RESEARCH ARTICLE

ALBANIAN EVOLUTIONS CIVIL SOCIETY

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Abstract
The main aim of this paper is to shed light on the historical development of civil society in Albania. Civil society is one of the most important elements of a democratic society. It’s role is irreplaceable and necessary. In order to understand the role of civil society in Albania we must consider its historical evolution.
The short history of Albania as a free and independent country and even its shorter story as a functional democracy is widely reflected to the story of civil society. However, Albanian civil society has generated earlier.
Civil society in Albania is formed around some key moments of Albanian history like: national movement, first Albanian state establishment, and communism fall. The analysis of these three periods gives a further view of the current situation of civil society in Albania.
Although the first organizations of civil society in Albania are established after the communism fall, they became important in number and activity. The continuous democratic development depends on the force and organization of this important sector, but even more by the collaboration between the civil society organizations and other sectors of Albanian society.
The research method used for the main aim of this study, is literature review and different civil society organizations’ statutes and main acts. The statutes have been analyzed to have a view on the differences of the civil organizations organization style, main aims and objectives

Keywords: civil society, democracy, communism fall.

Introduction
Strands of Civil Society in Albania can be found in Albanian (our) renaissance period (1831-1912) with individual and mostly sporadic initiatives that are rooted in the communities of Diaspora. On 1870-1890 in Albania there were about 80 organizations, most of which operated as humanitarian organizations supported from different religious communities. First associations formed in emigration matter mainly the Albanian language development and in supporting the creation of the first Albanian state.
Albania declared the independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912. The period from 1912 until 1944 was characterized by national efforts aimed at establishing and strengthening the foundations of the Albanian state and preserve the territorial integrity and independence.

1 Indeksi i shoqërisë civile për Shqipërinë, IDM-CIVICUS-UNDP Albania, Tiranë 2010, f.1
3 Indeksi i shoqërisë civile për Shqipërinë, IDM-CIVICUS-UNDP Albania, Tiranë 2010, f.7
towns and burned 6831 houses that belonged to 43296 inhabitants, a large part of the population in these areas was forced to migrate, mainly to America.  

Despite numerous political crises of the period after the declaration of Independence and deep political and social chaos of the years 1914-1924, most symbolic elements of Civil Society survived. The main reason that made possible their survival was not their financial ability and culture, but the fact that their activity, in many cases performs the role of the state, sometimes by replacing its institutions. Throughout this period the public debate was realized through the printed media. There was no radio or other means of modern communication, which at that period of time could be found in many other countries. Poverty and insecurity, which came naturally as negative inheritance of five centuries of Ottoman invasion and due to various experiments on the regime forms. So on the lack of a new civic elite, significantly limited the chances for the evolution and expansion of symbolic institutions of civil society. 

Albanian elites in that period consisted mainly of representatives from Diaspora. They lived in emigration, studied at well-known universities and possessed western culture and norms. The centre of public debate became Albanian communities in the US, France, Italy, Austria and other countries mainly western. In Albania also there were a limited elite in number and mainly composed of writers, historians and linguists, who had mainly studied in Italian, German and Austrian schools. Within the official border of Albania there were two "Western" areas Shkodra in the north, which was under the Austrian and Italian influence, and Korca in the South, which was temporarily named "French autonomous republic". The "Invaders" above played a major role in the development of these areas and consequently bring the development of some elements of civil society. 

The occupation of the country during the First World War and its division into several separate areas of invasion created difficulties for the national Albanian movement. This movement did not create during the world conflict a single leading centre to outline a unified political program. However patriotic circles inside and outside the country borders did not stop protesting against the claim of neighbour expansionist countries that violate the territorial integrity of Albanian state and violate its national independence. In complete order the nationwide aspirations of the Albanian people was formulated then by “Vatra” Federation formed by Albanian colony on USA, an organization that developed wide activities during 1914-1918. In a resolution adopted by the organization in July 1917, among other was claim that: "to provide with any legitimism manner(way) from the Major Powers and the Peace Congress an Albania for Albanians with politically and economically elements". This formulation was evaluated later as the basic program of the National Movement. 

More efforts were made during the years 1921-1924 for the democratization of the country’s life, a special role belong to cities, especially Tirana, as the capital of the country, where were settled central state bodies. In cities brightened up the political and social life by creating non-governmental organizations and associations, which, along with their press, influenced the political fight that took place in the National Council (parliament), as well as in cultural activities. Such associations were set up in Shkodra in Korca, then in Tirana, Durrës, Vlora and Gjirokastër. Most of them had local character, others had national coverage, a federation "atdheu" of society "bashkimi". 

Federation "Atdheu" was created in 1921 by merging several patriotic associations and cultural organizations, which by the end of 1920 had action in the cities where they were formed and were extended no further than their surroundings. During efforts to democratize the country’s life, the leaders of these organizations thought it would be most helpful to coordinate activities to unify their programs, what could be achieved if all local organizations united in a single national organization. The Initiative for this union was took by Avni Rustemi. 

After the close of the "Atdheu" Federation, democratic movement activists began work for the renewal of a federation to unify the Albanian society. By the initiative of Avni Rustemi and his associates, on October 13, 1922 was founded the organization “Bashkimi” located in Tirana which spread its operations in almost the entire country. 

In the early 20 Albanian woman was already in social and political life of the country with a patriotic activities developed since the last period of the Renaissance and the early years of Independence. Representatives of the women had participated in cultural and patriotic movement, especially in efforts to educate the Albanian women and to raise any society of women. Society of women were raised in Shkodra, in Tirana, Korca, Vlora and Gjirokastër.

5] Idem, f.510 
7] Idem, f.28 
9] Idem, f.197 
From 1928 to 1939, a period that includes the longevity of the second Albanian monarchy, the society and government underwent radical changes. The most important success of the King was the building of state institutions. He turns out to be the real founder of modern Albania, comparing it in the context of time and Albanian history. Under his direction was improved all aspects and areas of society. The Constitution and modern legislation brought security for people and a large number of schools were opened throughout the country. Educational reform as a prerequisite for building a civil society, brought the first successes and created the basis for the establishment of a scientific and cultural elite, who will recognize its exploding in the second half of the monarchy of king Zog. Other reforms, especially in the justice system, health system and culture sector gave positive results too.\textsuperscript{11}

Overall it can be said that under the second Monarchy, Albania took the first steps to building elements of civil society and true democracy. However, the first steps could not meet the greater needs for successful reform, new thinking and rapid development of social culture. This tradition can be ranked insufficient in comparison with other countries such as the Czech Republic, where the best conditions for democratic developments of the last decade mainly stem from the period between the two world wars.\textsuperscript{12}

The Tragic End of Civil Society that was established during the monarchy did not come on surface with the invasion of Albania by Italian and German armies, but with the end of World War II and the beginning of the communist period. With the enforcing of the power of Communists gradually was closed all independent associations, intellectual groups, foundations, media etc. Several dozen deputy liberals members and intellectuals, communist opposition leader got killed, imprisoned or was deportation. Social organizations, associations, clubs intellectual, representations of various stratum of the population groupings and other existing types allowed to operate even further only under strict control of the government and the party-state.\textsuperscript{13}

To distract from the serious economic situation in the country, the communist regime organized a powerful blow one after another in several areas of life such as economy, the military, even in culture. The bad lucky fell on authors and their books. They became victims of persecution, while books and literature, mass burning action, action reminiscent of the Nazi period in Germany. In 1975, a special decision was sent to former Labor Party Committees of districts, who was accompanied by a list of books to be removed from circulation. Earlier it was given shock to the people of culture, education and art, and it was following stroke depth.\textsuperscript{14}

This process centralization and elimination of the segments of civil society came much earlier and more complete than in other countries of Eastern Europe. In Yugoslavia were allowed and were guaranteed by law conservation of some Western concepts of democracy. In Poland the stages of Stalinism came in 1952, when all the foundations of the pre-war era were closed. In Romania, Bulgaria and other countries these processes occurred after the sanctions that were taken in the former Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{15}

Being special and extreme example of Stalinism, the Albanian dictator model was based on the concepts and attitudes of unimaginable by human mind. The culmination of these attitudes came in 1967 when the regime closed all religious communities’ facilities and religion was declared the main enemy of socialism. Another factor that assistance and incentives in destroying the foundations of civil society so far, was the closure of Western schools and especially prohibition and latter burning of foreign literature, regardless of whether it was scientific, political, religious or cultural.\textsuperscript{16}

Isolation of Albania was manifold and turns out to be as a historical example to all totalitarian regimes. Party - State exercised strong control over all aspects of socio-economic spheres of society and especially "ideological potential institutions" such as universities, media, information, diplomacy, schools, etc. A strong censor system used to operate at all levels and intellectual freedom was everywhere only an empty term. In the concept of a state party was not allowed the private sphere of the person or uncontrolled thoughts of citizens.

Stronger repression was exercised on university intellectual and religious elites. Many of them were imprisoned, others were forced to emigrate abroad, while another part of them agreed with the developments and decided to cooperate closely with the regime. Intellectuals and liberal or critical voices in society were denied the right to free exercise of the profession, many of them were expelled from universities and state administration being sent to new cooperative units in villages and isolated areas of the country. Creations and works of writers and artists were allowed to release it only if they meet standards

\textsuperscript{12} Idem
\textsuperscript{13} Idem.
\textsuperscript{14} Elmas Leçi, “Krime në kohë e komunizmit”, Instituti i Studimit të Problemeve të Sihurisë dhe Mbrojtjes, Tiranë, 2007, f.295
\textsuperscript{16} Idem
of ideological regime. Many of those who refused this unprecedented censorship system, being "forbidden author". Their works were burned or avoided by the circulation, while they themselves were imprisoned or exiled to isolation camps.

The party in power, the Labor Party was the only party allowed by law and sanctioned by the Constitution of 1976 as the leading force of society alone. In these circumstances, the party was the state and the state was the party. The dictator was the only person ruling party and the state. His speech was law, no one was allowed to criticize it. The dictator and his loyalists use to take decisions as which allowed the writer to write books, which allowed to publish, what a journalist should write tomorrow's editorial in the party newspaper and even which footballer to play for the national team.

Over the years the main obstacle to citizens became the difficult economic situation of families. Without the help of the state, through employment, political support and permanent care, no family was able to survive economically. For result, families were totally dependent on state-party and consequently under their strict control. Individuals who think differently from the regime and expressed this opinion at work, public or in a different environment, even family, risked imprisonment up to 10 years. Besides the penalty, the family and their relatives were sent to deportation camps and in isolated areas, while their children were not entitled to study at high schools or universities. They were also not allowed to vote! Since the expression of dissatisfaction or criticism, the state considered them collaborators of the enemies of the country.

All media were under the control of the Labor Party, which announced the creation of the "new man" model as its main goal. "New man" according to the communist model would mean: was not allowed to become party criticism; All policy decisions should be accepted unanimously and without debate; state was allowed to maximum limit or even to totally deny freedom of people and society; voters were forced to attend 100% of the vote and none of them were allowed to vote against the party and its candidates; citizens were not allowed to show sympathy for the West; not lawful private property, such as the flats, shops, cars, etc., culminating in cooperation of the 80s; not allowed to travel to the border area and furthermore abroad without special permission from the police and security, and was not allowed to read or heard any west media, and later was deny any foreign media as well. The last area still standing free, religious institutions, were closed by law in 1967 and they were declared enemy of the model of 'new man'.

In this way, public information and social debate, was replaced by communist spirit being once and for all the end of every hopes that civil debates or independent information were closed. At the same time the party-state under the Soviet model created newspapers and magazines for every profession and age group. This was followed by the decision of compulsory for all citizens, who every morning to read the party newspaper in groups and to discuss in support of its articles. In Albania of 1989, then in the end of communist rule, had 42 newspapers and 71 periodicals, of which 85% are distributed in the capital and other major cities. Unlike today's times, during the communist period and the scale success was greatest radio. Strengthening and expansion of radio service in all villages, towns and settlements, was in the interest of the regime itself.

Radio became the best means of politics, as throw it people can hear only the thoughts of the regime. "Information" no footage and no written material was effective method to introduce another reality beside the true one. However the history of the Albanian radio is very young and starts in 1938. In 1945 the state was the only radio and broadcasted on pre-setting hours. By 1990 radio service was expanded passing in 16-20 hours a day and later with services in several dozen foreign languages.

Experts believe that the politics purposes of Albanian radio was one of the most common and competitions on radio waves the most powerful in Europe. As radio so the television history on Albania is totally new. In 1960 was created the first television station which broadcast only three hours a day. After 12 years began broadcasting daily and some television programs and only in 1981 was achieved for the first time realized the five-hour television program and color filmed. It should be noted that in 1990 in Albania had only one radio and one television state station.

In terms of these censor measures and control was meaningless to speak of existence, activity and position of Civil Society. Nor can imagine the creation or existence of opportunities for communication, engagement and public debate or civic movements, to unanimously accept the fact that during the communist period had neither the Civil Society nor local institutions.

The experience of other former communist East Germany, Poland or Hungary, showed that the best

17 Idem, f.31.
18 Idem.
19 Idem, f.32

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response against a totalitarian regime is building and strengthening of civil courage citizen in society and their free institutions. Even Albania faced with such a situation, but here developments were not identical with those of most of the former communist countries. In Albania the change system and the start of democracy in December 90 was achieved through massive student movement, which after was turned on the nationwide movement.

Compared to other east counties the concept of "civil society" had no role and importance in the early stages of democratic change. In debates on the design of the program's first political opposition speakers almost unanimously demanded that the new party to engage newly established Euro-Atlantic integration, protection of human rights and economic reform. In relation to requests for Civil Society, we can say that in their entirety was evidently reflected the lack of experience, training and personal formation found political leadership. This condition was reflect on political design of the main landmarks of the political program, where within 20 most important points of reference was totally missing the draft of establishing Civil Society. Weeks later became new interventions positive in the program, based these on western councils, although there was still no clear vision. Political commitment for Civil Society conceited for the first time in mid-March 1991, four months after the creation of the opposition. Since this moment the requirements for the establishment and strengthening of civil society dominated political speeches and diplomatic meetings of the opposition and the government. The word "we fight for free and democratic Civil Society " was read every day in the newspapers or heard often in political meetings. However, after that there was no clear platform about what could be achieved with and how to achieve it. Even politicians use to avoid potential questions of journalists or voters for their political vision of civil society, NGOs and various civic initiatives. This made between promises and reality practical electoral desire to have a large margin.

The first election campaign in new Albanian history of election that was held on March 31, 1991, showed once again how difficult it was to spread new ideas and liberation of people from communist idealism. The elections were marred by high tensions, old slogans and state blackmail against opposition candidates and parties. In the absence of a free media independent, strict state control and lack of public debate, as expected for the construction of Civil Society chances were minimal.

In growing the social crisis was the fact that most of the migrants and political dissidents who were involved in the new policy Albanian demonstrated an old political mentality. Names, symbols, old programs and nationalist vocabulary heredity from the time of World War II and was brought back into the political scene 45-50 years later, it sounds old fashioned and unacceptable to the majority of the Albanian electorate. It was unacceptable that the nationalist parties that had lost the civil war, taking power not as an alternative to tomorrow, but as revenge against the past. They were received with skepticism at attempts, intentions and old forms of political struggle to win the race that was lost a half century ago, especially the younger generation, which in Albania makes up most active society. The rivalry between the two historical periods and their supporters was wrong and the day-to-day tensions generated crisis. They have devoted much to Albania's transition phase.

Negatively impacted another fact. Prominent Albanian intellectuals, who created these political forces and nationalist movement during World War II were passed away. Those who survived or who were running these political groups failed to yield any positive political message, nor in the idea, not in the model of political organization. They guarded un-voted their leadership positions for more than five decades. Name personalizing and nationalist political forces became deeper reaching the public identification of specific individuals with political forces that they ran. This experience personalization parties, associations and consequently political institutions was a wrong lecture on democracy and the new leaders of the opposition.

Unlike other former communist countries of Eastern Europe, where in 1970 exist groups representing special interests, in Albania there were no activities of any independent group until the end of communist rule in December 1990. Earlier there was a buffer zone between the state and society, as applicable Communist Party controlled all life appears. This legacy of the former regime, and the fact that, even before the communists took power, Albania lacked civic traditions and social movements, create obstacles and difficulties for the construction of a free civil society, which is seen as important element for the consolidation of democracy.

However, major political and economic transformations, especially privatization and the gradual emergence of a wealthy middle society class that was able to maintain a financially independent political organizations, encouraged the emergence of intermediate organizations and civic groups that had to do with the structure, organization and society function. In post-communist Albania came over a

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20 Idem. f.37

swarm of professional associations, socially, cultural organizations, clubs, women's organizations, mergers, organizations, businessmen, with environmental protection groups and other voluntary groups that claim to occupy a place in public life. Define their purpose as civic activities for the common good, exerting pressure on state institutions, influencing political processes, promoting political participation and asking from the government transparency and openness.

Association for Democratic Culture, sponsored by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, emerged as one of the most important civic groups in Albania. Through a broad program of non-political activities, trying to foster tolerance Association, openness and understanding in society. Perhaps best known for the role played strongly in educating and mobilizing voters and election observation, the group called for broad participation of citizens in political and economic life of the country. Association for Democratic Culture trying to foster public dialogue, organizing community meetings on various issues. In addition, together with the National Democratic Institute, the Association worked with Parliament to develop communication between lawmakers and groups of voters.

Another important organization was the Helsinki Committee, who oversaw the observance of human rights, the Helsinki Committee raise their issues of police brutality and other violations of government. He also fought for judicial and legal reform and improvement of prison conditions. However the effectiveness of this organization for human rights is weakened by the fact that it was under the influence of well-known personalities from the communist period and therefore regarded primarily as an organization in opposition to democratic government. Disagreements within the Committee had as a result of the resignation of several prominent activists such as Jusuf Vrioni and Maks Velo. Within all the problems the Helsinki Committee did valuable work and reporting of violations of human rights seemed to coincide with those of foreign organizations of human rights.

Other groups operating in the broad area of social interaction aimed to exert influence on public policy. However, since their identities were more monodimensional than the multidimensional, their influence on government policy cannot be limited. With the exception of trade unions, non-governmental organizations were less strong enough to exert any pressure being over government institutions. Nor unions were not a great success and the simple expression of interest. Radical economic transformation had consequently closure of large industrial-cooperation so and the trade union movement was weak both politically and economically.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to creating sustainable organizations and groups was the lack of real autonomy from the state or political parties. Very few youth organizations or women org, cultural associations and clubs artistic or intellectual can claim to be free from political control or influence. Although nascent constitutional order of Albania provided opportunity for open debate and free expression of different interests, sometimes the state will not endorsed independent organizations and movements. In many cases, on the contrary, trying to border autonomy and their freedom of action. But the lack of a skilled management and organizational capacity hindered the construction of a civil society. Many intellectuals, who were probably prepared for organized various civic activities, did not want to deal with these activities and prefer to engage in the work of political parties. Little-known intellectuals agree to undertake the construction of civil and social organizations, which they saw as the task below its claims.

As a result, a deep chasm still stand separating the public sphere with the private sphere and the creation of a strong civil society remains a distant goal. However, voluntary organizations and civic groups were beginning to play a more and more important in detecting abuses and manifestations of corruption in state bodies, catering to a mature civic spirit and prompting the government to respond and give increasingly explains.

NGOs are an essential sector in a democratic society. Although the first NGOs in Albania were established after the fall of communism, they have become important in number and in their events. Continued development of democracy depends on the strength and organization of this important sector, but perhaps more by cooperation throw NGOs and other sectors of Albanian society.

In addition to Civil Society Organizations and associations of human rights and women org, the period of post-communist transition helped in the development of new forms of organization known as: groups of so-called policy experts “think tank”. The first “Think Tank” launched in 1992 was Albanian Centre for Economic Research. Other areas that attracted attention were management and solving of conflicts (especially after the revival of customary law

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22 Idem.

23 Idem, f.327.

24 Udha e Shqiperise drejt Demokracise, ORT/USAID, Tirane 1999, f.12
and blood feud), environment development and economic one, youth and media. Almost 30% of civil society organizations and associations that have been active during the last two decades have been recorded during the early period of transition.

The development of the country was seriously questioned on 1997 crisis caused by the collapse of pyramid schemes. This event had a very negative impact on the economic, political and social life of the country. The situation was further complicated by the war in Kosovo and the fact that more than a million Kosovo peoples were forced to migrate in Albania. These events led to the development of a large community of civil society organizations in Albania, which address issues ranging from women's rights to the “gun mines”. Almost 49% of civil society organizations already registered in Albania were created from the period 1997 to 2001. Currently in Albania there are 2,231 non-profit organization, registered, focused mainly in Tirana and major cities of the country. Only 314 of them are registered with the Agency for the Promotion of Civil Society and the rest, so that 1917 of them are logged in Tirana court.

Conclusion

The creation of the Albanian civil society hangs on in three important moments of the history. The first moment is linked to the first national movement. The organizations of that period were more oriented to the state formation and the Albanian language development, in other words a nationalist matrices. The second moment is linked to the monarky creation, the Albanian modern state. In this period many groups of the society started to get organized in order to protect their social interest and their social rights.

While the third moment is linked to the fall of communism in Albania. This period brought out the need for democratic state creation. The civil society is one of the most important components of a democratic state. Civil society of Albania has been part of many important deals between Albania and BE. Albanian civil society has shown not to be very strong and this position didn't help it in the eyes of the citizens. The fact that many politicians have used the civil society organizations to get connected to the people and ask for their vote has created a big gap between people and civil society organizations.

But this does not decrease the role of the civil society in the proces of democratic society creation. the organizations that were not connected to politics have had a very important role in democracy creation, in human rights field, economy, and integration.

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