

IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL PARTY DYNAMICS IN KOSOVO: AN EXPLORATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES' PROGRAM AND IDEOLOGY

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Abstract. *This paper explores the relationship between international factors, state formation process, and the ideological identity of political parties in Kosovo. The study argues that while the international factors and state formation process are influential in shaping the ideological orientation of political parties in Kosovo, other factors such as historical legacies and strategic positioning are equally or more important. The study provides a detailed analysis of the evolution of two major political parties in Kosovo, the LDK and PDK, and how their respective histories have shaped their distinct identities. Furthermore, the study examines the ideological discourse of the Vetvendosje party, which is characterized by a strong leftist discourse that departs from post-colonial political thought and emphasizes economic development. Overall, the study highlights the complex interplay between local and international factors that shape the ideological orientation of political parties in Kosovo.*

Key words: *political parties, Kosovo, international factors, state formation, ideological identity, historical legacies, LDK, PDK, Vetvendosje*

Introduction

Kosovo is a country that has experienced significant political and social changes since declaration of its independence in 2008. The country has faced a range of challenges, including the legacy of war, the role of nationalism, and the impact of communism. These factors have shaped the political party system in Kosovo, making it unique and different from other countries in Europe. The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between ideology and political party dynamics in Kosovo, with a focus on understanding how these parties have developed and what role ideology plays in their formation and operations.

Objective / Hypothesis: The international factors and state formation process influence the ideological identity of political parties in Kosovo, but other factors, such as historical legacies and strategic positioning, are equally or more important. While the LDK and PDK have changed their orientation over time, with the former now positioned at the center-right of the political spectrum and the latter as a center-right party, both parties continue to maintain a distinct identity shaped by their respective histories. In contrast, the Vetvendosje party is characterized by a strong leftist discourse that departs from post-colonial political thought and emphasizes economic development as a means to promote the country's long-term interests. Overall, the ideological orientation of political parties in Kosovo is shaped by a complex interplay of local and international factors, which requires a nuanced analysis to fully understand.

This hypothesis will be tested through a review of existing literature, case studies, and other relevant data.

The study of political parties and ideology in Kosovo has been the subject of previous research, but these studies have not taken into account all the internal and external factors that can influence the expression of ideology in political parties. In order to gain a more complete understanding of this relationship, this paper will examine the impact of political and historical circumstances, the presence of international administration, the absence of political elites, and globalizing effects on the expression of ideology in political parties.

One of the key factors influencing the expression of ideology in political parties is the presence of international administration. The international community has played a significant role in shaping the political and social landscape of Kosovo, and this has had a profound impact on the expression of ideology in political parties. The presence of international administration has limited the ability of political elites to take a stance on particular political matters, which has in turn weakened the ideological linkages between political parties and their members.

Another factor affecting the expression of ideology in political parties is the absence of political elites. Political elites play a crucial role in shaping the political and social landscape of a country, and their absence can have a profound impact on the expression of ideology in political parties.

In the case of Kosovo, the absence of political elites has led to a lack of clear ideological direction for political parties, which has in turn weakened the ideological linkages between political parties and their members.

The study is based on an examination of literature by local and international authors and experts, as well as data collection and analysis. A case study of Kosovo is used to argue that political parties in Kosovo have weak ideological linkages and are therefore not well-equipped to meet the demands of certain ideological wings. Despite previous research efforts to clarify the ideological traits of political parties in Kosovo, it has been difficult to categorize them into a distinct category.

The study focuses on the major political parties in Kosovo, and provides a more accurate picture of where political parties stand and what voting patterns may be expected based on the collective diffusion of opinions in current culture. The formation of political parties in Kosovo is explained by the fact that they were established during the liberation attempts, by groups recruited during the war or through peaceful resistance, and linked together by geographic, professional, and family connections.

According to Gerring (2016), the use of case study research is an effective way to examine specific situations, events, or phenomena and to provide a deeper understanding of a particular subject. The present study is a single case study that uses qualitative and descriptive methods to examine the relationship between political parties and ideology in Kosovo. The authors aim to supplement previous research results by investigating the major political parties in Kosovo, using the principles and practices of case study research as outlined in Gerring (2016).

In conclusion, the study argues that political parties in Kosovo lack ideological identity due to their formation during the liberation war, attracting individuals with liberal, leftist, or nationalist liberal viewpoints. The development of their typology has been slow due to the long-term management of Kosovo by the international community, which has prevented the political elite from ruling the country and taking a stance on political matters. The findings of this study contribute to the literature on political ideology in political parties by examining the relationship between political parties and ideology in a specific context.

Literature review

A significant number of social and political scientists have conducted research on political parties, including their operation, political platforms, ideologies, and organizational structures (Dommett 2014: 106–122).

Political parties, as opposed to other organizations, tend to maintain a steadfast stance on social and economic matters, foreign policy, and other relevant issues based on the policies they advocate to the public.

A political party's ideology is defined by its expressions of attitudes, ideas, and reactions to events, as well as its approach to addressing governance issues.

Ideology can also be understood as a belief system held by a specific group of social actors, or a collection of beliefs represented by those actors. The ideologies of some individuals may evolve over time due to changing beliefs and opinions on various situations (Van Dijk 2006: 115–140).

Political parties can be classified into three categories based on their ideologies, goals and beliefs: conservative, center-right or center-left, and centrist.

Albanian authors have written extensively about political parties in Kosovo, particularly regarding the country's post-conflict political landscape. Some authors, like Gezim Krasniqi and Gezim Visoka, have highlighted the challenges facing Kosovo's political parties, such as corruption, lack of accountability, and inter-ethnic tension. Others, like Atdhe Hetemi and Besnik Pula, have focused on specific parties and their role in Kosovo's political development, including the Democratic Party of Kosovo, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, and the Vetevendosje Movement. Overall, Albanian authors have played an important role in shaping the discourse around political parties in Kosovo, providing critical analysis and insights into the country's complex political landscape.

The authors of “Species of Political Parties: A New Typology” make a noteworthy contribution to the study of political parties by categorizing them into three typologies, which they detail in their publication (Kuswandoro et al. 2020).

The first aspect to consider is the formal structures of political parties. The second is the type of themes that political parties engage in. Some parties have clearly defined ideologies rooted in philosophy, religion, or national sentiments, while others are less defined. Unlike parties that are diverse and inclusive, others focus on specific ethnic, religious, social, economic groups or geographic regions. The third aspect is concerned with political party strategies and ethical standards of behavior (Gunther et al. 2003: 167–199).

In post-communist countries like Kosovo, it can be challenging to differentiate between the two typologies of political parties in terms of their ideological structure. Kitschelt has categorized political parties based on three criteria: Charismatic Leadership, Clientelism, and Political Programs (Kitschelt 1995: 447–472).

Some scholars argue that post-communist democracies may undergo a progression in terms of the role of political parties:

- 1) Initially, they may be based on programs rather than on charismatic leadership and clientelism;
- 2) During a period of political competition, they may remain unconsolidated due to parties vying for support based on programs; and
- 3) Ultimately, they may shift towards being based on charismatic leadership and clientelism rather than on programs (Kitschelt 1995: 447–472).

The study of political parties continues to be a focus of social and political scientists, who have investigated various aspects of political parties such as their functioning, political programs, ideologies, organizational structures, and more.

Kitschelt's analysis of political parties categorizing them into "Charisma, Clientelism, and Programs" has been applied to a number of nations, including Kosovo. Political parties can be broadly categorized based on their aims and philosophies into conservative, conservative-liberal, and centrist groups. Political parties in consolidated democracies differ from those in fledgling democracies still in the process of consolidation. The literature on political parties includes studies on the ideological component of political parties, or their structure of social beliefs, as well as other aspects of social beliefs. The term "social attitudes" is commonly used in sociological literature to describe individual attitudes toward objects with common social relevance in various areas such as the economy, politics, religion, education, ethnicity, and more. The terms "ideologies" or "political attitudes" are also used (Kerlinger et al. 1976: 265–79).

Understanding the ideological divide between the political left and right requires an analysis of how political parties in Kosovo align with social, economic, political, and other ideologies. The political left and right are fundamental concepts in the European political system and are crucial in shaping political debates and intellectual discourse. Political ideologies, movements, parties, actors, and events rely on these labels to express their political beliefs and actions. Individuals and organizations frequently categorize their political opinions and affiliations as either left or right (Klingemann & Fuchs 1990: 203–234).

The right- and left-leaning ideologies of Western Europe have been rapidly adopted by certain Eastern European countries, reflecting strong support for free-market economies (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 236–245).

The study of political ideology in political parties in Kosovo is important because it sheds light on the difficulty parties face in understanding the ideological ideas of the left and right. Historical and political circumstances have resulted in a lack of clear expressions of left and right in Kosovo's political landscape. To better understand the theoretical notions of ideology and the dimensions of the left and right, the research draws on the ideas of several prominent scholars. The results of this study contribute to the existing knowledge on political ideology in political parties and highlight the influence of ideology on parties in a frequently overlooked context. The study finds that political parties in Kosovo have a weak ideological link and struggle to satisfy the demands of specific ideological wings. The research aims to close the gap between the literature and the current understanding of this topic.

Methods

This paper adopts an analytical approach, examining the factors and data collected during the study process. The study is based on a comprehensive review of literature by both local and international writers and experts, as well as the collection and analysis of data pertaining to the relationship between political parties and ideology. The paper also critically evaluates the opinions and suggestions made by various writers, relevant literature and reports, scientific publications, political party programs, and legislation.

Additionally, the role of international administration in producing uncertainty in the relationship between ideology and political parties in Kosovo is analyzed.

The paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the structure and dynamics of political ideology and the ambiguities presented by political parties in Kosovo. The study begins with a review of existing literature, focusing on prominent authors and their work in this field. Secondly, the conceptual structure of certain ideologies is explored, examining sub-variables that may partially or contextually influence the phenomenon under consideration. Finally, the interrelationship of variables that have impacted political party performance with ideology is examined. The approach taken in writing this paper is based on sociological and political perspectives, and the descriptive and analytical methods are employed. The descriptive method is used to cite prominent scholars in the field, while the analytical method is used to examine variables that have shown ideological uncertainties among Kosovo's political parties.

The historical context of the formation of political parties in Kosovo

The historical context of the formation of political parties in Kosovo is a crucial aspect to consider in understanding the current political landscape. This section aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the evolution and development of political parties in Kosovo, from the early stages of political consciousness to the current state of political pluralism. To provide a detailed analysis, we will examine the historical, political, and cultural factors that have shaped the formation of political parties in Kosovo. This will include a review of relevant historical events, political movements, and ideological currents that have influenced the development of political parties in Kosovo. The study will also examine the impact of international interventions, particularly the role of the international administration, in shaping the political landscape of Kosovo. By analyzing the historical context, this study aims to shed light on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by political parties in Kosovo and the ways in which they have responded to these challenges.

The formation of political parties in Kosovo has been shaped by its historical context, including the demands for independence and the disintegration of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (FSR Yugoslavia). The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), founded in 1989 and led by Ibrahim Rugova, was one of the country's earliest and most prominent political organizations. However, some scholars argue that the establishment of the LDK was more a result of the independence movement rather than the conventional formation of a political party (Hofmeister 2013: 27).

The formation of political parties in Kosovo was a result of the demands and efforts to establish an independent nation-state during the disintegration of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (FSR Yugoslavia). The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), founded in 1989 and led by Ibrahim Rugova, was the country's first notable political organization. According to some scholars, the creation of

the LDK was more of a independence movement rather than the formation of a conventional political party. Other political entities were established in the 1990 – 1991 period with the aim of establishing an alternative political system independent of Serbian governance. However, these parties, including the Christian Democratic Party of Kosovo, the Liberal Party of Kosovo, and the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo, faced difficulties in gaining support and organizing efficiently in comparison to the success of the LDK. The LDK was prominent outside of Kosovo, particularly in Western and European countries, where the Albanian diaspora had settled. With the support of the Albanian diaspora, the LDK was able to establish the well-known “3 percent” fund, which aimed to foster the growth of Albanian political activities and parallel institutions (Hofmeister 2013: 38).

Aside from the LPK (Kosovo People's Movement) and the LKK (National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo), other political groups exist in the country and are worth mentioning. Hofmeister and Grabow suggest that the emergence of military-political groups with aspirations for Kosovo's independence, such as the Kosovo Liberation Army, was a result of the influence and impact of the LPK and LKK (Hofmeister 2013: 41).

The formation of political parties in Kosovo was marked by ideological differences between the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo) and the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) in responding to Serbia's activities. These differences resulted in two branches of the KLA: the “arm of peace” represented by the LDK, led by Ibrahim Rugova, and the “arm of war” represented by the PDK (Democratic Party of Kosovo) and AAK (Alliance for the Future of Kosovo). Rugova was referred to as the “Gandhi of the Balkans” due to his peaceful methods of organizing. After the Kosovo War, the UNMIK (United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo) became the dominant entity in the country and was responsible for maintaining peace and stability, which facilitated the formation of political parties. The LDK emerged as the winner of the first elections in Kosovo, conducted by the OSCE, with 46.29% of the vote, beating the parties formed by former KLA commanders (Hofmeister 2013: 58). The LDK heavily depends on its history and the building of the so-called parallel state during 1988-1992. Its recent center right leanings are more of a result of positioning itself at the center of the political spectrum in terms of moderation, as many centrist parties in Europe do.

The UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was tasked with maintaining peace and establishing self-governing institutions, taking charge of governance and administration in the country. As a result, political parties in Kosovo have coalesced around the common objective of independence, prioritizing it over developing a comprehensive political platform based on shared values and ideas. The emergence of the ORA movement in 2004 marked the first attempt at creating a political party with a clear doctrine, positioning itself as left-wing with a focus on economic policies related to public businesses. Despite this attempt, political parties in Kosovo have failed to offer substantive ideas and remain primarily concerned with independence.

The Pristina-Belgrade discussions, facilitated by UN special envoy Marti Ahtisaari, further delayed the development of political ideologies in Kosovo. Political parties in Kosovo are often defined by their stance on independence, with few exhibiting coherent political programs or ideologies. The absence of democratic political culture and the socioeconomic challenges faced by Kosovars have contributed to this situation. Political promises, such as job creation, economic improvement, and integration with NATO and the EU, are often used as substitutes for political platforms. The resolution of Kosovo's political status may provide an opportunity for the consolidation and prominence of political parties with clear ideologies. This study aims to examine the ideological characteristics of political parties in Kosovo, exploring instances where they exhibit a clear ideological identity through leadership statements, party platforms, or association with pan-European parties. The 1999 conflict in Kosovo resulted in the formation of two groups of political parties: post-war parties (PDK and AAK) and peaceful parties (LDK), all with the goal of liberating Kosovo but differing in their approach (Hofmeister et al. 2011: 55–64).

As part of its efforts to maintain strong relations with the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and its leader, Ibrahim Rugova, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) initiated efforts to bring Rugova back from exile in Rome, Italy, in order to mitigate the potential influence of the future Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) party (Tansey 2009: 215–235).

In order to facilitate the establishment of social stability, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) adopted a strategy similar to that employed in East Timor and engaged in political intervention through the promotion of rising local elites. This approach aimed to shape the outcome of political disputes and elections, ensuring a balanced representation of various parties and ethnic groups, while also fostering the development of modern politics in Kosovo. UNMIK played a significant role in mediating between political parties and the elite, as well as in the formation of post-election coalitions, by selecting local interlocutors and engaging international actors (Tansey 2009: 215–235).

The formation of the ruling coalition during the first legislative elections under the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Administration in 2001 – 2004, as per the Kosovo Constitution, included the three main political parties in the country: The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), along with minority groups who were deemed important components of all administrations, as stipulated in the Constitution. The coalition was diverse in terms of socioeconomic inclusion, with no divisions based on ideology or programmatic orientation. At the time, there were no well-established alternative political organizations.

The formation of the coalition in a democratic democracy was a significant event, especially considering the lack of strong democratic legacy in the country post-conflict. The LDK/AAK coalition and opposition to the PDK marked the first-time political parties actively participated in the government, from 2004 to 2007.

UNMIK played a significant role in establishing, creating, and enforcing laws and regulations, as well as participating in the organization of elections, the electoral system, the election timetable, certification, and the announcement of election results. The UNMIK was also involved in the appointment of Serb minority representatives, who had declined to participate in elections due to political objections.

On February 17, 2008, the day of Kosovo's declaration of independence, the PDK and LDK were the two most popular political parties in the country, in terms of public support and historical representation. The transition to democratic and institutional consolidation represented a significant challenge for Kosovo society, with new state institutions established in the post-independence era, previously under foreign supervision.

In the years 2007 to 2010, the governing PDK and LDK parties focused more on state-building and power preservation than on a clear ideology-based agenda. The ability of political parties in Kosovo to explain their goals and orientations is expected to improve with economic and social progress, solidifying the country's political landscape.

According to Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo, the formation of the PDK-LDK coalition was driven by the goal of declaring Kosovo's independence and promoting its state development, and was not based on any philosophical or ideological affiliations (Thaçi 2014: 4). The violation of the Kosovo Constitution by the President of Kosovo and the President of the LDK, who held two positions simultaneously, was confirmed by the Constitutional Court in 2010 (CCK Decision 2010: 29). According to the data, the formation of the governing coalition in Kosovo during the 2011 parliamentary elections relied primarily on the number of seats held by political parties, rather than on shared values, objectives, or ideological affiliations. The constitutional court's decision in 2010, which declared that the President of Kosovo and the President of the LDK had violated the constitution by holding two offices simultaneously, resulted in the withdrawal of the LDK from the coalition and sparked an institutional crisis. From March 2011 to June 2014, the PDK and the AKR administered the country, relying on numerical superiority rather than ideological and programmatic alliances. However, the lack of clear ideological characteristics among political parties, as well as the formation of coalitions based primarily on numerical strength, has had negative impacts on the political system and the quality of governance, particularly in terms of social and economic development. The June 2014 elections resulted in a crisis as none of the political parties secured a legislative majority. This study will examine the uncertainty surrounding the relationship between political parties and ideology in Kosovo.

Regarding the PDK and the AAK. This parties have emerged after the war, led by military commanders like Thaci and Hajredinaj. The political and ideological structure of the KLA was on the leftist/radical nationalist side of the political spectrum. And of course, this ended after the war. Gradually the PDK declared as a center right party also leading also the process of privatization in the country.

True both the LDK and the PDK are influenced by the international factor but they still have or manifest an identity. In the last local elections both parties have changed their leaders and ruling group, which marks a moment of emancipation, especially for the PDK.

True the electoral excursus of the Vetvendosje is heavily influenced by the process of state formation, even more than any other party since it contests the process of negotiation with Serbia on the matter of normalization of relations. Despite this, Vetvendosje with other parties (foreign influence/state formation), LVV is maybe the only political party which discourse is permeated strongly by a leftist discourse (which departs from solid reading of Fanon and the whole post-colonial political thought). Even in government Vetvendosje has a markedly leftist/developmental leaning which reflects its view of Kosovo as a post-colonial entity which needs a strong state which can spearhead economic development.

Results

Through the analysis of the evolution of political parties in Kosovo, it has been found that international factors and the state formation process play a role in shaping their ideological orientation, but other factors such as historical legacies and strategic positioning are equally or more important. The LDK and PDK have both changed their orientations over time, but continue to maintain distinct identities based on their respective histories. The Vetvendosje party, on the other hand, emphasizes economic development and is characterized by a strong leftist discourse that departs from post-colonial political thought.

As a starting point, it is important to acknowledge that Kosovar political parties are relatively new and are still in the process of development. Many of them suffer from a lack of clear ideological direction, well-defined policies, and reliable information regarding their membership. Despite these limitations, the political parties in Kosovo fulfill the basic criteria to be considered as such and are undergoing reforms as part of Kosovo's transition towards democratic governance. However, it is unfortunate that ethnic tensions continue to exist within Kosovar political groups, reflecting the ongoing divisions in the wider society (Nenadović 2021: 1153–1175). As a newly established nation, Kosovo faces numerous transitional challenges, particularly in the domains of corruption, organized crime, the strengthening of rule of law, and an emerging economy, among other factors (EC 2022: 20–45).

Kosovo, being Europe's youngest nation, faces a range of transitional challenges, particularly in the domains of corruption, organized crime, weak rule of law, and a nascent economy, among others. Political parties in the region are perceived as a convenient means of acquiring positions of power, which confer benefits to their holders that the majority of the Kosovo population does not receive. This study will examine three political parties in the context of their election outcomes, public support, and recent political activities, among other factors.

During election periods, political parties in Kosovo are notorious for making unrealistic promises while setting achievable goals. The programs of the major political parties reveal a lack of emphasis on their unique identities. Conversely, the majority of entities function within a “Catch-all Party” system, which implies that parties without clear programs or ideological frameworks will seek to please different social groups through the use of ad hoc measures (Kirchheimer 1966: 229–234). It is important to note that the lack of proper ideological definition hampers the ability of political parties to formulate basic policies and also affects citizens’ ability to effectively identify, guide, and protect their interests in the decision-making process.

The platforms of the major political parties in Kosovo vary in several aspects, as demonstrated in Table 1. For instance, the PDK’s “The New Decade” program focuses on rapid economic development, job creation through the establishment of the Status Fund, and acceleration of European-Atlantic integration, as outlined in the program description (PDK 2020: 6). The objectives of promoting economic growth and reducing dependency on imports were to be achieved through various means, such as investing in agriculture and industry, enhancing the private sector, and attracting foreign investment. The focus was on fostering the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the taxation system was not specified in the program, with regards to the type of tax to be implemented and the amount to be collected (PDK 2020: 6). In contrast to other political parties, the LDK program placed a strong emphasis on economic growth, and a significant portion of the party’s agenda was devoted to this area (LDK 2020: 7). As a center-right political party, LDK seeks to encourage the growth of the private sector, particularly small and medium-sized firms, via its program of legislative initiatives (SMEs).

This has occurred for two reasons:

- a) because small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) account for 99 percent of all businesses in Kosovo; and
- b) because Kosovo has a high concentration of SMEs, and since small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employ an average of 80 percent of the workforce in the private sector, and as a result, they want to expand their party’s voter base (LDK 2020: 7).

The AAK program “New Direction” claimed to provide prospects for SME growth that were even bigger than those offered by PDK and LDK.

Natural resource use (heavy industry), attracting foreign direct investment, and altering credit rules and conditions for concessions or resources were all evaluated in terms of economic growth (AAK 2020: 8).

The Alliance’s immediate strategy in this area will be the development of new power plants, such as the “Kosovo C” plant in Kosovo (AAK 2020: 8). Apart from that, LVV highlights its shape for the growth of manufacturing firms and the development of industry in a different manner than other political parties do.

In order to kick-start the regeneration of Kosovo’s economy, this issue sought to improve the performance of state-owned firms (LVV 2020: 9). Its program, on the other hand, was a little paradoxical. LVV started as a local social movement, in 2005 gradually emerging as the third party in the 2010 elections. True, the electoral excursus of the LVV is heavily influenced by the process of state formation, even more than any other party since it contests the process of negotiation with Serbia on the matter of normalization of relations. LVV is maybe the only political party which discourse is permeated strongly by a leftist discourse (which departs from solid reading of Fanon and the whole post-colonial political thought). Even in government LVV has a markedly leftist/developmental leaning which reflects its view of Kosovo as a post-colonial entity which needs a strong state which can spearhead economic development.

Example: In the election and party systems in Kosovo, one of the LVV's program goals in terms of the economy was to provide opportunities for the Albanian diaspora to participate in public and private enterprises (LVV 2020: 9). They seemed to be opposed to any privatization or concession of a public business of any kind (LVV 2020: 9).

The election plans of political parties in five major sectors are as follows:

Table 1. The political parties’ 2020 governance programs.

	Taxation	Health	Foreign Policy	Education	Economic Development
PDK	Providing a simple tax system (although it is not clear which system will be used). It aims to stimulate businesses through a reduction in tax rates	Reform of the health sector; application of health insurance Proper and sustainable health financing	Preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional order. - Strengthening economic diplomacy. - Normalization of relations with Serbia - Recognition of Kosovo’s independence and EU, NATO, and UN integration	Education of pupils, students, and teachers, in accordance with the offers of the labor market	Creation of Labor Fund (200,000 Vacancies) - Fiscal and financial relief. Strengthening the public-private diagram
LDK	Use of a simple tax system, through the proportional distribution of the tax burden	Development and improvement of the health system: The health system is financed through the increase of public funds and	International organization membership; intra-Albanian integration; and close collaboration with Albanian	Inclusive education system and education in line with the labor market. Approval of the system "Lifelong	Economic development through private sector development, with a focus on supporting small and medium

		public partnership. privat	regional municipalities	learning" and development of the private education sector	enterprises (SMEs)
LVV	Progressive tax system	Health insurance for public sector employees, managed by a public company	Protection of the national interests of Kosovo and Albanians. - Unique Foreign Policy towards Albania - Different approaches for countries that respect Kosovo's citizenship from those that do not respect it	Public education at all levels should be free for everyone. - Establishment and financing of scientific institutions for the sciences	Economic growth, employment, and welfare; - Replacement of imports with local products; - Against the privatization and concession of public enterprises
AAK	There will be no increase in tax levels, but there will be an expansion to meet fiscal obligations. New businesses that create 10 jobs will be exempt from profit tax for the first 3 years of work.	Establishment of a public health insurance fund, financed by the Ministry of Health. -New law on health reform and quality services for citizens	Diplomacy as an internal structure for investment behaviors. - Maintaining and strengthening relations with the US-EU integration	Increasing the budget for education. - Approval of the system De-politicization of lifelong learning and higher education	Supporting the development of natural resources (heavy industry) - Providing foreign direct investment. establishment of a guarantee fund for small and medium enterprises.

Despite differing views regarding various political parties across various sectors, there was a common ground in their platforms—a focus on prospective investments and job creation. However, these objectives proved to be challenging to achieve in practice given the high unemployment rate of 44% and the significant 70% youth unemployment rate in the country (UNDP 2020: 28). According to reports, PDK and AAK pledged to create 200,000 new employment opportunities each, while LDK pledged to generate 120,000 new jobs in the city of Pune. However, these figures were not attainable due to the Kosovo government's inability to fulfill its promises, as a result of its limited economic capabilities (EC 2020: 116–145).

This paper focuses on exploring the ambiguity of the relationship between political parties and ideology. The research is aimed at examining two main issues: (1) the ambiguity of political parties' links with ideology as depicted by their election platforms and (2) the political discourses.

The findings indicate that there is a degree of ambiguity in the relationship between political parties and ideologies. Political parties often claim that their programs do not conform to the ideological standards of the political party to which they claim affiliation. This ambiguity is also evident in the relationship between political action and the demands of the political wing to which the party claims loyalty.

In Kosovo, all political parties pursued the same “ideology policy,” which was independence from Serbia and economic growth in the country. While public discourse differentiated between right, left, and center, there was no real separation between the two. The party system in Kosovo is nominally center-right, represented by parties such as PDK, LDK, and AAK, but in practice, it is more left-wing, with a focus on social welfare and support for certain social groups.

When it comes to political inclusion and less prominent parties, the PDS, LDK, and AAK are better examples, while the VV takes a different approach on certain issues, such as European integration, the future Kosovo army, and foreign policy. There is still a significant degree of ambiguity in the political party structure in Kosovo when it comes to coalition partner determination. This results in a lack of clarity during the campaign and government formation process.

The findings of this study suggest that political parties in Kosovo use political jargon without any intention of aligning their agendas with a particular political philosophy. The study concludes that it is necessary to conduct a comparative categorization of the primary political parties in Kosovo to gain a clearer understanding of their perspectives on political ideologies and future topics. The research takes into consideration local environment and individual socioeconomic aspects as crucial factors. The analysis also includes a review of political speeches by political party leaders and influential individuals within the party.

The ideological consistency of political parties is crucial for their success, as parties gradually evolve from being vehicles for the interests of specific groups to being representatives of a stable base of voters with shared interests. A well-defined ideological profile would increase party discipline, while consistency of views may restrict the freedom of action of individual leaders while strengthening internal party democracy. However, in Kosovo, political parties have unrealistic platforms, with values and long-term goals not serving as the foundations of their platforms. They are preoccupied with immediate issues, such as economic development and employment, and are unable to see the bigger picture.

Despite the limited influence of ideology on party ideals, political parties have started to exhibit certain ideological behaviors. It is challenging to convey the attitudes of many political parties in Kosovo, and there are difficulties in effectively communicating their ideologies and platform advantages to their constituencies. In conclusion, political parties in Kosovo have not developed a clear ideological orientation, and their fundamental principles are altered or interpreted based on political shifts.

According to a minority of analysts, the establishment of the LDK is more comparable to the evolution of an independence movement rather than the formation of a political party. (Hofmeister 2013: 16–45). In the 1990 – 1991 period, new political parties were established with the aim of constructing an alternative political system that was separate from Serbian institutions and based on democratic principles. The Christian Democratic Party of Kosovo, the Liberal Party of Kosovo, and the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo are a few examples of such parties that have encountered difficulties in organizing and gaining traction, in comparison to the successful operation of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). The LDK was particularly successful in Western and European countries where a large concentration of the Albanian diaspora resided.

The two major political parties in Kosovo, the PDK and the LDK, reached an agreement on February 17, 2008, to declare the country's independence. According to the authors, the post-independence era marked the establishment of new state institutions that were not previously present or under foreign control. The transition towards democratic consolidation and institutional stability constitutes a significant challenge for Kosovo society.

The political parties are expected to articulate their plans and orientations in regard to economic and social improvement, thus contributing to the solidification of the political landscape in Kosovo. Although each political party system in Kosovo possesses its own distinct characteristics, a common model or theoretical framework of party structure can be applied when examining the major political parties and coalitions in the country. These parties meet the essential criteria for being identified as political parties and are undergoing reforms as part of Kosovo's democratic transition process. However, the persistence of ethnic divisions within Kosovar parties reflects the broader societal divisions in the country (Nenadović 2010: 1153–1175).

The development of political parties in Kosovo has been hindered by a lack of progress beyond generic declarations of the leadership's intentions. This is particularly evident in the voting record of these parties in the Assembly, where their political rhetoric does not align with their stances on various issues.

The leadership of a political party should not be seen as a blueprint for the party's future direction. The ideological categorization of these parties does not reflect the operation of their respective governments. The perspectives of a wider group of party leaders will play a crucial role in determining whether a party will meet its goals set by its governing bodies.

Several dependent variables contribute to this situation, including Kosovo's unresolved status (prior to 2008), the presence of international administration, the impact of reforms imposed by the International Community, and the lack of political party elites and the effects of globalization, among others. It is important to note that the strength of these factors varies over time and across regions.

In light of the inconsistent motivations behind party statements and actions, the focus should shift to understanding the public's perception of the party's ideology.

To this end, we present a methodology for investigating the potential impact of party elite rhetoric, taking into account the context of the speeches, alternative party goals, and the consistency of their ideology in the application of concepts.

Conclusions

The study highlights the importance of considering the complex interplay between local and international factors in shaping the ideological orientation of political parties in Kosovo. It suggests that historical legacies and strategic positioning, along with international factors and the state formation process, are important determinants of political party ideology. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for a nuanced analysis to fully understand the ideological orientation of political parties in Kosovo.

The findings of this study indicate that political parties in Kosovo are largely driven by charismatic and client-based relationships, rather than by programmatic and ideological principles. This is particularly evident when taking into account the context of speeches and alternative party goals, as well as the consistency in the application and reasoning of concepts. The results suggest that the strength of these dynamics varies across time and space and that it is inevitable to impose restrictions on political parties in Kosovo. Finally, the link between political parties and ideology in Kosovo is tenuous. The “Catch-all Party” system, which encompasses all political parties that lack a defined platform and ideological goal, is used to organize the country's political parties. This is due to the fact that they are more concerned with not identifying oneself as belonging to a certain ideological spectrum and with appeasing groups of persons from varied socioeconomic backgrounds.

Political parties in Kosovo are now undergoing consolidation and profiling. Furthermore, the International Administration, non-determination of status, and relations with Serbia all had a role in creating an ambiguous connection between ideology and political parties in Kosovo. Political parties' objectives were first focused on developing institutions with the support of the UNMIK, as well as economic and social progress, but there was no clear guidance on how to approach ideology and institutional development throughout the period 1999 to 2008. This was made possible by the fact that political parties operated under foreign administration until the election, after which they were granted certain, but still limited, government powers by the government.

In conclusion, this paper argues that political parties in Kosovo are largely charismatic and client-based, rather than programmatic and ideological. Although it is not intended to be exhaustive in its examination of the problem's complexity, it is intended to provide an analytical understanding of the relationships that political parties in Kosovo have with ideology, as well as a better understanding of the role of internal and external factors in the direction of political party identity. The study provides insights into the dynamics of political parties in Kosovo and highlights

the importance of taking into account the context of speeches, alternative party goals, and the consistency in the application and reasoning of concepts when investigating the ideology imparted through party elite rhetoric. The results of this study offer a basis for future research on political party dynamics in Kosovo and the broader region. Political parties in Kosovo are not ideologically motivated, but they are malleable and prepared to change as the situation requires them to.

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