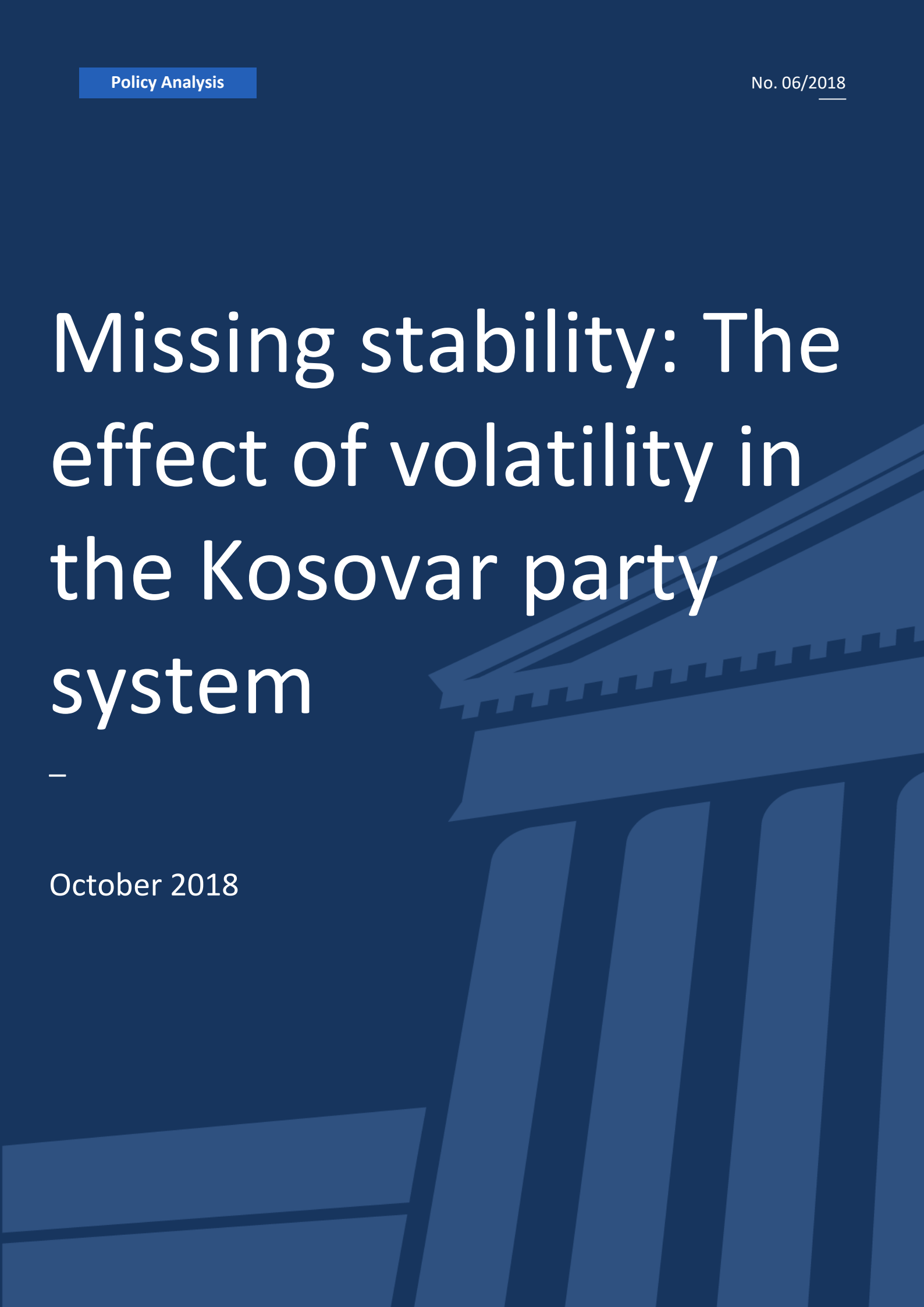


Missing stability: The effect of volatility in the Kosovar party system

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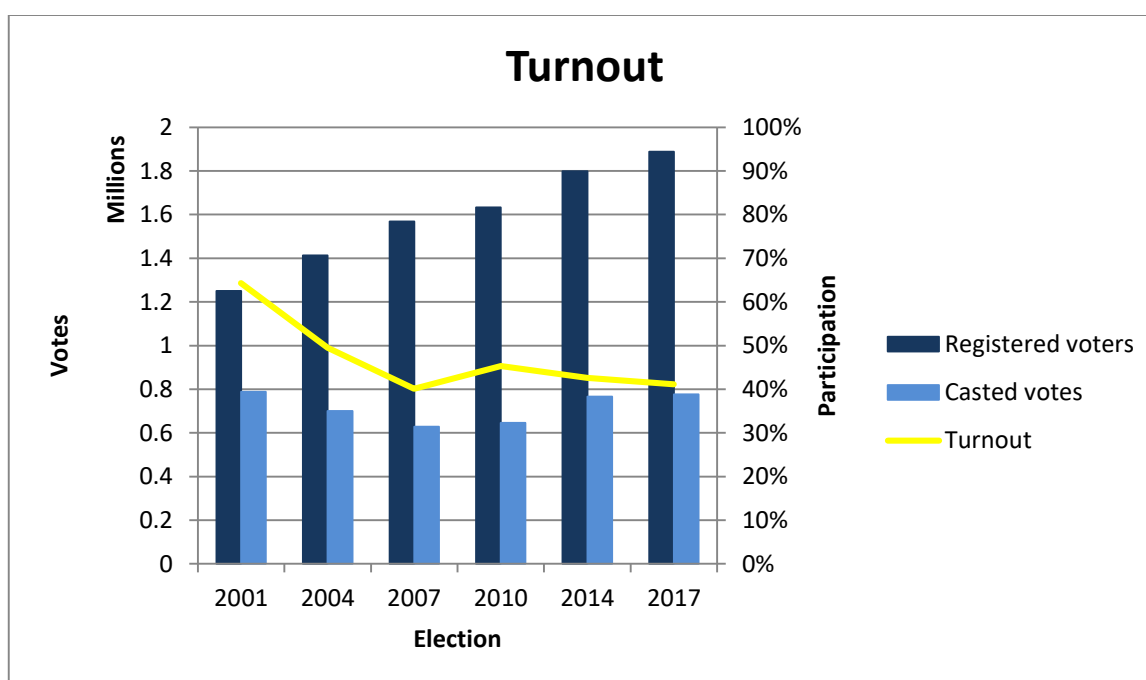
MISSING STABILITY: THE EFFECT OF VOLATILITY IN THE KOSOVAR PARTY SYSTEM

Introduction

In 2017 Kosovo celebrated its sixth parliamentary elections since the establishment of the Assembly in 2001, and the fourth since the declaration of independence in 2008. During these years, the political landscape has evolved with the local society, with different political parties rising and falling. In fact, of the parties that were present in 2001, only three still remain nowadays. The rest have either disappeared or have been absorbed by a bigger fish, remaining independent only in name. Such is the fate of the Albanian Christian Democratic Party (PSHDK), which since 2010 has not stood for elections independently and has been integrated into a larger parliamentary group dominated by other parties.

The Kosovar party system, in short, seems to be marred by a high volatility and comprised of political parties that fail to “represent” the political preferences of the population, a problem that might easily lead to dissatisfaction and, ultimately, democratic regression. Thus, studying the level of consolidation of the system is of outmost importance.

Before delving into the analysis, it is worth making two preliminary remarks. First, the substantial increase of the electorate in Kosovo since 2001, from around 1,2 million registered voters to 1,9 in 2017. These numbers represent an increase of more than 50% in the electoral roll in barely 16 years. Natural population growth only explains part of it. The other factor to consider is an ongoing effort to obtain a comprehensive census and improve the quality of the electoral roster. Especially during the early years, both international and domestic institutions put a substantial effort into gradually registering people that previously remained outside of the official records, both in Kosovo and among the “Diaspora”.



Source: Own, based on CEC data.

Both phenomena allow for a constant influx of new voters that do not necessarily share the same backgrounds, expectations, and sometimes, in the case of second generation migrants, even the origin with the previously registered population.

Second, and due to historical reasons, the particular distinction between Albanian and “communities” population in Kosovo, which also has electoral consequences. As the United

Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) strived to build a multinational state back in the first decade of the century, the Assembly of Kosovo has kept a number of seats reserved for these communities since 2001. These seats are not allocated in a separate district, but are just reserved. That means that any party competing for them can also gain a “general” seat if it obtains enough votes, but a party representing the majority (i.e. Albanian) cannot gain a reserved one. This arrangement has necessarily distorted electoral representation to some extent, as these parties have often benefited from decreased competition and the lack of electoral thresholds. This, in turn, has created distinct dynamics for the parties representing the minority communities that have not necessarily reproduced along the main parties. Thus, most electoral studies conducted so far in Kosovo have often left them aside. Unfortunately, due to time and resource constraints, this analysis makes no exception, although further research on the topic is definitely advisable.

At a first glance, the main feature of the political system in Kosovo is an ongoing tension between the three ‘traditional’ parties, PDK (Democratic Party of Kosovo), LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo) and AAK (Alliance for the Future of Kosovo), all of them ranging from conservatism to centre-right, on the one hand, and the emergence of alternatives all across the political spectrum, on the other hand. In some cases, these alternatives have been the result of schisms within the main political parties, like the short-lived LDD (Democratic League of Dardania) that emerged as a splinter group of LDK in 2007 and returned to the fold in 2015, or NISMA (Initiative), a self-declared center-left splinter group from PDK. In some others, they are born precisely as a reaction against this seemingly closed and veteran-dominated political establishment. That is the case of Vetëvendosje (Self-determination), a pan-Albanianist socialist movement that became a political party in 2010, with great success.

As a result of all these schisms and mergers it is quite difficult to properly identify voting patterns, since the involved political subjects keep changing. The problem is increased by the electoral system in Kosovo, which encourages political parties to run in pre-electoral coalitions, being treated as a single entity for MP allocation purposes. Both phenomena complicate to a large extent comparing election cycles. A portrayal of this can be the recent snap elections of 2017, where all traditional parties ran under one or another coalition list. PDK and AAK formed the so-called PAN with Nisma and nine other small parties, while LDK decided to concur with AKR (New Kosovo Alliance) and Alternativa (a recently created centrist liberal party). It is possible to work around these difficulties, although a certain tradeoff in accuracy is inevitable due to these shifting units of study. More details about this are provided below.

That said, this paper aims at reviewing the situation of the Kosovar party system, as well as its evolution since 2001. The main aim of this effort is to review its, at first sight, high volatility, and its consequences for the system. In order to do that, the following section will present a review of the relevant literature on the field, focusing on the theoretical framework employed for the analysis. Section 3 introduces a historical overview of the different electoral cycles that have taken place thus far in Kosovo. Then, Section 4 will present the main findings of the analysis according to the methodology previously introduced. The last section of the study summarizes the main findings and their potential outcomes.

1. Theoretical background and Methodology

In order to ascertain the stability and maturity of the Kosovar party system, it is first necessary to clarify and define the precise meaning of the terms and the methodology employed. This task can be complicated by the fact that the terms employed in politics became colloquial long ago, and thus are often heard in journalistic and informal environments as much as in academic literature. After all, everybody knows what a political party is, and most Kosovars would instantly agree with anyone claiming that the party system is unstable. Yet, if asked to back any of those statements,

they would probably run into substantial problems to come up with an operative explanation. That is because none of these terms has a real universal definition to refer to, and even in literature there is an inconsistent use of terms. Thus, none of the following definitions attempt to set the language for generations to come, but merely to create a methodological frame for this paper.

The departing point for any study on party politics must logically be the *political party*, the minimum unit to act in these contexts. In its simplest meaning, a political party can be defined as “a group of persons organized to acquire and exercise political power”.¹ Although this offers a good initial approach, it is still too finalist and insufficient to constitute an operative definition. Thus, introducing a procedural element, and according to Giovanni Sartori, a political party can be defined as “any political group identified by an official label that present at elections, and is capable of placing through election (free or non-free), candidates for public office”.²

Sartori, whose work remains the reference in this field, goes beyond that and conceptualizes a *party system* as “the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition”.³ Since he emphasized the interrelations between and among parties, for Sartori the key element of any party is its ability to form coalitions, or, in its case, to prevent their creation. Thus, depending on how many parties had these capacities, party systems can be categorized as one-party systems (i.e. any dictatorship à la Yugoslavia), two-party systems (where two blocks or factions alternate in power, as historically has been the case of Great Britain), moderate pluralism (between three and five parties having coalition forming and blocking capacity, such as in France or Germany) and polarized pluralism (where a large number of actors compete in a similar standing, often leading to political blockade).⁴

Other scholars have added to the typology; for instance, Blondel spoke about two-and-a-half party systems, where a minor third party occupied a secondary but balancing role. However, this simplified typology is sufficient for the purposes of this paper. Furthermore, the work of Laakso and Taagepera, who devised a quantitative measurement technique for the number of parties within any given party system, is more relevant here.⁵ Their *effective number of parties* (ENP) serves to measure the aggregated “weight” of the political parties operating in the system. Thus, the larger the party, the more it adds to the index. Residual parties, consequently, barely count in this calculation. The ENP can be calculated for both vote results (ENP_v) and seats obtained in parliament (ENP_s), according to the following formula,

$$ENP = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n S_i^2}$$

where n is the total number of political parties and S_i represents the share of votes or seats of any given party. Since this share is expressed as a decimal, the aggregation of all shares must equal 1. As said, if all shares were similar, the ENP would be close to the actual number of parties that run for elections, while smaller parties' shares have a reduced effect on the index.

Building upon this, Michael Gallagher went a step beyond and created what he called the least squares index, which measures the disproportionality between the votes received by a party and the seats allocated in parliament.⁶ Gallagher's *disproportionality index* (D) ranges from 0 to

¹ Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-party>

² Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*, 1976, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera, “Effective” Number of Parties. A Measure with Application to West Europe”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 12:1, April 1979

⁶ Michael Gallagher, “Proportionality, disproportionality and electoral systems”, *Electoral Studies*, 10 (1), March 1991,

100, being 0 perfect proportionality. Consequently, the higher the value of D, the more disproportionality there is in a system, and vice versa. To calculate it, the following equation is used,

$$D = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n (V_i - S_i)^2}$$

Where V_i represents the share of votes received by a party, and S_i the share of seats in a parliament these votes are translated into. As before, the share is expressed as a decimal, and thus the aggregation of all shares must be 1.

When taken together with Laakso and Taagepera's ENP, Gallagher's D serves to provide an overall picture of the status of a party system, as well as its evolution over time. This is very important since the system design has a clear effect on electoral behavior. Thus, understanding the characteristics and features of the Kosovar party system is necessary to delve into the question of electoral volatility.

For decades it was assumed that in any consolidated Western democracy volatility would remain relatively low. Since political parties grouped people with similar interests and agendas, they were necessarily rooted in sociological divides, and thus assumed to be, if not static, very slow to change. This theorem of the frozen *cleavages* (as these divides were denominated), advocated by Lipset and Rokkan, remained the cornerstone of electoral studies for most of the second half of the 20th century.⁷ According to their model, these cleavages were the result of two revolutions; the industrial, which divided people among capital and labour owners, and the national, which created a new cleavage between the center and the periphery. Thus, any party that could expect to survive needed to respond to these cleavages and align itself with any of the resulting groups. However, both time and a widened scope of studies that include Eastern Europe have been gradually eroding the universality of the model. Kosovo, being included among the post-communist societies in Europe, falls within this last group, as it will be further developed below.

Since experience showed that volatility tended to be higher than previously assumed, further attention was paid into measuring it. One of the most relevant scholars that focused on party system change was Mogens Pedersen, who approached the issue from a quantitative perspective to design a *volatility index*.⁸ This index simply measures the changes in votes from one election to the next, that is, the electoral volatility between both processes. To do that, Pedersen came up with the formula

$$V = \frac{1}{2} \times \sum_{i=1}^n |V_{i,t} - V_{i,t-1}|$$

where $V_{i,t}$ is the share of votes received by a party in the election t , and $V_{i,t-1}$, that of the previous election. As before, i represents the total of parties running for election, and thus it must be equal to 1. By using their absolute value, Pedersen focuses on the total net change produced between both electoral processes, since otherwise the gains of one party could be compensated by the losses of another. Thus, the disappearance of a classic party to be replaced by a new one would show as negligible volatility, despite such an event representing a seismic change of any political

⁷ Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, 1967, New York: Free Press,

⁸ Mogens N. Pedersen, "The Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility", *European Journal of Political Research*, 7/1, March 1979.

system. The result of this aggregation is then divided by 2, precisely to take into account that the losses of a party tend to correspond to the gains of another party. The result will thus produce an index from 0 to 100 measuring the degree of electoral shifts that took place in the elections with regard to the previous ones.

This index serves to describe how electoral behavior is changing and to what extent votes are shifting among political parties, but it does not explain why this phenomenon takes place. The existing literature in this field is also abundant and points toward both structural and individual variables. The structural elements include the number of parties active in the system, the level of polarization, and the electoral system (voters will behave differently in proportional systems, such as Kosovo's, than in a first-past-the-post, since the outcome of their votes can vary substantially). Pedersen, for instance, focused on the effect of the system in electoral volatility. Individual variables, on the other hand, include education, political sophistication and knowledge (how informed and interested is the person in politics) and satisfaction with the working of democracy. Since these variables are currently unassailable with the existing sociological information for Kosovo, they have been left aside in the research, which will focus instead on the structural elements of the Kosovar system.

The next sections will thus review the characteristics of the party system in Kosovo, outlining the "game rules" and the electoral system, providing a brief historical review and then analyzing the structural elements that may condition electoral volatility. In order to do that, using the certified results provided by the Central Elections Commission, certain methodological decisions have been taken to ensure consistency.

First, the scope of the analysis is limited to parties competing for the general, Albanian seats in the Assembly. Thus, the number of votes received by these parties has been discounted for the purposes of obtaining the various indexes employed. Second, any party failing to obtain a seat has been grouped into "others" category. In each election a large number of parties or electoral lists run to elections only to receive around a hundred votes. Since their individual effect is negligible and merely marginal at the aggregate level, this simplification does not compromise the quality of the data, yet it enormously facilitated the analysis. Finally, during the calculation of volatility the succession of parties has been taken into consideration at each stance. Whenever a party or coalition formed, its results were compared with the share of its components in the previous elections, as if they had also run in coalition in the previous cycle. The same logic has been applied to splitting coalitions.

2. Historical evolution of the Kosovar party system

The regime regulating the activity of political parties in Kosovo stems directly from the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of association as well as the right to elect and be elected, and establishes a minimum framework for central and municipal elections. A more detailed legal framework is then composed by the Election Regulation 01/2013 on Registration and Operation of Political Parties, and the Laws No. 03/L-073 on General Elections [...] and 03/L-072 on Local Elections in the Republic of Kosovo. The Law No. 03/L-174 on Financing Political Parties, as amended in its current version, adds some rules regarding their funding structure and establishes obligations for a minimum of transparency.

The Constitution and the Law on Elections configure a legislature composed of 120 MPs, 20 of which are reserved for parties representing minorities (the so-called communities already referred to). These are elected through a proportional, open-list system, with a threshold of 5% for general parties. The seats are then allocated according to the Saint-Laguë formula, with a minimum of 30% reserved for women in both lists and allocated seats. The Central Elections Commission manages the process (and distributes public funding according to the representation each party

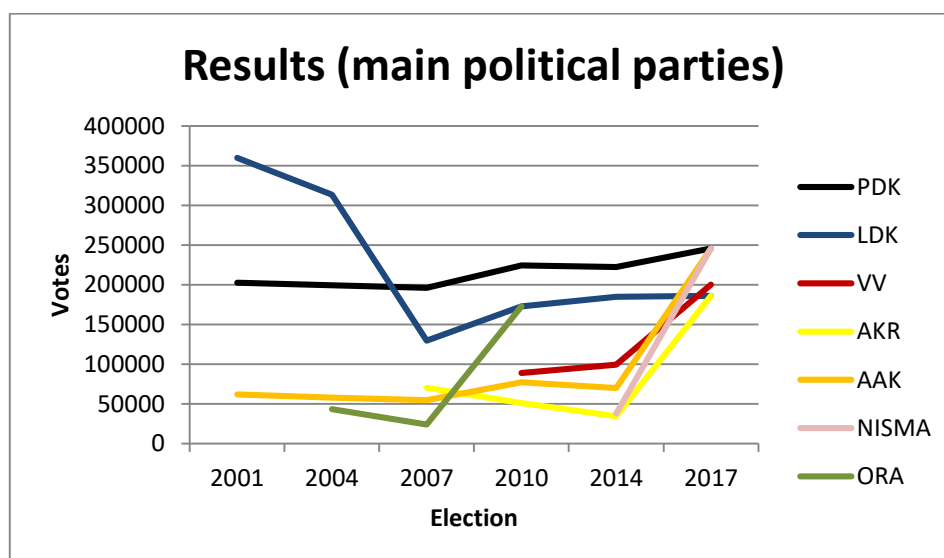
gained in the previous elections), and an Election Complaints and Appeal Panels adjudicates on disputes.

In general, it can be said that Kosovar politics is dominated by two main political parties that have historically held the majority of the Assembly, PDK and LDK. Both parties have systematically received votes on the hundreds of thousands, an order of magnitude above the closest alternative until very recently.

LDK was the dominant actor of the early parliamentary history of Kosovo, with comfortable majorities in 2001 and 2004, having received 360,000 and 313,000 votes, respectively. That would not last long, and a fight for leadership within the organization resulted in the formation of LDD, which took some 60,000 voters from LDK. Not only that, it contributed to accelerate its erosion, which led to the party catastrophically losing over 180,000 voters, thus opening spaces for new organizations to sprout. Apart from LDD, AKR managed to enter the political scene with over 70,000 votes on its first elections. It also led to the lowest turnout on any election in the recent history of Kosovo (628,630 or 40.10%), with almost 80,000 voters less than in 2004.

PDK, in the meantime, had managed to remain somehow stable, with an electoral basis anchored around the 200,000 voters. Thus, despite being unable to increase its numbers, and even losing some voters in that instance (196,207), it was the one benefiting the most from the fall of LDK, as it allowed the former to form government for the first time. Although LDK managed to recover to some extent, it has never reached the numbers it once boasted, while on the contrary, PDK's share remained more stable over the years, as stated. Furthermore, it managed to inherit some 30,000 votes from engulfing PSHDK, after the coalition of the former with LDD (which would not even manage to get into the Assembly again) had just collapsed. This marked the highest point of PDK, with 224,339 votes.

The third traditional party, Ramush Haradinaj's AAK has always remained under the shade of both LDK and PDK, with an electoral floor just over 54,000 votes and remaining usually around the 60,000. The only exception to that is 2010, when AKR started its slow decline and both parties switched places. That year AAK would reach its electoral roof on 77,130 votes, an increase almost exactly paralleled by the fall of AKR. This is more substantial when considering that those elections marked the beginning of the recovery in electoral participation in Kosovo, with around 20,000 more voters than in 2007. It is interesting to consider that all three traditional parties managed to increase their share compared to those elections. In the case of LDK, its recovery matched the fall of the splintered LDD.



Source: Own, based on CEC data.

On the other hand, the “new” parties have had a more unstable history, marked with an even higher volatility. In 2004 ORA appeared as a progressive alternative that obtained 40,000 votes on its first elections and would never reach that number again. In 2010 it helped shoring up LDK and eventually dissolved. 2007 saw two new political parties, the already mentioned LDD and Pacolli’s AKR, which presented itself as a liberal, pro-market party. Both of them would eventually lose voters to a recovering LDK. In the case of AKR, as it has already been said, the losses it sustained in 2010 matched almost perfectly the surge of AAK, which obtained then its best result so far.

A different case is Vëtevendosje’s. A protest movement turned political party, the leftist organization has thus far managed to avoid the scandals and internal strife that have too often prevented other parties to establish themselves. By gaining Pristina in 2013, they have also managed to present themselves as a power alternative, and not just as another fringe party. This, together with its marked political program, which contrasts sharply with that of the majority of the establishment in both economic development and the role of the international presence in Kosovo, has granted it a powerful brand recognition. Thus, since 2007, when the party ran for elections for the first time, it has yet to reach its electoral roof. In the recent elections, it actually doubled its numbers, from some 100,000 to 200,000 votes. That could indicate that the party has managed to tap into the class cleavage, a feat that would represent a landmark event for the party system as a whole. However, whether that is the case, and whether Vetëvendosje’s status is sustainable long term is a completely different question that requires further study in the future.

These last elections were quite remarkable compared with the previous processes, as they appeared to show a transition in the politics of Kosovo. Three main lists ran, the so-called PAN (PDK, AAK, Nisma) Coalition, Vëtevendosje and the LAA (LDK, AKR, Alternativa) Coalition. Of those three, only Vëtevendosje can objectively claim an improvement on their results. PAN came first, with 245,627 votes, which represents a net loss of 100,000 votes from the results its constituent parties obtained in 2014. Similarly, LAA coalition, which came in third, left behind some 33,000 votes, when compared with the results of LDK and AKR (Alternativa didn’t exist yet) in 2014.

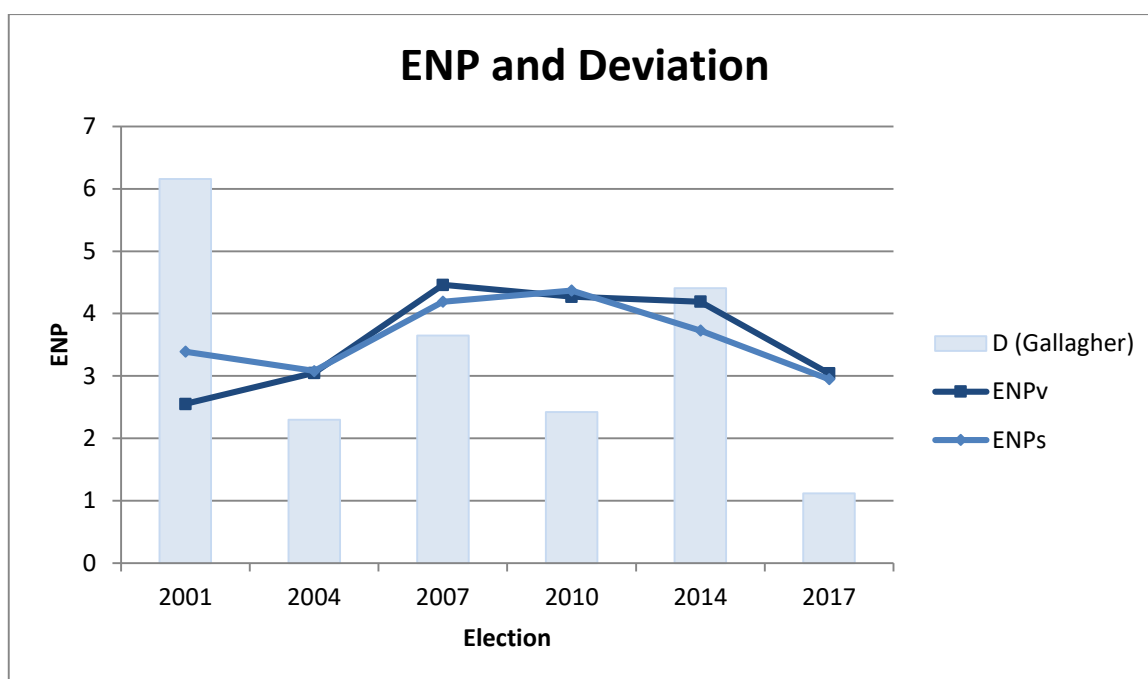
Furthermore, the decline of the traditional parties is even more evident when considering their allocation of seats in the Assembly. While not exactly comparable due to their decision of forming coalitions, the allocation of seats is based on the direct election of specific candidates within the list by the voters. Assuming that most voters only backed candidates from their party of choice, it can be roughly stated that these traditional parties have all lost share. PDK has passed from 37 to 23, while LDK shrank from 30 to 23. The same applies for AAK, from 11 to 10. These coalitions have not performed well, since in both cases their results are actually inferior to that of their senior constituent in 2014. On the other hand, Vëtevendosje’s surge meant they moved from 16 to 32. Even after a sizeable portion of the party abandoned it in early 2018 to resurrect the Social Democrat Party (PSD); Vetëvendosje managed to retain 19 seats, more than in previous elections, consolidated as the third largest group in the Assembly.

3. Identified patterns of the Kosovar party system

The electoral results that were shown in the previous section seem to point towards a relatively unstable, yet pluralistic party system, as the flux of parties appearing and disappearing has been a constant throughout the years. This perception is in fact confirmed when analyzing the data. The citizens of the country have consistently had a plethora of options to choose from, and the ENP has remained always high. In 2001 it had its lowest value, with an ENP_v of only 2.55 (plus a hegemonic Serb coalition). However, due to the electoral formula, that translated into a higher 3.39 ENP_s . Since then, Kosovo has remained anchored in what Sartori called moderate pluralism, oscillating between 3 and 4 “effective” political parties. In fact, the snap elections of 2017 produced the lowest outcome in this index, as biggest parties grouped into 2 pre-electoral

coalitions, the last one deciding to run for elections solo. That year ENP valued 2.95 for seats and 3.04 for votes.

At the same time, disproportionality, as measured by Gallagher, has remained low, with only few exceptions. However, these can be explained by the peculiarity of the quotas for minorities. In 2001, the *Koalicija Povratak* managed to obtain 22 MPs, thus taking 12 regular seats from other parties. The disproportionality index for that year (calculated without taking the *Koalicija* into consideration) reached 6'16. Similarly, in 2007 and 2014 ORA and AKR respectively failed to reach the threshold of 5%, for which the votes to minority parties are accounted. However, in both cases they obtained over 4% of the votes, more in absolute terms than most minority parties that gained representation. It is reasonable to assume, thus, that a full electoral study that also takes into account these minority parties would show moderately lower figures.



Source: Own, based on CEC data.

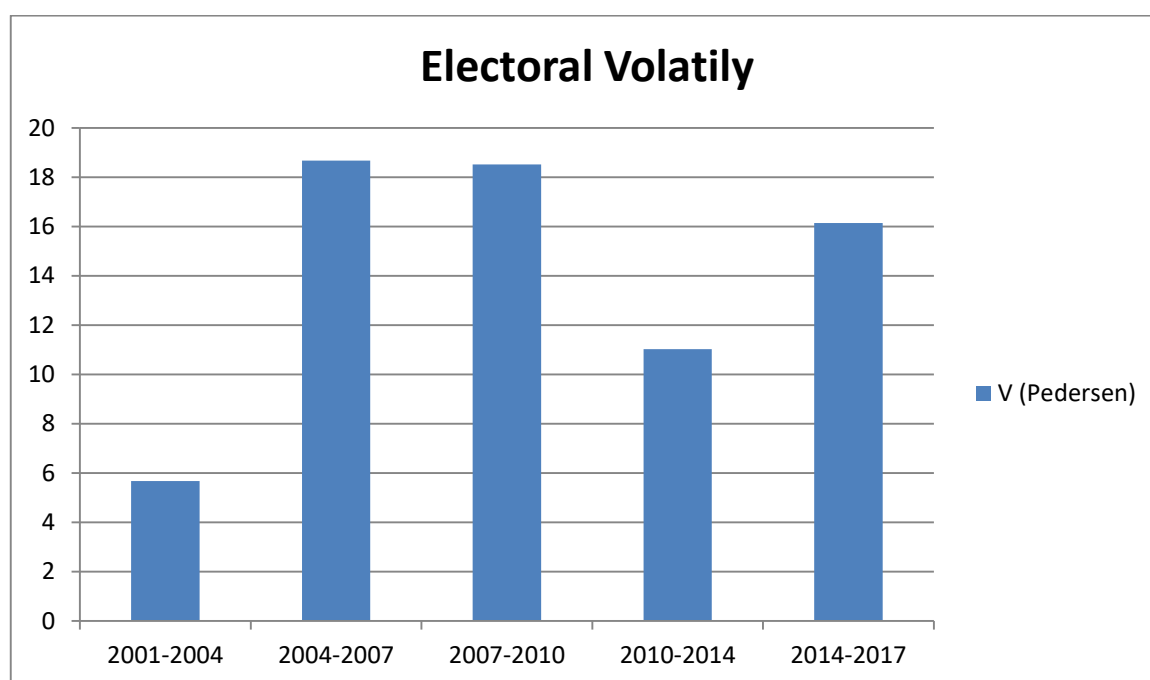
This confirms the idea that Kosovo's party system remains pluralistic and highly proportional. This, in turn, is expected to increase volatility; the reasoning being that more options for voters will increase the chances of them finding a different party they can relate to. On that note, a variable often related in literature is polarization, or how ideologically distant are parties from each other, especially the extremes at both left and right. Unfortunately, barring a long qualitative study of party programs, speeches and policies, it is impossible to measure the current polarization in the system, as no sociologic study in Kosovo has tackled perception and self-perception in the traditional left-right spectrum. Thus, any valuation made at this point is going to be subjective to a certain extent.

Tentatively, it can be said that most political parties remain relatively homogeneous, since most brand themselves as liberal, conservative, or center-right. The main exception for this is Vetëvendosje, and now the reborn PSD, who consider themselves left and center-left, respectively. Thus, it can be said that the traditional ideological cleavage has played a minor role in Kosovar politics thus far. That may be changing since, as said, an admittedly left-wing party has been in the rise for the last 3 electoral cycles, which in turn has served to enlarge the scope of public discussion and debate. However, if this process is indeed happening, it is still at an early stage, and more time is required to obtain a conclusive answer.

Thus, the class cleavage, one of the two relevant cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan, does simply not exist (yet, at least) in Kosovo. It is worth noting that this phenomenon is not exclusive of this context, but has been widely identified in most post-communist societies, that emerged from the old regime “levelled”, and thus the class cleavage is far less relevant than in Western Europe.⁹ Consequently, also in Kosovo a weak alignment between voters and parties is to be expected, which, in turn, leads to higher volatility.

The other traditional cleavage, based on ethnicity, is on the other hand present and visible, but since Kosovo remains highly homogeneous, its importance in politics is minor. In 2017, the largest minority party was Srpska Lista, which obtained 6.11% of the votes. The next one, the Turk Democratic Party of Kosovo (KDTP), obtained an astounding 1.08% of votes. If not for the quota system, only Srpska Lista would manage to obtain representation, provided no other Serb party challenged its hegemony, and that would be in the single digit. Thus, the relevance of the national cleavage is debatable, and completely inconsequential within the scope of this paper.

Considering this, it is logical to expect a high volatility, as elections seem to be decided mostly on the charisma of the candidates and the general appealing of the parties at any given moment. In short, a fight to consolidate brand recognition, establish alignment with voters and occupy a limited political space seems to have raged for 20 years. This would certainly match Lipset and Rokkan’s model, according to which any sustainable political party needs to be anchored in a societal divide. The lack of that anchor could explain why political parties in Kosovo endure such difficulties to consolidate, as even the most traditional parties are in recession, as seen before.



Source: Own, based on CEC data.

Indeed, the results of the study clearly point to a high volatility, and in fact there does not seem to be any descending trend, as it has been often expected from Eastern European countries where the party system starts to take roots.¹⁰ Only in 2004 it was below 6% (5.68%), and it averages 16% for the 6 elections studied. This indeed tells a story about an unconsolidated, still in transition

⁹ Åsa von Schoultz, “Party Systems and Voter Alignments” in Kai Arzheimer, Jocelyn Evans and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behaviour: Volume 2*, 2017, London: Sage Publications

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

party system, where brand recognition and alignment with voters is weak, and thus the results may vary substantially from one election to the next one.

At this moment, the political debate in Kosovo seems to have started shifting towards a more traditional left-right spectrum, albeit slowly. Currently Vetëvendosje occupies the position of the main social democrat party, although a deep crisis in 2018 represented a major setback for its consolidation. In this condition, it is unclear whether increased stability is to be expected in the future. If this happens, the logic response would be further concentration of votes in the right, either around PDK or more likely, LDK.

Since stability is precisely the key of success in Western European democracies, that process would not only be desirable, but possibly critical for the long-term perspectives of survival of Kosovo, which, it is worth noting, has existed as an independent state for barely a decade. Consequently, the high volatility that has been identified should remain a motive of concern for everyone, as well as the failure of the existing political parties to “represent” the population. These are all the ingredients for democratic regression.

4. Conclusions

The Kosovar party system, as the results of the study show, has a relatively high degree of volatility, often a sign of ulterior instability and a danger for democratic consolidation. Through the six electoral processes that have taken place since 2001, only three parties (PDK, LDK and AAK) have shown a minimum of resilience and stability, and even those are suffering major erosion.

Any electoral study is thus going to face the difficulties of an ever-evolving landscape, in which parties constantly split and merge. The socio-demographic evolution of Kosovo and the peculiarities of an electoral system that both favors short-lived coalitions and guarantees minimum quotas for parties representing minorities add an extra layer of complication. Consequently, considering the relative size and weight of these minority parties, most electoral studies in Kosovo tend to focus on the majority parties, and this study was no exception.

To assess the status and evolution of the Kosovar party system, a number of indexes were employed. In particular, Laakso and Taagepera’s effective number of parties (ENP), applied to both votes (ENP_v) and seats (ENP_s), served to present the basic outline of the system together with Gallagher’s disproportionality index (D). The former measures how many political parties exert any influence in the political system, be it by forming or blocking potential government coalitions, while the latter describe the difference between votes received by the parties and the number of seats they are subsequently allocated. This was then complemented by Pedersen’s volatility index (V), which measures the aggregate shift in votes that has taken place between any given election and the previous electoral cycle.

Historically there has been a constant tension between the traditional parties and emerging alternatives that have consolidated with different degrees of success. The catastrophic schism that LDK suffered just before 2007 led to the party being overpassed by PDK, which has consolidated as the party of government ever since. On the other hand, most alternative parties have remained side actors in Kosovar politics. There is, however, one exception; Vetëvendosje, which seems to be on its way to establish a deeper linkage with voters, and thus ensure some more long term stability and importance.

All in all, the party system has consistently been marked by a moderate pluralism, with an ENP ranging between 3 and 4, and low levels of disproportionality. These conditions have often been identified in literature as conducive to high volatility. Furthermore, many studies in the last decades showed that post-communist countries lean towards higher levels of that phenomenon, compared to the more mature Western European democracies. It is assumed that the basis of societal divisions, what Lipset and Rokkan called cleavages, were softened (“levelled”) by decades

of communist rule. Thus, the high volatility that has been found, averaging 16% for the studied period, comes as a logical consequence of the history and context of the Kosovar party system. However, that could easily become a problem, as high volatility equals to lower political stability, and there is a short leap from there to frustration and disenfranchisement with the democratic system, two elements that far too often fuel democratic regression.

Policy Analysis

Policy Analysis in general is a policy advice paper which particularly aims to influence the key means through which policy decisions are made in both local and central levels of government. The purpose of Policy Analysis is to address, more in-depth, a particular problem, to examine the arguments related to a concerned policy, and to analyze the implementation of the policy. Through Policy Analysis, Group for Legal and Political studies seeks to stimulate wider comprehensive debate on the given issue via presenting informed policy-relevant choices and recommendations to the key stakeholders and parties of interest.



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