



Kolegji AAB

MASS COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM

MASTER THESIS

THEME:

**ROLE OF MEDIA IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS
KOSOVO AFTER 1999**

Mentor:
Prof. Asoc. Ibrahim BERISHA

Candidate:
Meneta ZEKAJ – NUSHI

Prishtine, 2014

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INTRODUCTION

The diploma thesis in the Master level with the theme “ROLE OF MEDIA IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS - KOSOVO AFTER 1999”, aims at opening a continuous discussion on the role of media during electoral campaigns. This paper aims at interrogating questions and analyzing relevant issues on the role of media in electoral campaigns. Since elections are valued as a more general political action for the promotion of democracy and government in central and local levels and at the same time as a part of the public reaction, towards functioning and democratic rotations of power, role of media in relation to them is beyond huge and irreplaceable. In this aspect, the function and mission of media in the assurance of communication between them, also realizes the reciprocal recognition among categories that consist of most responsible components.

The purpose is to reflect the role of media in the development and success of electoral campaigns:

- If media can strongly affect in their calmness
- In balance and reduction of aggressiveness of the subjects and competitive candidates
- Creating relations of reliability and impartiality of media, during electoral campaigns, and also
- avoidance of impacts and political control for partial benefits, are some of the purposes of this work. The work includes the theoretical phase of attitudes, to continue with the phase of debates and direct interviews and other researches, on electoral campaigns in Kosovo.

But before dealing with the theme, I will present a short history of electoral processes developed in Kosovo, after the war in 1999 and until 2009.

The first local and democratic elections in Kosovo, were organized in the 28th October in 2000. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSBE) had the mandate for organizing the elections, which was also responsible for the democratization and establishment of Kosovo's institutions. In our country, there have been implemented some electoral systems held from 2000 until 2007. In 2000 there was set a proportional system, with open lists, where an equal chance was given to the small parties and minor communities. Meanwhile the gender quotas from 30%, is applied in all the elections. Since 2001 until 2004, voting for deputies was done with closed lists, meanwhile in 2007 the system with open lists was implemented, where 10 deputies could be voted. This reform was done with the purpose to enable the democratic development within the party. Kosovo has an election zone, voting is done with open lists, threshold for entrance in

parliament for political subjects of the Albanian majority is 5%, meanwhile for political parties of ethnic minorities, the electoral threshold is neutral.

Another change in the electoral procedure happened after the independence of Kosovo, where again there were open lists, but the number of candidates was five. The Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo consists of 120 deputies, 100 of them go in parliament through the proportional representation, through the cheap competition during the election day, meanwhile 20 countries are guaranteed for minority, 10 for Serbians, and 10 for other minorities.

Elections in Kosovo have the theoretical and legal basis. With the purpose of organizing free, fair and democratic elections, these issues are regulated with the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Law for General Elections and Law for Local Elections. The administration of elections is done by the Central Commission of Elections (KQZ).

CONCLUSIONS

In the first decade of elections in Kosovo, the electoral system, the process and management are deteriorated, such evaluations were done by international and local observers. We can conclude that there are enough things within the electoral process which have to be changed. Responsible institutions and political scene, would have to seriously approach with the biggest professionalism the issue of changes of the electoral process, or otherwise the country will face even bigger electoral crisis.

Also we should mention the fact that the extreme dependence in the international community and slow learning of Kosovan institutions, are distinguished elements of the previous decade. A negative consequence of this dependence is also proofed by organizing the first parliamentary elections from Kosovo's institutions in December the 12th in 2010.

It is regrettable that the processes of discussions for finding the right electoral system are totally directed towards the international community or better said towards the embassies of the countries of Quint. From 5 pairs of elections organized in Kosovo since 2000 until 2010, the parliamentary elections of 2010 are valued as elections that gave a bad image to the country of Kosovo, that had only two years of establishment and functioning as an independent country. The big irregularities lacks and manipulations that that appeared during the parliamentary elections of 2010, expressed the necessity for a whole electoral reform. Through which, would be shown the level of the democratic development and the future vision within international standards. After many debates and critics between political subjects and representatives of the civil society, in April of 2012 in the Convention of Kosovo, was signed an agreement for forming a commission for the electoral reform, that is led from the representatives of the parliamentary parties. It should also be noted that the importance of a whole reform and the worries for an inappropriate electoral process, were even mentioned in the Progress Report of the European Committee of 2011.

But, despite the almost one year work of the Commission for the Electoral Reform, disagreements of political parties for many issues, caused time waste and no change in laws for elections, where electoral lists, zones issues, electoral threshold and reserved places for the Serbian community remained undecided issues. Considering the electoral processes already and problems that accompanied them, as an executive of this paper, I consider that for avoiding the electoral contestation and possible institutional crisis in Kosovo, the elections must be organized in a regular and democratic way. Political parties must vow for a fair competition and give up from non-democratic tools, and also to watch out the language in electoral campaigns. In this field some aspects must be reviewed with special care:

- Legislation and electoral system

- Management of elections
- Electoral campaigns
- Electoral zones
- Gender quotas
- List of voters
- Voting from abroad and conditional voting

These issues with the electoral reform, must be viewed as a permanent war to improve the governance in the aspect of representation and accountability.

A negative side effect, is that some changes that have been already done before, have strengthen the party hierarchies, where the combination of open lists with an only electoral zone, has made the leaders only more powerful, than they were with closed lists.

Political parties shouldn't also create parallel systems, but believe in the country power and security structures, meanwhile politicians must be self conscious with the loss or win of elections and stretch out their hand to the political opponent, by accepting the results of elections.

As a conclusion, in the end of this work I'd emphasize the role of media, which during the electoral campaigns and during the election day, must act according to the principles of objectivity and impartiality. It should also be noted that the necessity for the placement of an appropriate balance for respecting the editorial independence, and the reflection of their work through organization acts and professional report.

Kosovan voters are used to declarations and promises of leaders as if that was their routine, during the 5 pairs of elections in Kosovo, since 2000 and until 2010. During this time, the only thing that has been processed is the independence of Kosovo in 2008. But the other issues as we've seen in programs of political parties, are problems that continue to follow the citizen of of Kosovo. In this aspect, electoral campaigns in the country are more focused in political issues and insults between political parties, concretely candidates for Mayor. Meanwhile the daily problems: such as, drinkable water, canalizations, electric energy and other public services, don't seem to be that concerning for them. In the concept of electoral campaigns, it's obvious that each party, acks of psychological access and social organizing, which would offer the citizen a projection on that, "what we promise and realize", and in this fact this point isn't given importance. In the other side, each one of us for 30 days straight during the electoral campaign, has seen the political videos of different subjects. During the transmission we've seen that most of political parties, don't have a genuine video which a political party should have. Also none subject has dealt with the main problem that Kosovo has: population with over 40 % in poverty. Meanwhile these acts of political parties automatically have an impact for the voters not to vote in elections, and for these acts there's also a lack of an expert

approach and appropriate political experience. As seen in here, communication with the public opinion remains as one of the most powerful challenges of political parties in Kosovo. Despite that they develop new forms of co-operation with the public opinion, they still haven't fully cultivated the self consciousness for the role of the public opinion in the compilation of politics. Let's pretend, only within the last years, political parties have begun to develop researches of the public opinion, as a very important dimension of communication for citizens' expectations in relation with the propagated politics by the political parties. But, they still haven't installed the research of the public opinion for many other relations, that touch political decisions. But some political parties want to make an impression that they're led by a communication plan that is somewhat consolidated, which includes the definition of strategic objectives, and signifies the role of decision-makers in its compilation. But, what is absent in this direction is the transparency in communication, even one of the biggest challenges of parties was exactly the absence of information regards to budget expenses for the activities of political parties.

Also a challenge and possibility for good communication between political subjects, especially for the upcoming elections in a national level, remain the media strategies, media relations, as well as creation of powerful messages and the way how they'll be delivered to the audience.

I must also emphasize on why Kosovo isn't signatory and legally obliged from the majority of international convents that define the democracy standards, it aspires such values. Therefore elections in Kosovo are valued if they support the basic values that are: Equal vote, secret and free.

Also elections are democratic if they fulfill some basic conditions of a democratic state, based on the dominance of law, like the basic freedoms, electoral stability.

According to the Universal Declaration for the Human Rights, and International Convent for the Civil and Political Rights, the population's will is expressed through legitimate elections, and there must be the authority base of governance, meanwhile keeping free and fair elections, is the main column of democracy and which legitimate in a right and transparent way the representatives of the population in order to lead it.