious the necessity to adapt and improve the interactive actions among inner actors (within the political system of the movements) and outer political actors, with the aim of a broader expansion of the movement in the social- political and cultural sphere and the deepening of the influence that the movement has to have in the coordination of relations between several actors.

2.1 Changing the movement into a political party and the "election- movement" functions.

The confrontation of the movement with the direct counter response by the military forces of UNMIK in 10th February, in which were killed two activists in the middle of the street and several other activists, the leader included, were arrested, had a direct influence in the function and its progress and increased the discontent against these forces. This means that the principal goal of the military forces of UNMIK could have been either the paralysis and the disband of the entire movement, or the comparative testing of resources and operational skills of international forces against such movement, giving indirectly a precaution in terms of changed objectives and operational tactics of it. There is no other way to explain the fact that "during 10 months of imprisonment, Albini was interrogated just once for 30 minutes and it was clear that for UNMIK, in Albini's case, the biggest priority was isolation and not justice" (The judicial process against Albin Kurti 2007-2008 a). However, a little later after his release from jail, the international factor, decided that Kosovo, based on the Ahtisari's plan, will be an independent state, despite the veto of Russia in the UN. This did not only neglect the main issue in which the movement based its activity, but it also created new contextual conditions and premises. The definition of such agenda by the side of the internationals and the other arrest of the leader and some other directors by the government of Kosovo in 12 June 2010, "after the press conference during which Vetëvendosje made public the decision to participate in the election as a movement" (Vetëvendosje leaflet, nr. 202, 2010, June 13), - motivated this movement to take further steps to make this decision concrete:

We have decided to participate in the elections after the democratic debate that we have developed within the movement during these five months. This does not mean that we will transform into a political party. No way. We will remain a political movement, preserving the same objectives and the participation in these elections is just a method more towards our goals. (Vetëvendosje Leaflet, nr. 204, 2010 a, June 25)

This means that in difference from political parties, the large trajectory of the movement allows its inclusion within the central or local institution and also its position outside the state institutions (Meyer, 1990). More or less, such a situation is related with the neutralization of the non-systematic political battles by framing them within a constitutional legal framework, where such a shift of the tactical course is perceived as necessary not only for the development of the movement in all fields by facilitating the weight of the direct pressure that was exercised previously from the international and inner political actors, but also as a need to add more possibilities that fit with its goals and objectives. All this is taken in consideration due to the fact that a social movement is much bigger than a special event and its appearance holds a challenge expanded in time

because the movement, in a certain way, operates through a dynamic interaction in relation to the central politics (Meyer, 1990 a).

But the question is: is it possible to have any direct relations between the content and objectives that Vetëvendosja had before, with the content and goals of a movement now represented politically?

That idea is that it could be seen as an attempt to develop an inner tactical movement, that could lead to the gradual avoidance of the principal goals on which was founded Vetëvendosja. The chance for such a tendency stimulates the opposition of the main actors and supporters that share a firm belief in the goals and causes of the movement and in the same time it can influence on other supporters to weaken their belief and actions in relation to the cause of it. Presuming this fact highlights the configuration of the movement during different stages that held within its organization not only the functionality of achieving the objectives since its foundation but also the attempt to reinforce the movement. In the opening of the electoral campaign and during the development of the election process in December 2010 was said:

We cannot be united if Mitrovica is not united. We want a new state for the Albanian nation and not a new nation for the state of Kosovo. Citizens of Kosovo, the election process faced problems in several voting centers; some are solved and are taken concrete measures after the reactions of Vetëvendosje! We are monitoring the process in details in each center and in each voting place, reporting even the minor infringements and preventing the major ones. (Movement 2010- fourth part 2010 b, December 29)

Based on these two basic categories, at the end of elections 2010, resulted that the movement had won 12 places in the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo. These results made everybody think about two principal parameters that have to do with the authorities and the supporters. One of them serves as an objective to preserve and increase the influence, if we have in mind the moment when a director of the movement says that "the declarations of Jabllanovic, who calls the mothers of the missing and the protesters in Gjakova- savages-were typical of a colonizer who tries to justify the invasion and all crimes that Serbia as committed in Kosovo (Rusta, 2015, January 16, the Action in front of the Ministry of Communities). The other parameters serves as a premise for add acting resources, when is declared that "the state has to spend of poor and tax the rich. But in Kosovo happens the contrary; the system exploits twice the poor; individually with high rates of interests and collectively with non-progressive taxes" (Kurti, 2014, December 30, The Burden of the poor man).

Given that these two definitions exercise pressure on different social groups, on those who support and those who don't support this policies (Knowing that the prime minister of Kosovo did not have any public reaction against the Serbian minister and his declaration), then is necessary to facilitate the weight of these pressures by sustaining the movement and the political completion in a written program that not only creates a connection of responsibility and seriousness, but it also legitimates the beginning of trust for the leaders of the movement, more when these programs reveal what is already said but in a larger and more inclusive context such as:

Vetëvendosje Movement! Is engaged to change parts of the Constitution that limit the sovereignty of Kosovo, including here the removal of the Ahtisari's Plan that divides the territory, institutions and culture based on ethnicity, while perpetuates the international sovereignty on Kosovo. (the Short Political Program, State-building, pp.7)

This makes the movement representatives to rely on the idea that if groups collaborate on goals and tactics, they can maximize their influence on policy-makers (Zald & McCarthy, 1987) and by this they mean the growth of supporters through the affirmation of national symbols and also the increase of pressure on political parties that are part of the government. Along with these uttered and active flows, is needed also the perseverance of stability within the members and supporters of the movement, saying that "the ratification of the agreement Thaci- Dacic is a major damage. So, the damage that this agreement is causing to Kosovo will hold the seal of the Parliament of Kosovo. This way, Thacishares his responsibility with other lawmakers of LDK and AAK, degrading the Parliament in a parliament of the government without a republic" (Kurti, 2013, June 18, Publicly against ratification).

This means that they can change themselves from their groups, because each of these groups tries to create and improve the personal space for further support (Zald & McCarthy, 1987 a). However, the recognition and bringing on focus different daily problems by the part of the leaders of Vetëvendosje- problems that deal with the public interest- gives the chance to different social groups to direct their daily demands towards governing institutions that have not achieve to meet the expectation of citizens, stressing out that: "the office of Energy Regulator has decided to increase the price of all tariffs of

electrical energy with 5.8%. This increase comes immediately after the price growth with 4.57%, a decision taken this July. So two times in a row the price of the electrical energy was increased in Kosovo" (The privatization of KEDS- a higher price for less energy, 2014 a, 03 September).

From the other side, highlighting the failure to meet the daily demands of the citizens by the government, not only undresses the movement by any personal and formal identification in relation to its supporters and voters of different parties, those in power included, but creates a chance for a larger support and possibilities to solve these problems where "those who have incomes till 170 euro will not be taxed; those from 17- up to 500 euro will be taxed with 5%; wages from 500 euro – to 850 euro will be taxed 10%; wages from 850 euro to 1700 will be taxed 20% and those who earn more than 1700, the tax will be 30%. For illustration, in Germany, those who have more than 250.000 incomes per year, pay 45% taxes" (Kurti, 2014 b, April, 09, Progressive taxation diminish inequality).

The political framework of the movement in a broader public sense, when it is emphasized that "we are against the privatization of public fabrics and strategic properties of Kosovo that have an enormous potential of incomes and compound the economic basis of the country" (The Short Political Program: the Privatization), confirms in one side the discourses when it was not part of the political system, because in this point of view the "the Public" could be considered as an entrance room to the National Unification. On the other side, the interaction of specific daily life with all its public inclusion helps the movement not only to grow its human resources, but to improve also their institutional support and pursue their goals for a long time (Piven and Cloward, 1977). This is important because different social groups need a solid structure for the future engagements (Minkoff, 1995), if we take in consideration that groups have more possibilities to change in the moment when the public interest is corrupted, resulting in the chase of different elements for the important matters (Meyer and Douglas, 1993 a).

Meanwhile, what is important for the movement is related also with the preparations that it has done for the perseverance and melioration of relationships with international actors that have recognized Kosovo's independence and that emphasize the problems that they have noticed in different economic, energetic and educative sectors, problems with which the movement agrees on as well and is trying to solve and improve the state of these sectors. The talks and meetings with the diplomatic representatives of Germany, The Netherlands and Austria resulted in common declaration of Vetëvendosje and the representatives in several points such as:

Ambassador Viets showed interest on plans and activities of Vetëvendosje! in the upcoming months and explained that she shared the same concern regarding the sector of energy in Kosovo, because the German investors think that this is one of the main concerns they have on Kosovo. (Meeting with the German Ambassador, 2015 a, April 01)

Ambassador Bosch agreed that one of the main issues for Kosovo is employment, saying that the state should pay more attention in stimulating the consumption of home-brew products. (Ambassador of the Netherlands in a meeting with Vetëvendosje, 2015 b March 31)

Ambassador Brieger congratulated for the new assembly, after the election within the movement and highlighted the need for a higher attention on problems related with education and healthcare in Kosovo, saying that a new economic approach would improve the situation in these two areas. (Vetëvendosje in a meeting with the ambassador of Austria, 2015 c, March 31)

Vetëvendosja has achieved to grow the political cooperation with other inner political actors of opposition, coordinating their agendas in common protests:

The repeal of the ZRrEE decision of 29th August 2014 and the dismissal of its board. Trepca should be declared a public enterprise with a special status; firing Hajredin Kuqi, Enver Hasani and all the managerial team of RTK. (From the meeting of opposition leaders, 2015 d, April 08)

This means that the institutionalization, in content and procedures, describes the ways in which change can be achieved, within losing the cause in which is founded the movement, because when the attention of the public is more attracted towards an issue and when resources used for it, Benford (1993 b), says that the groups that collaborate between them, even those who did not have any principal interest, have chances to develop it.

Conclusions/ Suggestions

Usually, both in physical sciences and in humanities, conducting a stable theoretical and methodological study, means to open new paths of research and practice, creating new possibilities that will serve as a basis or new meanings, approaches to solve the numerous problems that society faces and to help configuring a more broaden and sustainable mentality in the continuity of the Humanity and Citizenship in general. In this sense, this article tried to offer a clear and understandable overview of the society and how important is for the presence and the social political activities of social movements and political parties. Punting these two entities in a race leads to competition and a better selection of alternatives that offer more in terms of welfare.

If we manage to acquire the sense of responsibility and responsiveness of social movements and political parties based on the concerns of their voters and supporters, we will pay more attention to their socio-political programs and the political debate will not be diminished in simple opposing ideas between competitors but it will aim to define clearly their ideologies, make their actions concrete and articulate their political discourse.

The match between the program and action to make it concrete, being conscious that no all the requests and problems of the citizens will be fully resolved due to a number of subjective, objective or circumstantial reasons, will make possible to draw a positive correlation between the movement and the party in one side and to the voters and supporters in the other. What is important is that at the end the voters and supporters should be generally pleased and that their request are taken in consideration so that they may feel actors and influential factors in the social- political changes.

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