

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES  
AND INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY  
IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**



**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**  
**Institute for Political and Legal Studies**

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES  
AND INTERNAL PARTY  
DEMOCRACY  
IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

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**Editor**

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## Preface

The enhancement and development of internal party democracy and democratically functioning party organizational structures are burning issues within the consolidating democracies of South Eastern Europe. Autocratic political leaders and the inability of parties to adequately absorb people's needs in their policies are major factors behind a growing crisis, reflected in declining voter participation in elections.

At an expert meeting held in Sofia in May 2005, scholars and politicians from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro analyzed and compared the situations in these countries. The dialogue between scholars and politicians generated a frank assessment of both the obvious and the hidden barriers to the development of democratic and transparent political parties.

The 2005 expert meeting was the second in a series jointly organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Sofia Office, and the Institute for Political and Legal Studies of Bulgaria. The proceedings of the first meeting, held in 2004, were published in "Political Parties and the Consolidation of Democracy in South Eastern Europe," which can be ordered from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung ([www.fes.bg](http://www.fes.bg)).

At the outset participants confirmed that internal party democracy can only function if two conditions are met: On the one hand, parties must keep their structures open to civil society and to the electorate. This requires maintaining open communication channels and allowing its members both freedom of action and expression. On the other hand, parties are organizations that aim to win elections and implement their political programs in governments. This requires a certain level of discipline and adherence to decisions made through

legitimate structures and by elected leaders. How these two prerequisites are balanced by parties in SEE depends on the concrete political circumstances, historical traditions and the prevailing political culture in each of the nations.

During a fruitful exchange of views, several major conclusions were made:

The organizational aspect of party life is poorly regulated in a legal sense. This is particularly true as far as party financing is concerned. Attempts to change this situation by imposing stricter regulations are met with resistance by entrenched party elites. Participants urged stricter implementation of existing legislation and transparency in the financial dealings of parties and their members of parliament.

Internal party democracy generally functions at a low level. Power is strongly centralised and leaders rule in an autocratic manner with little participation by members. The selection method of party leaders and party members for official government positions is crucial. The principle of one member, one vote was discussed extensively without reaching a conclusion. As an alternative, proper mechanisms of delegating power from local to national structures were proposed. Participants felt that the role of local organizations in the decision-making process must be increased as part of the overall process of the bottom-up development of power. Party mandates should be limited and the holding of multiple positions de-emphasized. They also considered staging “primaries” before electoral lists are drawn up or to hold referenda among party members on important issues.

Party discipline would be less of a problem if parties had clear programmatic principles. Given the nature of globalisation, it would be difficult to map out sets of rules, but basic values remain the same and the establishment of “basic value committees” could assist in the formulation of day-to-day policies. Generally, it was considered better to have a small and active membership than a large one. The level of payment of membership fees is a good indication of the commitment of party members.

## *Preface*

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A party based on principles and supported by committed members will not have problems with the formation of factions. Parliamentary groups need more autonomy in the legislative process. Only if this kind of openness exists will parties be able to extend their influence into civil society and the public at large. In turn, they should receive positive stimulation from outside party circles. The horizontal expansion of party structures through informal networks helps to reach out to social and professional groups and to engage sympathizers in the activities of the party.

Parties need to make special efforts to integrate underrepresented groups, including women, youth, ethnic minorities and immigrants. Parties could set up permanent “working groups” or committees of women, etc. There should be clear rules guiding the participation of such groups in party decisions and on their representation in party bodies, eventually through quota systems.

The organizers hope that the papers presented in this publication and the exchange of views and experiences at the expert meeting will contribute to a better understanding of parties and party systems in South Eastern Europe. They also hope that it will contribute to the development of professionally run parties, organized in a democratic and participatory manner. The implementation of the above-mentioned reforms is an indispensable precondition for the consolidation of democratic political systems in the region.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the authors for the articles and to thank those who have been involved in organising the meeting and in preparing this publication.

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## **INTERNAL RELATIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SERBIA**

*Vladimir GOATI<sup>1</sup>*

### **1. Legislation, articles of association of various parties, organizational structure and internal democracy**

Serbia has a rather modest body of legislation governing the establishment of political parties. According to the *Law on Political Organizations*, which was adopted early in 1990, it takes as few as 100 signatures to register a party and there are no provisions governing the termination or “closing down” of a party. Given this, as of mid-2005, Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohija) had 309 registered political parties, for an average of 21,072 voters per party. However, barely one-sixth of these parties truly are active in Serbian political life. In an effort to restore order to this area, the Serbian government proposed a draft *Law on Political Parties*, in May 2003, but Parliament did not have enough time to debate this draft law, since it was disbanded in October of that same year. The financial operation of political parties is closely regulated by a law that took effect on January 1, 2004, superseding a 1997 law. The new law, *inter alia*, obliges parties to make periodical financial disclosures, restricts private donations (in terms of amount of donation and nature of donor), bans donations by foreign legal and natural persons, requires parties to open a separate bank account for electoral campaign fundraising purposes and lays down strict sanctions against breaches of its provisions.

This text will focus on eight parties, of which seven have managed

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to reach the five-percent “threshold” (Serbia is treated as a single constituency) that each party must meet in order to enter the 250-seat parliament. These parties are the following: Serbian Radical Party (82 seats), Democratic Party of Serbia (53 seats), Democratic Party (37 seats), G17 Plus (34 seats), Socialist Party of Serbia (22 seats) and the coalition between the Serbian Renewal Movement and New Serbia parties (22 seats). In addition to the above seven parliamentary parties, this text will also pay heed to a new party (established in 2004), the Movement of Serbian Forces (PSS), which enjoyed strong voter support both in the presidential elections held in June 2004, when its candidate scored 18.2 percent of the vote, and at local elections, held in September 2004. Several empirical surveys of political opinion, conducted in 2005, showed that voter support for the PSS party ranged between nine percent and 12 percent.

Except for the SPS party, which symbolizes continuity with the former Communist Party that ruled prior to the establishment of a multi-party system and which had been “created from the outside”, all other parties were created from the “inside” (Duverger, 1976, 8-16). That means they have a parliamentary and electoral background. These parties were created in different ways, through: the association of groups of individuals (DS, SPO); the merger of previous organizations (SRS), rifts in existing parties (DSS, NS); or the transformation of a non-governmental organization into a political party (G17 Plus). The PSS party was established “under the auspices” of a wealthy businessman, Boguljub Karić, ahead of the June 2004 presidential elections, in which Karić appeared as a candidate. This party is an organization that was set up by a “sponsor” (Panebianco, 1988, 50), as his political instrument. That is why Karić’s election as PSS leader did not occur by accident.

All the parties concerned were organized using a territorial principle, with their basic organizations having different names. Those names include: “local organization” (DS, SRS, SPO, G17 Plus, NS), “basic organization” (SPS), “municipal branch” (DSS) and “municipi-

pal organization” (PSS). Except for the SPS, which has insisted on the principle of strict subordination (“democratic centralism”) from its very outset, certain differences between the higher and lower party bodies may be perceived in other relevant parties in Serbia. Still, a certain hierarchy prevails, as set out in article 50 of the G17 Plus articles of association (2004). According to this provision, “prior to taking a decision, relations between various bodies at different Party levels shall be based on the principles of partnership and agreement, but once a decision has been taken, such relations shall be based on the principles of subordination”. In keeping with this provision, higher party bodies may disband lower bodies.

## **II. The role of party members in decision-making**

According to the respective articles of association of the parties concerned, party members may participate in the shaping and implementing of party policy, they must pay membership fees, they should take part in advertising activities during election campaigns and they should vote for those candidates nominated by their own party. Party members are also authorized, via their respective delegates, to participate in the election of their party’s highest bodies. According to statutory documents, basic organizations should take decisions by a majority vote and their members must enforce both these decisions and those decisions taken by higher bodies within their party. Some statutory documents also regulate the position of those members who hold a minority opinion. For instance, according to the *DSS Articles of Association* (2003), a member may freely and without any consequences express his or her opinion or take a certain stance within the party (art. 4), whereas the *SPO Articles of Association* (2004) contains a provision that “a party member may not be held responsible for having expressed his/her opinion within the party” (art. 10). According to article 12 of the *NS Articles of Association* (2004), members may enjoy party support “...for any public appearance made in keeping with the NS authorizations and platform.” However, any assess-

ment of the work of the NS itself or of its individual members may be made solely within the NS bodies. Any NS member who fails to comply with this provision shall face expulsion from the party (art. 13 of the *NS Articles of Association*).

Some parties' statutory documents contain "additional safeguards" that apply to those who hold a minority opinion, by which such members are allowed to voice their opinion within the party bodies even after a decision has been taken (art. 11 of the *G17 Plus Articles of Association*). The *SPS Articles of Association* (2003) reinforce a member's active role by imposing an obligation on the party organization and bodies to discuss an issue raised by an individual member, provided that such an issue is supported by at least 20 percent of the membership (art. 6). SPS members may voice their opinions within the party, even if they are in a minority, but they are not allowed to debate in public on stances taken by their party or its higher bodies. A further step in the promotion of the rights of those in the minority was made in a provision of the *DS Articles of Association* (2004), whereby a group consisting of 10 percent of the members of each party body is entitled to interpellation, while a group consisting of 40 percent of such members may request that a decision be reviewed by a higher party body (art. 12).

No matter how impressive the aforementioned rights may seem, Blondel's general assessment that most members of political parties act just like members of any other social body, as they do not exercise any right or duty that their membership imposes on them (Blondel, 1963, 90), appropriately describes the behavior of members of Serbian political parties. Some members of Serbian political parties seek to avoid paying membership fees; their involvement mainly comes down to voting for those candidates nominated by their own party. We say "mainly", because an empirical survey, conducted in 2003, using a representative sample of 1,636 respondents, showed that 62 percent to 90 percent of members would actually vote for candidates from their own parties, while another three percent said they would even

vote for a candidate from another party, while the balance could not make up their minds. (Mihailović, Vasović, Stojiljković, Gredelj and Nikolić, 2003, 6).

### **III. Selection and control of party leadership and state officials (MPs, cabinet members)**

Party officials are elected using the majority principle, with the exception of the DS and DSS, whose respective assemblies (as their highest bodies) select their main board members in proportion to the number of members from a particular region. The articles of association of some parties allow the use of a secret ballot to elect party officials and require the nomination of several candidates. The statutory documents of the DS, DSS, G17 Plus, SPO and PSS parties prescribe the use of a secret ballot not only when electing party president, but also when electing presidency members. “As a rule”, the SPS elects its officials using a secret ballot; its statutory documents do not provide for any circumstance where it is possible to deviate from the rule.

While the above parties have accepted in their respective articles of association the principle of the secret ballot, at least to elect party leaders (with the aforementioned “flexible” stance of the SPS), the ultra-nationalist SRS party is an exception to this rule, because it strictly provides for a public vote. The SRS *Articles of Association* (2000) provide for an election procedure that minimizes the possibility of its membership influencing the election of a party leader and leadership members. According to this procedure, the SRS Patriotic Congress (as the highest party body), acting upon proposals from the central patriotic administration, will first select members of the election committee, using *a public vote*, (art. 20), then the election committee will “...draw up a list of candidates for the party president, members of the Central Patriotic Administration, Statutory Commission and Supervisory Board” (art. 22) and then the patriotic congress will again take *a public vote* on the candidates nominated on that list. Although

the candidacy procedure allows for a possibility of “alternative nominations”, candidates who are nominated in this way must meet extremely harsh requirements. Namely, such candidates may be nominated in writing by 30 congress delegates or by one SRS executive committee at least seven days before a patriotic congress session (art. 25). However, even if the above requirements are met, the congress will consider the “alternative candidates” only after it has taken its position on the list of candidates who were nominated by the election committee, thus preventing “alternative” candidates from competing with “official” candidates on an equal footing. Since the SRS Patriotic Congress also elects the working presidency, using a public vote and acting upon a proposal from the party president or from the central patriotic administration, this is a closed circle in which “alternative” candidates are second-class candidates, enabling members of the leadership to actually elect themselves.

When it comes to tenure of office, there is nothing like that enjoyed by Serbia’s party leaders in any other country of Central or South Eastern Europe. Here are some figures that underscore their amazing ability to stay in power, despite the numerous losses they have suffered in various elections held over the past 15 years. Excluding the NS, G17 Plus and PSS, due to their “short history” as political parties (as they were established in 1998, 2002 and 2004, respectively), of the remaining five parties, four leaders (Slobodan Milošević of the SPS, Vojislav Šešelj of the SRS, Vuk Drašković of the SPO and Vojislav Koštunica of the DSS) were elected as early as the founding conventions of their respective parties, held between 1990 and 1992! Although the aforementioned four parties, with their “here-to-stay leaders”, suffered many electoral losses in the period concerned – and, on top of it all, Milošević and Šešelj have been detained by The Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia since June 2001 and March 2003, respectively – their leaders still managed to retain key positions. Finally, the fifth party concerned, i.e. the DS, is the only exception to the “rule” that a party



leader will not be ousted even in the case of poor election results. A peaceful shift of DS party leaders took place in early 1994, when Zoran Đinđić replaced Dragoljub Mićunović. “The way to the top” remained open in this party even after Đinđić was assassinated on March 12, 2003. At the DS electoral meeting, held in February 2004, Boris Tadić scored a landslide victory over Zoran Živković (83 percent against 16 percent, with 1 percent of the ballots declared invalid) in competitive, intra-party elections. Also elected in a secret ballot cast at the same meeting were members of the DS presidency, main board, statutory commission and supervisory committee. The election procedure is regulated in great detail in the *DS Election Committee’s Rules of Procedure*, whereby candidates competing for the leading party positions enjoy equal treatment. This suggests that the DS has a highly competitive, intra-party election procedure that applies not only to the election of a party leader, but also to the election of people who will hold other strategic positions within the party. That is in sharp contrast to leadership self-election, a practice that takes place in other parties. In addition to the lack of statutory provisions that would ensure competition in choosing who will assume the highest office in a party, these other parties also have limited opportunities to contest the election of party leaders. Furthermore, they are restricted by an atmosphere that makes the leader look like some kind of divine creature, and where any attempt to take his place is treated as an act of treason or blasphemy.

When it comes to the election of MPs, one must bear in mind that Serbia has had a proportional electoral system in place since 1992, whereby a party leadership determines not only lists of candidates, but also selects MPs regardless of how they rank on those lists. Contrary to democratic electoral principles, party leaderships select their MPs *after the polling is over*, which is why such an election system is defined as an “indirectly proportional system” (Goati, 2004, 175). Pursuant to article 88 (paragraph 1) of the *Law on the Election of Members of Parliament* (2000), an MP will lose his or her office if

his or her membership in the party is terminated, which enables the party leadership to remove a “disobedient” MP from office, by arbitrarily expelling him or her from the party. However, a Serbian Constitutional Court decision of May 27, 2003, declared null and void paragraph 1 of article 88 and thus the court decided to allow such MPs to remain in parliament. Thereby, the court thwarted willful party leadership behavior and gave autonomy to MPs and parliamentary groups, making them important participants in the intra-party division of power. However, that decision had a latent effect, as, in mid-2003, several MPs became “turncoats”, switching from one party to another. This “transfer” of MPs from one party to another continued also in the new parliament that was constituted in 2004. For instance, in January 2005, the public was informed that 14 MPs (whose names and party “origin” were not disclosed) had joined the PSS party, which gave a fair amount of parliamentary power to a party that had not even participated in the December 2003 parliamentary elections. Hence, the Constitutional Court, in its decision, allowed not only for the individual defection of MPs, but also for a process of “non-electoral parliamentarization” (see Kasapović, 2003, 242).

As expected, the articles of association of various political parties (and their relevant amendments), adopted following the above Constitutional Court decision, now regulate more closely than ever the position and role of parliamentary groups (party clubs). The latest statutory documents of various parties obviously attempt to secure party control over their respective parliamentary groups. For instance, a DS statutory document specifies that a parliamentary club shall decide on the votes to be cast by its MPs and also shall elect the party whip and appoint its secretary, but it sets out that the DS main board shall arbitrate in the case of disputes between the party presidency and its parliamentary club. Parliamentary club activities are regulated in a similar manner also by the NS articles of association. According to article 51 of the G17 Plus articles of association, the activities of members of parliament or local city councilors are to be regulated by

separate rules of procedure, which are to be proposed by the party presidency.

The DSS, SPO and PSS have specified in great detail how their respective parliamentary clubs should operate. Each also introduced one novelty, which is disputable, to say the least. The DSS (*DSS Articles of Association*, art. 61, paragraph 1) prescribed that party whips both in the Serbian and State Union Parliaments shall be elected by the DSS Presidency, upon a proposal from the DSS president. Such a provision demonstrates an effort to considerably restrict the autonomy of a parliamentary group. With the same goal in mind, another novelty was introduced by the SPO party, in article 72 of its *Articles of Association*. According to this article, the following persons shall participate in the work of the SPO parliamentary club: the SPO president, vice-president, presidency members and party secretary, for a total of 21 party officials, which greatly exceeds the number of seats (13) that the SPO actually won in the 2003 parliamentary elections and almost equals the total number of SPO-NS MP seats (22). Finally, the third disputable innovation was made by the PSS. In its *Articles of Association*, without any hesitation, that party imposed upon its MP and local councilor candidates an obligation to deposit undated letters of resignation ahead of the elections. "In case of gross violation of his/her duties as an MP or local councillor, the Executive Committee may activate such resignations" (art. 40 of the *PSS Articles of Association*). This was obviously an attempt to outwit the principle of a free term of office, because, by signing such a resignation letter ahead of time, an individual must depend on party bodies to decide his or her future fate. In addition to having to deposit a letter of resignation, some parties (such as the SRS) seek to commit future MPs by making them take an oath in the Serbian Orthodox Church and thus pledge loyalty to their party.

#### **IV. The degree of openness of internal debate and the possibility of party factions (minority opinion)**

Under article 6 of the *SPS Articles of Association*, factions are

not allowed. This provision was in place even in the period that preceded pluralism, since it was part of the articles of association of the Serbian League of Communists, as well as in the articles of association of all ruling Communist and opposition parties. In addition to the SPS, no other intra-party associations, beyond those organizational bodies already provided for in articles of association, nor any “horizontal linkings” are allowed by any other relevant party in Serbia. A different solution may be found only outside the circle of relevant parties. For instance, one small party, the Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS), incorporates such a solution. According to article 10 of the *GSS Articles of Association* (2004), this party may have factions, provided that its members reflect the will of at least 15 percent of the party’s membership or 20 percent of its main board members. They also must submit a document containing their organizational goals, which should be in keeping with “the party program and Articles of Association” and submit to the GSS presidency a request for approval of the faction, which must be duly signed by a required number of GSS members (this number should be determined by a separate document issued by the main board). It is worth mentioning that a faction called “December 11th” has been operating within the GSS. There is no cooperation between this faction and the “rest of the party”, as they simply “co-habit.” We might even say that this faction is “a party within a party”.

Despite the fact that factions are not allowed under the relevant parties’ articles of association, they still have been formed *via facti* in the past 15 years since the multi-party system has been in place. They have ended either in the expulsion of “factionalists” from the party and/or in party rifts. The most successful party to emerge following a party rift was the DSS, which, as of mid-2005, is the mainstay of the minority Republican government. The DSS was established in July 1992, and consisted of DS leaders and members who were dissatisfied with their original party’s refusal to join the then-DEPOS coalition of opposition parties. Two more parties that emerged following party rifts also scored some political success, while the more than 30

other parties set up in this way since 1990 have remained on the political sidelines or disappeared outright. Two even returned to the party that they had left (the Democratic Centre returned to the DS and the Social Democratic Party returned to the SPS).

### **V. The role and function of working groups (women, youth)**

Like in most countries in the region, women play an extremely subordinate role in Serbia's social life. We shall list several striking examples to corroborate this. Although women account for 52 percent of Serbia's population, they make up 43 percent of the total number of employees and 58.7 percent of the unemployed. Women are paid 22 percent less than their male counterparts for the same type of work.

Women fill just 11.7 percent of the country's managerial positions (for data on representation of women, see Joksimović, 2005). Women are marginalized even in the political sphere, although there have been certain signs of improvement after the toppling of the Milošević regime in October 2000. At the first Republican elections held in December 2000, following the October 2000 changes, women represented 10.8 percent of the elected Serbian MPs, which is four times as many women as compared to the composition of the previous parliament, in 1997. In democratically oriented parties belonging to the DOS coalition, women MPs accounted for 13.6 percent (24 of the total of 176 seats), while women accounted for just four percent of the MPs (three of the total of 74) from the parties that ruled during the previous regime (the SPS, SRS and Serbian Unity Party – the SSJ, which was very close to the them). In the Serbian parliament elected in 2003, the percentage of women MPs grew to 12.4 percent from 10.8 percent. Women MPs are most heavily represented in the G17 Plus parliamentary group (where they make up 29.7 percent of its MPs), followed by the DS (16.2 percent), DSS (13.2 percent), SPO/NS (9 percent), SRS (4.9 percent) and SPS (4.5 percent).

In an effort to attract and involve women as much as possible, the

respective articles of association of the DS, G17 Plus and NS parties have established separate organizations pertinent to them. According to the *DS Articles of Association*, a “Women’s Forum” was established as a “...voluntary organization, made up of female members of the DS” (art. 50). This organization deals with the exercise of women’s rights, in keeping with international standards. The “Women’s Network” of the G17 Plus and “Women’s Council” of the NS share the same goals. Women’s organizations within the above parties are part of their respective main boards. The DS main board includes 10 representatives of the “Women’s Forum”, while the president of the “Women’s Network” is a member of the G17 Plus main board and the NS main board may co-opt new members upon a proposal from the “Women’s Council”.

While only three of eight Serbian parties prescribe separate forms of women’s organizations, the following seven parties have specific kinds of youth organizations: the DS, DSS, G17 Plus, SPO, SPS, PSS and NS. The statutory documents of the G17 Plus, SPO, SPS and PSS set 28 as the age ceiling for membership in youth organizations, whereas this limit is 27 within the DS and DSS. art. 43 of the *NS Articles of Association* regulates this matter in its *Rules of Procedure for the Organization and Operation of the Youth Club*. Respective articles of association of all seven parties concerned stress the fact that youth organizations are not parallel organizations and, therefore, must observe and implement program-related and statutory commitments of their respective parties.

## **VI. Relationship with supporters and NGOs**

In the last decade of the 20th century in Serbia, it was impossible to develop a network of social groups with clearly differentiated interests using a completely destroyed economic basis. Furthermore, even the rudiments of an interest-based method of organization, established at the time of “self-management Socialism” (until 1990), grew weak. Although some elements of a market economy did exist at

the time, entrepreneurs failed to clearly articulate their own interests and secure needed organizational infrastructure. Workers were slightly more successful in this respect, as they used to have a single trade union, which was actually an “extension” of the ruling League of Communists. After pluralism was established in 1990, workers continued to use the organizational infrastructure that had been built up in the period of “self-management Socialism” and this infrastructure survived, with slight modifications, until mid-2005. Here we refer to the Serbian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (SSSS), which, in fact, was a successor to the earlier and official trade unions. After 1990, another two major trade unions were set up: the “Nezavisnost” United Branch Trade Unions (in 1991) and the Association of Free and Independent Trade Unions (in 1996), as well as several other independent professional unions. As of late 2004, around two-fifths of Serbia’s 1,800,000 workers belonged to various trade unions.

Just like political parties, trade unions lack clearly differentiated “customers” and often try instead to act as representatives of the interests of all employees, whether they have been winners or losers in the transition process. That has accentuated mutual conflicts and weakened their negotiating power with the government and employers. Apart from trade unions, other civil society stakeholders include social organizations, citizens’ associations and some 3,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). While social organizations and citizens’ associations existed even in the time that preceded pluralism, NGOs started to emerge on a massive scale after 1990, mostly as a result of efforts by intellectuals to indirectly counter Milošević from a “third sector”. Until the political upheaval in 2000, there had been a “personal union” between some parties and NGOs, where NGOs acted as a “channel” used to furnish substantial economic support from abroad. In fact, before the October 2000 changes, NGOs in Serbia were strongly politicized and they played a major role in toppling the Milošević regime. After overturning the *ancien régime* in 2000, numerous NGO leaders assumed responsible positions within the

government apparatus. Due to a sudden “loss” of leaders, many NGOs have considerably cut down on their activities. That resulted in a certain loss of orientation after “their enemies have disappeared” from a conflict that served for many NGOs as a basis on which they had built their own identity and strategy of operation. In mid-2005, what once had been a vague line of distinction between political parties and NGOs now began to take a somewhat clearer shape. Some NGOs transformed themselves into political parties (G17 Plus, Otpor), while others “came back” to their original, apolitical activities.

The fact is, almost five years after the October 2000 changes, some protagonists of Serbia’s civil society still lack the roots and strength to act as stakeholders capable of efficiently protecting and promoting both individual and partial interests. That continues to have an adverse effect on political parties in more ways than one. First, stakeholder weakness deprives political parties of an essential partner in the process of articulating, aggregating and selecting social interests. Second, the lack of clearly differentiated interests within Serbia’s civil society hampers “party identification” among voters, which, among other things, may help reduce sudden fluctuations in strength of parties and thus increase the predictability of political life. Bearing in mind the lack of clearly differentiated interests among social groups in Serbia, it is no coincidence that fluctuations in the parties’ electoral power are much stronger in this country than in other countries of Central and Southeastern Europe (Goati, 2004, 185). Third, due to the lack of clearly differentiated group interests, parties practically “float” freely within their insufficiently differentiated fields of interest. That allows their leaders to take arbitrary decisions on strategic issues, while, as was demonstrated earlier, allowing them to remain in power, regardless of how their respective party performs in elections.



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## *Appendix*

### Results of parliamentary elections in 2000 and 2003

Party	2003	Seats	2000	Seats
Srpska Radikalna Stranka (SRS) Serbian Radical Party, nationalist	27,6%	82	8,6%	23
Demokratska Stranka Srbije (DSS) Democratic Party of Serbia, conserv.	17,7%	53	-	-
Demokratska Stranka (DS) Democratic Party, social-dem.	12,6%	37	-	-
G17 Plus (G17+) G17 Plus, (conserv.-) liberal	11,5%	34	-	-
Srpski Pokret Obnove - Nova Srbija (SPO-NS) Serbian Renewal Movement - New Serbia, nationalist	7,7%	22	3,8%	-
Socijalistička Partija Srbije (SPS) Socialist Party of Serbia, communist	7,6%	22	13,8%	37
Demokratska Opozicija Srbije (DOS) Democratic Opposition of Serbia	-	-	64,1%	176
Others	15,3%	-	9,7%	14
Total	-	250	-	250
Turnout		59,3%		-

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND  
INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

*Gordana Siljanovska-DAVKOVA<sup>1</sup>*

**Introduction**

In contemporary states it is difficult to imagine there being politics without parties. This does not mean that parties are always revered institutions; far from it. There is a strong distrust of parties and dissatisfaction with the politics of major parties. Given that parties are so important within the modern state, the question is, “What are they?” It seems that the best way to define parties is to consider some of the features of parties that at least some observers have thought to be key features. “A political party is an institution that (a) seeks influence in a state, often by attempting to occupy positions of government and (b) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and so to some degree attempts to aggregate interests” (Ware, 1996; 5). Why this definition? Because it focuses attention on the centrality of the state as the object of party activity and recognizes that for many, but not all, parties being in government is an important means of exercising influence. It also is applicable to parties operating in regimes other than liberal democracies, distinguishes parties from pressure groups and avoids the misleading assertion that parties are necessarily united by shared principles or opinions.

If the parties are institutions, then institutions include not only formal but also informal rules and procedures. There is of course a dis-

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inction between the institution itself and areas of social and political life affected by that institution.

In liberal democracies, parties are popularly perceived as differing from one another in terms of the ideologies they espouse. They have their own ideas and approaches to the relation between state and society and the role of the state. As Klaus von Beyme says, “Over the longer term only parties based on an ideology have succeeded in establishing themselves” (von Beyme, 1985; 29). But there were, and are, many parties whose sole *raison d’etre* was obtaining patronage through their control of political offices. They were less driven by party doctrines, which lead to policies, than by greed. It seems that the non-ideological aspects of politics have infected Macedonian parties. The question is whether they have the capacity to adapt? Do they adapt their ideology to the opinions and values of their likely supporters in the electorate? There are other questions important for internal party democracy as well, such as: How to handle internal conflicts? How to prevent oligarchic tendencies? How to use member’s knowledge, energy and creativity? How to create consistent policies and how to be competitive in elections?

Currently, Macedonia has 75 registered political parties. In Sartori’s words (Sartori, 1976, p. 125), such a party system would be described as one of extreme pluralism or even atomised pluralism.

From the point of view of the parties’ relevance in forming a government (in light of election results and their participation in the division of power), we could speak of a “two and a half” party system, or of a bi-polar, two and half format. Namely, the SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE are the parties that win a majority of seats in Parliament, but not the absolute majority. This is the reason why they must include other parties in the government, often by forming pre-election coalitions. All Macedonian governments, including the expert government of 1990-1992, formed post-election coalitions with one of the ethnic Albanian parties represented in Parliament.

Based on the political relevancy, I shall limit my analysis to the

Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM), Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Democratic Union for Integration (DUI).

The Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM) belongs to the family of socialist and social-democratic parties, or one of the nine major groups of what von Beyme calls “familles spirituelles”. The VMRO-DPMNE is a hybrid of elements of Christian-democratic and Conservative parties. The DUI is a regional and ethnic party and the LDP is a liberal party. Macedonian parties are atypical members of a particular *famille spirituelle* as a result of the interaction of the politics of patronage and the politics of ideology. They are very much under the personal control of their leaders and party *camarillas*. The *familles spirituelles* should not be treated as rigidly demarcated categories into which each party can be fitted. Modern parties have to respond to the demands of the electorate by adopting new views and policies. The practical policies of Macedonian parties, including the above-mentioned, are not always in the spirit of their programmes, and sometimes are even in direct opposition. The SDSM had the leading role in implementing privatisations in the Republic of Macedonia, the VMRO-DPMNE evolved from an ultra-rightist to a right-centrist party, the LDP’s ministers often promote liberalist ideas drawn from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the DUI fully ethnicizes politics by dealing exclusively with the collective rights of ethnic Albanians. It is completely misleading to see party ideologies as fixed. To speak of “left” and “right” in Macedonia is very difficult.

In Macedonia, party ideology in policy-making is becoming less important, because the self-interest of the actors plays the most important role. Policy-making is characterised as elitist in the sense that key decisions are made by the political elite in power, but it is partly as corporatist as well, as often the key business elite wield influence.

Political parties, especially the SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE and their ruling Albanian partner, play an important role not just in political

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life, but in overall life in Macedonia as well. That influence is so big, that often it is difficult to tell where the state ends and the parties begin (like Italian *partitocrazia*).

The relationship between the two main parties has been characterised by harsh political confrontations and uncivilised political behavior, especially during campaigns and public debates, as well as by a lack of dialogue and co-operation. Political opponents are considered “enemies”. Valuable energy has been wasted on fighting among parties and politicians. Such savage relations within the political elite stem from a lack of a democratic and consensual culture, as well as from a patriarchal political culture and archaic political process. Macedonian political culture is not rooted in liberal and democratic values. The political programs of the country’s various parties have not been challenged by realistic alternatives and by clear politics. Their rule has been accompanied by a systematic abuse of power, leading to ineffective governance and a failure to implement promised reforms. The political parties in power try to exclude opposition parties from the policy process. The attitude of the opposition has been “simply to oppose” rather than to offer alternative policies.

Alternation in power is an indicator of a healthy and functioning democracy. It also stimulates leadership renewal and policy development. There is no democracy without democratic alternation. In Macedonia, on the contrary, removal from power is perceived as a catastrophe, because politicians and state officials lose privileges, high social status and luxurious lifestyles. The “institution of resignation”, so crucial for the resolution of political crises, is unknown as an option in political life, even when it necessary after total failures or lost elections.

The historical background of both main parties reflects and explains their shortcomings. The SDSM was born from the former Communist Party, changing its name and modifying its program, while the VMRO-DPMNE, established in opposition to communism, is still searching for its own identity. The first party had to unlearn old poli-

cies and learn new ones; the second, as “policy virgins”, had to learn how to govern in unfamiliar settings. Albanian political actors, either those with political experience in the post-communist period, or newcomers from the DUI, which was derived from the National Liberation Army, have been and are primarily loyal to an “ethnic agenda” and the “Albanian national issue”, totally ethnicizing politics.

Internal party structures reveal the distribution of power, i.e. whether parties are democratic entities, which spread the participation and approach to power (polyarchy), or they mainly exist to reinforce the authority of the leaders and the party elite (oligarchy).

It seems that Ostrogorski, in *Democracy and the organization of political parties* (Ostrogorski, 1902, p. 72), in pointing out that the representation of the individual interests weakens, and the influence of the party machinery and control by the party elites grows, and Michels, with the “Iron Law,” expressed in *Political Parties* (Michels, 1911, p. 85) with the words “the one who says organization, says oligarchy”, are very relevant to contemporary Macedonian political structures and relations.

In spite of their different organizational structures and different orientation of values, the distribution of power within Macedonian political parties is similar: the party leadership, often represented in Parliament, dominates. Also, when the party is in power, the key players include the party *camarilla*, MPs and those holding ministerial posts. Ware’s claim that it is “harder to lead the socialist than the liberal and conservative parties” because of the institutionalization of the clashes and the factions that exist in the party is not applicable in the case of the Republic of Macedonia.

In the Republic of Macedonia, not a single party, including the SDSM, allows factions or tendencies. Fifteen years have passed since the establishment of party pluralism, yet it seems that the spirit of democratic centralism, as a Leninist principle guiding the alleged “balance” of freedom of debate, and strict “unity in action” persists among our parties. The splits that rift some parties require serious thinking and a

re-examination of their internal organisation and decision-making. But the same is true of those parties that do not have this problem and take pride in their monolithic constitution, while treating factions and tendencies as a disease!

The last elections brought to the surface the phenomena of eroded party identification, unexpected election behavior and even the “floating” and “instability” of voters. Macedonian political parties are facing a crisis. Not only have they failed to solve the most important problems of their members, their supporters and the citizenry as a whole, but they do not even address them.

Worse, the oligarchic tendencies within internal party life are regularly transferred to the institutions of power, thus infecting them with *partitocrazia*.

Civil society, the intellectual elite and the political opposition are excluded from, or not active in, policy-making. The lack of participation by a broad range of actors means that the policy-making process in Macedonia is hardly pluralistic and open. Macedonia is what Della Sala (1997: 19) describes as a “weak state” and its politicians “political hyenas”.

The democratisation of Macedonian parties is essential, particularly as pertains to the equal distribution power and wider participation in the election of leaders and candidates and expanded roles in the decision-making process.

### **1. Legislation concerning party organization and internal party democracy**

Legislation in the Republic of Macedonia treats only in principle those issues regarding party organisation and internal party democracy. Pursuant to the law on political parties (2004), “Political parties realise their goals through democratic structures and the expression of political will to participate in elections, as well as through other democratic means” (art. 2, p. 2). This guarantees the freedom and independence of political parties in acting and determining their own

internal structures, goals and elections. (art. 6, p. 2).

Macedonian law prohibits the forming of military and para-military structures in the internal organisations of parties (art. 6, p. 3). Also in line with internal party democracy is a provision for the realisation of the principle of gender equality as pertaining to party functions (art. 4). This provision is in correlation with a provision of the law on the election of MPs, which guarantees that either gender should be represented by at least 30% of the lists of proposed candidates (art. 37 from the law on elections of MPs). Similarly, the law on local elections states that each gender should account for least 30% of both the upper and lower lists of candidates for members of the council of the municipality and city of Skopje (art. 22).

As a result of including such quotas in election law, the representation of women in Parliament increased to 17.5% in 2002 from 7.5% in 1998. In municipal councils, the number of women increased to 22.7% in 2005, from 8.4% in 2002.

Political parties are organised and act in accordance to the territorial principle (art. 7 from the Law on Political Parties). The law also establishes that “political parties are founded at an assembly of founders, at which decisions on a foundation, program and statute are enacted, and its bodies are elected” (art. 14). Article 16 establishes the contents of party statutes.

## **2. Party organization**

To assess party organization and decision-making, i.e. the degree of internal party democracy, we will focus on the analysis of several key issues:

- Vertical power sharing - the status of the basic party organization and its relation to central party bodies;
- The role and the status of the individual member in internal party life, the (non) guaranteeing of autonomy of thought and opinion, as well as the (non) possibility of being a minority without facing sanctioning.



- The role and the status of the party leader, party leadership and elected public functionaries; the method of recruitment and control mechanisms.
- The network of horizontal structures and their role in internal party life.
- The relation of the party to its supporters and civil society.

### **2.1. Local organization versus central organization**

All Macedonian parties, including the four that are the object of our interest, may be classified as mass parties, organized on the territorial principle. Differences exist, but uniformity is the main organizational characteristic. Another important characteristic is hierarchy and subordination between the local and central levels.

The centralization-decentralization of decision-making is an important dimension of internal party democracies. The question is: do local associations have a participatory role in the decision-making process or they have only the right to initiate, propose and comment, but not to decide?

Formally, the SDSM and LDP have a decentralized model of organization and the VMRO-DPMNE and DUI have a centralized model of organization. *De iure*, all use the local organization as the basic form of building political will and realizing the rights and commitments of party members. In this sense, the municipal organization and its bodies are guaranteed participation in the building and realization of party policy, putting forward candidacies for SDSM bodies and the nomination of candidates for self-government at the local level.

The municipal organization of the SDSM is a form of inter-connecting local organizations from municipalities. Decisions regarding its foundation and termination are enacted by the central board of the SDSM. The bodies of the municipality organization are: the conference, the president, the presidency and the supervisory board. The conference is the highest body of the municipal organization and includes the president, the members of the presidency and the supervi-

sory board, but also members of the municipal council, members of the central board, MPs, the ministers and deputy ministers from the related municipality organization, and the mayor and the president of the local club of the Social Democratic Youth of Macedonia (art. 23). The competencies of the conference include: proposing candidates for the SDSM bodies as well as nominating candidates for the local self-government bodies; participating in the building and realization of the party program; electing the president of the municipal organization, the members of the presidency and the supervisory board of the municipality organization; electing delegates for the congress; debating reports of SDSM bodies, etc. (art. 25). The bodies of SDSM at state level are as follows: congress, president, secretary general, central board and supervisory board. A provision designed to encourage a more proactive role for the municipal organization allows one-third of them to ask for the summoning of an extraordinary congress. The composition of the congress reflects the internal party structure of the SDSM (an inclusive model). It is composed of: the president of the party, the secretary general, the members of the central board and the supervisory board, the presidents of the municipal organizations, the president of the city board of the SDSM, the president of the Social Democratic Youth, one delegate representing a certain number of members from the municipal organizations established with the decision of summoning the congress, MPs, ministers and deputy ministers elected from the SDSM list. (art. 46). The central board as the highest body between the two congresses deals with appeals lodged against decisions taken by the municipality organizations.

**In the VMRO-DPMNE** the president of the party and the executive committee play powerful roles in constituting party bodies at all levels, in the election of functionaries as well as in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, the municipal organization is treated as the basic form of organizing party members and the organization and competencies of the municipal bodies are regulated by the rules of procedure. The highest body of the municipal organization is the

municipal committee. It is composed of a president, members appointed by the executive committee of the party, the president of the municipal committee of the Union of Young Forces of the VMRO-DPMNE, the president of the municipal organization of the Union of Women of the VMRO-DPMNE, the president of the municipal organization of veterans of the VMRO-DPMNE, the president of the council of the VMRO-DPMNE, the president of the municipal subcommittee, the secretary of the municipal committee, the mayor of the municipality, the coordinator of the councillor group of the VMRO-DPMNE in the municipal council, the MPs elected from the area of the municipality (art. 4 from the Rules of Procedure for the work of the municipal committee of the VMRO-DPMNE). The hierarchy and the subordination in the relation between central-local bodies can be seen in the procedure of appointing and dismissing the presidents of the municipality committees by the executive committee of the party, and by the proposal of the president of the party (art. 6 from the Rules of Procedure on the work of the municipal committees).

**The LDP** has a decentralized system of organization and decision-making with guarantees for the personal and functional autonomy of local party organizations and their bodies, as well as a cooperative relation with the central bodies. The party is organized on the municipal level, at the level of the city of Skopje and at the national level. A different way of organizing the LDP may be established by a special decision of the party's central board. The municipal organization is the basic form of organizing members within any one municipality. It is formed by the decision of the central board of the party. The bodies of the municipal organization are as follows: assembly, municipal board, executive board, president of the municipality board and a supervisory board. The assembly of the municipal organization of the LDP is its highest body and is made up of all party members from a given municipality. If that number exceeds 200, then its sessions are attended by a certain number of elected members. The number of members of the assembly is determined by a special decision by the

municipal board that also determines the procedure for summoning the assembly. The assembly is summoned by a decision of the municipal board at least once a year. The decision to summon the assembly can be also made by the central board of the party. The assembly is authorized to: implement the party program within the municipality; review basic political issues, documents and party activities; establish the directions the work of the municipal organization will take in agreement with the program; debate, take positions, draw conclusions and adopt the annual reports of the municipality organization; elect and appoint the members of the municipal and supervisory boards. The municipal organizations are entitled to have their own representatives in the assembly of the LDP, whose number and criteria for election are determined by decision of the central board of the party (art. 21). An LDP assembly can be summoned at the request of more than half of the municipal organizations. Also, one-third of the municipal boards can ask for the holding of a session of the central board. The central board deals with appeals of decisions taken by the municipal boards.

**The DUI** is a centralized and personalized party with hierarchical relations between its central and the local bodies. The subordination is seen in the process of electing the bodies, candidates for public office as well as in the decision-making process. The DUI is organized on a territorial principle, with branch offices, sub-branch offices, and local councils. The president of the DUI forms the branch offices, i.e. through the verification of their constitution. The branch office is formed within the territory of a single municipality. The bodies of the branch offices are the management board, the president, the presidency and the secretary (art. 18). The statute contains no provisions for the composition and competencies of the bodies. The party bodies at the central level are the following: the congress, the general council, the management board, the president, the presidency, the statutory committee, the supervisory committee and the court of honor (art. 20). The congress is the highest body of the party. A regular congress

is being summoned every four years. The DUI president can summon an extraordinary congress if requested by two-thirds of the members of the management board or at the request of half of the presidencies of branch offices that make up more than 50% of overall membership. This double condition makes it difficult for branches to take on a proactive role.

## **2.2. Member participation in decision making**

Formally, all the parties guarantee their members a long list of rights as well as inclusion in the decision-making process.

The members of the **SDSM** have the following rights and obligations: to participate in the building and implementation of party politics and in the undertaking of initiatives that do not oppose the program and the statute; the right to be a candidate on the party lists for parliamentary, presidential and local elections; the right to be informed about the activities of the party and the right to have a critical view of them; the right for solidarity assistance from the party, particularly in case of the breaching of this right due to party affiliation; the right to have separate opinions, proposals and positions that may place them in the minority during debates and decision making and to ask for a review of those proposal when they consider the conditions to be right; the right to inform and to ask for support from their membership for a renewed review of an issue for which they have not received the majority of support. (art. 8 of the statute of SDSM). The statute guarantees the autonomy of the personality of the member and the active role of the membership in the decision-making process. The membership may be ended on account of: simultaneous membership in another political party in the Republic of Macedonia; if as an MP, mayor, councilor or elected functionary in the executive, the member does not act in agreement with the program or the statute of the party; if by his or her behavior he or she tarnishes the reputation of the party; if he or she works in opposite to the program or the statute of the party (art. 9). The decision to terminate membership has to be submitted to the

member in a written form. The member is entitled to appeal to the central board of the SDSM in cases when the decision to terminate has been made by the presidency. In cases when the central board has made the decision, it is the supervisory board of the SDSM that will decide on the appeal (art. 9, p. 5 and 6). To inform members of the party of their insight into and control over the work of the bodies of the party, the statute envisages the formation of a permanent tribune - i.e. a democratic forum (art. 17). The bodies of the SDSM can make abiding decisions if the meetings are attended by more than half of the members of the body, and the decisions are passed on a majority vote (art. 61). If at least 30% of the total number of members oppose the decision or abstain, the enacting of the decision shall be postponed until the next session of the body. A significant minority of 30% cannot suffer any consequences because of their different opinion or voting (art. 61, p. 5). The statute of the SDSM does not contain provisions for the prohibition or allowing of factions or tendencies. The leadership of the SDSM has explained on several occasions that there are no factions within the party lines and that the party has a monolithic structure.

The rights, commitments and responsibilities of members of the **VMRO-DPMNE** are: to participate in the work of the party; to elect and to be elected to the bodies of the party; to be informed about the activities and the acting of the party; to forward proposals for the more successful work of the party. The member is committed to pay a membership fee on a regular basis and to abide by the program documents, the statute and the other acts of the party (art. 14). Membership in the party can be terminated by voluntary departure, or by acting contrary to the statute, program documents and other acts of the party or for joining another party (art. 16). The members of VMRO-DPMNE committees cannot be held responsible for expressing their opinion during committee sessions, but the decisions and positions of the committee are mandatory for members of the party (art. 28 from the Rules of Procedure). The statute of the VMRO-DPMNE does not contain

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provisions on factions or tendencies, but they have been a reality in the party: In 1994, Mr. Vladimir Golubovski left the party and formed the VMRO-Democratic party; in 1999, Mr. Boris Stojmenov, a former finance minister in VMRO-DPMNE, left the party and formed the VMRO-Macedonian; in 2001, Mr. Boris Zmejkovski, one of the founders of the party, left the party and formed VMRO-the Real; in 2004, the former leader of the VMRO-DPMNE formed VMRO-the People's party, and 12 MPs from the VMRO-DPMNE transferred to the new party and formed an MP group. In 2004, the former vice President of the VMRO-DPMNE, Ms. Dosta Dimovska, after her request to form a faction within the party was denied, left and formed the Democratic Republican party. In the meantime, the VMRO-Democratic Party and VMRO-The Real returned to VMRO-DPMNE.

According to the statute of the **LDP**, the member is “the base for organizing the Liberal Democratic Party” (art. 8). For this party, one of its basic goals and tasks is to be “a party of free and responsible individuals, people with a civic and liberal spirit” (art. 6, line 7). The accession to and the membership in the party is treated as a personal right of the citizen who accepts the program goals and statutory norms of the party (art. 9). Any adult can be a member of LDP, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, religion or occupation, as long as he or she is a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia and is a permanent resident (art. 9). The membership procedure starts with the filling in of an application, which is submitted to the municipality organization of LDP or to the headquarters of the Party that is in charge of keeping the registry (art. 10). An association, political party or another organization can access the party, and by signing a statement for membership, all their members can become full members of the party (art. 12). Members of the LDP has the following rights, duties and responsibilities: to participate in the activities of LDP at all levels of organizing; to freely express their positions and opinions and to give recommendations to the bodies of the party; to elect and be elected to the bodies of the party; to run as candidate

for a public function; to actively participate in the realization of the goals, tasks and activities of the party; to be informed about the activities of the bodies of the party; to be engaged in the growth of the number of members and supporters of LDP; to preserve the reputation and the identity of the party; to implement the program, the statute, the decisions and the positions of the party in the political and societal life; to be free to have a different opinion from the majority of the party and to strive through the bodies of the party to have their opinions affirmed, although the decision of the majority remains mandatory (art. 13). The status of any member of the party may be terminated through a written statement if that member joins another political party. (art. 14)

Pursuant to article 6 of the statute, “membership in the **DUI** is free and on a voluntary basis. The DUI is open to all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, and every adult member, citizen of the Republic of Macedonia who accepts the program and the statute of DUI can become its member”. The membership procedure starts with an application form; the card must be returned upon termination of membership (art. 6). The membership process is carried up via the party bodies, closest to the location of the citizen’s household. Honorable members of DUI can be “individuals with a special contribution in the realization of the program goals and determinations of DUI” (art. 15). The members are entitled: to engage themselves in the work of the party, to elect and to be elected to party bodies; to be informed of its activities; to forward proposals, suggestions and remarks; to be familiarized with the acts of the bodies; to defend the honor, dignity and interests of the party (art. 9). The status of a party member is terminated through the withdrawal of membership following a particular statement, the loss of psychophysical capabilities, death or exclusion (art. 10). A party member can be excluded through acts contrary to the program and the statute, abuse of materials or finances, the carrying out of activities in opposition to the acts of the party and for any immoral or compromising behavior (art. 11). The branch offices, sub-



branch offices or party bodies that carried out the original membership procedure (art. 12) may carry out the exclusion process as well. The excluded member can appeal by submitting an objection. In this case it is the presidency of the board that will decide, and in the final instance, the management board of the DUI (art. 13) that will make the decision. The member can also be excluded because of passivity or non-payment of membership dues (art. 14).

In reality the party membership is not actively included in party life. Its activities are mainly connected to elections. The lack of a democratic tradition and political experience (internal party democracy conditions), as well as the previous political system's legacy, are reflected in deficiencies inside the parties: the lack of tolerance and dialogue; the banning of factions and different alternative ideas or critics within the party; the lack of courage to speak up for the fear of being dismissed from the party or being considered as a "traitor"; and the lack of transparency, with decisions not being taken openly or with consensus. So, the conclusion is that decision-making is more like decision-imposing than a consensus-seeking process. Ideology and policy programs have become less salient features of internal party life, which has led to a gradual decline in the numbers of ideologically committed members and an increase of "pragmatic" members. Personal material interests and benefits prevail over values, beliefs and political convictions.

### **2.3. The leader**

"Presidentialism" is a developed concept in all Macedonian parties. Parties are identified by their presidents ("chairman + seal"). Nevertheless, there are two groups of parties: those where presidential power has been statutory supported (VMRO-DPMNE and DUI), and those where presidents have been *de facto*, acting in accordance with the "winner takes all" principle (LDP and SDSM).

The president of the **SDSM** represents the party; he leads the party in between the sessions of its bodies; he participates in the build-

ing of the policy of the SDSM; he summons the sessions of the central board and the presidency and chairs them. The mandate of the president is four years, with the right to reelection. Normatively, the president of the SDSM is the *primus inter pares*, but in practice, he is a key subject in the recruitment of the party leadership, not only on a central level but also on the local one. He also plays a key role in putting forward candidacies, the election of public functionaries from the SDSM at all levels, and the creating and leading party politics. The SDSM lost parliamentary elections in 1998, but the membership and party bodies didn't ask for a resignation from the SDSM president. Nor did he offer to resign.<sup>2</sup>

The President of the **VMRO-DPMNE** is normatively and realistically the key party figure. He is elected every four years and may be reelected again and again. He is president of the central and the executive committees (art. 21 of the Statute). The president of the party has wide competencies: he represents the party, he chairs the sessions of the central and executive committees as well as the annual assembly. He makes political and other decisions on behalf of the party, actively participates in the creation of its politics; is in charge of the implementation of the statute, the program and other acts; concludes agreements and signs acts in agreement with the program and the statute; proposes the election and dismissal of vice presidents, the secretary general and the members of the executive committee; proposes to the central committee the election and dismissal of the statutory and supervisory committee in between two congresses; establishes the timing of the annual assembly; can stop the execution of decisions and other acts of the executive committee and the other bodies and can inform the central committee of such actions; submits an annual report to the central committee (art. 22 of the statute). In cases of an

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<sup>2</sup> In the election campaign ahead of the presidential elections in 2004 and during the local elections in 2005, the prime minister, in his role as resident of the party, was actively involved in the campaign, thus using the state function for party purposes.

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emergency, the president of the party can call a session of the central committee within fewer than five days' notice, and can propose the agenda at the session itself (art. 25).

The executive committee of the party, as a political-executive body, acts on the political directions, conclusions and tasks given by the president of the party and the central committee (art. 26). The executive committee reports of its work to the president and the central committee (art. 27). The Union of the Young Forces of the VMRO-DPMNE is responsible not only to the central and executive committees but also to the president of the party (art. 42, p. 4). In cases of war, danger of war or other extraordinary situations, when the work of the congress, the central and executive committees is objectively impossible, their competencies are taken over by the president (art. 48).<sup>3</sup> We believe that the enormous competencies of the president are a great obstacle to internal party democracy and that it is necessary to make changes in the statute within the framework of the announced reforms. Presidentialism within the VMRO-DPMNE has been a factor that has contributed to fragmentation, although it initially was aimed at unifying the party.

According to the statute of the **LDP**, the president has the following rights, duties and responsibilities: to represent LDP in the country and abroad, to call and lead the sessions of the assembly, the central board and the executive board of the LDP; to implement the politics of the LDP; to care for the implementation of the decisions, conclusions and other acts of the party; to sign those acts; to propose programs for the development of the party in between two assemblies as well as programs for increasing membership; to proposes ways of acting to the representatives of the party in the legislative and executive branches; to propose election campaigns; to put forward candi-

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<sup>3</sup> Following the lost parliamentary elections in 2002, the president of the VMRO-DPMNE, Mr. Ljubco Georgievski, withdrew from his function. The new president, Mr. Nikola Gruevski, initiated reforms in the party.

dates for members of the executive board and candidates for vice president of the LDP; to run staff policy; to propose candidate lists for LDP MPs; to propose a list of members of the central and executive boards; and to carry out other tasks assigned by parliament and the central board of the party (art. 49). The function of the president ceases at his request or upon dismissal by the LDP assembly. The proposal for dismissal can be submitted in a written form by an LDP body that represents at least half of the total number of LDP assembly members. The decision to dismiss can be made through a majority vote taken by the members present (art. 50). Regarding the representation of the party, the statute says: “the party is represented by the President within the framework of its goals and tasks and within the limits of its statutory functions. He has no right to undertake on behalf of the party legal actions, unless this is entrusted to him by a special decision of the Central Board (art. 75, p. 2). The LDP leader, Mr. Penov, who had been the mayor of Skopje for eight years, ran for the third time in March 2005 local elections and lost. Regardless, he did not submit his resignation nor did the party membership or bodies ask for it!

The President of the **DUI** has the role of party ‘sultan’. He is authorized to form the branch offices of DUI, i.e. to verify their constitution (art. 18, p. 2). He is also entitled to propose one-third of the composition of the executive board of the party (art. 26, p. 5). The congress elects him on a secret ballot, in two rounds, but he can also be elected by a decision of congress (art. 30, p. 6). The president of the DUI is president of the presidency and president of the executive board of the party. The president of the party represents the party, actively influences the realization and the valorization of the program determinations of the party, takes into account the realization of the party program, the statute and other acts and decisions that are enacted by the bodies of the party; signs the decisions of the branch offices that are not in accordance with the provisions, the statute and the program of the party and can also, for the same reasons, abolish a

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branch office or a sub-branch office. The president signs agreements on inter-party co-operation in the country and abroad; proposes the election of vice presidents and the secretary general; proposes the election of the members of the presidency of the party. The president also submits a report on his or her work to the congress (art. 32). When the executive board proposes a vice-presidential candidate, again, the president of the party needs to give consent. The vice presidents lead a certain number of sectors with the approval of the president of the party (art. 32). The president of the party proposes to the presidency the candidates for public functions at the central level. The immense power of the DUI president can be best seen in the statement of the former minister Mr. Agron Buxhaku, of the DUI, who said that as a minister in the government he “*was not accountable to the Prime Minister but to his party leader*”. During the recent local elections, next to the billboards of the DUI candidates for mayor, there were posted as well billboards with the figure of DUI leader Ahmeti. Ahmeti has almost never attended a single session of Parliament, despite being an elected MP.

During the transition period, Macedonia has lacked leaders with vision, who have been willing to make sacrifices and make a difference for the country and its citizens. Irresponsible leaders inexperienced in the procedures of democratic life have governed the country. Many have not had any sort of notable academic or professional background and have lacked in success their previous professions, as well as integrity and values. They are perceived as self-interested and arrogant. There is a growing discontent among Macedonian citizens when it comes to party leaders: the president of the SDSM, who is also the president of the country, has the confidence of 7.9% of the population; the president of the DUI - 11.3%; the president of the LDP – 3.8% and the president of the VMRO-DPMNE – 8.7%.<sup>4</sup> They are usually surrounded by so-called “business politicians” who have no ideologi-

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<sup>4</sup> Early Warning , UNDP’s Report from June 27, 2005

cal or programmatic convictions and who have built their careers through clientelism. So, businessmen, instead of running their businesses, run the country. We failed to create a political system based on stable institutions. Instead, it relies on party leaders, who then behave like political gods. Macedonian party leaders are synonymous with an authoritarian mentality in the political leadership. They put themselves above the party, party organs and party members, thus becoming serious obstacle to the democracy and progress of their parties and the country as a whole. We need more idealistic, intelligent, well-educated, honest and patriotic leaders with integrity, strong willingness and a high sense of commitment and responsibility. We need visionary leaders, reformers who can bring energy to transforming the country along western democratic lines. We need Macedonian “tigers” able to push modernization and democratization programs, who will take courageous and decisive action toward establishing a “one member, one vote” model, with decentralized decision making, autonomous local organizations, respect for and protection of personal opinions and, in a word, internal party democracy.

#### **2.4. Selection and control of party leadership and office holders**

In all Macedonian parties the president’s mandate is not limited, nor is that of members of executive organs. Primaries are unknown and party leadership is reluctant to stage them, “led by fear of entropy and anarchy”. To harmonize the need for efficient leadership with the need for representation of the main party structures, almost all executive bodies are elected by the national convention (SDSM,), by the assembly (LDP), or by the congress (VMRO-DPMNE, DUI). They can be proposed by different actors: municipal organizations, presidents, central bodies, certain number of delegates at conventions, etc. Knowing that MPs, ministers and deputy ministers are *ex officio* members of the highest organs on a national level, as well as of the highest organs on a local level, the decision-making process is under

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the strong control of the president and party leadership. That leads to the development of an elitist type of internal party democracy, while reducing its pluralistic and participatory nature. Since they are selected through a centralized procedure, MPs and councillors are subordinated to and dependant on the party leadership. Despite the fact that parties are financed by the state budget, in accordance with the number of parliamentary seats, money goes directly to the party center. Without autonomy in the creation of parliamentary platforms, or in financial matters, coalition bargaining and the election of parliamentary leaders, much less in parliamentary voting, parliamentary parties are more like party spokesmen than they are political representatives devoted to citizens. So, “*homo partitus*” is not “*homo democraticus*”.

The selection /election process of party leadership and office holders is oriented from the bottom-up. Municipal organizations propose candidates and their election is carried out by the highest body of the party (congress, assembly or convention). The procedure, way and criteria for putting forward candidacies and electing party functionaries is determined by the central board (SDSM) or central committee (VMRO-DPMNE) as the highest bodies of those parties between two congresses.

The election of **SDSM** functionaries is carried out via secret balloting, in two rounds. In the first round, a majority of the votes of attendees is required, under the condition that it represents no less than one-third of the total number of the members of the body. Two candidates proceed to the second round. Securing the votes of a relative majority, which should be no less than one-third the total number of members of the bodies, is sufficient for victory. At least 20% of all SDSM body members must be younger than 32 years and at least 30% must represent either gender. The calling of a congress, in the form of a convention, is mandatory prior to parliamentary and presidential elections in order to nominate candidates. It is also mandatory after parliamentary, presidential and local elections in order to analyze election results and express the confidence in SDSM bodies.

(art. 47, p. 8). During elections, the principle of de-accumulation of functions must be taken into consideration (art. 62). The congress of the **VMRO-DPMNE** as its highest body elects the president of the party based on the proposal of at least 30 delegates. The election is carried out in two rounds. The first round requires the absolute majority of votes, and the two best-ranked candidates enter the second round. Whoever obtains the majority of votes wins. The central committee of the VMRO-DPMNE as the highest body of the party in between congresses nominates candidates for MP. The president of the VMRO-DPMNE proposes vice presidents and the secretary general, who are then elected by the executive committee. In the **LDP**, the municipal board nominates candidates for mayors and members of the municipal council, but the president of the party proposes candidates for MP. In the, **DUI** the presidency nominates office holders (ministers, deputy ministers, public enterprise managers and all other functionaries) based on the proposals of the president, as well as the list of MPs, which has to be verified by the management board, as the highest body between congresses.

The statutes of the SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI contain provisions that regulate relations between MP groups and party. The parliamentary group of the SDSM acts in accordance with its work rules, which in turn is in agreement with the decision of the central board. They submit at least two times per year a report on their work to the central board of the party and clear all their activities with the central board, which makes assessments and formulates positions in regards to the issues that are subject to parliamentary debate (art. 70). The MP group of the VMRO-DPMNE is tasked with carrying out its activities in Parliament in accordance with the statute and program of the party. To do this, it needs to consult with the bodies of the party. The parliamentary group of the DUI has to work and act in accordance with the program and the statute of the party, and to consult with party bodies (art. 48).

The statutes also regulate the relationship between councilor groups



and mayors on one side and the party on the other. The councilor groups of the SDSM submit reports on their work to the presidencies of the municipal organizations. The councilor groups in the VMRO-DPMNE need to consult with the party bodies on their activities in the municipal council. The councilor groups of the DUI are obliged to consult with the party bodies on their work.

In all parties, functionaries enjoy special status. By function, the MPs, ministers and deputy ministers are members of the SDSM congress. By function they are also members of the conference of the municipal organization and its presidency, but are not entitled to vote. Also, the mayors and councilors by function are members of the conference of the municipal organization and its presidency. The MPs, ministers, deputy ministers and mayors are by function members of the central board of LDP (art. 36).

There are supervisory bodies in all parties. In this sense, the members of the LDP “are entitled to control the work of the LDP directly and also through the Supervisory Board” (art. 72).<sup>5</sup> Within the DUI, there is a court of honor, which decides on issues related to the behavior of the bodies and public functionaries (art. 47). As the representative of the party, the president is not entitled to back off from the goals and tasks of the party, nor from the program direction and orientation as established by the LDP assembly. The president has no right to undertake legal actions on behalf of the party, unless this is entrusted to him or her by a special decision of the central board of the LDP (art. 75).

De facto the process of selection/election of party officials is degenerating into a game between the “candidates” and the leader and leadership, instead of fair and open competition. The leadership selects/elects obedient party friends rather than persons with integrity, who can properly represent the electorate and work for it in a responsibly.

The proportional electoral model with fixed electoral lists favours

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<sup>5</sup> LDP dismissed the vice president of Parliament due to a difference of opinion and his voting contrary to the party majority.

the leadership and enables the strong influence during the selection/election process by a limited group. All the parties have “cadre commissions” that evaluate and nominate party holders, but actually it is the president and an informal inner party cabinet, led by the servility of candidates for office and their business connections, who have the last word. Therefore, Macedonia functions like a “party state”, not as a “Rechtstaat”. The high public officials selected by “spoils system” work as “party officials”, not as state officials, who should work for the benefit of the citizens (devoted to citizens/citizen demands). “*Partitocrazia*” penetrates all areas of the state and the ruling parties colonize society and numerous sectors of the state. Clientelism (the use of state resources of various kinds in the interest of those in power) has grown rapidly. Elected politicians control access to the principle sources of wealth, the awarding of public contracts, the granting or withholding of licenses to do certain types of businesses. Clientelistic distribution of resources is a significant means of voter mobilization. Politicians seek to manage public resources, because that is an effective means of maintaining their own power. Another aspect is the provision of employment and appointment of party workers to public institutions. This is a well-known phenomenon: “*lottizzazione*” is the system through which the major political parties parcel out posts in public bodies and companies. There have been many allegations of politicians and statesmen extensively abusing public office to advance their personal and party interests. We are still waiting for a judicial epilogue. *Partitocrazia* and clientelism provide one of the bases for corruption and facilitate its spread (Newell 2000: 45).

### **2.5. The role and function of working groups and their relationship to sympathizers and supporters**

There are different horizontal structures in all Macedonian parties, but they serve a decorative rather than functional purpose. *De iure* parties have similar horizontal structures. In accordance with the statute, a Social Democratic Youth of Macedonia (SDMM) has been

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formed within the lines of the SDSM. This group includes members of the party and supporters (art.s 72 and 73). The SDMM organizes itself at all levels and is entitled to 20% representation within all bodies of the SDSM. Its president is by function a member of the congress of the party. The SDSM also has an active body of women. The women in the SDSM fought to gain 30% representation in all bodies of the party. In the current government, there are three women ministers from the SDSM. The statute of the **VMRO-DPMNE** envisages the following groups: the Union of Young Forces of VMRO-DPMNE, the Union of Women, the Union of Veterans, forums, and the Academy for Politics. Their organization and function are regulated with specific rules of procedure. (art.s 41- 44 of the statute). These groups are represented in the highest bodies of the party. The Union of Women of the VMRO-DPMNE actively lobbied for the introduction of a 30% quota in candidate lists in election regulations. The **LDP** has a Liberal Democratic Youth (art. 68), a Forum of Women of the LDP (art. 69) and an LDP Council (art. 60). The goals, tasks and principles are regulated, with a program and work rules. The forum of women is defined as a political method of organizing female members. The statute of the **DUI** envisages the formation of a forum of young people and a forum of women on the decision of the management board, which elects their members. Their organization and work is determined through separate acts, confirmed by the management board (art. 50).

The intent to attract potential scientific and expert parties has led to the establishment of different kinds of think-tanks. The SDSM has its council, which is composed of 30 to 40 renowned personalities from the arenas of science and culture as well as public personalities, who do not have to be members of the SDSM (art. 59 of the Statute).<sup>6</sup> The VMRO-DPMNE has a council of intellectuals as well as an academy for politics, which provides continuing education to the member-

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<sup>6</sup> The forming of the council is a function of the program determination for engaging scientific and expert potential in projecting the development of the Republic of Macedonia. (Item 6 from the program platform of the SDSM).

ship via the engagement of local and foreign experts. The council of the LDP is a body composed of LDP members and renowned public personalities who take up positions, and voice opinions and proposals on issues that are of strategic significance for the development of the LDP, country and society (art. 61).

All the parties are open to the possibility of cooperating with supporters and individuals who have no party affiliation. For this purpose, they can “participate in the work of the bodies of the party, with no right to decision-making”. The central board of the SDSM can form committees on: the political system, education, culture, ecology or to analyze the situation in any related fields. The committees can put forward remarks, criticize and come up with suggestions. They also can recruit competent and expert party staff as well as sympathizers (item 6 of the program platform). The LDP allows for the unobstructed presence of its members and other interested persons at the sessions of all bodies, as well as access to reports and materials related to the party (art. 81).

Parties also organize open party meetings of party officials and office holders with sympathizers and supporters on the local and central levels. Electronic communication has become more and more important as a medium connecting parties and sympathizers. The problem is that only 5% of the population in Macedonia uses the Internet.

De facto there is no adequate horizontal power sharing within Macedonian parties, i.e. different groups and specific interests are not properly included in decision-making. Parties also lack permanent cooperation with supporters. Usually, before elections, they develop *ad hoc* activities for sympathizers in the search for votes. Most intellectuals are unwilling to join party think-tanks since they fear they could lose their intellectual independence and integrity. Thus these bodies haven't developed into powerful policy-creating tools. Parties have been closed off from any sort of significant influence from different internal groups, including women, youth and the knowledge elite. Thus party politics, like policy making, rarely includes negotiations,

compromises and bargaining among different actors, in what Lindblom has called “partisan mutual adjustment”, which includes “consensus seeking” and provides for horizontal power sharing. There is no “best way” of policy-making. Some issues require highly political, pluralistic bargaining and an incremental approach, while others need a more planned and analytical approach. The lack of inclusion of all relevant party interests, streams and groups as well as communications with supporters and civil society, results in policy-making that is to a great extent a political process, not a technocratic one, and a partisan rather than an administrative one. It is a process in which the party leaderships have had exclusive rights to create policy, opening the door to potential conflict among the different actors. Policy-making on the road toward EU integration requires increased independence from direct political control (Della Sala 1997: 18). Indeed, some policies are efforts to force changes that are compatible with specific ideological goals. But in Macedonia, the personal self-interests of the main political actors play the most important role in policy-making: that is what makes it elitist. The party elite make the key decisions and often it is the key business elite who are the influential actors.

## **2.6. Parties and civil society**

According to Diamond, the functions of civil society include “limiting state power, promoting a modern type of citizenship and democracy-building and creating channels for the articulation of interests and opportunities for participation and influence” (quoted in Pridham 2000: 233). Contrary to its projected role as democratizing agent, Macedonian civil society has evolved into a weak and barely recognizable actor in the transitional period. More than 6,000 NGOs, trade unions, business and professional associations exist in Macedonia. But civil society in these 15 years has not been actively included in policy making. It is fragile. It cannot stand by itself and does not walk on its own two legs. Thus it is unable to organize and articulate societal interests and values. Its influence on political, economic and so-

cial life is small. There has been little dialogue and interaction between civil society and political parties. They are not enough in number and are not actively included in policy-making (especially regarding economic and labor policies). The number of NGOs dealing with civil and political rights, and particularly with minority rights, is much larger than the number of those dealing with social and economic rights. Trade unions are organizationally weak and have limited affiliations as a result of de-industrialization and high unemployment.

Some of the NGOs portray politicians as incompetent, irresponsible and corrupted. Other NGOs are very close to some parties. Some parties portray NGOs as corrupt and dependent on foreign donors or even as a “fifth-column”, but others support them. Nevertheless, NGOs have shown they can’t mount an effective civic protest to voice the anger of the people at poverty, corruption and mismanagement by seemingly indifferent and irresponsible politicians and to bring them to task.

Professional organizations, think-tanks, civic and grass-roots associations are limited and lack the organizational experience, financial resources and advocacy skills necessary to influence decision-making.

New business elite and its associations (chambers of commerce) play a powerful role both in party and in political life. Oligarchs exercise considerable control over the media and politics. The informal interconnection between the business and party elite is often what counts in decision-making.

The knowledge elite have vanished as a result of the “brain-drain” phenomenon. An amorphous substitute intelligentsia, mostly servile and incompetent, has attempted to fill the vacuum in search of a secure existence. Parties and politicians have not made any effort to either stop intellectuals from leaving or to lure them back home. Political leaders feel more comfortable in an environment from which the most educated and civilized people flee every day, rather than create strategies to make Macedonia a decent place to live and work.

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Instead of stemming the exodus and encouraging the smartest to return home, political leaders use all means to discourage them. Macedonia is a country where advancement depends on party and ethnic affiliation rather than meritocracy. Under good leadership, many of those who might intend to leave Macedonia would prefer to stay and those who have left are likely to return. Saying this, I have in mind Ireland, which, from a land of emigrants, has become a land of net immigration. Knowledge is vital to catching the last train for Europe, and in coping with the challenges of high technology and competition. Macedonia is not a society where knowledge is appreciated or considered important.

An open and free press plays a prominent role in any democratic society being both a mirror of public opinion and a magnifying glass of the issues that it takes up. Journalists are important actors in political life. The media, however, remains to a large extent dependent on the various power centers, including political parties. Macedonian politicians often send overly optimistic messages to the population. It is very important that Macedonian citizens be realistically and properly informed. Unfortunately there is no organic link between parties and supporters, politicians and general public. Distrust in politicians is widespread. They lack legitimacy. The gap that divides the public from the elite is growing. Citizens are seriously disappointed with politics, exhausted by the mediocrity and irresponsibility of the politicians and unhappy with the poor quality of party performance. Parties and party leadership appear distant, alien and largely irrelevant to the concerns of everyday life.

There are big challenges for Macedonian leadership: ensuring and preserving political and government stability; developing good governance; organizing free and fair elections; respecting rule of law; upholding human and minority rights; intensifying the fight against organized crime, trafficking, fraud and corruption, poverty and unemployment; uncontrolled urbanization; and severe environmental problems. Only competent, honest and responsible political elite

can tackle the most crucial problems. Parties are unresponsive to citizen concerns and unable to reverse the social and economic decline. The 55% voter turnout in the last presidential elections and roughly 55% turnout in the last local elections illustrated the electorate's disillusionment with their leadership's inability to provide them with basic necessities.

## **Conclusions**

Internal party democracy is like the Roman god Janus, who had two faces: one that is statutory-democratic and another that is realistic-authoritarian and oligarchic. One can move further or closer to the normative guarantees, depending on the ethical capacity of the political and legal culture of a party leader, its leadership and its membership. The situation within the four parties herein analysed on the normative-realistic level is different, but there are some general tendencies, which are as follows:

1. The authoritarian: Presidential and oligarchic elements dominate poliarchic ones;
2. Centralised decision-making suppresses decentralised action;
3. The recruiting of public and administrative functionaries is in the hands of the highest political leadership or under its strong influence;
4. The membership is by rule inactive, disciplined or follows a routine pattern;
5. The responsibility of the party leadership and public functionaries is relativized and suspended, even following the loss of parliamentary or local elections;
6. In the absence of precise criteria and procedures, a patronage model of putting forward the candidacies by those in power is what actually works in practice;
7. The submissive political culture becomes a *modus vivendi* because critical opinion and behavior is sanctioned with exclusion, while obedience is rewarded;



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8. In the name of victory, hate speech is tolerated and stimulated;

9. On behalf of monolithic structure and unity, the statute that guarantees different or separate opinions is broken, and the same with the constitutional provision for the right of an MP to vote according to his or her own beliefs (art. 62 p. 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia);

10. Through the appointment of selective staff to party headquarter positions, the right of local party organizations to elect their own leadership is being suspended;

11. The internal bodies that represent women, youth and other groups still do not have an institutional shot at promoting and protecting their legitimate interests<sup>7</sup>;

12. Although the party statutes and programmes include provisions for co-operation with the NGO sector, a partnership relation has not yet been established with them, and often the parties in power (ab)use the NGO sector for their own election goals;

13. The councils of the intellectuals and similar bodies are more decorative than policy-making;

14. The factions and the tendencies are not guaranteed in a single party statute and attempts to change this situation are sanctioned with exclusion from the party.

### **What changes are needed for internal party democratisation?**

1. Power sharing between the local and central levels;
2. Opening of the question concerning tendencies and factions and regulation of the issue;

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<sup>7</sup> One issue that needs to be mentioned is the co-operation of the women's groups from the SDSM, LDP and VMRO- DPMNE within the frames of the Macedonian Women's Lobby, together with the non-governmental sector and renowned female intellectuals, to increase the participation of women in politics. This resulted in the incorporation of the mandatory 30% gender quota in the laws for the election of MPs and on local elections.

3. Inclusion of the membership in the election of leadership and office holders through primaries;
4. Direct participation of members in the decision-making process;
5. Re-examination of the relationship between the proportional electoral model and internal party democracy;
6. Inclusion of horizontal structures in the decision-making process, i.e. horizontal power sharing;
7. Limiting of the mandate of the party functionaries and de-accumulation of functions;
8. Transparency and control over the work of the local, state and public functionaries;
9. Provision of more autonomy for parliamentary groups;
10. More appropriate representation of underrepresented groups;
11. Activation of think-tanks;
12. Reinforcement of the inclusive model of inter-party democracy through the wide participation of the membership and supporters;
13. Continuous education for the membership on policy making and good governance;
14. Building of a civic political culture;
15. Creation of party architecture and decision-making processes that are compatible with parties in the EU;
16. Building of partnerships with civil society;
17. Enforcement of gender equality;
18. Promotion of a philosophy of dialogue, tolerance and cohabitation;
19. Expression of readiness for compromise and consensus over issues of national significance;
20. Development of co-operation with related European parties;
21. Macedonian parties should become, more and more, parties of integration with a proactive and not a reactive political strategy, capable of mobilising, educating and inspiring citizens, and not only responding to their requests.

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## Appendix 1

### List of Party Acronyms with a Brief Description

**DUI - Party for Democratic Integration.** Founded in 2002 out of the NLA (National Liberation Army). The DUI is an ethnic Albanian party. Its president, Mr. Ali Ahmeti, was the former commander in chief of the NLA. It is a coalition partner of the SDSM and LDP. It currently has 16 MPs.

**LDP - Liberal Democratic Party.** Founded in 1993 under the Democratic Party name. In 1997, it merged with the Liberal Party and was renamed the Liberal Democratic Party. The party split in 1999. The President is Mr. Risto Penov. It currently is in coalition with the SDSM and DUI, with 11 seats in Parliament.

**SDSM - Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia.** The legal successor to the SKM (League of Communists of Macedonia) reformed and founded in 1990 under the name SKM-PDP (League of Communists of Macedonia - Party for Democratic Prosperity). The ruling party from 1992-1998 and from 2002 -on. It currently has 60 MPs. Its president is Vlado Buchkovski, Ph.D., who is also the president of the government.

**VMRO-DPMNE - Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Democratic Party for National Unity.** Founded in 1990. Splits in 1994, 1999 and 2004. Was ruling party from 1998-2002. Current status is in opposition, with 11 MPs after splits, of the 28 won in the 2002 parliamentary elections. Its president is Mr. Nikola Gruevski.

**Results of parliamentary elections in 1998 and 2202**

Party	2002	Seats	1998	Seats
Socijal-Demokratski Sojuz na Makedonija (SDSM) Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, social-dem.	40,5%	49	25,1%	27
Liberalno-Demokratska Partija (LDP) Liberal Democratic Party, liberal		11	7,0%	4
Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo (VMRO-DPMNE) Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity, (conserv.-) christian-dem.	24,4%	28	28,1%	49
Liberalna Partija (LP) Liberal Party, liberal		5	-	-
Demokratska Unija za Integracija (DUI) Democratic Union for Integration, ethnic [albanian]	11,9%	16	-	-
Demokratska Partija na Albancite (DPA) Democratic Party of the Albanians, ethnic [albanian]	5,2%	7	19,3%	11
Partija za Demokratski Prosperitet (PDP) Party for Democratic Prosperity, ethnic [albanian]	2,3%	2		13
Socijalistička Partija na Makedonija (SPM) Socialist Party of Macedonia, social-dem.	2,1%	1	4,7%	1
Nacionalna Demokratska Partija (NDP) National Democratic Party, ethnic [albanian]	2,1%	1	-	-
Others	11,5%	-	15,8%	15
Total	-	120	-	120
Turnout		73,5%		72,9%

## **ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PARTIES AND INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY IN CROATIA**

*Goran ČULAR<sup>1</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Internal party democracy has never been a theoretically straight issue (Wright, 1971: 17-54). While some authors insist on the importance of internal party democracy for the proper functioning of the democratic system as a whole (Duverger, 1963: 134; Michels, 1990), others stress that the logic of party competition rather than internal party democracy is the element that makes democracy function (Sartori, 1977: 54-56; Epstein, 1972). It is not only scholars who have had their doubts about internal party democracy. Equally indecisive are party members when it comes to internal reforms toward more democracy in their parties (Saglie/Heidar, 2004; Young/Cross, 2002).

Internal party democracy has not been particularly developed in the parties in newly post-communist countries (Biezen, 2003: 203-214). Their parties were mainly internally created, according to the “top-down” way of expanding their organizations, and organizational development was carried out through limited penetration.

The aim of this paper is to describe the structures of Croatian parties and to compare them according to internal party democracy criteria. The first section presents the state of legal regulations and restrictions concerning the organizational issues of Croatian political parties. In the second section, the basic model of organizational structure of the parties is approached by differentiating among three faces of party orga-

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nizations: the party on the ground, the party in the central office and the party in public office (Katz/Mair, 1995; Katz/Mair, 2002). The criteria for comparing and evaluating the condition of internal party democracy as well as the comparative analysis are developed in the third section. Finally, the last section draws some conclusions and tentative recommendations.

The analysis is based on seven major Croatian parties. All the parties have existed since at least 1990 and have competed in national elections since at least 1992. These parties together regularly win the vast majority of the parliamentary seats and have been the main partners in coalition governments since 2000, as coalition politics distinguishes political life in Croatia. Although some other smaller parties have also played a role in coalition governments, their appearance and electoral success nevertheless do not qualify them as relevant parties. Conversely, HSLS, though problematic due to its extraordinarily bad electoral performance in the last elections, is included in the analysis. For more on the parties included, see *Appendix 1*.

### **Legislation on political parties**

The main legal provisions that regulate the organizational matters and activities of political parties in Croatia are given in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia and the Act on Political Parties.<sup>2</sup> Article 6 of the Constitution of 1990 only stipulates that the parties should be territorially organized.<sup>3</sup> Later, as a part of the constitutional changes

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<sup>2</sup> Other formal rules that only indirectly affect internal party organization are the Parliamentary Rules of Standard Procedure, which regulate activities of the parliamentary party, but in a way so as not to interfere with party autonomy, and legislation on the electoral process, constituencies and electoral campaign.

<sup>3</sup> This was a direct reaction to the Socialist practice of organising cells at work places of the League of Communists. Apart from this, the art. also proclaims the freedom of party formation and the responsibility of the Constitutional Court to ban political party from acting violently against the integrity of the state and democratic order. In the art. I will consider only those legal elements that directly refer to internal party organisation.

of 2000, the article was amended so that the provision on the territorial organization of the parties (which anyway became part of the Act of Political Parties) was dropped, while the requirement that the parties should be internally organized according to constitutional democratic principles was introduced.

Legislation regulating political parties was originally passed in 1990 as the Act on Political Organizations by the then-socialist composition of the parliament, exactly between the first and the second round of the founding democratic elections in Croatia. On several occasions it later was minimally amended, so that its main provisions considering the organizational aspect of political parties remained and largely survived in the succeeding Act on Political Parties of 1993. The second law was also amended several times (for the last time in 2001), mostly in regard to the changes in the model of direct state financing of political parties.

As a consequence, political parties in Croatia have all been subject to roughly the same legal restrictions regarding their organization. The most important of these refer to the registration procedure, membership, territorial organization and party subunits, and generally are rather loosely set. Thus, in order to register as a political party, at least 100 citizens with the right to vote should organize a public meeting and pass the party program and the statute. This rather undemanding requirement resulted in the fact that, during the last 15 years, more than 100 parties have been registered in Croatia.<sup>4</sup> The right to become a party member is also legally restricted to adult citizens. Party activity is defined as public activity in principle, though with the right of the parties to exclude the public from their internal affairs under certain conditions. The parties should be organized strictly territorially, with a clear ban on establishing party organizational units in com-

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<sup>4</sup> Moreover, for some independent candidates in the last two elections for the Sabor (Croatian parliament) it was easier to register as a political party than to collect 500 signatures needed for their candidacy as independents to be officially accepted.



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panies, institutions or any other type of legal subjects. The law stipulates that the party statutes must further regulate membership, the forms of internal organization and party bodies and their terms and election procedures, but does not point to any specific type of internal party relationships, leaving room for the parties to freely choose how to regulate those issues.

The first Act of 1990 for some reason banned the establishment of youth organizations within the political parties, but the Act of 1993 rescinded this ban. Also, the Act of 1993 clearly excluded the possibility that party subunits become legal subjects in of themselves, enforcing in that way the existing pattern of party organizational development through penetration, and precluding party diffusion (Panbianco, 1988: 50). Finally, the Act of 1993 introduced the principle that party leadership should be exercised by party members directly or indirectly, through elected representatives. In this way, the law obliged internal party organizations to follow some form of democratic principles, though in very vague terms.

After article 6 of the Constitution of 2000 prescribed democratic norms and principles for party organization, the question arose of the further legal development of that constitutional article. The pressure from the public and civil society on party leadership to pass a law that would regulate party activities in a more detailed manner, particularly with regard to transparency, internal party democracy and party financing, provoked a negative response from Parliament.<sup>5</sup> As a result,

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<sup>5</sup> A group of university professors and specialists in political science and law from the NGO Croatian Law Centre prepared a draft proposal for an Act on Political Parties (Prpić, 2004). The draft was inspired by the German Act on Political Parties and provoked criticism for being rather detailed and restrictive (109 art.s). Nevertheless, the parliamentary Committee on the Constitution and Political System adopted the draft and put it in motion. The motion was rejected by parliament during preliminary discussions. Since 2000 political parties in Croatia have been heavily criticised for non-transparency, corruption, heavy spending, politicisation of the public sphere, inefficiency in governing, non-democratic internal practices, destructive effects of party discipline, preclusion

political parties in Croatia operate under a rather restricted set of laws.

### **The organizational structure and development of parties**

Roughly speaking, all Croatian parties may be classified under the same organizational type. The differences between the parties concerning their membership, local organization, ancillary organizations, the number of organizational levels, the number and type of party organs, selection procedures, and the relationship to the parliamentary party, though present, are barely visible and do not allow for detection of more than one organizational model. In this way, Croatian parties fit the theory that the organizational similarities among European parties can be best explained by national traditions. However, these similarities are far more pronounced in the Croatian case than in the case of Western European parties (Scarrow/Webb/Farrell, 2000), or even parties in some post-communist countries, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic (Biezen, 2003; Deegan-Krause 2005).

The organizational model can be best described through several characteristics: a very limited (if any) role of non-members in party affairs; a very limited, direct role of party members in the decision-making process; a lack of party factions; a weak influence of functional groups (youth, women, retired persons, etc.) within parties; a lack of affiliated organizations; a hierarchical internal order; simple organizational patterns copied at all levels; indirect elections of central party bodies; significant overlapping between the party in the central office and in the public office; the limited autonomy of the parliamentary party; the holding by party presidents of the most influential public positions (president, prime minister, president of the parliamentary party); and selection procedures that incorporate only the

of experts to take part in decision making, etc. More radical demands call into question the existing model of political representation and suggest new forms of representative bodies, consisting of intellectuals, direct representatives of social classes and strata, representatives from NGOs and moral individuals.

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central bodies with a prominent role in choosing a party president. It is obvious that internal party democracy in all the parties is not a high priority. Just the contrary: the party organization is subordinated to the aims of efficient management of party activities by party leadership. Moreover, organizational uniformity in a way has erased the differences that have marked the specific developments of some parties. Today, it is not easy to find the traces in party structure of the specific intermingling of the party and the movement that characterized, say, the HDZ during the 1990s, or of the SDP's communist heritage, or of the elitist beginnings of liberal parties, such as the HSLŠ or the HNS.

Another common feature shared by Croatian parties is the relative frequency with which they change their statutes, which isn't always related to the rather limited real organizational changes that the new sets of rules are meant to introduce. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of party conventions end with some amendments being made to the statutes, larger-scale changes, particularly those that alter initial organizational models, rarely occur. One of these larger-scale changes refers only to the HSS, which through several amendments of its statute during the 1990s, completely changed the structure and the manner of electing its central bodies, presidency and main board, but yet without any change regarding the existing practice.

Most organizational changes in Croatian parties can be classified under the evolutionary (Panebianco, 1988: 239-250) or "life-cycle" (Harmel, 2002: 121) approach. The parties change their statutes simply as they mature and become more complex organizations, in most cases simply to regulate issues that initially were not regulated or to adapt rules that would make them more or less flexible, depending on the management problems they experienced. Another incentive for organizational change were the crises in maintaining internal party discipline, the open disobedience of party factions or the attempts by groups of party activists to challenge existing leadership. These "discrete changes" (Harmel, 2002: 125-128) usually led to solutions that facilitated the control of internal dynamics by party leaders and even-

tually additionally centralised the parties. The remarkable “system-level” changes (Harmel, 2002: 122-125) due to legal, technological or competitive influences, apart from the organizational adjustment of the parties to the newly introduced system of local self-government in 1992, were virtually absent. Also, it seems that Janda’s proposition that electoral defeat is “the mother of party change” (Harmel, 2002: 126) can be applied to Croatian parties only to a point, since some changes happened just after electoral successes.

The sources of the above-mentioned uniformity in the organization of Croatian parties, as it is obvious from the first section, should not be sought among legal influences but rather in the way that Croatian political parties were established. All of them originated in a similar manner: they followed the “top-down” model, with a prominent role played by national party elites in establishing and developing party organization. Furthermore, these elites had been socialised, regardless of the dissident position of some individuals, within the same socialist organizational culture and inherited the same organizational patterns. Without broader insight into the variety of party organizational forms, without the remarkable pre-communist tradition and transitional “lack-of-time” conditions, these elites naturally tended to develop similar organizational styles and probably copied one another as well. The absence of later outside incentives and the fact that party leaderships did not consider organizational issues and style as a means to compete for voters, resulted in a uniform organizational model, with the inherited and distinctive features of each party unchanged from the beginning.

The internal structures of the Croatian parties (HNS, HSLS, HSP, IDS, SDP) include at least three and in some parties (HDZ, HSS) four layers.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the party on the ground, members are orga-

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<sup>6</sup> The numbers of layers fit the size of membership for each party, so it is not strange that the HDZ and HSS, as the parties with the most members, also have the best-developed local organisations. In this respect, Croatian parties seem to be ahead in comparison to other post-communist countries, not only for the huge numbers of members associated with the HDZ during the ‘90s, but for other parties’ membership as well (Čular, 2004: 101-108)

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nized in branches or local organizations where, depending on membership size, they can or cannot directly participate in local conventions. The executive bodies, elected by the conventions at the local level, make most local party decisions, design the activities and encompass the bulk of active party members. The intermediate (county) level, usually a structural copy of the local level, consists of representatives from the local level and is of secondary importance in most parties, with the exception of the regional IDS, in which the county level is actually the highest party level. At the national level, the parties organise regular national conventions, consisting of representatives from the local level (HNS, HSP, IDS, SDP), the intermediate level (HSS) or both levels combined (HDZ, HSLS). Besides, national conventions regularly include *ex officio* members of national bodies, MPs and sometimes presidents from the intermediate level. The national conventions meet annually (HDZ, HSS, SDP), every two years (HSLS, IDS) or every four years (HNS, HSP), but the electoral conventions are, in principle, organised every four years. The main functions of the national conventions are to discuss political issues, pass party programs and statutes and elect members to the central party bodies.

The party in the central office is represented by the national executive, called the presidency (HDZ, HNS, HSS, HSP, IDS), executive committee (SDP) or minor council (HSLS); the national committee that is the highest political body between two conventions (central board in HDZ and HNS, main board in HSP, HSS and SDP, great council in HSLS and council in IDS); one or more bodies for supervision and internal control (supervisory boards, courts of honour, statutory commissions) and sometimes advisory councils (HNS, SDP) consisting of non-members as well. The national executive is the main political and operative body that helps party presidents to manage parties, representing the most powerful group within the party, i.e. party leadership. Apart from the party presidencies there are, with variations from party to party, subordinated bodies of party experts,

advisors and professionals, coordinated usually by the party secretary, who together make up the central party office. The national committee is a broader body, consisting of 50 to 100 members or even more (HSS), which should act as the main political control over party leadership, with statutory powers to draft political programs, make proposals for amendments to the statute, pass internal party rules, prepare the conventions, (in some parties) make the final decision in the selection process and, in various ways, elect or confirm the members of the executive body. Although the central party bodies should be accountable to the party conventions as the representatives of the membership, not all members of the central executives and committees are elected by the national party conventions. In this sense, the parties range from the HSP and the HNS, in which only the presidents are elected by the party convention, to the HDZ and the HSLS, in which roughly half of the members are elected at the conventions, to the SDP, in which the majority of the members of both bodies are elected by the convention.

A party in public office is, like in other post-communist democracies (Biezen, 2003: 214-218); very often indistinguishable from a party in central office, since MPs and ministers are regularly members of at least one body at the central level. However, it could be said that the parliamentary party is subordinated to extra-parliamentary leadership. Firstly, party statutes and other internal acts stipulate that, in one way or another, the parliamentary party should be accountable to central party organs. Secondly, financial resources, from membership fees, donations or the state budget, flow to the central office of the parties and not to the parliamentary party. Thirdly, the turnover in the parliamentary factions of all parties has been constantly high from one parliamentary term to another, which has created a thin layer of top party leaders and, at the same time, has made the only MPs with experience very dominant within the parliamentary party. All in all, parliamentary parties lack autonomy in designing party platforms, in coalition bargaining, in financial matters, and, in some

parties, in the election of the parliamentary party leader. On the other hand, the only evidence of reversed influence can be seen in the practice of most parties where the MPs are *ex officio* members of the organs at lower organizational levels, though it could be equally interpreted as the control of the central office over the party on the ground.

### **Internal party democracy**

Internal party democracy means that the party should be formed from the “bottom-up” and that the internal distribution of power should be marked by dispersion among different levels, bodies and individuals rather than through its concentration in one organ. Unlike most definitions of democracy at the level of the political system, the definition of internal party democracy does not mean a state that can be distinguished from other forms of internal party order. It is rather the scale by which we can measure the extent to which a party is democratically organized, which allows us eventually to compare parties. It goes without saying that, again unlike “big democracy”, internal party democracy should be taken as a neutral term and valued only if contributes to the quality of the “big democracy”.

Furthermore, internal party democracy is by no means a one-dimensional concept. For instance, while in some parties a stage in internal democracy can be reached by the decentralisation of the decision-making process, in others the same stage can be reached by the direct participation of its members in party conventions. Contrary to this, and sometimes for exactly the same reason, it is not easy to decide which configuration of power distribution is more democratic. Should we, for instance, value the autonomy of the parliamentary party more than its accountability to the bodies of party membership? Similarly, not all of the organizational features of parties are related to the concept of internal party democracy. The lack or existence of ancillary or affiliated organizations does not speak much about internal party democracy. These and similar cases should therefore be consid-

ered as indicators of different types of party organization rather than the indicators of the level of internal party democracy.

In this paper I am going to try to determine the level of internal party democracy in Croatian parties according to two main dimensions. The first dimension refers to vertical power-sharing, i.e. to the autonomy of different party units, whether of members or local branches, and the measure of the extent to which the “party on the ground” can freely act and influence decision-making processes at different party levels. The dimension can range from very decentralised structures, with the party floor open to discussions and initiatives and central decisions heavily dependent upon the local level, to very centralised parties that arbitrary preclude initiatives from the bottom and with the decision-making processes concentrated at the national level. It can further be broken down into three sub-dimensions: the rights of party members, the autonomy of local branches and the influence of lower organizational levels in central decision-making bodies (see *Appendix 2*).

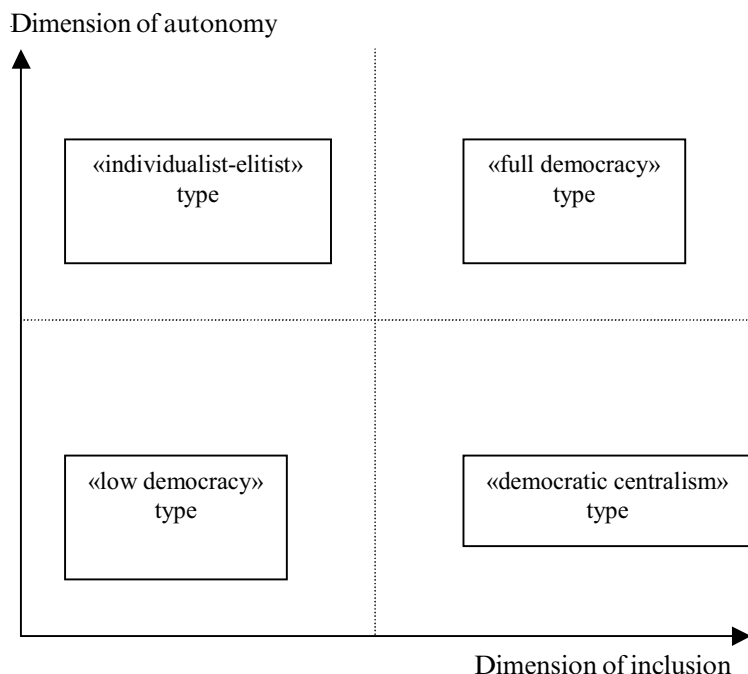
The second dimension could be called the participatory dimension or dimension of inclusion. It refers to the horizontal aspect of organization, the measures of how many members the decision-making process includes and compares the prerogatives allocated to the wider party bodies with those given to the narrower circle of leadership. This dimension can also be broken down to three sub-dimensions: the direct role of members in the decision-making process, the prerogatives of the conventions of members or delegates versus the executive bodies and the concentration of power in the hands of the party president (see *Appendix 2*). While at the one end of the scale there is the party where most decisions are passed by the membership assemblies, with direct elections and a constrained party president, at the opposite end there is the party where power is mostly concentrated within the narrow circles of executives, with an indirect system of representation and a powerful president.

The fact that these two dimensions sometimes refer to the same



object, i.e. members' rights, should not be misleading, since the individual rights of autonomous action and attitude and the rights of direct collective decision-making can easily be seen as different types of indicators. Furthermore, the two dimensions are held theoretically independent, meaning that combined they can produce different outcomes, depending on the place a party occupies within each dimension (see *Graph 1*). The results can differ according to the degree of internal democracy (if both placements of each party are low or high), but also according to the type of internal democracy (if parties have different placement within each dimension). In this way we can distinguish among four types of parties: the "low democracy" party, "individualist-elitist" type of party, "full democracy" party and the party of "democratic centralism".

**Graph 1. Two dimensions of internal party democracy and IPD types**



### *Member rights and protection*

All parties introduced similar conditions for citizens to become party members as well as general rights once they are party members. In general, citizenship, voting rights, the willingness to accept a party program, exclusive membership and confirmation by some party organ are the requirements for a citizen to become a party member. They have the right to participate in party discussions and decision-making, to elect and be elected to party bodies or to party lists and be informed about party activities. The only party that formally recognizes the right of its members to form a faction is the SDP, but up to now this right has not been exercised, partly also due to the expressed hostility to such attempts by the party leadership.

Disciplinary procedures against party members and officials clearly reveal the degree of freedom enjoyed by their members. While all parties have disciplinary measures of exclusion from the party, some also have lesser measures, such as reprimanding, suspension, bans on candidacy, etc. All parties from the beginning introduced some sort of a two-step procedure of exclusion with the right of party member to a complaints procedure. However, while at the beginning the executive bodies or even the party conventions took part in the procedure, later the role was taken over by the supervisory bodies and the internal courts, and only in some parties (HSLs, SDP) reached high standards. The exceptions are the HSS, in which executive bodies still decide on the procedures of so-called “political exclusion”, and the HDZ, where the final decision on the exclusion of members of central party bodies is made by the party presidency. After current Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader narrowly won the HDZ presidency in 2002, leaving him to face enormous opposition within the party, the HDZ added a special procedure of “erasing from the party register” those members who damage the party’s political interests or reputation. This is by far the most restrictive procedure involving Croatian party membership and it is applied completely by the executive bodies. It does not specify any sort of complaints procedure. These two

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parties also used the specified procedures most frequently, with the HSS doing so in the mid-1990s. Within the HDZ, the newly introduced mechanism was massively applied after 2002. Other severe reductions in member autonomy are outlined in an HSP statutory provision, according to which an elected or *ex officio* member of a party body can be dismissed on the decision of that body.

### *Autonomy at the local level*

While some parties emphasize the general principles of local party autonomy (HNS), the statutes of other parties (HSS, HSP) are full of general statements of subordination of the local to the central level. It is a reflection of the fact that the local organization serves not only as the framework for expressing the will of the membership, but also as the organiser of party work on the ground, particularly during electoral campaigns. Since all parties prescribe the organizational model to the local level, there are not many organizational variations from one local branch to another. Regarding important decisions, such as selection procedures for local elections or coalition strategy, local organizations are somewhat more autonomous in the HNS, HSLs and SDP than they are in the HSS, HDZ and IDS, where such procedures include either hierarchical coordination or confirmation from the central level. Far most centralised in this respect is the HSP, whose local bodies can only propose candidates for local elections, with the final decision remaining the president's prerogative.

Central party bodies in many situations can infringe upon local autonomy. First, local branches can be closed down, with (HDZ, HSS, IDS, SDP) or without (HNS, HSLs, HSP) the right to a complaints procedure. Second, central bodies can organize local conventions, usually under certain conditions (HDZ, HNS, HSP, HSS), but also at any time (HSLs, HSP, SDP). Third, often such interventions are covered by the very broad term of coordinating at the local level by central executive bodies, which is particularly developed within the HSS. Fourth, higher levels can sometimes take over local decision-making

(HDZ) or send its representatives to the meetings of local executive bodies (HDZ, HSP, IDS). And finally, great influence on local decision-making is exercised through *ex officio* members from higher levels. This principle is most strictly applied in the HSS, in which all party officials from all party or state offices are members of the party bodies in their branch or a local and county organization.

Altogether, centralisation is most pronounced in the HSP, followed by within the HSS and HDZ. In these parties, there is a strong “top-down” line of decision-making regarding internal party life and a “bottom-up” principle of responsibility. The HNS, HSLS and SDP, on the other hand, are not characterised in any radical way of the imposing of discipline over local party organizations. However, the practice by the HNS and the SDP partly limits proclaimed local party autonomy, since the central leaderships often choose informal ways to put pressure on local leaders. Somewhere in between these two groups lies the regional IDS.

### ***Influence of the local level on the central party***

National party conventions consist of representatives elected or appointed from lower party levels. While in the HNS, HSP, IDS and SDP only the local levels participate in this process, in the HSLS and HDZ the representatives are combined from the local and the intermediate levels. In the HSS, the local party level is completely excluded from the direct election of representatives to the national conventions. With regard to the right of the lower levels to elect or appoint their representatives in the central political and executive bodies, there is a big difference between the HNS and IDS on one hand and the SDP on the other. While the central bodies of the former parties consist of the majority of members from the intermediate and the local level, in the SDP the central level of decision-making is completely independent from the local level. The role of the local organizations and branches in the selection procedure for parliamentary elections is of secondary importance in all the parties. Only in some parties (HDZ,

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HNS, HSLŠ, SDP) can local bodies nominate candidates for the selection procedure, but even in those parties there is no guarantee that they will be accepted by the central selection bodies. Nor it is possible for local branches to nominate candidates for selection at the constituency level, since no party organizationally operates at that level in any sense. Concerning the initiatives toward the national party level, the local bodies within the HNS, HSLŠ and IDS and the intermediate organizations in other parties can convene a special session of the convention and/or change of the statute.

The organizational structure of the HNS and the IDS give to the local level the most room for designing their party politics. In that way, the role of the huge bodies of the membership representatives (conventions) is made secondary in comparison to the circle of party officials who at the same time hold the leading local posts and participate in the central party bodies. At the opposite end are the HSS, HSP and the SDP with the central level of decision-making virtually independent from the local level. However, in the case of the SDP this is an obvious consequence of the “assembly” model of internal party democracy and in the case of the HSS a combination of the “assembly” model and stronger centralisation, whereas in the case of the HSP it is an exclusive result of the overall centralisation of internal party power, which does not leave any room for genuine local impact on the party leadership. The HSLŠ and the HDZ are somewhere in between these two groups.

### *Direct participation of members*

In Croatia this indicator refers to the conventions of basic organizations, their size, prerogatives and the frequency with which they meet. All other party bodies are established according to the indirect model of representation. Within these limits, the members of the HSS enjoy the greatest opportunity for direct participation, since all are members of the branch assembly. They meet once a month, have autonomy in local matters and elect the executive bodies and their rep-

representatives for higher level conventions. Direct participation of the members of the HNS, IDS and the SDP depends on the size of their local branches. If a branch is small than the members can enjoy even more participatory rights than in the HSS, but if a branch or an organization is large enough, the only direct activity of the members is in electing the representatives of the local convention. In the HDZ, HSLs and the HSP, members rarely meet and elect an executive body that takes over all the local activities between two electoral conventions. Only the HSLs allows for the possibility that a certain number of members can initiate the disciplinary exclusion of a member, call a national convention and individually initiate amendments to the statute.

### *Conventions vs. Executives*

This variable refers to power-sharing at the same organizational level. The first indicator is the extent to which the members of the central political and executive bodies are elected by the national party assembly. While only in the SDP and the HSLs are the majority of members of the main political body elected at party conventions, and only in the HSS and the HDZ are the majority of the members of the presidency elected at conventions, while in the HNS, HSP and the IDS only a few members (e.g. presidents, vice presidents, honorary presidents) are elected by the convention. Regarding the selection processes, no Croatian party requires the convention or any other representative body for the final selection (Kasapović, 2004: 73). While in some parties (HDZ, HSS) the final decision concerning party lists is the domain of the party presidency, in other parties the presidency or the president himself/herself propose the lists, which are then confirmed by the national political board. However, the strongest position of the executive is in the HSP, for the whole range of special prerogatives enjoyed by the presidency and the president's exclusive control of the selection process. Besides, narrow executive bodies in all the parties have different prerogatives, in dismantling the lower-level organizations (all parties), in coordinating the lower-level bod-

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ies (HNS, HSP), in coordinating and controlling the parliamentary factions (HDZ, HSL, HSS, HSP), in confirming party candidates for local and regional elections (HSS, HSP, IDS), or in confirming standing procedures at local levels (IDS).

Local assemblies in all the parties regularly participate in the election of the executive and supervisory bodies at the local level. However, their power is severely restricted by the *ex officio* members in the executive bodies, particularly by the party officials from the local, regional and national level. Given the closed system of candidate selection in all the parties, the *ex officio* members of the party executives represent the will of the leadership rather than that of the membership. In addition, the executive bodies in most parties are responsible for the local selection procedure for both the local elections and the internal party elections. The only party in which all those prerogatives belong to the branch assembly is the HSS. In some parties, the local conventions of members are excluded even from electing the representatives to the higher-level conventions (HDZ, HSL, HSP).

### ***Power of the president***

It is generally claimed that the power of the party presidents is much more pronounced in the post-communist countries than it is in old European democracies (Biezen, 2003: 206). The Croatian experience is by no means an exception. Party presidents are regularly named in the statutes as distinct bodies of their own or with decisive prerogatives within the executive bodies. They enjoy the widest party support, particularly in those parties in which other officials are not elected at the conventions. They regularly hold the most powerful political positions within the state. They attract the most attention from the media and in a way personalise the parties for which they speak. The institution of the party “boss” exists in all Croatian parties and most members and party officials readily admit it.

However, it is possible to distinguish between two groups of parties: the group in which presidential power has been formally sup-

ported by a sort of statutory “presidentialism” (HNS, HSLS, HSP) and the group in which presidents have used informal influence in order to make up for the somewhat smaller statutory prerogatives they enjoy (HSS, IDS, SDP). The main characteristic of the “presidential” parties is the “winner-takes-all” principle, according to which the president is held fully accountable for the work of the executive body and party on the whole. Once elected at the party convention, he or she forms the party “government” in order to act according to the party program approved by the convention, while other camps and opposition groups do not have much access to the leadership.

The system is most consistently applied in the HSP, where the presidency selected by the president is not confirmed by any other party body. Besides, the president makes an exclusive recommendation of five members for the main political body, can call a meeting of the national committee or any other executive body at the local level and chair it, and has the right to initiate suspension procedures for party members and officials. Especially striking is the role of the president in the selection processes in the HSP. Unlike any other party, the HSP president decides on the party lists both for national and local elections. The level of power concentration is additionally backed by the rather wide prerogatives of the presidency, which is completely subordinated to the president. This very centralised and autocratic form of internal party relationships is the consequence of the ideological fear that increased autonomy and participation leads to anarchy and entropy and has been the reason behind the stable position of the party leadership in the last 10 years.

A somewhat milder form of party “presidentialism” marks the organizational structure of the HNS and the HSLS, since the president’s proposals/appointments of the party “government” must be confirmed by the national committee. A minor exception is the vice president of the HSLS, who is elected by the national convention, but who is counterbalanced by the president’s right to initiate a vote of no-confidence in the vice president before the national committee. Besides, the HSLS



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is the only party in which the president has the veto power in the minor council (the executive body). While in the HSLŠ the presidential prerogatives are limited to the appointment of the members of the executive body, in the HNS they also belong to the members of the national committee as well. The HNS president, apart from the members of the presidency, exclusively appoints up to 15 members of the national committee and the entire advisory council. Since the members of the presidency as well as of the party in the parliament and government are the *ex officio* members of the national committee, it is obvious that presidential power increases to the extent that the president, through the appointment of the party officials, can in principle control a good deal of the decision-making processes in all central party bodies.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the presidents in these two parties can initiate the dissolution (HNS) or disbanding (HSLŠ) of the local branches and their representative bodies.

Executive bodies in other parties (HDZ, HSS, IDS, SDP) try to balance the demand for efficient leadership with the demand for representation in the main political/programmatic views. Almost all their members (especially vice presidents) are elected by the national conventions or the national committee (SDP) and can be appointed by different actors (presidents, other central bodies, local level bodies, certain number of delegates at conventions, etc.). The right of the presidents to exclusively recommend the members of the executive bodies is restricted to the function of the main secretary, who performs organizational and technical rather than political functions. Knowing that the presidents of these parties cannot control the election of the national committee members, it is clear that the composition of the central bodies can reflect the interests of different party groups to a much

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<sup>7</sup> Out of 103 members of the central board of the party between 2000 and 2004, 22 members were elected on the proposal of President Vesna Pušić, whether as members of the presidency, who are also *ex officio* members of the national board, or as directly co-opted members. Statutory, this number could increase to 32, or to almost one-third of the national committee.

greater extent than in the first group of parties. A partial exception is the HDZ, in which the president is also the *ex officio* president of the central board and has the exclusive right to appoint the members of the inner circle of the central board and the central supervisory bodies.

In order to evaluate internal party democracy across political parties more precisely, *Table 1* ascribes to each party the position relative to the other parties, according to the listed indicators and analyses. These placements are then turned into points, with higher numbers indicating more internal democracy. The fact that the values within

**Table 1. Evaluation of Croatian parties according to six indicators and two dimensions**

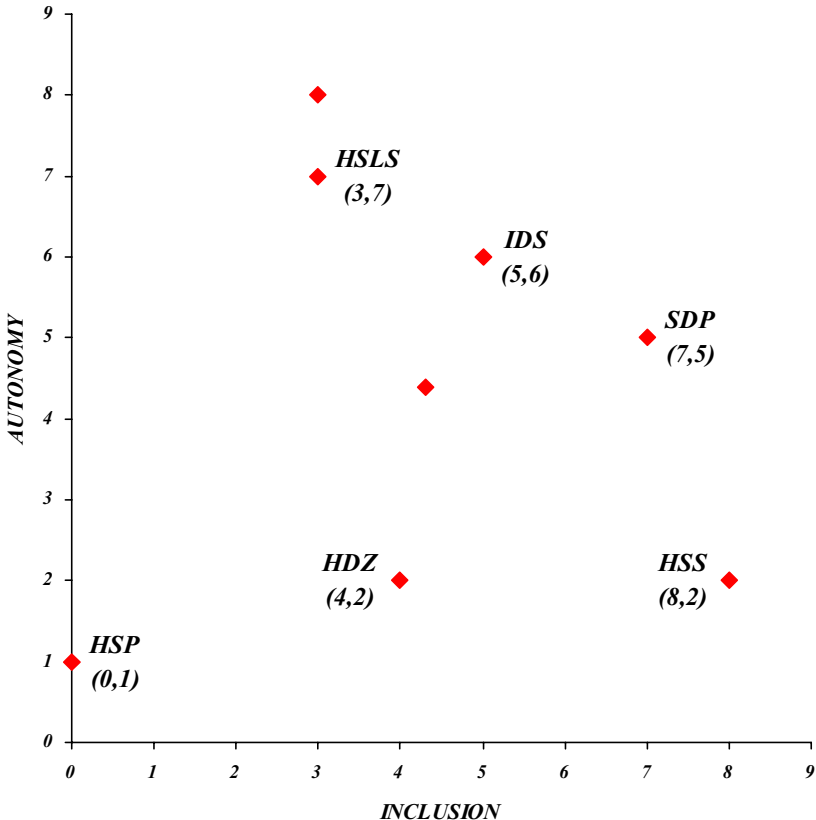
Dimensions of internal party democracy	HDZ	HNS	HSLs	HSP	HSS	IDS	SDP
<b>1. AUTONOMY</b>							
1a. members' rights and protection	0	2	3	1	1	2	2
1b. local level autonomy	1	3	3	0	1	2	3
1c. local level influence on central party	1	3	1	0	0	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. INCLUSION</b>							
2a. direct member participation	0	1	0	0	2	1	1
2b. conventions vs. executives	2	1	2	0	3	1	3
2c. presidential powers	2	1	1	0	3	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>

*Note:* Higher numbers indicate more internal democracy. All the indicators follow the same pattern except “presidential powers”, where the points are reversed – more powerful presidents, less internal democracy.

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each group of indicators correlate fairly well confirms the claim about the consistency and independence of the dimensions. The values for each party in each dimension are created by summing up the values of the indicators that a dimension consists of. By transposing these values into coordinates it is possible to design a spatial configuration of Croatian political parties (*Graph 2*). The dotted lines, cross-cutting in the average position, divide the space into four parts as it is hypothesised at the beginning of the section. The full line divides the space into the “below average” and the “above average” areas. The

**Graph 2. Positions of the parties in the IPD space**



distance between the zero-point and moving out along both axes toward the upper right determines the grade of internal democracy a party has achieved. This grade for each party can be calculated by summing up  $x$  and  $y$  ( $x, y$ ).

While the HSP and to a great extent the HDZ differ from the other parties regarding the degree of internal party democracy, other parties differ from each other primarily regarding the type of internal party democracy toward which they lean. The HNS and HSLs and in some way the IDS have developed the “individualist-elitist” type of internal party democracy, based on a high degree of decentralisation and local autonomy, but they score low on the dimension of participation. These are the parties in which small circles of local activists and officials are bearers of local party activities and, at the same time, participate in the decision-making processes in the party’s central office. Together with the national party leadership these activists and officials practically make the party, while the membership is rather excluded from the decision-making process. The pronounced role of the party president and his or her exclusive responsibility for the party once he or she is in office are another expression of the “elitist” lack of confidence in participatory, but also in pluralist, internal democracy. The HNS is certainly the best example of this type of internal party democracy. In the HSLs (until recently) the national party elite was rather isolated from the local level, but consisted of a great number of nationally recognised individuals, confining itself to the typical post-communist developmental model of the “party of honourables”. On the other hand, the IDS has a more balanced internal structure, which somewhat blurs its “individualist-elitist” development.

The other extreme is the HSS, in which internal party democracy has been more of the “democratic centralism” type. In this type, direct participation in relatively frequent meetings of local conventions and the range of prerogatives of the local and national conventions are undone by a high degree of centralisation, low autonomy of individual members and local branches and hierarchical dominance of the upper

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party levels. Together with other characteristics of the HSS, such as a relatively large membership, the penetration of the local organization and the dominance of the central office party over the other faces of the party, the “democratic centralism” type of internal organization makes the HSS somewhat similar to the canonical model of the mass party.

The most balanced organization regarding internal party democracy is that of the SDP. In this party, the rudimentary emphasis is on the participatory dimension, as the historical communist heritage mixes with the elements of later reforms. In the 1990-‘93 period, the SDP introduced several elements in its organizational structure that emphasised a radical turn to the electoral functions of the party. Some of the introduced reforms (the national convention as the final body tasked with selecting parliamentary candidates or the electoral board that replaced the national committee), were unique in the short organizational history of Croatian parties. Apart from being the most democratic elements ever, those organizational solutions departed from the dominant party organizational model and uniform organizational practice in Croatia. However, the SDP later adjusted its organization and brought it closer to the common organizational model.

The HDZ and the HSP are below-average parties regarding the degree of internal party democracy, though there are some differences between these two parties as well. The formal internal structure of the HDZ reflects on the one hand the specific development of the party in the 1990s, when the party functioned as a mechanism of the institutionalisation of a nationalistic movement into some sort of an autocratic regime within the democratic framework (Čular, 2001: 139). Its characteristics were its clientelistic and charismatic appeal to voters (Kasapović, 2001: 21-24), informal intra-party relationships and interconnectedness within the state structure. On the other hand, the structure is a result of the attempt of the new party leadership to reform the party and secure its own position after 2000. The new leadership expressed an ambivalent relationship toward the internal party

democracy, taking it as a means to be applied when it was in its interest and denying it when it was not, rather than as a goal in itself, so that the democratic organization of the party has been completely subordinated to the changes of the party's ideological and political image.

A similar conclusion could be drawn in the case of the HSP. Its shift toward a more moderate position within the political space and its transformation from the radical "anti-system" opposition to a party with a certain coalition potential has not been followed by any attempts to democratise its internal structure. Moreover, in recent years this clearly autocratically organised party centralised the decision-making process even more. Because of this, the HSP is by far the least democratic Croatian party.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The analysis of the organizational development of the Croatian parties and internal party democracy has showed several things. First, the organizational aspect of party life is poorly regulated in a legal sense and attempts to change the situation by imposing new and stricter regulations are not likely to succeed. Second, Croatian parties do not depart from the common post-communist experience of party organizational life, with a rather rigid structure, organizational uniformity and little substantial change through time. Third, internal party democracy is generally low, with the strong power centralisation, strong presidents, little participation of members and selection procedures that are highly controlled by the leadership. Nevertheless, even within such a uniform picture it is possible to draw some differences between the parties concerning the degree of internal party democracy as well as the type of internal party democracy to which each party leans. However, the differences are so small that they do not produce significantly different impacts on the political process in general. This is particularly true for the overall drop in public confidence in political institutions and the political elite. But when thinking which organizational changes within the parties could produce broader effects on

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the political system as a whole, one should not fall into the trap of arguing for more internal party democracy in general. By differentiating between the degree of internal party democracy and the type of internal party structure, the analysis paved the way to a more sophisticated strategy. The rest are very tentative recommendations based on the Croatian case.

In Croatia, more than half of the country's MPs have never served in Parliament before – a fact unlikely to change with time. The only experienced MPs are top party officials, who control both the parliamentary party and the selection procedures within the party. In this way, members of parliament are dependent and subordinated to the top party leaders of both sides. Moreover, in filling parliamentary seats, party leaders increasingly prefer popular persons over their own party members. Although all the parties are financed from the state budget in proportion to the number of their parliamentary seats, rarely does any party invest that money into professional and financial support of their own MPs. The money instead is directly transferred to the central party offices and used mostly for the purposes of electoral campaigns and regular party activities. All of this makes the parliamentary party very weak and incapable of fulfilling its function as effective political representatives.

The two decisive elements that mark the closed party structures in Croatia and affect the composition and the effectiveness of the political elite are the centralised selection procedures for the candidates in national and local elections and the lack of financial and organizational strength and autonomy of the parliamentary party. These two institutional elements taken together can largely account for the problems in the recruitment patterns of the political elite, the high turnover and the instability among the MPs and the low competence of the parliamentarians. Opening up the selection procedures by decentralising the process and including a broader selective body, together with putting more power and financial sources into the hands of the parliamentary party, would lead to a reduction in the power of

the party leadership and the shifting of party power from the central office toward the parliamentary party. However, one should notice that while the first task completely fits with a higher degree of internal party democracy, the other task leads in a quite an opposite direction. Parliamentary party autonomy can only be interpreted as a reduction of internal party democracy, since a party group is no longer accountable to the party membership or their representatives. In the latter case, what could cause wider political change is not internal democratisation but a change in the type of party. On the other hand, the internal democratisation of other aspects of party life (e.g. president elected directly by members, stronger connection with some collateral organizations, more local autonomy, liberalisation of party factions, etc.) is not so important, since those changes in of themselves do not necessarily have any positive impact on the political process – and sometimes can have even negative effects.

Finally, even if we know what to argue for, it is still unclear how to push the political practice in that direction. A direct legal intervention would hardly have a chance of being implemented. Yet, there are some small-scale legal incentives that could work. For instance, preferential voting, by which voters would have the right to intervene in the party slates, could lessen the ambition of party leaders to control the selection process, decrease tensions in the party struggle for top positions on the slate and open up room for reform. Similarly, allocating more money to the parliamentary parties would probably lead eventually to the greater independence of MPs as well. But since these incentives are themselves dependent on the present party/parliamentary elite, we can only hope that an electoral defeat or some other contingency will push at least some parties to adopt the proposed reforms. The other parties would then certainly follow.



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## Appendix 1

### List of Party Acronyms with a Brief Description

**HDZ (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica) - Croatian Democratic Union.** Founded in June 1989. The leading party of the right, with nationalist and conservative appeal. The ruling party in Croatia from 1990 to 2000 and again with the support of several smaller parties and independent MPs since 2003. Until his death (1999) the leader of the party was Franjo Tuđman, President of Croatia, it is now Ivo Sanader, the current prime minister. Splinter parties: HND (1994), DC (2000) and HB (2002). Party has 63 out of 152 seats in Parliament.

**HNS (Hrvatska narodna stranka) - Croatian People's Party.** Liberal party, recently more to the left. Founded in October 1990 under the leadership of several prominent political leaders of the 1971 national movement in Croatia, who were non-partisan leaders of the

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Coalition of People's Agreement (KNS) in the 1990 elections. The party follows the political ideas of the KNS. Party of Croatia's President Stipe Mesić. Member of the governing coalition from 2000 to 2003. After 2004, the party merged with the minor Libra and turned to HNS-LD (Hrvatska narodna stranka-liberalni demokrati - Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats). President since 2000: Vesna Pusić. Party currently has 13 MPs.

**HSLŠ (Hrvatska socijalno liberalna stranka) - Croatian Social-Liberal Party.** A national liberal center party, which has recently moved further to the right. Founded in May 1989 as the first established party within the so-called “democratic alternative”. In 1990 it was the leading force of the KNS. After the breakdown of the coalition it remained the most successful party of the KNS. The party split in 1997. A faction formed the LS in 1998, and was later member of the governing coalition in 2000. HSLŠ was a member of the winning coalition HSLŠ-SDP in 2000 and also a member of the governing coalition from 2000 to 2002, when the party split again and left the government. The rest formed a new party – Libra – which remained in the coalition government. Currently, the party is in coalition with HDZ and has two MPs. Current president: Ivan Čehok.

**HSP (Hrvatska stranka prava) - Croatian Party of Rights.** Radical nationalist party, recently shedding radicalism and neo-fascism. Founded in 1990 as a political follower of the party founded in 1861. The party entered Parliament in 1992, but split in 1993. A faction established HSP-1861 in 1995 but with no success at the national level. In the present parliamentary mandate the party has eight seats. President: Anto Đapić.

**HSS (Hrvatska seljačka stranka) - Croatian Peasant Party.** Centrist traditional party oriented towards agricultural and craftsmen interests. The only traditional Croatian party with organizational con-

tinuity since 1904, when the party was established under a slightly different name. After 1945 the party existed in exile. In December 1989 it was legally re-established in Croatia, and, after factional disputes, consolidated in 1991. It was member of the governing coalition from 2000 to 2003. Currently in opposition, with nine parliament seats. President (since 1994): Zlatko Tomčić.

**IDS (Istarski demokratski sabor) - Istrian Democratic Assembly.** Founded in February 1990. Regional party within the territory of the region of Istria, where it controls all local governments. Member of the governing coalition from 2000 to 2001. Currently with four seats. President for more than 14 years: Ivan Jakovčić.

**SDP (Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske) - Social Democratic Party of Croatia.** The leading force of the centre left, with moderate social-democratic policies. The party is legal successor of the SKH (Savez komunista Hrvatske - League of Communists of Croatia), reformed and formally founded in November 1990 by the reformist wing of the SKH. Initially the party was called SKH-SDP and since 1992 simply SDP. In 1994 it merged with a small social democratic party (SDH), which was founded in 1989. A member of the winning HSL-SDP coalition in 2000 and the main pillar of the governing coalition from 2000 to 2003. Iвица Račan has been its only president. Today in opposition, with 34 MPs.

## Indicators of two dimensions of internal party democracy

### 1. DIMENSION OF AUTONOMY

#### 1.1. members' rights

1.1.1. general rights

1.1.2. rights to form factions

1.1.3. protection of members against disciplinary measures

#### 1.2. autonomy of local organization

1.2.1. autonomy in decision-making:

- regarding local structure

- in disciplinary procedures

- in the selection procedure for local elections

- regarding local coalitions

1.2.2. prerogatives of a higher level in local affairs, in:

- the disclosures of the local organization

- the election and replacement of local leadership

- calling local conventions

- local decision-making

- the coordination of local activities

- that party officials from higher levels are *ex officio* members of local bodies

#### 1.3. direct influence of local bodies on the central level decision-making, through:

- election of representatives for party conventions

- election of members of central political and executive bodies

- role in the selection procedure for national elections

- initiatives in calling national conventions and amending the statute

### 2. DIMENSION OF INCLUSION

#### 2.1. direct participation of members, in:

- direct decision-making and elections

- selection procedures
- initiatives toward the central level

## **2.2. prerogatives of conventions vs. executive bodies**

2.2.1. at the central level, in:

- passing statute and political program
- the election of members of central political and executive

bodies

- selection procedures

2.2.2. at the local level, in:

- election of members of local executive bodies
- election of representatives for conventions at higher level
- selection procedures

## **2.3. prerogatives of the party president**

2.3.1. in personal matters:

- right to propose/appoint vice-president
- right to propose/appoint other member of the central bodies
- rights to suspend/replace/exclude a member

2.3.2. in selection procedure:

- at the central level
- at the local level

2.3.3. other prerogatives

**Results of parliamentary elections in 2000 and 2002**

Party	2003	Seats	2000	Seats
Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (HDZ) Croatian Democratic Union, conserv.	33,9%	66	24,5%	46
Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske (SDP) Social Democratic Party of Croatia, social-dem.	22,6%	34	40,8%	46
Istarski Demokratski Sabor (IDS) Istrian Democratic Assembly, regionalist		4	-	4
Stranka Liberalnih Demokrata (LIBRA) Party of Liberal Democrats, (social-) liberal		3	-	-
Liberalna Stranka (LS) Liberal Party, (social-) liberal		2	-	2
Hrvatska Narodna Stranka (HNS) Croatian People's Party, liberal	8,0%	10	-	2
Primorsko Goranski Savez (PGS) Primorsko-Goranski Alliance, regional		1	-	1
Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka (HSS) Croatian Peasant Party, agrarian	7,2%	9	15,6%	16
Hrvatska Stranka Prava (HSP) Croatian Right's Party, nationalist	6,4%	8	5,3%	4
Hrvatska Socijalna Liberalna Stranka (HSLs) Croatian Social Liberal Party, (conserv.-) liberal	4,1%	2	-	24
Demokratski Centar (DC) Democratic Centre, conserv.		1	-	-
Hrvatska Stranka Umirovljenika (HSU) Croatian Party of Pensioners	4,0%	3	1,9%	-
Hrvatska Demokratska Seljačka Stranka (HDSS) Croatian Democratic Peasant Party, agrarian	1,0%	1	0,3%	-
Minorities	-	8	-	5
Others	12,8%	-	11,7%	2
Total	-	152	-	151
Turnout		61,7%		69,3%

**INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY.  
THE CASE OF FOUR MAJOR POLITICAL  
PARTIES IN BULGARIA**

*Georgi KARASIMEONOV<sup>1</sup>*

**1. Introduction**

Internal party democracy (IPD) is a controversial notion. On one hand, it implies the application of democratic principles to the activities of a specific voluntary organization - the political party (PP). In a democracy, PPs act as intermediaries between civil society and state institutions. As such, they have to grant certain democratic rights to its members, which allow them to articulate citizens' interests and values.

On the other hand, PPs are vehicles for gaining access to governing institutions. In that respect, they need a certain hierarchy, centralization, rules and leadership that will assure them the needed discipline and effectiveness as parties in government.

As parties entrenched in civil society, they require wide enough channels through which to gain the support of the electorate. As parties in government, they need a centralization of power and resources to make them effective players in the decision-making process.

This is reflected in the organizational structures of PPs, which have to assure coherence in their policies and capacity to win democratic elections in competition with their opponents.

Viewed from that angle, IPD is a balancing act between democracy and centralization, between freedom of action for party members and maintaining a certain subordination. Too much freedom of action

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for party members could give leeway for some of them to foment constant internal strife and conflicts. The restriction of democratic rights on the other hand can forge authoritarian tendencies, apathy and oligarchic rule. (Michel's Iron Law). In that sense, there is no ideal situation or example that can be used as a model for the application of IPD. It always reflects specific circumstances, political exigencies and a level of political culture in a concrete country and region.

IPD is formalized on one hand in rules (statutes) and on the other hand it reflects concrete political practices. Although rules can in principle be circumvented, they nevertheless are an important indication of the atmosphere in a party and its intentions. Rules by themselves can enhance democratic or autocratic tendencies: That is why they are an important aspect when we analyze IPD.

### **2. The legacy**

The analysis of the state of IPD in a post-communist context, especially in South Eastern Europe, has to take into account the specific circumstances in which PPs appeared on the political arena, their historical roots and traditions and their role in the new democratic political system.

The authoritarian legacy from 1934 to 1944, followed by the communist totalitarian legacy after 1947, had a resounding impact on the emerging party system in the years after 1989 in Bulgaria. Although democratic institutions appeared in a relatively short span of time, the lack of democratic traditions and culture, especially within the new elite, was a major impediment to party democracy.

Two major lines of development marked the organizational structures of post-communist parties. On one hand, the dominant up-to-1997, ex-communist BSP had to, mostly through external pressure, demolish the party state structures that had embodied the totalitarian political system. And at the same time, it had to adapt to the new democratic rules as a party organization. Its reformist leadership understood well that changing its internal structure was a question of its

survival, although this ensued in bitter internal conflicts that eventually led to compromises. Looking back, it has to be underlined that the BSP was able quite successfully to manage this task. It had enough internal resources to evolve into a democratic party and escape any fatal splits, although hundreds of thousands left the one million-strong party.

Its major opponent, the UDF, took another road. If the BSP had to overcome its totalitarian legacy, the UDF started from scratch as an incoherent and loose umbrella coalition of divergent political organizations consisting both of historical parties and various newly established associations. Internal party democracy was not a priority on the agenda as the UDF, which emerged as a circle of newly acquainted, self-appointed leaders united under one major motive – to bring down the communists from power and clean the way for democratic reforms. Each member of the UDF coalition went through a period of constant internal conflicts and reorganizations up to 1997, when it converted into a homogeneous political party. At this point in time, it had its own legacy to cope with, which in no way could be characterized as democratic from the internal party organizational context. In fact, the leaders who finally took over the UDF party in 1997 and led it to its becoming a governing party were in many ways semi-democrats by internal conviction.

In other words, both opposite sides of the new party spectrum, the BSP and the UDF, in different ways in the 1990s and early 2000s, had to cope with a specific legacy as party organizations. While the BSP had the most democratic party statute, it had to cope with its legacy as a disciplined apparatchik and highly centralized political party. Meanwhile, the UDF had to learn to combine democracy and party discipline in a normalizing political environment. This meant the overcoming of the anti-communist syndrome, which justified the constant purges of deviators from the leader's position.

Parallel to those major PPs, a third minor and ethnic party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), evolved from a protest

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movement to a highly centralized semi-authoritarian party led by its first leader, A. Dogan. The rationale of the antidemocratic organizational syndrome was based on the necessity to overcome the forced isolation and repression of the Turkish minority during the 1980s that had been forcefully carried out by the communist regime. Although this rationale eventually lost ground, as the party was integrated in the democratic political framework, the hangover of the past continues to nourish the authoritarian leadership of Dogan.

A specific challenge to the party system and its organizational development was the appearance of the National Movement Simeon II (NMSII) as an anti-party phenomenon. At least this was the intention of its founder, the country's ex-king in exile, Simeon II, who returned to the country in 2001 to establish his own political movement. The fact that political realities forced him two years later, after the NMSII had gained an almost absolute majority in parliament, to accept the need to transform his movement into a party; it did not change his aversion to parties as such. By embodying the movement, 90% composed of newcomers to politics, it was in a way natural for the new party to be a one man, both highly centralized and *de facto* authoritarian in its leadership style.

By early 2005, at the time this paper was being written, the four major parties to be analyzed showed divergent developments concerning IPD, although all of them in different ways have attempted to adapt to new realities. One major phenomenon to be observed is the legitimacy crisis of PPs and the growing distrust in their capacity to govern effectively, which leads accordingly to a detachment of the electorate from PPs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The local elections in autumn 2003 showed that the established PPs lost significant ground to newly established PPs and associations, which received more than 50% of the vote. Only 55% of the electorate participated in the June 25, 2005, parliamentary elections, or 10% less than had in the previous elections, held in 2001. Karasimeonov, G. *The Party System in Bulgaria in: Political Parties and the Consolidation of Democracy in South Eastern Europe*, Ed. Karasimeonov, G., pp.39-58, GorexPress Sofia 2004

At the same time, the party system as such is going through deep changes, which reveal its evolution from the first post-communist party system to the second party system. That is more or less based on the consolidation of democracy and the appearance of new cleavages and political priorities.<sup>3</sup>

The prevalent anti-party attitudes in the electorate are a big challenge to PPs, and which engages them to face the burning issue of IPD, whose failings are partially a cause for the “parties without trust” phenomenon. What I want to argue is that they have done very little, except for the BSP, to confront the issue and make the necessary changes.

### **3. The statutes**

To “measure” the level of IPD, I look at several regulations and provisions in the statutes of the four major PPs with parliamentary representation – the BSP (left), the UDF (center–right), National Movement Simeon II (liberal, center), MRF (ethnic-Turkish, liberal, center).

I have taken into account the following variables – rights of party members to influence party policy and the role and place of internal opposition; prerogatives of local party structures vis-à-vis central ones and vice versa; position and power of the leader; horizontal organizational structures and linkage to civil society; relationship between party and parliamentary group.

The comparative analysis of how the statutes regulate these aspects of IPD will give us the formal side of the relationship between poliarchic and oligarchic tendencies in the four PPs.<sup>4</sup>

According to Machos, poliarchic or oligarchic elements are present when several “institutionalized centers of power – favored by internal party regulations – exist or can appear, ergo if they (these

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p.45

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis see Machos, Cs., *Organisationsstrukturen linker Parlamentsparteien in Ostmittel Europa*. FES, Berlin 2002.

regulations) allow transparent and decentralized structures which in their essence allow their members, local organizations and internal party opposition, autonomous space for decision making and large participatory rights. Or are these parties more or less oligarchic ergo closed, centralized and hierarchic, whose statutes allow more or less the institutional prerequisite for concentration of the decision making process in a small group of persons with power resources”.<sup>5</sup>

### **Rights of party members**

Although all statutes allow party members to participate in party activities and to express their opinions, differences appear on the crucial issue of the freedom of party members to take critical stances toward leadership decisions and to be free to form internal opposition. Only the **BSP**, in art. 8, allows “ideological pluralism”, the formations of ideological movements, platforms, unions, etc. whose only limitation is to act in the realm of the program or the statute of the party. It stipulates that “party members and party organizations not accepting adopted decisions, can defend their opinions” (art. 11).

It is the only party that defines the principle of internal party democracy in art. 9. It states that it is a duty of the members to work toward the strengthening of IPD, which is characterized in the following way:

1. Participation in the formulation, fulfillment and analysis of the policy of the BSP.
2. Initiative, autonomy and responsibility of party organs and organizations concerning their activity, structures and internal relations.
3. Transparency in the activity and responsibility for decisions and actions.
4. Freedom in expressing of opinions and presenting various choices in the discussions and decision-making process.
5. Equality in the rights and duties of socialists.
6. Solidarity, support and respect of each other.

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* p.7

Exclusions for minority opinions are not foreseen.

When comparing the statutes of the BSP with those of other parties as pertaining to this issue, the contrast is evident. All other three parties limit member critiques.

According to the statute of the **UDF**, party members have a duty to act for “the realization of collective decisions and not to act against them” (art. 5). A party member can be excluded for “publicly expressing disagreements with decisions taken by the UDF” (art. 10, b). And also for acts that “discredit the party, which are in contrast to the statutes, program and decisions of the UDF” (art. 10).

In other words, there are several provisions that limit and sanction internal opposition and divergent opinions, especially those contradicting majority decisions. This gives ample possibilities for the central organs and the leadership to subdue member freedom of expression and activity.

The **NMSII** has no provisions guaranteeing minority opinions or activities.

Membership in this party has a peculiarity that lies in the fact that the central institution, the political council, approves new members while local organizations are practically nonexistent. By statute, the **NMSII** is an electoral party without local organizations and has only local coordinators, which transmit the applications of eventual members to the political council (art. 8).

The **MRF** has very limited provisions in this respect. The statutes mostly define the duties of the members, whose major task is to fulfill the decisions of higher party institutions (art. 11). As a counterpoint, art. 6 extensively cites the reasons for various sanctions, including the temporary and final exclusion of party members. It is an extraordinary catalogue, part of which deserves to be cited:

A party member can be excluded in part for:

– undermining the prestige of the party; not fulfilling decisions and tasks, not keeping party secrets; using more power than he has been given by the statute; discrediting the party in the media; creating

conditions for divisions and factions; and endangering the unity of the party and its leadership.

Temporary exclusion is foreseen:

– for attempts to undermine party unity and creating divisions; for disinformation; dissemination of false and untrue information, etc.

### **Power of local party organizations**

This aspect of IPD gives an idea of the level of centralization and concentration of power in the leadership and higher party institutions.

In this aspect, there are also significant differences among the parties. The **BSP** stands out as having empowered its local organizations with significant possibilities to act on their own. The organizational structure is based on three levels – main organizations, local councils and central bodies. The lowest party structure, the main organization, has significant autonomy. The statute of the BSP foresees only territorially based main organizations and interest groups (professional and others), as the law forbids the establishment of party organizations at working places. Among the rights of those lowest organizations are the right to nominate candidates for public and party positions; establish contacts with similar structures at the local level; express divergent views with resolutions and projects with higher party bodies, etc. (art. 11).

The next level, the “local city council” has the right to organize referenda among members and sympathizers in order to decide the composition of electoral slates for local and municipal elections (art. 38).

An intra-party national referendum can also be initiated by two-thirds of the local councils (art. 46).

In contrast, the statute of the **UDF** foresees a more complicated four-level structure – local clubs and municipal, regional and central organs. According to the statutes, the lowest organizational structure, the local club, is subordinated to the higher municipal council and as article 28, p.3 stipulates, they fulfill the decisions taken by the municipal councils and municipal leadership of the UDF. It is the municipal council that works out and adopts the program for the development of

the local clubs, (art. 28, p.1) and governs the political activity of the clubs in the municipality (art. 27, p.8).

The high level of centralization and subordination in the UDF are also revealed in the fact that the higher bodies have the right to apply strict control and even disband lower organizations. The regional structures can call – and cancel – on their own a meeting of all structures of UDF in the region (art. 22, p. 1).

The national executive on its own part can also “call and cancel meetings of all structures except of the national council” (art. 19, p. 1).

“It can disband regional councils and appoint temporary ones” (art. 19), as well.

The **MRF** is also a highly centralized organization with a four-level structure – local, municipal, regional and central.

The local council, according to article 17, has the task to “fulfill the policy of the party and to solve specific local problems”.

The statutes foresee that the central institution – the central council – has the right to “call and cancel regional and municipal conferences and their legitimacy is recognized after the presentation on their part of the complete documentation at the Central council” (art. 9, p.5).

The organizational structure of the **NMSII** as an electoral party contrasts with the others as far as it foresees only collective central institutions – congress, national council, political council and the leader (chairman) and central control committee ( art. 12).

The only local institutions are the regional and municipal coordinators, whose main functions are to “fulfill the decisions of the central institutions, to help organize electoral campaigns and register the new members” (art. 25, 26).

### **The Leader**

A specific phenomenon for post-communist parties is that through their emergence and role during the transition period, they are leader-centered parties. They are formed by the leader and his close friends and allies, who acquire great power resources. This creates the pre-



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condition for the formation of a *partitocrazia* at an early stage, which resists sharing its power even when democracy is on the road to consolidation and has become irreversible.

As in the previous cases, there are significant differences among the parties.

The **BSP** has been keen after its totalitarian past to avoid giving too much power to its leader, where the tradition of an apparatchik party had been very strong.

This is not a case of the newly emerged post-communist party, the **UDF**, which introduced changes in its statute after 1997 with a view toward the enlarging of the power of its central bodies and its leader. Not by coincidence, the first leader of the UDF, Ivan Kostov, was called the “commander”. By controlling the national executive council through his cronies, the chairman of the UDF can have a decisive say in all structures below the national executive council. The chairman has tremendous possibilities in disciplining local structures and sanctioning dissidents.

The most pronounced cases of leadership-orientated parties are the **MRF** and **NMSII**. The statute of the **MRF** foresees ample formal power for the chairman, who is also by statute chairman of the central council and the central executive bureau, as well as of the parliamentary group (art. 10) He has as well the right to propose the exclusion from the central council of every member “who has violated the statute or not fulfilled his duty”, (art. 19, p. 4). The chairman is solely embodied with maintaining contacts with state and other institutions. He can delegate his rights to others (art. 10).

He represents the party in international activities. He confirms candidates for parliament and municipal mayors.

Consequently, he has almost absolute power to control the party without being challenged. In practice, all attempts to challenge his authority have led to the exclusion from the party of those who have attempted to do so.

Although the statute of the **NMSII** is quite concise concerning

the leader's power, the real situation (even the fact the party carries his name and that the party was created to fulfill his personal ambitions) puts its stamp on how the party functions. Simeon Saxcoburggotski is the dominant figure by fact and has the last word in all major decisions. He chose the leading figures in the all-powerful political council and they are subordinated to his will.

### **Relationship between party and parliamentary group**

When both two major centers of power in a party have a certain autonomy vis-à-vis each other, democratic decisions are better served, although this sometimes might create internal tensions.

The statute of the **BSP** allows for some autonomy of the parliamentary group (PG), whose members are not by definition members of the BSP, especially those of the so-called civic quota and coalition members. They participate in the activities of party fora with a counseling vote.

To guarantee the coherence of its policy, the **BSP** requires those who are elected on the slate of the BSP, including coalition parties, to sign a declaration that they will be "loyal to the policy of the party" (art. 55). This creates a certain conflict with the constitutional provision of the free mandate (art. 67).

In the **UDF**, party decisions are compulsory for the PG (art. 15, p. 2), whose members are also members of the national council (art. 16, p.2b).

In the statutes of the **MRF**, the PG is defined as "a function of the party", (art. 27) and has practically no autonomy vis-à-vis party institutions.

In the **NMSII**, the PG is a very specific phenomenon. The NMSII was created as a parliamentary party and only at a later stage was the structure of the party "outside of parliament" formed. Consequently, its parliamentary leaders dominate in the new party. In fact, the PG controls the party "outside of parliament" and in doing so, reproduces the conflicts that appear within the parliamentary group. Several splits

in the PG consequently led to splits in the party. After the parliamentary elections in 2005, a certain division of power will certainly be established between the PG and the party “outside parliament”, but by its statutes as an electoral party it will remain a parliamentary-centered party (following the British model).

### **Horizontal structures**

The establishment and extension of horizontal structures attached to party organizations is one of the typical trends in the development of IPD. Through horizontal structures, PPs fulfill their functions vis-à-vis civil society, they establish channels of communication and aggregation of interests with the electorate at large, especially with sympathizers who might otherwise refrain from being active as party members but who would like to participate in some kind of party-related activity.

For PPs in advanced democracies, the establishment of horizontal structures has become one of the most important parts of party development in the last few decades. This has been an attempt to counter dwindling party membership and the loss of importance of traditional party activities by keeping the support of the electorate.

The statutes of the four Bulgarian parties analysed in the paper do show differences in that respect too. While the **BSP** and **UDF** do pay attention to horizontal structures, they are almost non-existent in the statutes of the **MRF** and **NMSII**.

The **BSP** stresses the need to cooperate with “civic public organizations, unions and movements supporting actions and decisions in the name of reaching human, democratic and patriotic goals as well as in defense of citizen’s professional and specific group social interests, whose members they are” (art. 76).

The statutes provide for “public discussion” of nominations for public officials at the local level and for the formation of “political discussion clubs” especially of sympathizers from various professional groups (art. 60, 37).

The **BSP** supports three youth and student organizations, which

accept the documents of the party. The BSP has no official women's organizations, but cooperates closely with the Democratic Union of Women, whose members are mostly members of the BSP or closely linked to it. Recently, the BSP decided to form its own women's organization.

A specific and interesting initiative of the BSP has been the establishment of the so-called "citizens quota" in the electoral slates of the party, which includes as nominees for public office non-party, well-known public personalities, most of who are experts and professionals. Up to 20% of the party slate for the parliamentary elections in June 2005 included such personalities.

A specific initiative of the BSP and its coalition allies from the New Left Alliance, which has a social-democratic orientation, is the establishment and support of the Civic Forum New Left, where direct links are established with various NGOs and other non-party personalities, mostly from academia, and where various aspects of the left's programmatic orientation and policies are discussed.

The statute of the **UDF** provides for cooperation with organizations linked to the party as the Women Union, Union of the Middle Class, Union of the Scientist, etc. (art. 35 /1/). Through them, the UDF wants to open its ideas to various social strata. These unions are incorporated in the structures of the UDF.

The UDF statutes also provide for cooperation with the Youth Union of Democratic Forces (YUDF). It is the youth structure of the UDF and it is incorporated in the structures of the UDF. The members of the YUDF are represented in the higher bodies of the UDF.

An interesting innovation is the inclusion in the statute of the figure of "sympathizers". They are non-party members, who may be grouped or remain individuals and can participate in the activities of the party and have counseling vote in the decision-making process (art. 36 /1/, 3).

The **MRF** provides in its statute only for a youth organization, but with limited autonomy and which remains strictly subordinated to the party.

The statute of the **NMSII** as an electoral party has no provisions

for specific horizontal structures. It only has a general provision, that in its activities, the party “cooperates with youth, professional, thematic and other NGOs” (art. 12 /4/).

#### **4. The practice**

Although statutes are an important indication of the state of IPD and the organizational development of political parties they do not convey a full picture. Practice has shown that there are deviations from internal party regulations depending on the personal qualities, ethical values and political culture of party members and leadership.

Oligarchic tendencies bear the imprint of personal greed for power, which undermines democratic principles. The way that IPD is applied within political parties reflects the democratic deficit in post-communist societies after many years of dictatorship and the harsh confrontation between political groups at the initial stage of transition. The lust for power and animosities and the warlike relationship between PPs has led to high centralization of power in the hands of party leaders and limited democratic articulation, freedom of expression and links to civil society. Although Bulgaria has advanced from a bipolar, highly confrontational party system to a more pluralistic one and with less intense polarization, the state of party organization and IPD still bear the imprint of the transitional period. In fact, a great part of the transitional elite still hold decisive positions in PPs. The old party elites are still resisting the giving up of their grip on PPs and free the channels for more IPD. That is why many intra-party conflicts are not resolved in the realm of the party and very often lead to confrontation, splits and factionalism, which leads in most cases to exclusions from the party.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Typical cases were the series of purges in the UDF between 1999-2001; as well as in the MRF when several members of the highest organs were excluded when they contradicted the leader Dogan; although a young party, the NMSII witnessed several splits in its parliamentary group and the formation of a new party, Novo Vreme, from dissidents who left the parliamentary group in 2004.

The BSP also has been a victim of local rivalries, especially in the 2003 local elections, when in some electoral districts there were two candidates from the same party. Very recently, there have been similar internal conflicts concerning the composition of party lists for the 2005 parliamentary elections.

Although the BSP has the most democratic statute, it suffers from the apparatchik syndrome and the influence of local barons, who try to control party organizations and keep their grip on power resources by confronting central party institutions.

Oligarchic tendencies in PPs are in fact a major cause for the deepening crisis of the legitimacy of Bulgarian PPs.<sup>7</sup> They are caused to a great extent by the crisis of political representation that followed the initial transition. PPs have failed to engage civil society in party activities and thus find themselves isolated, especially from the most active social strata.

The Bulgarian experience has shown that the sacral quest of party unity, which is the argument for all infringements on democratic rules and procedures, has not been served by limiting democracy. On the contrary, it has served to undermine the consolidation of parties and has led to internal splits and the formation of splinter groups. Unity has to be reached by respecting democracy and member dignity, as exclusions have to be an exception, and the minority should have the right to challenge leadership decisions by preserving the necessary solidarity to majority decisions.

## **5. What reforms are needed?**

The statutes and political practice have shown that oligarchic tendencies outweigh poliarchic ones.

The BSP is an exception to the formal point of view, but has still

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<sup>7</sup> Karasimeonov, G., From Anarchical Competition to Institutionalization - Emergence and Evolution of Party Systems in Post-Communist Europe, Center for European Integration Studies, Bonn, Reader series N. 7, 2004

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a way to go before it can fully conform to its democratic rules and overcome the negative effects of local *partitocrazia*.

The most oligarchic is the organizational structure of the MRF, whose leader A. Dogan has an almost dictatorial grip of power. The UDF, since its becoming a homogeneous party, still bears the imprint of its birth in 1997 and has fallen prey to internal splits and conflicts, which led to the adoption of oligarchic provisions in its statutes.

The NMSII is a very young party under the complete dominance of its leader and mentor Simeon Saxcoburggotski, who finds himself in the exotic situation of being a former monarch and a party leader at the same time.

Having in mind the state of IPD, I suggest some possible directions that reform could take and that could help overcome the democratic deficit in the internal functioning of PPs:

– **Development of horizontal structures.** There is a need for the establishment of a network of formal structures that can reach out to many more social, professional and interest groups and engage members and sympathizers in the activities of the party;

– **Much more transparency.** There is the need for much more transparency, especially in the activities of elected officials from the bottom to the top. Most of their individual activity in various state institutions remains to a great extent behind close doors and is invisible to the public. Modern forms of communications between elected officials and the electorate are greatly needed to enhance the links between parties and civil society. Very few if any MP's have their own personal web site;

– **Enhancing the role of local organizations.** They must be allowed to be much more active in the decision-making process as part of the overall process of devolution of power from the top to the bottom;

– **Furthering of direct democracy.** Direct forms of participation of the members and sympathizers like referenda, primaries, etc., should enrich internal party democracy and links to civil society;

– **Development of new channels for communication,** like the

Internet, is highly needed to transform PPs into modern structures adapted to the technological and communication revolutions that will greatly enhance links to the newer generations who do not accept the traditional forms of politics and party activities;

– **Assure more just representation of underrepresented groups** in PPs, including women, youth, ethnic minorities, emigrants, etc.

– **Inclusion of more members in the democratic debate** and the enhancement of pluralism within PPs and their sympathizers. There is a deficit of debate on basic values and ideological issues. This will contribute to making the change from pragmatic and clientelistic politics to more value-oriented policy making;

– **Develop initiatives that will further the learning of politics**, especially of democratic politics, with the aim of achieving greater professionalization in the art of politics and the enhancement of a democratic political culture;

– **Create closer links to political parties in developed democracies** and engage local PPs at various levels in the activities of transnational parties, especially in the realm of the EU.

## **Conclusion**

PPs are major components of the democratic political system. They are a laboratory for democracy and have a major influence on the whole political system and process.

If oligarchic tendencies prevail in PPs, there is a significant chance that they will prevail in their activities as parties in government. That is why the consolidation of democracy in post-communist societies will be hampered if democracy does not take hold in political parties.



**Appendix**

**Results of parliamentary elections in 2001 and 2005**

Party	2005	Seats	2001	Seats
Koalicija za Balgarija (KB) Coalition for Bulgaria, social-dem.	31,0%	82	17,1%	48
Nacionalno Dviženie Simeon Vtori (NDSV) National Movement Simeon II., liberal	19,9%	53	42,7%	120
Dviženie za Prava i Svobodi (DPS) Movement for Rights and Freedom, (liberal-) ethnic [turkish]	12,7%	34	7,5%	21
Koalicija Ataka (ATAKA) Coalition Attack, nationalist	8,2%	21	-	-
Obedineni Demokratični Sili (ODS) United Democratic Forces, christian-dem.	7,7%	20	18,2%	51
Demokrati za Silna Balgarija (DSB) Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria, conserv.	6,5%	17	-	-
Balgarski Naroden Sajuz (BNS) Bulgarian People's Union, (agrarian-) christian-dem.	5,2%	13	-	-
Others	8,8%	-	14,5%	-
Total	-	240	-	240

**ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND  
INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY  
IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

*Davor VULETIC<sup>1</sup>*

*“To be a democrat, in the first place, means to be free from fears: not to be afraid of people who think different, who speak different and who are of a different race...and of all those imaginary dangers that became the real dangers just because we are afraid of them.”*

*Istvan Bibo<sup>2</sup>*

**Introduction**

Bosnia and Herzegovina can be seen as the most unfortunate of all transition countries in the Balkans. After the dissolution of the SFRY, it suffered a devastating war with a lot of interethnic atrocities and war crimes. This postponed its political, social and economic transition, as well as delayed fulfillment of its wish to join the countries of the EU, and ushered in a centuries-old multiethnic, multi-religious and multicultural tradition of living “diversities” in one society. The irony is that, after the war, all those necessary transitions were set as priorities in the European integration processes, but now under totally dif-

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<sup>1</sup> MP, Socialdemocratic Party

<sup>2</sup> Bibo Istvan was a Hungarian lawyer and sociologist who became in 1956 a state minister in the government led by Imre Nagy. This quote is from his book *The Misery of Small Eastern-European States*, published in 1946 in Budapest.

ferent circumstances. They are characterized by lack of trust and political consensus, by politics of “out of war grown” elites, over-exaggerated ethnic belongingness, weak state institutions, complicated constitutional structure, poor economy, weak civil society, lack of respect for human rights, domination of collective rights over the individual human rights, freedoms, and disappointment and apathy in society.<sup>3</sup>

In theory, politics is described as a “mechanism by which the collective decisions are taken and especially conflictual problems are resolved”<sup>4</sup> and as a process of the “authoritative allocation of values” applicable to all members. However, it is rather difficult to create and implement any policy in such a divergent society with different goals, ideas and wishes as to its own future, much less in a state where ethnic- or nationalist-based “checks and balances” are so strong as to prevent any substantive movement forward in building state structures

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<sup>3</sup> Political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina have to overcome those illnesses but unfortunately they are part of the root cause of the disease. A number of polls have been conducted in past two years showing the cause of the constant decrease in support for political parties. According to poll results published in daily newspapers “Nezavisne novine” (Independent newspapers) or weekly magazines “Slobodna Bosna” (Free Bosnia) and “Dani” (Days) the overall perception of politicians is that of “liars”, “thieves”, “corrupted”, “not honest”, “incompetent”, “only take care on their own interests”. When asked “who have been the biggest winners from 1990s until the present?” respondents answer “politicians” overwhelmingly. Criminals are in second place, drug dealers in third and dishonest people in fourth. When asked “who have been the biggest losers from 1990s until the present?” they answer: ordinary people, workers, pensioners, veterans, youth. When you ask them to explain the difference between political parties, the most common answer is “they are all the same”. This is a consequence of the total disconnect with most of the electorate, and therefore the results of the elections have shown that turnout has constantly fallen: over 80% in 1996, over 70% in 1998, 63% in 2000, 53% in 2002 and 48% in 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Blondel, Jean. “How the Process of Political Transition Can Be Monitored and How the Moment of Consolidation Can Be Determined” in *Post-communist Transition as a European Problem*. Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2002. p.21

that can protect the concept of citizenship and functionality.

It can be said that there are five main steps in any political process, no matter if it's totalitarian or democratic: the articulation of demands, aggregation of demands, rule-making, rule-implementation and rule-adjudication.<sup>5</sup> The main difference between the political processes in totalitarian and democratic states lies in the approach to these five steps. In democratic states, there are many groups and organizations involved in this process, although not all of them in the same manner. Moreover, they are specialized and autonomous from each other; they are the result of a free civil society. Furthermore, there are organizations – governmental, commercial, political or nongovernmental - that are given the opportunity under the law to make, implement and adjudicate the rules, free of the fear of punishment by some party organ constantly monitoring them. On the contrary, in classical totalitarian systems, there are only three crucial bodies involved in political activities: the party, government and bureaucracy.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, transformation must pass through three phases: the breakdown of the centralized decision-making system, emergence of strong plural and democratic political party systems and autonomous sub-national authorities, and finally the development of strong autonomous groups and associations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first phase was overdeveloped and led to a nonfunctional state. The second phase is still in process. There are 70 registered political parties; 14 of them are parliamentary parties on the state level. This fragmentation does not help the political processes. Moreover, we have three dominant nationalistic parties – the SDA, SDS and HDZ – that are the “protectors” of Bosniak, Serb and Croat national interests, respectively. After the war, three autonomous sub-national authorities were created, but each of the three was controlled just by one “nationalist” political party, on its own territory and over its own people. Therefore, there were three parallel totalitarian one-party systems. The

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 22 – 29

process of dismantling such political system started in 1998 with the breakthrough of the social-democratic parties, the SDP BiH and SNSD. It gained further ground in 2000, when the opposition closely won the election and formed a nine-party, coalition government with the help of the S BiH and PDP, which lasted for 18 months. Disappointment later brought the nationalists to power again. Under this situation, the development of strong autonomous groups and associations, NGOs, advocacy groups or think-tanks was strongly supported by the international community, but was not sufficient, nor was it focused or goal-oriented, which will be explained at length later.

Since the goal of this paper is to give an overview of the main parties, and given that there are 70 political parties, 14 of which have seats in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, we will consider only the eight parties that are able to pass the 3% threshold, according to the results from the last local elections, held in 2004.

## **I. Legislation concerning party organization and internal party democracy**

There is no precise legislation concerning party organization and internal party democracy. The laws on political parties deal with obligatory issues concerning registration. There are certain laws that partially frame and impose limits on the issue. In the first place, there are the respective constitutions of the country and its two entities.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> By Constitution of Federation of BiH, this entity is organized as federation of ten cantons, which are the smallest electoral unit for general elections and form the administrative unit between the municipality and entity levels. Parties in FBiH are organized in a way to have municipal and cantonal organizations. In the Constitution of Republic Srpska, this entity is defined as unitary and centralized. Therefore, there are no administrative regions like there are in FBiH, but parties are organized on a regional level too for practical purposes, and it differs from party to party, but all of them have municipal organizations. Some of them use divisions in three or six regions (according to the electoral units for BiH Parliament from RS or RS National Assembly). In the constitution

The election law of BiH asks that every party reserve at least 33% of its party lists within each electoral unit for the less-represented gender, typically women. However, the lists are open and a good position on the list does not necessarily guarantee that a female or young candidate will be elected. Moreover, the election law of BiH clarifies that the mandate for an elected MP at any level belongs to the MP and not to the party, in order to strengthen the independence of MPs. However, that has led to many MPs leaving their parties, taking their mandates with them and calling into question internal party discipline and democracy, given the expenditure of resources.

The law on the financing of political parties permits just one KM (0.5 euros) to be spent per registered voter by each party during an election round. The limits on donations allow MPs who have left their party to keep their portion of the public money allocated to their political parties, in accordance with the number of MPs. Furthermore, the law on treasure finances requests from every party a centralized database detailing the flow of money inside the party and requires the centralized party authority to oversee the finances of the party's branches.

The law on civil servants forbids civil servants from being members of the political board of any party (but they can be simple members). The same situation is regulated by the law on conflicts of interest, which states that executives and supervisory appointees cannot be members of party boards, nor may they be political advisors or MPs.

The above-mentioned legislation provides the general framework

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of the BiH state, the country consists of two entities and some parties have separate organizations for each entity, while some don't and others have asymmetrical party organizations at the state level without "entity organizations". In practice they still consider "their national territory in their entity" as the main political battlefield and other municipal organizations in other entities are just for the purpose of creating the public perception of their presence on all the territory.

within which political parties and their members must operate while organizing themselves and choosing people for internal party and public positions. Most of the organizational issues are left to the parties and are developed in their own statutes, which in turn are must be submitted to be officially registered as a political party. As mentioned before, they only have to declare that their activity will not be focused on opposing the constitution.

## **II. Party statutes and organizational structures**

**SDA (Party for Democratic Action)** is the leading Bosniak nationalist party. Article 1 of the SDA statute says that “SDA is a people’s party of the political center...” However, SDA in reality has a membership that is 100% Bosniak-Muslim, with only a few political figures of other nationalities to give a public perception of being an “all BiH people’s party”. The leadership is highly elitist and divided among those who are more “pro citizen”, “business technocrat” and “hardliner”. The elitism is a trademark that is accepted by members, who are disciplined and obey leadership decisions. The lack of democracy is compensated by the greater goal: a strong party structure to protect Bosniak national interests in what politically are highly fragile circumstances.

The party was established as a movement that arose from the renewed national feelings among the Bosniaks in the 1990s. The movement concept is still very strong and recognizable in its statute, which is stated in article 4: “The SDA and other organizations established as independent political organizations, under the name and idea of the SDA, represent the unified movement of the SDA in the world, and they define their internal relations by the special regulations.”

Its territorial organization starts with the “local community organization” (art.s 56-68), which gathers its membership from one neighborhood or village and which in turn elects a local president and local board. They also send representatives to the “municipal assembly of the SDA”, which elects municipal executive board and a president.

The municipal board consists of a president, executive board and presidents of local community organizations.

The upper level of the organization is cantonal (in the F BiH entity) or regional (in the RS entity) (art.s 69-77). They are formed on the base of the representation of the delegates. Each municipal board delegates a certain number of municipal board members to the cantonal/regional board. That number per each municipal board is decided by cantonal/regional board, with the prior consent of the general secretary of the SDA. The presidents of the municipal boards are members of the cantonal/regional board by function. The cantonal/regional board elects a president, secretary and one or more vice presidents. The same is applied for town organizations and the organization of the Brčko District.

The state level organization of the SDA has seven collective or personal party authorities: Congress, which elects the others; convention; main board (109 members); president; presidency (deputy president, five vice presidents and 16 members); supervisory board (five members); and the court of honor (11 members). The general secretary is elected by the main board. The SDA has 15 cantonal and regional boards and 111 municipal organizations.

**SDS (Serb Democratic Party)** is the leading Serb nationalist party. Their political platform is ultra-nationalist and is preoccupied with the faith and future of the RS and the protection of Serb national interests in sharing power with the other nationalist parties (SDA and HDZ). Their main aim had been to split the RS from BiH and attach it to Serbia, but after the Dayton Peace Accord, they accepted the reality of BiH, while still considering it a “necessary evil”. Its practical policy is to obstruct any strengthening of the BiH state. Its membership is 100% Serb, and wields strong influence in eastern and south-eastern BiH. In the past 10 years, it has split a few times. The party structure is not well known, since it works within a closed society that relies on internal networks created before and during the war. The



party is outlawed from using any public money dedicated to political parties, since it has been proven that the SDS supports the networks used to hide indicted war criminals. This ban was introduced by the Office of the High Representative (OHR), following on reports submitted by intelligence agencies.

The territorial organization of the SDS starts with “local community organizations”, but their role is more geared toward “implementing” than it is to “decision making”. Since they operate in the RS, which is a centralized entity, their “municipal organizations” have a certain autonomy and more influence than they do in other parties. Regional organizations have a coordinating role. The main organization of the SDS actually covers only the RS.

The main assembly of the SDS elects the main board, presidency, president and court of honor. The role of the president depends on his personal authority, since he is the president of the presidency. After all, the SDS has remained a political movement.

**HDZ BiH (Croat Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina)** is the leading Croat nationalist party, formed in 1990. Its organizational documents define the HDZ BiH as “a people’s party that gathers all segments of the Croat people and other citizens in the BiH. The HDZ BiH bases its program on the principles of a Christian democracy”. The HDZ BiH also represents a movement more than it does a political party; the process of changing the movement into a party is still ongoing. That can be seen in the introduction to its political platform:

“The HDZ BiH emerged as an expression of a centuries-old goal of the Croat people for the realization of its own national self-determination and existence, in the historical circumstances of a breakdown of the totalitarian communist government, as well as the expression of the goals of the Croat people for establishing democracy, national freedom, equality and constitutive position of the Croat people in the BiH, having in mind the political, economical, social and cul-

tural circumstances of the surrounding in which it works, as well as the multinational and international context of free European countries”.

The HDZ BiH applied for observer status in the European people’s party. However, the party has no unique position on the future of BiH, nor its structure and relation with Zagreb. Its party leadership may be divided in three categories: “hardliners”; “moderates”, who try to negotiate with other nationalists and the international community; and “technocrats”, who are ready for any functional approach. The HDZ has faced three important but different splits. The first was in 1998, when pro-Bosnian Croat politicians, mainly from northern and central Bosnia, formed the New Croat Initiative (NHI) and in 2003, when a portion of its ultranationalist element split to form the Croatian Bloc.

Currently, the HDZ works in Croat-dominated cantons within the FBiH, out of which its members would like to create a single region (third entity), and in some parts of central and northern Bosnia, where their main opposition is the NHI. Although the HDZ declares itself an all-BiH party, in reality its main battleground is western and southern Herzegovina, where 80% of the Croats in BiH live.

Its organization starts with “basic organizations”, which cover one or more local communities depending on membership. Municipal organizations (64 of them) elect at their conventions a municipal board, president, secretary and supervisory board. Like other parties, the HDZ has cantonal (nine), regional (two) and town organizations that cover Brčko and Mostar.

The main organization of the HDZ is elected by representatives from local organizations at the party convention. The convention elects the main board of 30 members, presidency of 12 members, president, four vice presidents, supervisory board (five members) and high court of honor (seven members). The presidency seat includes the president and four vice presidents, general secretary (elected by the main board), president of the HDZ youth and president/vice president of the two houses in the BiH Parliament.

**SBiH (Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina)** was formed in 1996 after the split in the SDA, which led to the departure of the one-third of its membership that was more liberal. It is soft-nationalist Bosniak party that supports the concept of a BiH without entities. It doesn't have a plan and program on how to create such a place, other than through the illusion that it can be accomplished by the international community, without the consent of Serbs and Croats. Its membership is 95% Bosniak. The SBiH has been in power since 1990, first within the SDA and then in coalition with the SDA, and later, after 2000, in the Alliance for Change with the SDP, and then later still again in coalition with the SDA. The SBiH declares itself a centrist party, pro free-market but with strong state oversight while undergoing transition. Its membership is based mostly on people holding different positions in all levels of the state administration. It could be said that it is a cadre party dependent on membership interest of holding positions. However, in the past few years, two groups have emerged within the party: a "center-left" and "center-right".

Article 1 of its statute states: "The SBiH is unitary political organization that operates on the territory of the BiH". According to article 7., its internal organization is based on the principles of: "organizational unity, multilevel organization, territory-based organizational units and democratic organization that allow the full activity of its members in creating and implementing the policy of the SBiH".

The basic organization of the party is the municipal council (art. 13-18), which is elected by at least 100 members of one municipality (municipal assembly of the SBiH). If necessary, local, village and neighborhood organizations may be established as well. The municipal council (15 to 31 members) elects a president and vice president. Municipal councils delegate their members to the cantonal/regional council (again 15 to 31 members), which elects the president and vice presidents (art. 19-39).

The SBiH Assembly is the main authority (art. 46.) and elects the presidency (11 members), executive commission (35) and the court of

honor (9). The presidency itself elects the president of the presidency and two vice presidents. The SBiH has nine cantonal boards and 15 municipal branches in the RS.

**PDP (Party for Democratic Progress)** is a conservative party that has attracted from the SDS many of its unsatisfied members. It is like the SBiH in that it is a pragmatic and purely interest-driven party. The party began as a leader-centric party, led by Professor Mladen Ivanić, when it was new and progressive but it soon lost its identity. It is in constant flux between the desire to reform and its still conservative and nationalist electorate.

The party is concentrated in the RS although it has few municipal boards in the F BiH. Its main board consists of residents of the RS, since its membership is 99% Serb. Its main board is elected by the party convention as are its President and three vice presidents.

**SDP BiH (Social-democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina)** says in article 2. of its statute that it “is a unified political multiethnic organization that works in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the Program of the SDP BiH and in accordance with this statute. The SDP is the only legal successor of the Social-democratic Party of 1909, the Communist Party of BiH ... the SDP BiH is a member of the Socialist International”. The SDP’s membership is 65% Bosniak, 20% Serb and 15% Croat. It works in both entities and has 16 cantonal/regional boards and 120 municipal boards (out of 142 municipalities in BiH). Due to its multiethnic structure, its orientation toward women and youth and strong regional organizations, the SDP requires that minorities occupy 20%, women 35% and youth 33% of every party board, from the municipal to the main boards, when possible.

The SDP BiH organization starts at the “basic organization” level, which covers each village or neighborhood. There is no delegating from the one board to another. Basic organizations nominate candi-

dates, create lists and send representatives to different levels to elect municipal/cantonal/regional/main party boards, supervisory boards and presidents. Boards elect their own presidency, vice presidents and secretary. Municipal organizations have the main executive role, while cantonal/regional organizations have a coordinative role, except when it comes time to prepare for cantonal/general elections. Then, they take a leading role, together with the main board, which implements general policy based on the political program prepared by the expert groups, but again adopted by the representatives of basic organizations at the party congress.

**SNSD (Alliance of Independent Social-democrats)** is defined in article 4 of its statute as an “independent and democratic political organization, open to all citizens who accept its Program and Statute.” The SNSD started in 1996 as a club of independent councilors in the RS who were opposed to the policies of the SDS. Since then, the SNSD has grown into a major opposition force in the RS. Since 2004, it has been the strongest party after the SDA, according to the numbers of voters who support it. The SNSD operates in both entities but attracts mostly Serb voters keen on the idea of social democracy, as well as those who are dissatisfied with the nationalists. Most of its members are Serbs (around 95%). The SNSD cooperates closely with the SDP.

Article 14 says: “The SNSD works as a unified political organization in the territory of BiH organized on a territorial principle. The organizational models of the SNSD are local, municipal and town organizations”. It is interesting that regional organizations are not mentioned here. However, regional organizations can be formed according to article 17 by the decision of the executive board of the SNSD, but only with the consent of municipal organizations from that area. A regional organization can be formed if needed for coordination purposes, but the main role is given to the municipal and main organizations of the party.

Local organizations send representatives to municipal and town party assemblies and they elect municipal or town boards, supervisory boards and statutory commissions. The “boards” then elect presidents, vice presidents, secretary and executive boards. The congress of the SNSD elects the same party organs as well as the president, which is not case on the lower levels. The main board has 141 members, of whom 111 are elected. The other 30 can be co-opted at the president’s suggestion.

The **SP (Socialist Party)** works “in the territory of BiH, and its parts: the Serb Republic, Federation of BiH and Brčko District” (art. 1). The basic organization of the SP is a “local community organization” that follows the old (Communist) way of organization using party cells and an executive role (art.s 23-26). The upper level includes municipal and town organizations that have their own assemblies to elect: municipal/town boards, presidents, vice presidents, secretary, statutory commissions and supervisory boards (art.s 21-42). The situation is the same at the main party level, where congress elects the same organs as well as a president (as in the SNSD). The main board elects a general secretary on the proposal of the president. Regional organizations can be formed by the presidents and secretaries of the municipal boards from a given area, which shows their purely coordinative role.

### **III. Level of member participation in decision making**

Participation in the decision-making process varies from party to party and it is directly linked to their own level of internal democracy and organization. All the parties have set out member rights and obligations in their statutes. The question is to what degree those rights are exercised in reality.

Members have the right to:

- participate in the decision-making process involving all important issues for the party, directly or through the elected representatives

## ***Organizational Structures and Internal Party Democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina***

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on party boards (SDA, SDS, HDZ, PDP, SDP, SNSD, SP);

- elect and to be elected to all party boards (SDA, SDS, HDZ, SBiH, PDP, SDP, SNSD, SP);

- be a candidate of the SDP for parliamentary and executive positions in the government (SDP, SP);

- nominate himself/herself as a candidate to stand for election (SDP, SP);

- be informed about the situation and activities of the party, its organs and bodies (SDA, SDS, HDZ, SBiH, PDP, SDP, SNSD, SP);

- express publicly his/her own opinions (SDP);

- launch initiatives, suggestions and opinions concerning party activities and actual issues that require party engagement (SDA, SDS, HDZ, SBiH, SDP, SNSD, SP);

- participate in suggesting, setting and implementing general party policy (SBiH, PDP, SP);

- participate (while away from his or her home more than six months) in the local party organization, where he or she is temporarily present. (SDA, SP);

- initiate the questioning of the responsibility of party office holders in front of the party organs (SBiH);

Duties:

- work in accordance with the program, statute and other documents of the party (SDA, SDS, HDZ, PDP, SDP, SP);

- be actively engaged in the implementation of party goals (SDA, HDZ, SBiH, SDP, SNSD, SP);

- represent program views and standpoints of party organs in political institutions (SDA, SDS, PDP, SNSD);

- pay membership fees (SDA, SDS, HDZ, PDP, SDP, SP);

- implement decisions of the party organs (SDA, SDS, HDZ, PDP, SDP, SP);

- keep up and improve the image of the party (SDA, SDP, SP);

- improve himself or herself in theory and practice in all political activities (SDP);

- support the party financially according to his or her ability (SBiH);
- participate in party activities and attracts new members (SDP, SP);
- defend democratic principles at all levels of the organization (SP).

Formally, large sets of rights and obligations allow members to participate in the decision-making system. In reality, a lot of suggestions, initiatives and nominations are filtered by different boards, commissions and committees or are never discussed. The realization of initiatives and the influence on decision making depend on the internal party strength of individuals or groups and the level of support they have for certain issues or initiatives. Moreover, it depends on one's personal devotion and decisiveness.

Involvement in the decision-making process depends on organizational structure too. In parties where one party board can delegate candidates to another, just a small number of members have the ability to push things, either by themselves or through their representatives (SBiH). In parties where basic organizations have more of an impact on all party boards and positions, at all levels, through direct election and direct discussion of party documents, they are able to exercise their "rights" much better (SDP). On the other side, accepting "duties" is usually an issue of personal attitude and party discipline.

Finally, the real place where decisions are drafted and, in most cases, made are the different commissions and committees that focus on specialized issues, such as the economy, political system, education, social care, cadre, etc. They are the filters for all initiatives and they propose decisions to the boards. They mostly consist of people familiar with the topics at hand.



#### **IV. Selection and control of party leadership and office holders**

This is very important for every party and is comprised of two components: the selection process in internal party elections and the control of party officials and office holders (MPs, government members). The first component is based on party statute, internal party election rules and discipline. The second component is more linked to the selection process itself and the laws mentioned in the beginning. All of the parties in BiH began as “strong leader-driven” or “elite-driven” parties. They are still in the process of becoming modern parties. Some of them are further along on that path; others are not. Therefore we have few variations when it comes to the selection and control of party leadership.

The SDA is an example of a “strong leader-driven” party and, after the late Alija Izetbegović, an example of an “elite-driven” party, with the party president strongly influencing the selection and control of its leadership. The SDA congress elects party organs, but beside the congress delegates elected by the municipal boards, members of the main board, presidency, supervisory board and court of honor are also delegates by right. Furthermore, the president has the right to appoint 5% of the delegates to the congress. The main board consists of 109 members, out of whom 81 are elected by the congress, while 11 are appointed by the president. In the 17-person presidency, five are elected by the congress (the deputy president and four vice presidents) while 12 others, including the general secretary, are elected by the main board, but only at the suggestion of the president and on consulting with the commission for cadres. This commission is obligatory at all levels of the organization. The voting procedure in the SDA is a “package”, meaning that delegates can secretly vote “for” or “against” the list of candidates. There is no voting for persons. Therefore, the elites, although sometimes challenged, try to create a “package” in a way that everyone is satisfied, unless a faction become strong enough to create its own “package”. At the lower levels, the

main force is the executive board of no more than 15 persons, which is a rather small group for a party with almost 100,000 members.

The SBiH is the other example of the same. After its former leader, Haris Silajdzic, officially left politics, the elites in the party took his role, although he still oversees party policy and the distribution of positions. However, they introduced secret voting if two or more individuals run for any party position. Their local councils have 15 to 31 members. Since the strong president is formally gone, the presidency elects the president from within itself. They have the right to add 30 delegates to the convention. The convention consists of two representatives from each municipal party council and three from each cantonal/regional party council. Not organizations – councils.

The situation is similar with the SDS, PDP and HDZ, where elites dominate and control the election process. The difference is that the HDZ and PDP elect their party president and other organs at their convention, while the SDS elects collective organs and the party presidency elects the president and the vice president. The “party elites” in the HDZ, PDP and SDS are closely linked with the “financially strong elites” who in turn are connected with suspicious business and trade activities, borne out over the last three years by indictments and verdicts involving high officials.

The SNSD is a case of a “strong leader”-driven party that tries to maintain the profile of a modern party. Moreover, its name is SNSD-Milorad Dodik, which underlines its legacy. Today, it has more of a party profile than it did before, when “the leader” represented the movement against the SDS. The SNSD today is more based on “local community organizations” and municipal boards, with the increased involvement of its membership. However, the legacy still exists at the main party level. Its congress elects 111 of the 141 member of the main board; 30 members are co-opted by the main board on the suggestion of the president. The main board meets twice a year but elects an executive board of 24 persons, who are proposed by the president. Besides that group, the executive board’s members also include three

vice presidents, a general secretary and secretary of the secretariat. The president of the SNSD is chair of the main board.

The case is similar with the SP but with the increased involvement of the party base and the diminished influence of the president. Delegates to the congress elect 61 out of 73 members of the main board, and 12 are co-opted to fill regional, gender and age allotted positions, but without the president playing a role. On the other hand, the main board elects vice presidents and a general secretary on the suggestion of the president.

The SDP BiH, although considered a “leader-driven” party due to the authority of its president, Zlatko Lagumdžija, it grants its president the smallest role. The SDP is in a constant process of internal party democratization and it has gone much further in that direction than any other party, even though the public perception is quite the opposite. The reason is that the SDP allows more democracy, freedom and space for its membership, but also requests that it respect its “duties” and “responsibility” and obey the will of the majority in a democratic way, since to do otherwise would lead to anarchy.

The basic organization of the SDP practically elects every other level (art. 25). They send representatives to the municipal party assembly, cantonal/regional conventions and to the party congress (art.s 31-89). Those representatives elect, respectively, the municipal, cantonal/regional, main party and supervisory boards, as well as presidents at different levels. The “boards” then elect a secretary, two vice presidents and the presidency from the nomination lists created, again, by the basic organizations. All nominations for party officials come from the “basic organization” and all those who elect them come from the “basic organizations”. The only role that the “boards” have on different levels in the selection process is to ensure that all nominations and elected officials fulfill the quotas set aside to guarantee ethnic, regional, gender and youth participation. Moreover, they have to take into account the number of nominations and to ask every nominee personally whether he or she accepts the nomination. The presi-

dent cannot appoint or propose anyone to any position in the party, nor is the president allowed to chair the main board. This is a separate position in the party. The main board (99 people) can co-opt 10% of that number but only from the list of those who did not make it in the first election. The usual composition of the municipal and cantonal/regional boards is between 20 and 40 people. All positions are elected by secret ballot, with the most candidates possible. The general secretary suggests the members of the secretariat to the presidency.

Before the last congress, held on February 5, 2005, the SDP presidency introduced the rule on internal party campaigning, which allowed candidates for president and other organs to campaign inside the party, promote their vision, organize meetings in municipal and cantonal/regional organizations, print and distribute promotional material to delegates, request transportation and use all party capacities at all levels for internal campaigning, all at the expense of the party. All three candidates for president took advantage of the opportunity, using it to advance their own priorities.

Concerning the control of party officials, all statutes have some kind of control mechanism. The SDP is only party that limits mandates, to two four-year mandates for president, vice presidents and the general secretary and three consecutive mandates for members of its collective organs. The SDA president, according to article 96, has the right to block all decisions of the collective and individual organs of the SDA that he or she might consider in opposition to the program and statute. The role of the main and supervisory boards is important here (SDP, SDA) as well as that of the presidency and regional organizations (SBiH, HDZ, SNSD) and courts of honor (SDA, SDS, HDZ, SBIH). They usually have the right to dismiss organs and organizations. More recently, such a prerogative has been exercised in the SDP, SBiH, HDZ and SNSD. The usual reasons include activities that are contrary to the statute and program, refusals to implement party decisions and actions that hurt the image of the party.

The selection and control of office holders is a separate issue. Their selection is the prerogative of the party and its membership. All parties request that candidates be respected, capable and proven promoters of party policy. All the parties have some kind of “cadre commissions” that evaluate candidates and assess gender, age, professional capability, etc. Mostly, it is the “boards” that process suggestions from the “cadre commission” and elect candidates. Suggestions come from the “party base” or from the “elites”; that is the main difference among the selection methods.

Speaking about control, it can be exercised through the special coordination of the “MP clubs” in parliament on different levels (SDP – secretariat for the coordination of parliamentarians, or HDZ coordination of all elected executives) and can involve the heads of the “MP clubs” in the party presidency (SDA, SDP, HDZ). The same is the case with office holders in government. The control over MPs is weakened by the election law, which allows MPs to take their mandate with them when leave the party.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the law on civil servants asks that every appointee with the rank of assistant minister (political appointments who are still civil servants) to obey the law, even though once they have been appointed they cannot be removed for political reasons. Dismissal of ministers is also difficult since they are elected as part of three-to-seven party alliances.<sup>9</sup>

The selection process has been proven to be the most important factor in all of this; because the very control over elected officials is

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<sup>8</sup> Six cases in the parliamentary assembly of BiH: SDP, PDP, NSRZB, NHI, Radicals and BOSS lost one MP each.

<sup>9</sup> The case when the SDA wanted to remove the prime minister of FBiH because it was not satisfied with his activity and the SBiH when its vice president as President of FBiH left the party because of different opinions. They could not remove them with the votes they had. The opposite case was with SDP in election year 2002 when party asked Head of Custom Service, Assistant Minister for Finance, Prime Minister of Canton Sarajevo and three other cantonal ministries in different cantons to resign because of suspicion of misuse of position that was never proven. They resigned but stayed in the Party.

difficult to maintain and it depends on the persons in question and party discipline.

#### **V. Degree of openness of internal debate or permissiveness toward party factions (minority opinions)**

It can be said that almost all parties have “minority opinions”, but they don’t allow factions. Meanwhile, the degree of openness of internal debate directly depends not on the “rights” set in statutes but on the organizational structure that is created to support or prevent internal debate. There are parties that allow their lower levels to discuss all issues and debate its program and statute and those parties that allow their regional and local organizations to discuss only those policies that are linked to the authority of a respected administrative unit. Moreover, some parties indeed take into consideration suggestions from the field and others openly hold debates within their local organization, on an informative basis, without having any impact or possibility of effecting change.

Party factions are still “taboo” since leaderships “are afraid of difference” no matter which political spectrum they belong to. That calls into question their democratic values. The SDA, SDS, HDZ, SBiH and PDP do not permit party factions nor are there any stipulations for minority opinions. The SDP defines minority opinion in article 18 of its statute: “In the SDP BiH, the public expression of minority opinion is allowed. Minority opinion cannot be opposed to the Program of the SDP BiH. In the SDP BiH, the institutionalization of minority opinions is not allowed in an organized way, meaning faction activity.” The SNSD defines this in article 12 of its statute: “Minority or individuals who do not agree with the decisions of the majority have a right to keep their views, and to represent and defend them and to request examination of a majority decision that they don’t agree with, but they are obliged to implement the majority-made decision.” The SP defines it in article 17, among other rights: “to express, and defend different opinions than those of the majority in the Party and to

question the decision of majority without making more difficult the work of Party organs and the implementation of majority decisions”.

The difference here is that the SDP allows it publicly and the SNSD and SP behind party doors. Therefore, this right has been exercised in the SDP numerous times, creating a perception of a lack of cohesion within the party, which represents the bad side of this good principle.

## **VI. The role and function of working groups**

All political parties have certain “interest-based groups”, mostly women and youth groups, but in some parties like the SDP there are also party veterans and syndicate forums. However, they don’t have the same organization or influence than do the first two. Their role and function depends on their internal party position, level of autonomy, influence in membership, network development and, of course, activity level. All the parties have W/Y groups but they are differently treated.

Mostly, the “main boards” define the framework of their organization and then leave it to the “groups” to more precisely develop it. Some of the W/Y groups follow the organization of the party (SDA, HDZ, SBiH, SP) and some have an organization only on the state/entity level (SDS, PDP). The third have their own way of organization (SDP, SNSD). Their role and function are also different; W/Y groups in the SDS, HDZ, PDP, SBiH only promote party policy among youth and carry out activities initiated by the party, while W/Y groups in the SDA, SDP, SNSD, SP develop their own programs and plans, implement actions and initiate platforms. During election campaigns, all are directly involved in executive activities.

However, their role in the creation of party policy and in decision making depends on their involvement in regular party organs. In the SDA only five of 109 places in the main board are allotted to the Youth Association of the SDA, while only 14 are women. The W/Y presidents are members of the presidency by their function (two of

25). The case is similar in the HDZ, two of the 22 in the presidency are women and one of the 22 is a youth, while in the main board, six of the 30 seats are held by women and three of the 30 by youth. This is usual in right-wing parties.

The SBiH is representative of a center-right elitist party given its attitude toward W/Y groups. It doesn't have any regulations regarding W/Y groups and their participation but it defines their role on the decision of the presidency. Furthermore, there is no youth representation in the presidency or on the executive board. There are three women in the presidency, which has nine members. The influence of W/Y groups depends on their closeness to the elite.

Leftist parties on the contrary have well-defined youth quotas. The SDP has the biggest quotas for W/Y groups. In all party levels, and in all party organs, (if membership potential allows) youth must represent 33% of the total and women 35%. This rule is for the most part implemented in 90% of party organizations. The same rule applies to the main board, 29% of whose elected members must be youth. The rest are co-opted later from the party lists, with preference given to younger candidates, regardless of the number of votes they receive. The female quota is fully met. In the presidency, youth hold five of 13 seats, while four of the 13 go to women. W/Y presidents attend and discuss, but don't vote. The important fact is that the young must represent 33% of the party congress and women another 35%. The same percentages apply for election lists.

"Youth" are those younger than 35; most are younger than 30. In the SNSD, W/Y presidents are by function members of the main and executive boards, but they also are subject to 30% female and 15% youth (younger than 27) party organ quotas (art. 20). The SP has a 20% quota for those under 30 and for women (art. 63). The presidents of the W/Y groups are members of the executive board (two of the 13).

The same quotas apply to candidate lists in general and local elections. However, for the SDA, for example, youth represented 40%



of their lists, while the SDP had young candidates more equally positioned on their lists. Unfortunately, since the lists are open and voters choose names, only one MP age 35 was elected to BiH Parliament and seven of 42 women, due to the fact that all parties were obliged to list women in every third position. After all, their real role depends on their elected positions, where they can promote themselves and show their abilities.

## **VII. Relationship to sympathizers and NGOs**

All the parties develop their relationships with sympathizers and supporters in usual and traditional ways: by holding open party meetings in towns, staging visits by party officials and office holders to important events and local communities, using the media (paid or non-paid), through the use of party infrastructure, etc. One important but often forgotten medium is electronic communications, including web sites and e-mail groups. Only 4% of BiH uses e-mail, but this mode of communication will grow in the next few years and it holds enormous potential to reach young and educated voters who don't have the time or the will to attend meetings but want to be informed. So far, only five parties have modern and developed web sites (SDA, HDZ, SDP, SNSD and NSRZB); a few others have web sites but they contain scant information and are not interactive.

Speaking about NGOs and different associations, every party has its own groups. Nationalist parties usually have war veterans, prisoners of war and victims associations – everything that is linked to inter-ethnic atrocities. Party members are often heads of these NGOs. On the other side, leftist parties wield influence over syndicates, trade unions, different civil rights and student associations, etc. Center-right parties have support in business associations, certain issue-driven NGOs, etc. It is a matter of discussion whether this the best way to link “civil society” and parties. NGOs have an important role in really democratic, open civil societies, but not in a closed society that pretends to be democratic. As one NGO expert said: The “West” under-

stands civil society as “ what we already have in the west and wish to see developed in the rest of the world”<sup>10</sup> and overlooks some specific historical and sociological circumstances, as well as the role of NGOs in transition, and controversies associated with them.<sup>11</sup>

Every party in BiH has a few attached NGOs, led by members who support the ideas of the party. That creates the false perception of “civil society” involvement. The situation can be seen more correctly in the pessimism expressed in low voter turnout. The real result should be the establishment of independent NGOs, think-tanks and advocacy groups that deal with real-life issues and link them with political parties that should use the “voice of civil society” in creating policies. This would help parties reach people and it would also help NGOs become stakeholders in policy creation and decision-making.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

The only conclusion we can draw from this report is that society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still going through the painful process of reconciliation and transition toward real democracy, and not just its shadow. The political parties are the main leaders and obstacles in this process, especially those parties possessed by irrational fears and unreasonable solutions. The simple citizen pays the main price because that person is still a political object, not a subject. However, there are improvements in some parties vis-à-vis internal party democracy and their attitude toward voters, especially within those parties from the left of the political spectrum. But there is a lot to be done to reach full democratic standards. Therefore, here are a few recommendations:

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<sup>10</sup> Chiodi, Luisa. “Promoting Civil Society: Local NGO’s in the Balkans Since the 90’s” in *Post-communist Transition as a European Problem*. Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2002. p.61.

<sup>11</sup> More about the role of NGO’s in contemporary world in Iriye, Akira. *Global Community*. Los Angeles, University of California Press. 2002.

## *Organizational Structures and Internal Party Democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

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– Change the legislation concerning election units to force parties to campaign throughout BiH, in order to change their rhetoric from ethnic-interest issues to citizen-interest issues;

– Change legislation concerning youth participation on the lists to improve their odds of being elected;

– Improve internal party democracy and organization by giving more space to the broader membership to participate in the decision-making process in order to break the elite driven policy;

– Introduce new technologies and improve e-communication and web sites;

– Institutionalize the evaluation of officials and office holders, including through the setting of measurable criteria, to improve the selection process;

– Institute open internal and external policy debates to get people and civil society groups interested and to encourage them to participate in society building;

– Allow W/Y and other groups more space for initiatives and promotion of their activities. It is necessary to establish a system where they are guaranteed equal participation in the media as well as in their promotion within the party if the parties want people to see that they are not closed groups of elites;

– Support NGOs, think-tanks and advocacy groups organized around common issues of common interest and make them the partners of political parties in overcoming the disconnect between parties and citizens;

– The international community and its representatives have to understand that a real democratic society cannot be established if the leading political parties are irresponsible and if international groups are uncoordinated in effort and focus;

– The final recommendation is for all of us. We cannot change the politics and politicians in BiH if we don't change the "mind set" with which they operate. There have been 10 different international organizations and foundations that have undertaken, separately, the task of

educating politicians, especially the younger generation, in different fields, including leadership, policy creation, public promotion and campaign techniques, but they have not built a complete and educated generation of politicians with the new, pro-European mindset that is so needed, not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina, but for the entire region. We need a new generation of politicians who can see and seek a future together in the EU, a generation free from fear. Therefore, I consider it extremely important to establish a regional political academy, in which we could have the opportunity to build a new generation of politicians.

More about Bosnia and Herzegovina, and its political system, economy, history, political parties and current issues can be found at: [www.europeanforum.net/country/bosnia](http://www.europeanforum.net/country/bosnia)

More about the parliamentary assembly of BiH at: [www.parliament.ba](http://www.parliament.ba)

More about elections and election law on the Election Commission web site at: [www.izbori.ba](http://www.izbori.ba)

More about the role of the international community and OHR at: [www.ohr.int](http://www.ohr.int)

SDA [www.sda.ba](http://www.sda.ba)

HDZ [www.hdzbih.org](http://www.hdzbih.org)

SBiH [www.zabih.ba](http://www.zabih.ba)

PDP [www.pdp-rs.org](http://www.pdp-rs.org)

SDP [www.sdp-bih.org.ba](http://www.sdp-bih.org.ba)

SNSD [www.snsd.org](http://www.snsd.org)

**Results of parliamentary elections in 2000 and 2002**

Party	2002	Seats	2000	Seats
Stranka Demokratski Akcije (SDA) Party of Democratic Action, ethnic (bosnian)/nationalist	23,7%	10	18,8%	8
Srpska Demokratska Stranka (SDS) Serbian Democratic Party, ethnic (serbian)/nationalist	15,2%	5	17,8%	6
Stranka za Bosnu i Hercegovinu (SBiH) Party for Bosnia and Hercegovina, ethnic (bosnian)/conserv.	12,0%	6	11,4%	5
Socijaldemokratska Partija Bosne i Hercegovine (SDP) Social Democratic Party of BiH, ethnic (bosnian)/social-dem.	11,3%	4	18,0%	9
Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica BiH (HDZ) Croatian Democratic Community, ethnic (croatian)/nationalist	10,1%	5	11,4%	5
Stranka Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata (SNSD) Party of Independent Social Democrats, ethnic (serbian)/social-dem.	10,1%	3	5,1%	1
Partija Demokratskog Progresu RS (PDP) Party for Democratic Progress, ethnic (serbian)/conserv.	4,7%	2	6,4%	2
Srpska Radikalna Stranka (SRS) Serbian Radical Party, ethnic (serbian)/nationalist	2,2%	1	-	-
Others	10,7%	6	9,7%	6
Total	-	42	-	42
Turnout		53,9%		-

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY IN ALBANIA**

*Blendi KAJSIU<sup>1</sup>*

There are currently some 90 parties registered with the Tirana District Court, out of which only 15 are represented in Parliament.<sup>2</sup> However, since 1991 the Albanian political system has been bipolar, with the two main political parties – the Socialist Party and Democratic Party – competing for power at both the local and national levels. The Democratic Party came to power in 1992 and was voted out of power in 1997, after a popular uprising that followed the collapse of the pyramid schemes, where many lost their lifesavings, and a rigged parliamentary electoral process in 1996. The Socialist Party came to power and has been in power ever since, while the Democratic Party has been steadily gaining in importance.

The two newest and somewhat significant political parties in Albania are the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI) and the National Movement for Development, on the left and right of the political spectrum, respectively. In September 2004 a long-standing fraction within the ruling Socialist Party, led by former Prime Minister Ilir Meta, split to form the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI). The new party also formed its own parliamentary group, as some 10 members of parliament moved from the Socialist Party parliamentary group into that of the Socialist Movement for Integration. The National Movement for Development (NMD), on the other hand, was

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<sup>1</sup> Albanian School of Politics, Tirana

<sup>2</sup> Republic of Albania, Parliamentary Elections of 2005. OSCE/ODHIR Needs Assessment Mission Report, 29 April, 2005. P 5.

born of the merger of two existing parties, the Legality Movement and the Renewed Democratic Party, and is headed by Leka Zogu, the son of the former Albanian king Zog I. Both parties aim to play an important role in the Albanian political scene after the July 3, 2005, parliamentary elections.

It is interesting to note that the two newest players on the Albanian political scene have chosen to be called movements and not political parties. On the one hand, this is a calculated move to differentiate oneself from the other existing parties, while also projecting the image of a political force that is open and inclusive, even beyond party lines. On the other hand, such a decision can also reflect the current disillusionment with Albanian parties in general. It is thus safe to assume that the new political actors did not want to be identified as just another political party, which might not be well received by the electorate.

### **Party organization**

All the major political parties in Albania can be classified as *mass parties*. They aim to maximize their membership and penetrate very deep into the social fabric. Without exception, Albanian political parties are organized in a hierarchical fashion and tend to be quite centralized. Their structure is organized to satisfy election requirements, as indicated by the fact that party organizations are formed around polling stations and electoral districts. Besides the need to mobilize voters, the current structure of Albanian political parties has also been shaped due to electoral code requirements. Elections in Albania are not organized, like in many other countries, by state or independent agencies.<sup>3</sup> The two major political parties, the SP and DP, as well as the smaller ones, are heavily involved in the organization of elections. They propose political representatives to each of the election commissions, starting from the polling station electoral commission to the

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<sup>3</sup> See Albanian Electoral Code. Available at [www.kqz.org](http://www.kqz.org)

Central Elections Commission (CEC). Therefore, an extended party structure becomes quite crucial during election time in order to perform a variety of tasks, from voter registration to campaigning.

At the local level in both the two main parties, the basic party organizations are organized around each voting center. At the electoral district level, each party also has another organization that brings together all the basic party organizations of the electoral district. In the Democratic Party structure, this organization is labeled ‘sub-branch’ and covers one electoral constituency. Since Albania has 100 electoral constituencies, there are 100 DP sub-branches. The same structure in the Socialist Party is called the ‘zonal council’. The highest local organization is organized at the prefecture level and brings together a number of electoral district organizations. This is normally called the party branch. In the case of the DP, the role of the party branch has been reduced in favor of the sub-branch; therefore the branch plays more of a coordinative role. Nevertheless, overall the party structures at the local level are quite similar for both the SP and DP.

There is also a striking similarity between the political party structures at the national level. The highest decision-making body in both cases is the National Party Congress, which in the case of the Democratic Party is called the National Convention (or Assembly).<sup>4</sup> This body elects a national committee that is the second-highest decision-making body, after the congress, and meets more often than it does. It is called the General Steering Committee in the case of the Socialist Party and the National Council in the case of the Democratic Party. In both parties, out of this collegial body is elected the presidency or chairmanship of the party, a consultative committee close to the chairman of the party. One of the main differences between the two main parties, so far in their national party structure, has been the fact that the secretary general in the case of the SP is elected by the National

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<sup>4</sup> See art. 38 of “Projekt Statuti i Partisë Demokratike të Shqipërisë (*Draft Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania*)”. P 20. Tirana, April 2005.



Congress whereas in the case of the DP, by the National Council, which means that the SP had a more authoritative secretary general alongside the chairman of the party.<sup>5</sup>

However, after their recent party congresses on April 22, 2005, for the DP, and May 5, 2005, for the SP, a number of important differences are worth mentioning. In order to become more competitive in the then-upcoming parliamentary elections, held on July 3, 2005, the DP created a consultative body named the Committee for the Orientation of Policies (COP), which consists of some 40 well-known experts in different areas. The short-term function of this committee was to produce platforms and programs for the Democratic Party, which became part and parcel of the program of the Democratic Party for the elections. In the longer run, this committee will design political projects on specific technical issues.<sup>6</sup> At their party congress, the Socialist Party also decided to set up a similar structure, calling the National Political Forum of the Socialist Party.

In a more dramatic move, the Socialist Party decided to approve at its May 5, 2005, party congress the so-called “Rama Platform”, named after the current mayor of Tirana, Edi Rama. This platform consists of eight points and was initially rejected at the December 12, 2003, Socialist Party Congress. One of the provisions of this platform was to increase the participation of women in decision-making forums by introducing quotas, according to which at least one-third of the members should be women. However, the most important provision of this platform was to institutionalize party factions and to elect the chairman of the party through the direct vote of the entire party membership, through the ‘one member, one vote’ principle. Each group within the party has the right to run in internal party elections with their own candidate and platform. The institutionalization of factions, or ‘the difference in opinions’, is guaranteed to any faction that

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<sup>5</sup> See art. 7.4 of the Statute of the Socialist Party. [www.ps.al](http://www.ps.al)

<sup>6</sup> See art. 44 of “Projekt Statuti i Partisë Demokratike të Shqipërisë (*Draft Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania*)”. P 24. Tirana, April 2005

receives more than 20% of the vote in internal party elections. These factions receive representation in all the main party decision-making forums in proportion to the number of votes they have received in internal party elections.<sup>7</sup>

In many aspects, this is a revolutionary and democratizing move on the Albanian political scene. In fact, the first party that introduced the election of the party chairman through the vote of the entire membership was the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI), headed by Ilir Meta, who was elected by the entire membership. However, the institutionalization of factions within the Socialist Party is a positive step, in as far as it allows for the coexistence of different groups within the party. In the past, divergences of opinions within the political parties resulted in purges, expulsions or splits. The Democratic Party has experienced such phenomena more often than any other political party in Albania. However, the SP has also suffered the same phenomenon. Recently, due to divergences of opinion within the Socialist Party a faction headed by the former Socialist Prime Minister Ilir Meta split to form the Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI). Therefore, the move on the part of the SP to institutionalize factions is a very positive step, which places it ahead of other parties in Albania in guaranteeing space for debate and dissenting opinions, which in turn is a primary prerequisite for internal party democracy.

The institutionalization of factions and the 'one member, one vote' system could also be quite helpful in improving the relationship between local and central party organs. Both these elements might contribute to a more open, active and participatory local structure, capable of better influencing decisions that are taken at the central level. This is in fact one of the major problems within the two main political parties: the relationship between the base and the center.

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<sup>7</sup> Edi Rama, tetë pika të një platforme lirie pa kufi. *Zëri i Popullit (Voice of the People*, the official party paper of the Socialist Party). Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005. P 3.

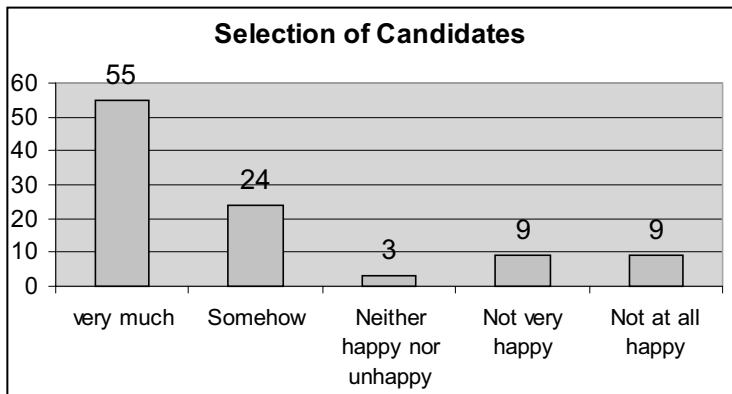
### **The structural crises of albanian political parties**

At the heart of the structural crises facing Albania's political parties remains the relationship between the center and the local organization, and along with it the ossification of the basic units of the party. Both political parties are highly centralized and the most important decisions are taken by a very limited group of people or solely by the chairman of the party, quite often even against the will of the party's local structures or in clear violation of party statutes. This phenomenon became quite clear with the nomination of candidates for parliament on the eve of the July 3, 2005, parliamentary elections. It is quite frequent both within the SP and DP. In both cases, the respective chairmen of the SP and DP represent the main decision-making centers and often have bypassed their respective party forums when nominating candidates for parliament.

Thus, in a spectacular move on March 21, 2005, Prime Minister Fatos Nano, who is also chairman of the Socialist Party, announced the candidates who would run on a SP ticket in the 2005 parliamentary elections. This was an announcement that violated the statutory provisions of the Socialist Party, according to which SP candidates who run for parliament are proposed by the presidency and the chairman of the party but are eventually voted on by the general steering committee. The announced candidates were declared as such before they had been voted on by the Socialist general steering committee, violating thus a fundamental provision of the statute. To make things worse, often candidates were chosen despite vocal objections by local party branches. In Elbasan, a city south of Tirana, alone there were two such cases. In one, the existing Socialist MP was reinstated as a candidate in his area only after he collected some 6,000 signatures from local voters who supported his candidacy.

There have been similar cases with the candidates fielded by the Democratic Party (DP). Yet it must be emphasized that, in the case of the DP, the candidates have emerged to a larger extent as the result of compromises between local and central preferences. The preferences

of the local branches have been taken into account to a larger extent. This has partly been the case due to the fact that the DP is an opposition party, which relies heavily on local structures that it is quite reluctant to alienate. However, even within this party there is ample evidence of a problematic relationship between the local structures and the center. The results of a survey of some 100 delegates (out of some 800 in total) at the Democratic Party convention held on April 22, 2005, show that local structures are not very happy either with their relationship with the center or with the selection of candidates for MP.<sup>8</sup> Thus, when asked whether they were happy with the selection of candidacies for MP, only slightly more than half said they were very happy. See Figure 1.



**Figure 1. How happy are you with the selection of candidates for MP in your party?**

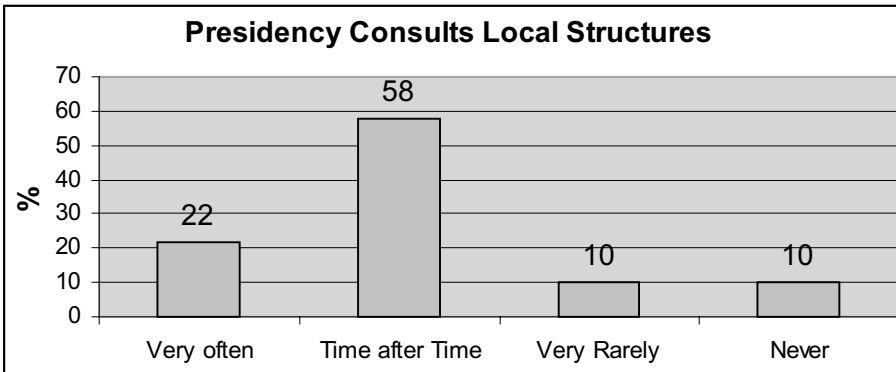
One could argue that the above percentages are not at all disturbing, given that more than half of the respondents were happy with the

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<sup>8</sup> This survey was conducted by Jonida Balla for her undergraduate thesis “A Comparative Study of the Membership of the Two Main Political Parties in Albania”. This is a work in progress and the findings of her research have not been published. All the consequent graphs are taken from this survey

candidate selection. However, it is highly probable that there is over-reporting in the first category ‘very much’, since in depth interviews with delegates at the congress showed that they would mark the ‘very much’ option even when they were not in fact very happy with the selection of the candidates for MP. This is quite understandable, given the target group of the interviews – party delegates – as well as the environment in which most interviews took place, i.e. the party convention.

The problematic relationship between the center and the base is even more obvious with regard to the decision-making process. When asked how often the presidency of the party takes advice from the local structures, only 22% of the respondents answered ‘very often’, while the majority said ‘time after time’, and 20% responded that the presidency of the party consults local structures either rarely or never. See Figure 2.



The above graph under-reports the problematic relationship between the center and the base. Here again, given the respondent pool and the venue, it is reasonable to expect that people would tend to positively over-report. Nevertheless, the above graph shows that there is a lack of communication between the center and the base. There seems to be little participation of the local structures in the decision-

making process at the center. This is particularly disturbing if we take into consideration that the above answers are given by delegates at the National Party Convention of the Democratic Party, i.e. party members who are quite active in the decision-making process. Therefore, one could conclude that other, less important members of the party are even less involved in the decision-making process.

At this point, it is quite clear that decision-making within Albanian political parties is quite centralized and in absence of vociferous opposition from local structures, an exclusive privilege of the party leader. One would be tempted to conclude that the immediate solution would be to decentralize the decision-making process. However, this is not necessarily a remedy, given the situation of many local party structures. In many cases, they are in the hands of local monopolies that use and abuse them to their own advantage. As a result, there have been a number of cases in which local structures have chosen candidates based not on how popular these candidates were with the electorate, but rather according to narrow clannish interests. Unfortunately, the highly centralized decision-making process has produced very dysfunctional and closed local party structures, which in turn quite often have perpetuated the need for a centralized decision-making process. In this vicious circle, local structures quite often have been usurped by local clans, with no interest in opening up the local party structures. And they can be kept closed for as long as the participation of the average party member is almost inexistent, except for during elections.

Under these circumstances, the immediate decentralization of the decision-making process might be counterproductive, as it would empower local clannish interests that do not represent those of the wider party membership. A more promising approach in order to improve the relationship between the center and the local structure would be through the introduction of the 'one member, one vote system'. If the membership of the party is more involved in the decision-making process through its direct vote, it is also highly likely that it will become

more open and less susceptible to domination by specific clannish interests. However, it is also important to emphasize that introducing a direct vote for the entire membership might also produce a number of complications within the context of the Albanian political scene.

### **One member, one vote and internal party democracy**

At this point, it is important to have a more detailed discussion of the one member, one vote system, given its growing importance on the Albanian political scene. Almost all the main political parties in Albania, including the two main ones, the DP and SP, have declared that they will introduce some form of this system in the near future. By now there seems to be some consensus among decision-makers within the political parties, as well as among a number of political analysts, that this system would enhance internal party democracy. One of the youngest political movements in Albania, the Socialist Movement for Integration, used this system in March 2005, to elect its chairman, Ilir Meta.

One member, one vote is a system that has been very effectively advocated by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Albania since 2003. It was first introduced in 1993 in the British Labour Party by its then-leader, Neil Kinnock.<sup>9</sup> At the time, the Labour Party had suffered a series of electoral defeats, was facing major problems with internal party organization, and was being held hostage by the Labor Union block vote, which gave disproportionate decision-making power to the labor unions, or rather a limited group within them, at the expense of the rest of the membership. By introducing the one member, one vote system, Labour managed to break free from the Union block vote and also increased the involvement its membership, producing

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<sup>9</sup> Ellison, Nick. “Rëndësia e Parimit ‘NJë anëtar, një votë’ për partitë politike në Shqipëri”. In “NJë anëtar, një votë. Një përmbledhje shkrimesh politike. Pegi Publishing House. Tirana, 2004. P 31

thus an electoral program that was more to the liking of the majority of the electorate.<sup>10</sup>

Although the one member, one vote system has been debated and discussed in great detail, it has rarely been explained at great length. Despite its deceptively simple name, the system can mean a number of different things and it is not very easy to define. As its very name suggests, One Member, One Vote (OMOV) is a system where the vote of each dues-paying member of the party is weighed equally and important decisions are taken through the voting of all members. However, the principle can be applied extensively or restrictively. In its simplest form, this system implies that the election of the chairman of the party or the chairmen of the party's branches is made by the entire membership. In some cases, a number of important decisions might be taken through the vote of the entire membership. The system can be extended to involve party candidates who seek to run for national or local office or parliament. They can also be elected directly through the vote of the entire membership of the party branch. In this case, the system would resemble primaries in the United States, where only party members can participate in the voting process.

One member, one vote has also been used in order to guarantee a fair representation of factions within leading political party structures, such as in the UMP in France. Different factions might compete for the vote of the membership with their leader and/or political program. Once the voting process is over, each faction that has received more than a certain percentage of votes can be represented with its candidates in national leading structures, such as the national steering committee, national assembly and so on. The representation could be proportional to the percentage of votes received by the party membership.

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathon Carr-Brown. "Cinizmi dhe mbështetja ndaj 'Një anëtar një votë'. In "Një anëtar, një votë. Një përmbledhje shkrimesh politike. Pegi Publishing House. Tirana, 2004. P 36.



### **Positive implications**

OMOV has been introduced as a solution to the problem of the lack of internal democracy in Albanian political parties. By giving party members a chance to vote, this system allows for decisions to be taken in a more democratic and transparent way. As a result, the membership can be more actively involved in the life of the party and thus become more enthusiastic and efficient. This in turn could produce more commitment on its part, and perhaps more willingness to pay dues thanks to an increased feeling of belonging. Thus overall the system is thought to produce a more active and more empowered membership. This is of particular importance in Albania, where besides the growing apathy of voters, party members seem to be increasingly alienated from the political process.

Besides the positive impact on party membership, the system is expected to also have a positive impact on the quality of candidates who run for local or national office. The argument goes that if the candidates are elected by the entire membership, it is more likely that they will win the vote of the public as well, as might not be the case if they are chosen by the chairman of the party or by other similar leadership structures. The vote of local party members, who are also voters in the area, could also be seen as a preliminary test of the popularity of candidates. Furthermore, after such a process, all party members and structures could unite behind the elected candidate and give him or her their full support during the election, unlike what's often the current practice, where local party structures or members are unhappy with the candidates appointed from the center and often do not help them during elections. A vote by the entire local membership of the party would legitimize the candidate and rally all party structures behind that person.

In the same fashion, the leader of the party would be more legitimate if elected by the majority of the membership. This would serve to reduce dissent and internal opposition against policies undertaken by a leader. This in turn would mean that the leadership would be

more efficient and successful, especially during electoral campaigns. Currently, party leaders are elected at party congresses on the vote of delegates. Often the congresses are accused of not being representative of the entire party membership, amid allegations that the party leadership handpicks delegates in order to assure re-election. This was the case with the Socialist Party congress, held December 12, 2003. Such accusations have undermined the legitimacy of the current party leadership, while also producing friction that has hindered the efficiency of the party.

Finally, by introducing the one member, one vote system, one can put an end to the fictional membership problem so present in Albanian political parties. Political parties in Albania still do not have accurate membership lists. The local branches and structures of political parties often over-report their membership in order to increase their representation in national decision-making forums. This leads to the production of fictional membership rolls. Once the OMOV system has been introduced, clear membership numbers will have to be devised in order to ensure that each vote counts. Furthermore, this also might contribute to the opening up of basic party units, which at the moment are controlled by a small group of people who decide which delegates to send to local and national decision-making forums. Such control over basic party organizations will no longer be of any use, once certain decisions are taken through direct vote rather than through delegates.<sup>11</sup>

### **Negative aspects**

Despite its positive potential, the above principle also entails certain problems or pitfalls, some inherent in the very nature of the system and others due to the condition of Albanian democracy. One of

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<sup>11</sup> Bejko, Roland. "Përse duhet përkishtë tani parimi një anëtar, një votë?". In "Një anëtar, një votë. Një përmbledhje shkrimesh politike. Pegi Publishing House. Tirana, 2004. P 103.

the major concerns inherent in the very nature of the system is the fact that a vote by the entire membership would in fact tend to centralize rather than decentralize the decision-making process. If the entire membership elects the leader of a party, then he or she would also have to assume an increasing number of competencies that would centralize the decision-making process, although once in a while, the membership would be asked to vote on certain issues.

Other concerns mostly pertain to the extent that such system actually could be put into practice. The first and foremost of these concerns is whether elections within a political party can actually be free and fair. This is a particularly acute concern given the fact that Albania has to yet pass the free and fair election test. Every electoral process in Albania since 1992 has been marred by serious irregularities. Given the difficulty of staging free and fair elections outside of political parties it is even more unlikely to have a free and fair electoral process within political parties. This is even more the case if we take into consideration the fact that political parties are voluntary organizations and as such their internal proceedings, including elections, mostly fall outside of the domain of the law. The law on political parties simply stipulates that parties should function in a democratic way, without actually defining what this is and what penalties they might face if they don't.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, while it possible to complain about elections to judiciary bodies, such as the Electoral College, it unlikely to occur in the case of elections within political parties. Furthermore, it would not even be advisable, since it would mean that the judiciary – which often is pressured by whatever party is in power – could determine the leadership of political parties. This would most probably generate some flagrant cases of intervention in internal political party affairs.

Therefore, the leadership of a party can use OMOV in order to re-legitimate itself even if it loses an election. This would not produce electoral political parties, which would require the resignation of the

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<sup>12</sup> See Law on Political Parties

leader after an election defeat. With OMOV, the leader of the party can resign and then be re-elected. This is quite possible, not only because it is difficult to guarantee the integrity of the electoral process, but also because the very high levels of political polarization in Albania tend to radicalize the party leadership, which rallies behind the existing leadership. It should thus come as no surprise that right before the 2005 parliamentary elections, both Fatos Nano, chairman of the Socialist Party, and Sali Berisha, chairman of the Democratic Party, both appeared willing to implement such a system. From this perspective, although such a system has been advocated as a means of renovating the existing leadership of Albanian political parties, in practice it can produce the opposite result.

In a similar fashion, this system might cement existing local party branch oligarchies. Their control over local party membership might be used to legitimate them *ad infinitum*, unless a free and fair electoral process is put in place so as to limit their control by extending party membership. Thus, internal party democracy can become an end in of itself, even more important than the electoral success of the party. This is an acute danger, if we bear in mind that the primary task of a political party should be to win election. One member, one vote should in fact serve exactly this purpose, and not vice versa. By focusing too much on internal party democracy, as a prerequisite for democracy in the world outside of political parties, we might bypass the real challenge of the Albanian democracy: the holding of free and fair elections. These can and should be held even before the one member, one vote system is applied within the political parties. In fact, many of the shortcomings within Albanian parties result from shortcomings outside of them, of which the absence of free and fair elections is the most important. In the absence of free and fair elections, it is no surprise that political parties field candidates with whom the electorate is not happy.

Another problem with the one member, one vote system is that it might tear a party apart. An internal electoral race, unless the party is

very cohesive, might produce irreparable damage to party cohesion, while also making it more vulnerable to its opponents. In fact, the Democratic Party applied a system quite similar to OMOV during the 2000 local elections. According to this system, the candidate for mayor who DP would introduce was to be elected by the local conventions, in which a large part of the membership would participate. Elections were preceded by a fierce electoral campaign. In some cities, the campaign was so fierce that it actually tore the local branch apart, and once a candidate was chosen, the portions of the local structures that were unhappy with the final choice failed to rally behind that person in the electoral campaign.

### **Political parties and civil society**

The relationship between political parties and civil society in Albania ranges from that of complete unison to outright hostility and enmity. The difficulty in generalizing about such a complex relationship is at least threefold. First, it is difficult to define what civil society is in Albania. Second, the Socialist and Democratic parties have had very different, and at times opposite, experiences with civil society. Thirdly, the relationship between each of the two main political forces and civil society has varied over time, depending on whether a party was in power or in opposition. In order to overcome these difficulties, we will primarily explore the present, referring to past developments only in as far as they help explain current developments, with no pretension to an exhaustive historical approach.

We will also apply a generally accepted albeit simple definition of civil society in Albania. Civil society will refer mostly to the collection of NGOs and think-tanks funded almost entirely by international donors, as well as academics, independent analysts and journalists. This definition leaves out some traditional segments of civil society, such as labor unions, religious communities and other organized civic groups. While this does constitute a limitation of our analysis, it is important to mention that such civil society segments play a

very limited role in Albanian political life. Religious communities, for example, do not participate at all in the political process, and religious issues are hardly part of the political debate. Labor unions have limited membership, and are weakly organized. They have been formed around each of the main political parties and lack any real political independence.<sup>13</sup> In both these cases the impact on political developments is limited, which to a certain degree validates our working definition of civil society. This is not to say that these parts of civil society – labor unions and religious organizations – could not have been included in our analyses, if only to explore why their impact on political processes is so limited.

At this point, it is important to avoid one potential misunderstanding. Our aim is not to focus on the historical relations between the two main parties and civil society but on how the latter has impacted the former. It is the impact of civil society on political parties that is at the heart of our analysis and not vice versa. Of course, the interaction between the two is much more complex than a one-way relationship. Yet to the extent that international donors have heavily funded the civil society sector it has sustained a level of autonomy and independence that cannot be easily compromised by political parties without its consent. This justifies our focus on the impact of civil society on political parties.

### **The impact of civil society on political parties**

Despite some major differences in the relationship between civil society on the one hand and the ruling Socialist Party and the opposition Democratic Party on the other, there is one aspect in which civil society has been detrimental for both political parties. This is with regard to the discourse that it has sustained on politics. Civil society has contributed to the general perception of politics and politicians as inherently corrupt and incompetent and of political parties as failed,

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<sup>13</sup> Nations in Transit (NIT) Freedom House Report on Albania. 2004. [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

unrepresentative, clientelist organizations. These are in short the perceptions that the general public has of political parties.<sup>14</sup> Although it would be unfair to deny the contribution of a number of politicians and political parties in producing and sustaining such perceptions, civil society has also played a crucial part in this regard.

It is important to understand here that the question is not whether politics is corrupt, or to what degree it is corrupt, nor even whether politics can be fair and honest. Nor are we exploring whether the current perceptions of politicians and political parties are true or not. These are questions left to philosophers or political scientists who deal with empirical data and analyses. Our working premise here is that in a democracy “perceptions are the only reality that matter”.<sup>15</sup> From this standpoint, the question that we explore is not whether or how much politics has failed, but how such failure is perceived, discussed, identified and condemned. It is in this context that we see the role of civil society and explore some possible hypotheses as to why civil society creates and/or sustains the existing perception of the failure of politics.

The fact of the matter is that civil society organizations in Albania articulate a strong condemnation of politics and what they refer to as the “political class” in general and political parties in particular. This has been articulated by a series of coalitions that fight corruption and other successful social movements, all of them funded by international donors.<sup>16</sup> While these organizations often target the

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<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed account of such perceptions see Early Warning System Report conducted by the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) on behalf of UNDP Albania.

<sup>15</sup> Krastev, Ivan. “The Inflexibility Trap – Frustrated Societies and Weak States”. Center for Liberal Strategies (CLS0. Sofia 2002. P 23.

<sup>16</sup> See Report to the US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe 20 July 2004 by Erion Veliaj, Executive Director of the MJAFT! (ENOUGH!) Movement. As the transcript demonstrates there is also a lot of criticism of the existing government following a series of scandals that have had as the protagonist the prime minister. However the bottom line of the testimony is that politics and the political class have failed.

government they also direct a good part of their criticism toward the main opposition party. What all these criticisms have in common, echoed too in the media by independent analysts, is the failure of politicians and political parties and the need for a new generation of politicians.

The need for a “new political class” that should replace the existing one is heavily articulated especially after national catastrophes, crises or scandals. Such cases provide a good opportunity for analysts, journalists or media consumers to express their disappointment with the politicians and political parties. It’s even more the case when the problem is considered to be political, including with elections, the corruption of government officials or parliamentary crises. In these cases, the leaders of the two main parties are the targets of criticism and disapproval, who along with politics and politicians in general are identified as the source of Albania’s national misfortunes.<sup>17</sup> Civil society organizations and representatives tend to be at the forefront of declarations when they touch on political issues.

There are at least two main reasons why this happens. The first reason is the condition of being non-political or politically independent, which is imposed by donors on the organizations they fund. Second, and as a consequence of the first, is the very definition of political independence that is most commonly applied by civil society actors when they take a stand on political issues. Before exploring in greater detail each of these two reasons and their consequences, we have to emphasize the fact that NGOs and other internationally funded organizations have a tendency to avoid political debates. Therefore, here we are only analyzing the cases when civil society actors participate actively in political issues. In these cases, it is of particular

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<sup>17</sup> See “Flet shkrimtari i madh: Nga tensionimi i politikës shqiptare, tek pozicioni i Shqipërisë ndaj luftës në Irak Kadare: Përçarja, veprimtari antikombëtare “Vënia në shënjestër e Edi Ramës, një ndërtuesi, midis duhmës shkatërruese, shenjë e keqe”. “Shekulli” daily paper March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003.



importance to understand how political independence is understood, applied and the consequences that it entails.

The most generally accepted definition of political independence for civil society in Albania has been “equally distanced from both political parties.” In a highly polarized political climate, it has been crucial for NGOs not to appear affiliated with any of the two parties in order to receive funds from international donors. In practice, this has meant that whatever criticism was directed against the government and/or the ruling Socialist Party had to be accompanied by the same amount of criticism for the opposition, the Democratic Party, and vice versa. In this way, any accusations from either political party would be avoided. The natural consequence of such an approach has been to rely on generalizing categories such as “the political class”, “politicians” and “politics” and criticize these units *en bloc* for the failures of democracy. This is not to say that there haven’t been cases in which individual institutions or politicians have been put under the spotlight of civil society organizations. Yet this has inevitably occurred in the framework of an “incriminated political class” and “failed politics”, of which the individual institution or politician was presented as factual proof.

Another reason that explains the stand of civil society vis-à-vis political parties is the role that they are supposed to play in a democratic society. Civil society provides a bridge that connects the public with decision-makers. Therefore, their take on political parties is not simply the consequence of donor conditioning. The *raison d’être* of civil society is the “failure of politics”, the growing gap between politicians and ‘the people’, which should be bridged by it. In this regard, the more politics fail, the more crucial civil society becomes. It is in fact by articulating and identifying such failures that civil society organizations make a case to donors for more projects and funds.

The consequences have been manifold. First, by reinforcing existing discourses on politics and politicians through generalizing

categories, civil society organizations have failed to individualize or isolate responsibilities. Therefore, even campaigns that aimed to produce more accountability in governance, for example by fighting corruption, had a certain counterproductive impact. They succeeded in raising public awareness about the lack of transparency in governance, but failed in their primary objective to reduce it – a task that is in fact quite political.<sup>18</sup> Corruption has also become deeply politicized in Albania. However, due to the need to sustain their independence, civil society actors have had to criticize all sides for it, including the existing political culture of the country, which in practice meant that “everyone” is involved and responsible for corruption. In the final analysis, instead of producing accountability, such an approach diffuses responsibility to the point that it makes the fight against corruption empty rhetoric, while also diverting attention from its sources.<sup>19</sup>

This in turn increases apathy and disappointment with politics and political parties on the part of the electorate, deepening further the “us” (the people) and “them” (the politicians) discourse. The impact on political parties is of particular interest here. Their lowered standing in the eyes of the public at large produces a number of detrimental consequences. Under such circumstances, incentives to participate in the political life of the country in general and to join political parties in particular lose ground. This is first reflected in the falling numbers of people who vote. Even more disturbing is the fact that the quality of party officials and politicians also drops, as reflected in the falling

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<sup>18</sup> See “From the Ground Up: Assessing the Record of Anticorruption Assistance in Southeastern Europe” by Martin Tisne & Daniel Smilov. Center for Policy Studies. Published in June 2004. The authors devote particular attention to civil society efforts to fight corruption in Albania. One of their conclusions is that there is a discrepancy between the fact that corruption in awareness campaigns is recognized as a political issue, while solutions that have been offered have been mostly technical.

<sup>19</sup> See Ivan Krastev. “Anticorruption Rhetoric and Reform Policies”. Center for Liberal Strategies (CLS) at [www.cls-sofia.org](http://www.cls-sofia.org)

education level of the members of Parliament from 1996 onward.<sup>20</sup> The 1996 parliament had the largest percentage of parliamentarians with postgraduate degrees and advanced qualifications. This percentage remains relatively high, 26 %, although it has not reached the 1996 levels in consequent Parliaments.

Ironically enough, this hinders the process of regenerating political parties with high-quality new comers and impoverishes the choices on the political market.

The civil society sector provides very good employment opportunities for well-educated people, which is also partly responsible for redirecting young educated Albanians from the political to the civil sphere. In a country like Albania, with an economy that staggers along, the state remains the single biggest employer. This is in fact one of the main incentives for people to join political parties; they deliver jobs when in power. As the statistics cited in the previous section show, the ruling party has a much larger percentage of sympathizers employed in the state sector. By providing a good alternative to employment in public administration or the political sector, NGOs have promoted an internal brain-drain phenomenon, with talent flowing from the public and political sectors to the non-political ones. This, combined with the existing perception of political parties and their internal organizational problems, has contributed to a falling number of well-educated people and intellectuals willing to join political parties. An increasing number of who could be considered well-qualified individuals, in terms of education, expertise and integrity, prefer either to not be involved at all in politics or to criticize politics from a distance. In both cases, civil society provides a comfortable refuge.

It is in this regard that in the longer term the role of civil society

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<sup>20</sup> The 1996 parliament had the largest percentage of parliamentarians with postgraduate degrees and advanced qualifications. This percentage remains relatively high, 26 %, although it has not reached the 1996 levels in consequent Parliaments. See “Legjislatura XVI, 2001 – 2005”, Manual, published by the Albanian Assembly, Tirana 2003.

organizations has been detrimental to political parties. In the narrowest sense, they have contributed to the lowering of both the number and the quality of individuals willing to join political parties. This has been achieved by contributing to the demonization of politics and political parties through broad generalizations. In the long run, this has produced less accountability in governance while discouraging those with a predilection for politics. This has reduced the quality of political party representation, which in turn has produced even more vilification of political parties by civil society actors. In the final analysis, this vicious circle has added to the de-legitimization of politics in general and political parties in particular. Although not the sole cause of this process, civil society has substantially contributed to it.

Finally, international donors have neglected political parties as instruments that could perform these goals by focusing on civil society organizations as the sector that could enhance accountability and transparency in governance. As the gap between the electorate and decision makers grows, an increasing awareness of the importance of political parties in producing more democratic and responsive governance is emerging among international donors in their search for responsive government in Albania. “Reforming political parties should be at the center of such a search for responsive government”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> In search of Responsive Government: State Building and Economic Growth in the Balkans”. Blue Bird Agenda for Civil Society in South East Europe. Policy Studies Series 2003. Center for Policy Studies. Central European University 2003. P 53.

**Appendix**

**Results of parliamentary elections in 2001 and 2005**

Party	2005	Seats	2001	Seats
Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë (PDSH) Democratic Party of Albania, conserv.	-	57	36,8%	32
Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë (PSSH) Socialist Party of Albania, social-dem.	-	41	41,5%	73
Partia Republikane Shqiptare (PR) Albanian Republican Party, conserv.	-	11	-	5
Partia Socialdemokrate (PSD) Social Democratic Party, social-dem.	-	7	3,7%	4
Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim (LSI) Socialist Movement for Integration, social-dem.	-	5	-	-
Partia Demokrate e Re (PDR) Reformed Democratic Party, conserv.	-	4	5,1%	6
Partia Agrare Ambientaliste (PAA) Agrarian Environmentalist Party, agrarian	-	4	2,6%	3
Aleanca Demokratike (AD) Democratic Alliance, liberal	-	3	2,5%	3
Partia Bashkimi per të Drejtat e Njeriut (PBDNJ) Human Rights' Union Party, ethnic [greek]	-	2	2,6%	3
Partia Demokracia Sociale (PDS) Social Democracy Party, social-dem.	-	2	-	-
Partia Demokristiane e Shqipërisë (PDK) Christian Democratic Party of Albania, christian-dem.	-	2	1,0%	-
Bashkimi Liberal Demokrat (BLD) Liberal Democratic Union, liberal	-	1	-	1
Independents	-	1	-	2
Others	-	-	4,2%	8
Total	-	140	-	140
Turnout	-		53,0%	

