Bekim BALIQI[1]

FROM A SOCIAL MOVEMENT TO A LEFT-WING PARTY: THE STUDY OF VETËVENDOSJE IN KOSOVO

Abstract. This research examines the mobilization strategies employed by Vetëvendosje, a left-wing political party in Kosovo, as it transitioned from a grassroots anti-establishment movement to a governing party. In the context of socio-economic inequality, democratic instability, and the legacy of post-communism, the study examines how populist mobilization serves as both a political tool and electoral strategy for social movements transitioning into political parties. Thus, it raises the following research questions: What factors enabled Vetëvendosje to maintain institutional legitimacy after its transition? How did populist mobilization influence its ideology and electoral outcomes? Through process tracing and content analysis of party manifestos, the research evaluates the evolution of populist discourse and its impact on electoral performance. By analyzing changes in identity and narrative within Vetëvendosje, this study contributes to broader discussions on social movements and the transformation of left-wing parties in post-communist societies.

*Keywords***:** Social Movements, Left-wing parties, Populism, Vetëvendosje, Kosovo

Introduction

In recent years, scholars and politicians have engaged in extensive discussions about profound changes and shifts in the European political landscape.[2]

---

[1]   Bekim Baliqi is a Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Prishtina, Kosovo (bekim.baliqi@uni-pr.edu). ORCID: 0000-0001-9010-4601.
[2]   Most relevant contributions in this context are the studies of Aslanidis that integrates social movement framing theory and Ernesto Laclau's theory to perceive populism as

These developments are often associated with the rise of anti-elitist, right-wing extremism and populist movements. The frequent electoral successes of these emerging political forces – usually by passing the conventional right-left political spectrum – underlined the need to reassess party systems and ideological orientations. These significant changes are partly attributed to a lack of intra-party democracy, ineffective leadership within the consolidated parties, and fundamental changes in political mobilization strategies.

Recent electoral results across several European states indicate a growing trend where social movements and radical political parties are gaining momentum and evolving into influential political forces. This political shift is accompanied by a radicalization of public and political discourse, leading to heightened polarization in society. A consistent pattern has emerged in which existing systems are blamed for socio-economic challenges, intensifying animosity towards certain communities, such as ethnic minorities, immigrants, and marginalized groups. These political entities often oppose political and ideological pluralism by asserting themselves as the only legitimate representatives of "the people." According to this approach, there are two antagonistic factions in society: "the people," who represent the ideal and true part, and "the elite," who represent the corrupt and incompetent counterpart. In this sense, nationalist rhetoric and symbols serve as mechanisms for mass mobilization in fragile and unconsolidated democracies. Such tendencies risk undermining democratic principles and institutions, potentially paving the way for authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, both left-wing and right-wing populist parties contribute to this dynamic by fostering divisive "us versus them" narratives. This process of political realignment leads to a redefinition of social boundaries and reshapes group identities within an increasingly polarized society.

---

discursively constructed collective action frame. Paris Aslanidis, "A theoretical framework for populist social movements," *Populist Mobilization* (Oxford, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Sept. 2024): 35-64, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198894599.003.0003. And the work of Vachudova that identifies elite strategies combining anti-establishment and ethnopopulist appeals to explain these power shifts. Milada Anna Vachudova, "Ethnopopulism and Democratic Backsliding in Central Europe," *East European Politics* 36, no. 3 (2020): 318-40, https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1787163. It is worth mentioning politicians that discuss and highlight these challenges such as Guy Verhofstadt, Yanis Varoufakis, and Roberta Metsola.

This article draws on recent research to explore the factors and dynamics driving changes in social movements as they change and adapt to left-wing political parties, with a particular focus on structural challenges. The historical context and ideological roots of left-wing parties in the region are inseparable from the socialist regime's past and the legacy of communism. In the Balkans, characterized by a post-communist legacy, ethnic nationalism, and diverse challenges related to EU integration, various left-wing populist movements have attempted to institutionalize as legitimate political parties, with varying degrees of success.[3] Following the 2008 global financial crisis, massive protests against elites and neoliberalism gained momentum, driven by widespread concerns over growing social and economic disparities, corruption, and inefficient governance.

The transformation of protest movements into left-wing populist parties in Southeast Europe and in other post-communist states has become an attractive research topic for understanding major political transformations in the region. In this context, the most prominent examples of electoral success through populist mobilization include the left-wing party Syriza in Greece and Kosovo's "Self-determination" (hereinafter referred to as Vetëvendosje or in its acronym LVV).[4] These cases illustrate the broader trend of social movements transitioning into formal political parties, offering broader insights into post-communist political transformations.

The main objective of this research is to examine this type of transformation of the left-wing parties, based on the case of Vetëvendosje and the context of Kosovo's political system. It aims to explain the identity and discourse shifts of the left, explore the mobilization strategies of LVV, and understand the key factors behind its electoral and political achievements. Further, the research aims to focus on the following key areas. Firstly, it analyzes the political transformation by process tracing

---

[3]   Věra Stojarová, "Legacy of communist and socialist parties in the Western Balkans" in *Party Politics in the Western Balkans*, eds. Věra Stojarová and Peter Emerson (London: Routledge, 2013), 26-41.

[4]   Emmanouil Mavrozacharakis, Dimitrios Kotroyannos and Stylianos Ioannis Tzagkarakis, "Mediterranean Left-Wing Populism: The Case of SYRIZA," *European Quarterly of Political Attitudes and Mentalities* 6 (2017): 39-52.

the evolution of Vetëvendosje from a social movement to a left-wing political party and ultimately to a governing party. Secondly, it looks at the transitions of the party system by exploring the shifts in the political landscape and discourse of the left in the context of post-communist Kosovo. Finally, it aims to understand the electoral strategies LVV uses for political mobilization in post-independence Kosovo. By examining these areas, this study seeks to explain the transition from social movements to formal political parties and the ability to combine grassroots activities with institutional practices.

The research employs a theoretical framework of populist mobilization to analyze the transformation of Vetëvendosje and its political leftist discourse, and the following methods are used: a content analysis of party manifestos and political programs, desk research on articles and reports, a literature review, and a comparison of electoral discourses. Additionally, electoral discourses and analyzes of election outcomes are compared. The findings contribute to understanding political transformation dynamics in Kosovo while offering insights and broader implications for similar transitions in other post-communist countries.

Theoretical Framework: Populist Mobilization

The transformation of social movements into left-wing populist political parties in Southeast Europe is best exemplified by focusing on a case study or comparative regional analysis. For instance, the emergence of the left-wing political party *Združena Levica* (United Left) in Slovenia, formed in March 2014 as a coalition of various leftist groups, following the cycle of protests since 2012. This case illustrates how anti-establishment narratives, when effectively employed through populist framing, can mobilize support and facilitate the successful transition of grassroots movements into established political parties. According to Ivaylo Dinev, several key factors contributed to the electoral breakthrough of newly established parties like *Združena Levica*. These include the polarization of traditional left-wing parties, the strategic use of activist networks, and the mobilization of support around class-based grievances and anti-

establishment sentiments.[5] Similar patterns can be seen across cases where social movements evolve into left-wing political parties by opposing neoliberalism, privatization policies, and socioeconomic inequality.[6]

The theoretical framework for understanding this transformation focuses on the populist framing adopted by left-wing parties and their political evolution, including the institutional adaptations they undergo as they transition from social movements. This approach highlights the contextual factors – such as socioeconomic grievances or widespread corruption – that contribute to their electoral success. In an era marked by numerous political crises worldwide and increasing vulnerabilities in democratic institutions, understanding how mobilization strategies enable social movements to transform into populist parties is critically important.

The political rise of the movement Vetëvendosje offers a compelling case study for analyzing this phenomenon. It demonstrates how leftist populism, rooted in grassroots activism and ideological adaptation, can fundamentally reshape the political landscape.[7] Although populism is a global phenomenon, Kosovo's *sui generis* political context – including its contested statehood, unresolved tensions with Serbia, persistently high unemployment, and entrenched elite corruption – has profoundly shaped the appeal of populist mobilization strategies. These factors not only contributed to Vetëvendosje's rise but also illustrate how systematic grievances and democratic deficiency can shape the transition of protest movements into political forces.[8]

---

[5]   Ivaylo Dinev, "Barricades and Ballots: Exploring the Trajectory of the Slovenian Left," *East European Politics* 39, no. 4 (2022): 609-26, https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2022.2152799.

[6]   Chiara Milan and Danijela Dolenec, "Social Movements in Southeast Europe: From Urban Mobilisation to Electoral Competition," East European Politics 39, no. 4 (2023): 577–87, https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2023.2267991.

[7]   Bilge Yabanci, "Populism and Anti-Establishment Politics in Kosovo: A Case Study of Lëvizja Vetëvendosje," *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 3, no. 2 (2015): 17-43.; Avdi Smajljaj, "Populism in a Never Ending and Multiple System Transformation in Kosovo: The Case of Vetevendosje," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 28, no. 2-3 (2020): 199-223; Isaac Toman Grief, "Kosovo's Competing Nationalisms: Theorizing an Internal Challenge to Rebel Victor Legitimacy," *Nationalities Papers* 52, no. 3 (2024): 573-87.

[8]   Pëllumb Kelmendi and Elton Skendaj, "Protests in postwar societies: Grievances and contentious collective action in Kosovo," *Nationalities Papers* 51, no. 5 (2023): 1143-1163.

Many scholars find populism to be a complex and sometimes ambiguous notion, mainly due to its broad description and application to various phenomena across diverse cultures and contexts.[9] Cas Mudde distinguished three types of populism: agrarian, economic, and political, which often are mixed or interrelated.[10] Throughout this study, I argue that populism is more than just a set of political ideas or 'thin-centered ideology' and rather a strategic approach to mobilizing voters through anti-establishment rhetoric and people-centrism, accompanied by charismatic leadership and organized movement. The research emphasizes the importance of context-specific political changes, specifically democratization and state-building processes in this case study.

By focusing on populist mobilization as a political tool rather than engaging in normative or extensive theoretical analysis, I approach it here primarily as an electoral strategy. In this context, the two critical elements of populism, as noticed by Robert Jansen, include mobilization and discourse. Populist movements in this regard target vulnerable groups, employing anti-establishment rhetoric to gain broad public support. According to Jansen, populist mobilization encompasses "any sustained, large-scale political project that mobilizes ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people."[11]

In Mudde's view, populist mobilization falls into three categories: personalist leadership, social movement, and political party.[12] Populism can consist of all three distinct characteristics simultaneously, or these characteristics may change over time. Populist mobilization can arise from top-down influences, such as a personalist leader, or from the grassroots, such as a social movement. Alternatively, it can arise from a combination of both approaches, with the prevailing party system in each country shaping the specific dynamics of mobilization. Populist mobilization

---

[9]   Benjamin Arditi, "Three Provocations concerning the Uses of Populism," *Populism*, no. 1 (2024): 1-20.

[10]   Cas Mudde, *The populist radical right in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[11]   Robert Jansen, "Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism." *Sociological Theory* 29, no. 2 (2011): 82.

[12]   Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 42.

encompasses not only protest or social movements but increasingly is present also in certain political parties dominated by charismatic leaders.

As Roberts precisely put it, "the essential core of populism is the political mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders seeking to challenge established elites."[13] A key feature of populist movements is the presence of influential and charismatic leaders who claim to embody "the will of the people." Another characteristic of populism is its organizational structure, which is often and essentially embedded in social movements. In post-communist societies, characterized by a weak institutional tradition and limited structural capacities, such movements frequently relied on nationalist symbols and rhetoric to mobilize support and consolidate power. For analytical purposes, the focus is on three types of populist mobilization, examined here in the case of Vetëvendosje. First, it examines the organization's evolution from a social movement to a political party. Second, it analyzes the role of its charismatic leader. Finally, it explores the interplay between these elements within Kosovo's political landscape. This study highlights the significant role of collective memory and experiences of the violent past in shaping public opinion. It also considers socioeconomic conditions and examines the involvement of powerful external actors relevant to the situation and developments in Kosovo. Additionally, it explores how populist mobilization strategies have become a vital analytical framework for assessing the effectiveness of social and political movements in post-communist countries and unconsolidated democracies.

Methodology

In this study, we examine how LVV evolved from a social movement into a political party by documenting its development and transformation, as well as by evaluating its populist mobilization through content analysis of party platforms. The implications of populist mobilization are significant, as it often leads to shifts in the political landscape by challenging established

---

[13] Roberts Kenneth, "Populism, Political Conflict, and Grass-Roots Organization in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 2 (2006): 127.

power structures. There has been limited research in recent years on populist mobilization strategies, mainly involving content analysis through single case studies, such as those conducted by Jan Jagers and Stefaan Walgrave and that from Teun Pauwels.[14] As highlighted in the comparative study by Matthijs Rooduijn and Pauwels, which examined four nations using both conventional and computer-based content analysis techniques, this research is focused primarily on two key dimensions of populism: people-centrism and anti-elitism.[15] To assess these characteristics, an analysis of party manifestos will be conducted, focusing on two primary metrics: the frequency with which they address the general public and the frequency with which negative language is used to refer to the elites, either by criticizing or using alternative derogatory phrases. A systematic content analysis of party manifestos will examine specific linguistic patterns within each document. Text segments will be coded to identify people-centric and anti-elitism terms using qualitative and quantitative techniques.

In the manifestos, measurement units are determined by word frequency, coded through lists containing words or phrases that refer to the masses and the elites as opposing units. For example, terms like 'citizens' and 'Albanians' represent the general population, while phrases such as 'UNMIK,' 'regime,' and 'Serbia' indicate an anti-establishment position. However, potential biases in coding linguistic patterns may arise from subjective interpretations of language and the selection of phrases. Furthermore, cultural and contextual differences can lead to misinterpretations of certain terms, potentially affecting the accuracy and objectivity of the coding process.

The unit of analysis focuses on Vetëvendosje's manifestos, each corresponding to distinct stages of their development. The first manifesto presents the initial phases of LVV as a grassroots protest movement. The

---

[14]   Jan Jagers and Stefaan Walgrave, "Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium," *European journal of political research* 46, no. 3 (2007): 319-345; Teun Pauwels, "Measuring populism: A quantitative text analysis of party literature in Belgium," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 21, no. 1 (2011): 97-119.

[15]   Matthijs Rooduijn and Teun Pauwels, "Measuring populism: Comparing two methods of content analysis," *West European Politics* 34, no. 6 (2011): 1272-1283.

subsequent document portrays its transition into a parliamentary party and, ultimately, to a governing party, tracing its political trajectory as a left-wing party and transformation 'from streets to the seats.' Party manifestos essentially function as ideological blueprints, articulating main values, policy priorities, and principles, while also serving as documentation of a party's evolving discourse and mobilization strategy.

Case Study: The Formation of Vetëvendosje

Like other social movements, the formation and evolution of the movement Vetëvendosje emerged from specific historical, social, and political contexts. A defining characteristic of Kosovo-Albanian social movements and civil society organizations in the 1990s was that they were closely linked with so-called 'parallel' institutions and political party development in the country.[16] After the League of Communists of Kosovo dissolved in 1989, there has been no successor leftist or socialist party. The political landscape was instead dominated by the conservative Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and other smaller parties, all unified in their striving for independence.[17] After the end of the war in June 1999, Kosovo was placed under the United Nations Mission Interim Administration (UNMIK), which gradually established self-governing institutions while leaving Kosovo's political and legal status unresolved. The dominant political forces in postwar Kosovo, like the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), have joined provisional institutions administered by the comprehensive authority of UNMIK.[18]

This situation has provided fertile ground for the rise of a movement that challenged both the undemocratic governance of the international administration and the domestic political forces that comply with instructions

---

[16]   Howard Clark, *Civil resistance in Kosovo* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

[17]   Věra Stojarová, "Legacy of communist and socialist parties in the Western Balkans," in Party Politics in the Western Balkans, eds. Vera Stojarová, Peter Emerson (London: Routledge, 2013) 35.

[18]   Bekim Baliqi, *State-Building durch die Vereinten Nationen: Am Fallbeispiel des Kosovo* (Saarbrücken: SVH-Verlag, 2009).

from a foreign authority (UNMIK). As the name suggests, Vetëvendosje (Self-determination) has directly challenged Kosovo's dependency on international administration, claiming the right of self-determination and sovereignty exercised by the people. In their manifesto, LVV defines itself as a "community of people who refuse to submit and intend to achieve and realize self-determination for the people of Kosova."[19]

At the same time, the organization contested the legitimacy of domestic political actors. Since there were no clear ideological cleavages and significant class divisions in Kosovo, political parties lacked authentic and distinctive identities. This situation might be defined as a '*plurality of similarity*,' which consequently has increased citizens' alienation from traditional political parties. The relevance of these observations is further supported by Grief, who examined how LVV has challenged Kosovo's established political elite by systematically undermining their shared legitimacy through public acts of delegitimization.[20] As Avdi Smajlaj has pointed out, the post-independence era – marked by socioeconomic stagnation, systemic corruption and clientelism, and reliance on international actors – created the perfect conditions for Vetëvendosje populist rhetoric to resonate.[21]

According to Robert Barr, populism might be defined as a "mass movement led by an outsider or maverick seeking to gain or maintain power by using anti-establishment appeals and plebiscitarian linkages."[22] In line with this understanding, Vetëvendosje is closely associated with its founder and party leader, Albin Kurti. Charismatic leader of the student movement, he was later a representative in the political office of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and was imprisoned by the Serbian regime from 1999 until late 2001, securing him reputable 'patriotic' status. In the postwar period,

---

[19]   Manifesti i Lëvizjes VETËVENDOSJE! 2010 (Manifesto of the Movement Self-determination), accessed December 5, 2024, https://www.vetevendosje.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2.-Manifesti-i-VETEVENDOSJE.pdf.

[20]   Isaac Toman Grief, "Kosovo's Competing Nationalisms: Theorizing an Internal Challenge to Rebel Victor Legitimacy," *Nationalities Papers* 52, no. 3 (2024): 573-587.

[21]   Avdi Smajlaj, "Populism in a never ending and multiple system transformation in Kosovo: the case of Vetëvendosje," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 28, no. 2-3 (2020): 199-223.

[22]   Robert Barr, "Populists, Outsiders and Anti-Establishment Politics," *Party Politics* 15, no. 1 (2009): 38.

he was imprisoned several times by both UNMIK and Kosovo authorities, which allowed Vetëvendosje to portray him as a victim of the political establishment. His political background – marked by his reputation as an unconventional political leader – combined with his rhetorical abilities and nationalist stances, secured him large admiration among the population.

Kurti's political discourse as a mobilization strategy might fit in the pattern of populist leaders, as "highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the 'gut feelings' of the people."[23] Like other left-wing populist parties, Kurti and LVV leadership seem to be influenced by Ernesto Laclau's hegemony theory of populism and have sought to implement it as a political discourse and mobilization strategy.[24] According to Laclau's approach, populism is "the formation of an internal antagonistic frontier separating the "people" from power."[25] When asked about possible government coalitions with other parties, Kurti replied using Laclau's style:

> "We are open because we really love Kosovo. These coalitions do not stem from love. We love people so much that they exhaust our capacity for love. However, the captured Kosovo state has no time to lose in its quest for democratization and development."[26]

As such, Vetëvendosje provides an excellent case study for examining populism within the context of post-communist and democratic transformation. Vetëvendosje changed its focus from nationalist demands and protest politics against the international administration to a left-wing party that prioritizes social rights and anti-corruption to reach broad voter support. This evolution highlights its political adaptability and strategic repositioning within Kosovo's political landscape.

---

[23] Cas Mudde, "The populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition: A Quarterly International Journal of Comparative Politics.* 39, no. 3 (2004): 541-563, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x..

[24] Alexandros Kioupkiolis, "Podemos: The Ambiguous Promises of Left-Wing Populism in Contemporary Spain," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 21, no. 2 (2016): 99-120.

[25] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 74.

[26] Kosovo 2.0, "Albin Kurti: 'Politics is not the art of the possible. Politics is art. Simply, art,'" October 11, 2017, accessed January 31, 2025, http://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/albin-kurti-politika-nuk-eshte-art-se-mundshmes-politika-eshte-art-thjesht-art/.

Vetëvendosje as a Social Movement

The Movement Vetëvendosje emerged as the successor to the Kosova Action Network (KAN), a non-governmental organization that advocated for active citizenry, human rights, and the issues of missing persons from the past war. They opposed the establishment of an international administration and their 'colonial-like' authority. The Movement began in 2004 with protests to the UN Security Council Resolution 1244[27] and escalated in June 2005 with diverse performances, adopting the popular slogan 'No negotiations – self-determination' outside the UNMIK headquarters in Prishtina. These efforts ultimately led to a transformation of KAN into 'Lëvizja Vetëvendosje,' with Albin Kurti.

Social movements typically possess certain components that shape their identity and contribute to their advancement. In the case of LVV, the structure was well-organized, the ideology was cohesive, the political goals were clearly articulated, and supporters were mobilized through vibrant social media engagement and effective protest actions. Another defining characteristic of a social movement is that its members are perceived as activists rather than elected officials or participants in the electoral process. These individuals are motivated by a deep commitment to political change and a strong sense of individuality.[28]

The movement has been involved in diverse public activities since its beginning, including organizing boycotts, holding demonstrations, creating street art, composing slogans, and protesting against the international administration while condemning domestic political elites for allegedly betraying national interests.[29] One of the largest protests occurred on February 10, 2007, against the internationally negotiated plan for the future status of Kosovo, known as the Ahtisaari Plan. This

---

[27] This resolution was adapted on 10 July 1999 from UN Security Council in a response to the war and with the main provisions to authorize military and civil international presence to maintain security and temporarily govern Kosovo. The full text of the UNSCR 1224 is available at: https://undocs.org/S/RES/1244(1999)

[28] Lynn G. Bennie, "Social Movements," in *Understanding Democratic Politics: An Introduction*, ed. Roland Axtmann (London: Sage, 2003), 164–174.

[29] Helene Bruce, "The Movement of a Movement: VETËVENDOSJE! and the Transition from Grassroots to Government," *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*, SIT, 2013.

protest resulted in the deaths of two demonstrators and left dozens injured and arrested, among them also Albin Kurti. The opposition to the Ahtisaari Plan made the LVV movement increasingly appealing to a broad audience, particularly among young people. The Movement's growth reflected a deepening crisis of legitimacy regarding the UNMIK authority and local provisional institutions, as they failed to meet the political expectations of Kosovo's society.[30] Throughout this period, Vetëvendosje's political discourse was also distinguished by strong opposition to the following issues.

While promoting a referendum and reunification with Albania, Vetëvendosje rejected internationally facilitated negotiations and the Ahtisaari Plan, which included decentralization, internationally supervised self-governance, and power-sharing provisions. Furthermore, the Movement boycotted the parliamentary elections held in 2007 and the local elections in 2009, arguing that they lacked legitimacy and were unable to genuinely represent the political will of the people,[31] conducted under the existing legal status and institutional framework. In addition to these forms of political dissent, the Movement opposed the privatization of public enterprises, including telecommunications, mineral resources, and the energy sector.

The Movement's political program, along with its economic and social policy initiatives, confirms its status and identity as a left-wing political force. However, its radical positions, nationalist discourse, and political symbolism suggest elements that align with a right-wing framework. When asked about the party's ideological orientation, Kurti declared that "The difference with Kosovo is that it's not a proper state with proper political parties and institutions, so you cannot have left or right. It's more complex than that."[32] This ideological ambiguity and increasingly populist tone became more pronounced as Vetëvendosje

---

[30]   Alma Vardari-Kesler, "Politics of Protest in Supervised Statehood: Co-Shared Governance and Erosion of Citizenship. The Case-Study of the Vetëvendosje! Movement in Kosovo," *Southeastern Europe* 36, no. 2 (2012): 149-177.

[31]   Albin Kurti, *Zgjohu! Për rezistencë drejtë Lirisë 2003-2007* [Wake up! For resistance toward freedom 2003-2007] (Prishtina: Publishing House Berati, 2007).

[32]   Brad Nosan, "Kosovo's Vetëvendosje Movement Doesn't Like Foreign Intervention," VIce.com (online), 2012, accessed January 12, 2025, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3b57m5/kosovos-vetevendosje-movement-doesnt-like-foreign-intervention.

transitioned from a socialist movement into a left-wing political party. The LVV used the achieved political agreements with Serbia to bolster their own legitimacy while undermining that of post-war elites drawn from former combatants and militant political forces. By evolving ethnonationalistic and anti-elitist rhetoric into an anti-neoliberal, anti-corruption, and leftist platform as they expanded as an institutional political force.[33] Social anthropologist Stephanie Schwander-Sievers notes in her insightful analysis that the LVV emerged both as a resistance movement against international authority and a potential actor for democratization: "The greatest risk faced by a grass-roots organization based on a narrow populist ideology, such as VETËVENDOSJE! thus might be that of itself appearing as dogmatic and undemocratic even to some of its own (former) members or the people who it claims to represent."[34]

According to Glauk Konjufca, co-founder of Vetëvendosje and former Speaker of Kosovo's Assembly, the Movement has undergone three crucial stages of transformation. The first stage involved establishing the foundational concepts and principles of the organization. The second stage marked a shift into political activism, characterized by public demonstrations and mass mobilization, which successfully enhanced its appeal to the broader public. Lastly, in the third phase, the LVV built an extensive organizational framework, expanded its ideological beliefs, and developed strong connections with the masses.[35]

Their main political demands, which initially included opposition to an international protectorate and a struggle for self-determination, alongside nationalist and anti-establishment rhetoric, underwent substantial change as Vetëvendosje transitioned into a political party. The political relevance of Vetëvendosje stems not only from widespread dissatisfaction with the political establishment but also from radicalized discourses surrounding fear and perceived threats from Serbia. Through ongoing

---

[33] Isaac Toman Grief, "Kosovo's Competing Nationalisms: Theorizing an Internal Challenge to Rebel Victor Legitimacy," *Nationalities Papers* 52, no. 3 (2024): 573-587.

[34] Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, "Democratisation through Defiance? The Albanian Civil Organisation 'Self Determination' and International Supervision in Kosovo," in *Civil Society and Transitions in the Western Balkans*, eds. Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 109.

[35] Leaflet VETËVENDOSJE! No. 336, January 4, 2013.

protests, community gatherings (*tubime*), and the dissemination of propaganda materials such as a weekly journal and newsletter, as well as appearances on radio, TV, and the internet, LVV activists successfully drew support from urban, well-educated youth, many of whom were influenced by leftist and anti-colonial literature. The Movement also appealed to former political prisoners, war veterans, and marginalized groups, who opposed the presence of international administration in Kosovo. However, after Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008, Vetëvendosje faced an existential dilemma: to continue its political activism as a social movement or to participate in elections and engage in formal institutions as political representatives. Its leader, Albin Kurti, justified the decision to participate in the 2010 national election in the following way:

> "We have decided to participate in the elections after the democratic debate that we have developed within the movement during these five months. This does not mean that we will transform into a political party. We will remain a political movement, preserving the same objectives and our participation in these elections is another means more towards our ends."[36]

This statement suggests that Vetëvendosje has had to find an innovative strategy to participate in elections without being viewed as a conventional political party. Therefore, they were registered in Kosovo's Central Election Commission as a 'citizen's initiative.' Their strong anti-establishment rhetoric and campaign opposing the Brussels Kosovo-Serbia dialogue led to moderate electoral results in their first parliamentary elections, where they secured a third place as a political subject. The electoral performance of the Movement can be partly attributed to voter dissatisfaction with the established parties – PDK, LDK, and AAK – as well as the country's challenging socio-economic conditions and the government's ineffective policies. As Bilge Yabanci exactly summarized the sources of their popularity:

> "Vetëvendosje's increasing popularity is related to the fact that its commitment to change the system (not only the elected leaders)

---

[36] Leaflet VETËVENDOSJE! No. 204, June 25, 2010.

resounds widely with the society's view of local politicians, international state-building and democratization. Political leaders are not trusted by ordinary citizens. Moreover, the international mission failed to bring corruption and clientelism structures at the top of Kosovo politics under control. As a result, the LVV's criticism of the government and the international community through a unique anti-establishment perspective has successfully addressed the frustration of the Kosovo Albanian electorate."[37]

The main argument of LVV for the boycott was that elections in Kosovo were not a genuine mechanism for expressing political will but rather an institution legitimizing the dominant political and legal frameworks. However, in 2010, Vetëvendosje made a surprising decision to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections by arguing that Kosovo needed to overcome the gap between the representatives (ruling elites) and the represented (people).[38]

Vetëvendosje as a Political Party

The transition from a social movement to a political party is facilitated by three crucial factors: societal and power dynamics (reflecting growing political and socio-economic demands), organizational availability (strengthening internal structures and leadership), and ideological premises (disseminating political demands and national ethos).[39] In the case of Vetëvendosje, this transformation was further enabled by additional factors, including growing dissatisfaction with existing political elites, as well as the party's ability to combine populist mobilization, anti-establishment rhetoric, and nationalist discourse. Over time, these elements influenced the party's leftist ideological orientation. After achieving significant electoral success in its first national elections, LVV adapted its mobilization strategy,

---

[37] Bilge Yabanci, "Populism and Anti-Establishment Politics in Kosovo: A Case Study of Lëvizja Vetëvendosje," *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 3, no. 2 (2015): 38.

[38] Albin Kurti, "JISB interview. Kosova in dependence: from stability of crisis to the crisis of stability," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 5, no. 1 (2011): 89-97.

[39] Yabanci, "Populism and Anti-Establishment Politics in Kosovo."

shifting from symbolic actions and protests to a more structured parliamentary opposition. This change compelled the party to strengthen its organizational structures and develop a practical party platform, building an electoral program titled 'Development *and Statebuilding: Together is possible.*'

Following the 2010 parliamentary elections, Vetëvendosje attracted more liberal-oriented groups, including members of 'Fryma e Re' (New Spirit), whose leader, Shpend Ahmeti, later became the mayor of Prishtina. The LVV's growth resulted from its image as a promising alternative to the established parties that dominated the political landscape for years. In 2015, LVV held internal party elections, during which Visar Ymeri was elected chairman with over 97% of the votes, despite being the only candidate.

In the 2014 elections, LVV achieved a modest increase of less than 1% in its vote share compared to previous elections, ultimately securing 13.59% of the votes and winning 16 seats in the National Assembly. However, the aftermath of the elections was marked by significant political crises, including a protracted six-month deadlock in government formation. In response, LVV joined forces with several other parties to form a strong opposition coalition, aiming to prevent the PDK and its leader, Hashim Thaçi, from gaining another term in office. Despite their efforts, the coalition's attempts failed, and the subsequent government coalition between the PDK and LDK put LVV into the role of the leading opposition party. This new position allowed LVV to benefit politically from voter dissatisfaction and leverage numerous government scandals to its advantage.

Their mobilization strategy during this period was highly effective, utilizing a combination of 'door-to-door' outreach and effective social media campaigns that sharply criticized government actions and rival political parties. Consequently, in the 2017 elections, LVV garnered an impressive 27.49% of the votes (200,132 votes), making it the largest political party in Kosovo's Parliament with 32 seats. Despite these remarkable results, the pre-election coalition of the PDK, AAK, and Nisma managed to secure 34% of the votes, enabling them to form the government. As a result, LVV once again found itself in opposition, but the party's popularity continued to grow, solidifying its position as a major political force in Kosovo (Table 1).

After the election, Vetëvendosje adjusted its approach by moderating some of its more radical demands and expanding its organizational structure to include a broader range of social groups and voters with diverse ideological beliefs – ranging from radical leftists to religious conservatives and strong ethno-nationalists. A significant rise in public support for the LVV was a result of the shifting political landscape in post-independent Kosovo, as well as numerous political scandals and a lack of legitimacy among existing political actors and parties. Vetëvendosje's sharp critiques of 'state capture,' corruption, and clientelism were viewed positively by the public, enhancing their support and legitimacy.[40] During the 2014 national elections, the electoral slogan, 'Are you tired?', served as an implicit appeal for political change, positioning LVV as a credible alternative to mainstream parties.

In contrast, their campaign for the 2017 national elections exhibited less emphasis on nationalistic rhetoric and a more moderate public image. The election slogan, 'With mind, and with heart' reflected a dual appeal – emotional (ideological) connections and rational (pragmatic) voting for Vetëvendosje, serving as a sincere appeal to the population. The party's populist rhetoric, vibrant social media presence, and innovative electoral platform have positioned LVV as the true representatives of the ordinary people, in stark contrast to what they described as 'corrupted and incompetent' political elites. This electoral strategy has appealed to a broad segment of society, particularly to the youth. The increasing accessibility of the internet and the widespread use of social networks in Kosovo, particularly on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, have enabled LVV to reach a larger audience.[41] These platforms have not only allowed the party to disseminate information and mobilize voters but have enabled them to challenge the information dominance traditionally held by established mass media.

The electoral success and political rise of Vetëvendosje were on the verge of collapse in early 2018 when Kurti's candidacy for the party's

---

[40]   Joseph Coelho, "Seizing the State under International Administration: The Case Study of State Capture and Corruption in Kosovo," *Southeastern Europe* 42, no. 1 (2018): 107-130.

[41]   In its official profile on Facebook, "Vetëvendosje" has 390.000 followers and Albin Kurti's Facebook profile has even more than 570.000 followers. Accessed January 14, 2025).

chairmanship was announced and intra-party elections began. Public scandals related to internal relationships and a significant leadership crisis almost destroyed the party. As a result, a substantial portion of the party leadership resigned, including former party president Visar Ymeri, party secretary Dardan Molliqaj, two vice presidents, Aida Dërguti and Dardan Sejdiu, the mayors of Prishtina and Kaçanik, and numerous other party members. Notably, 13 out of 32 members of parliament defected from the Social Democratic Party. According to them, Kurti exhibited authoritarian tendencies, personalized the party, and undermined intra-party democracy. Due to these events, the party found itself in an existential crisis, and debates began about its political future and ideological consistency.

Even after this dramatic split, the party held on to its position as the largest political party in Kosovo during the early elections held the following year, winning 26.27% of the vote. As a result, the Kurti government was formed in February 2020, in coalition with the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). However, just a few weeks later, on March 25, due to internal struggles within coalition partners and international diplomatic pressure, the LDK initiated a vote of no confidence in parliament. This move led to the collapse of the Kurti government.[42] Shortly after forming a new government, the LDK faced sanctions imposed by the Constitutional Court ruling, which led to the holding of new elections on February 14, 2021. In these elections, the LVV achieved a historic victory, winning a substantial majority of the votes. This electoral success was unprecedented in Kosovo's party system, marking the very first time a single party secured more than 50% of the vote, breaking the long-standing tradition of grand coalitions. After the election, the LVV formed the Kurti II government in coalition with the smaller parties 'Lista Guxo' and 'Alternativa,' alongside other coalition partners representing ethnic communities. The transfer of power has occurred peacefully and smoothly, despite concerns raised by various observers. Aidan Hehir expresses this viewpoint in the following way:

---

[42] Werner Distler, "Politische Krise und Corona – 'Ausnahmezustand' im Kosovo," *Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* 9 (2020): 375-384.

"While the party has been criticized by many for both its tactics and outlook, it does not espouse an authoritarian or sectarian agenda, seeks to work within, rather than overturn, the existing democratic system, and is committed to continuing Kosovo's attempts to further integrate with the West through joining NATO and the EU. Thus, while Vetëvendosje's tactics have at times been unconventional and its nationalistic stance has alienated some within Kosovo, it's ascent to power has not precipitated any significant political or societal instability."[43]

The Kurti II government aimed to strengthen territorial sovereignty and the rule of law, improve economic development, fight corruption and organized crime, and enhance social welfare programs. As the content analysis of the government program indicates, it focused on fostering a more just and inclusive society for all ethnic groups.

After four years in power, Prime Minister Kurti and his party, Vetëvendosje, which has governed without a grand coalition for the first time, have faced widespread criticism for their inadequate management of key policy sectors. While the government's performance has not met public expectations and many challenges persist, Kurti's leadership continues to shape the political landscape in Kosovo and exert influence in the region. At the same time, Vetëvendosje, as a left-wing party, remains a dominant political force with a long-term impact on Kosovo's political system. However, the LVV government has failed to enhance credible political figures beyond Kurti or build inclusive party leadership. Instead, it has relied almost entirely on Kurti's personality cult, which has limited intra-party democracy and the party's ability to institutionalize its influence.

Strengthening Kosovo's sovereignty and reducing Serbian influence, especially in the northern regions, was one of the key issues that LVV emphasized during the election campaign; therefore, their slogan was 'cep më cep,' literally translated 'edge to edge,' indicating the extension of the state authority throughout the country's territory. Vetëvendosje's

---

[43]   Aidan Hehir, "The relationship between hope and societal stability in Kosovo," *East European Politics* 40, no. 1 (2024): 186.

campaign took place almost without an election program, and the party avoided media debates during the recent parliamentary elections in February 2025 (Table 2). Its campaign relied mainly on populist rhetoric and symbolism, which, while resonating with some party militants, have limited its broader appeal. Vetëvendosje won the elections again but did not have the necessary 50 percent electoral majority to form a government on its own. Thus, there is currently a post-election deadlock and political crisis to build a new government in the weeks or months that follow.

Content Analysis of the Vetëvendosje's Programs

Vetëvendosje's foundational Manifesto dedicated nearly three out of four pages to a historical timeline of Kosovo, framed from a radical, protest, and anti-colonial perspective.[44] The narrative begins with Kosovo's occupation and the hardships endured by its population from the early twentieth century until the establishment of international administration. As a social movement, Vetëvendosje emphasizes that the right to self-determination is a precondition for a sustainable resolution of the Kosovo issue, as their ultimate political goal. The text predominantly highlights phrases like "Serbia," "Serbs," "regime," "enemy," "suffering," and "victims," presenting them primarily in a negative light. In contrast, concepts like freedom, people, Kosovo, and Albanians are frequently interconnected, implying that national self-determination can only be achieved through social cohesion and political unity. This political platform centers its narrative on the historical persecution of the Albanian nation and advocates for unity in both politics and society by solely relying on the people's right to self-determination.

A systematic analysis of the most frequently used concepts in Vetëvendosje's manifesto during its phase as a social movement, provides empirical evidence of anti-establishment and nationalist undertones

---

44   Manifesti i Lëvizjes Vetëvendosje (Manifesto of the Movement Self-determination), Prishtina, 2010, 4 pages, 1889 words, accessed December 5, 2024, https://www.vetevend osje.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2.-Manifesti-i-VETEVENDOSJE.pdf.

combined with populist discourse. This analysis highlights not only the movement's critical perspective on existing political structures but also its call for a strong national identity and social equality. Vetëvendosje achieved electoral success in local elections, raising hopes of many non-partisan voters that the party would be able to become a moderate and acceptable governing alternative. Consequently, they named their party program *Alternativa*, consisting of three main pillars: Just State, Developing State, and Social State.[45] While the initial Manifesto concentrated on historical narrative and nationalistic sentiments, this political program is more policy-oriented and a governance platform than a pure ideological statement. According to the Table 3 on the content analysis of Vetëvendosjes's programs, the term 'people' seem to occur less often than 'citizens,' whereas 'self-determination' is much more frequent than the phrase 'state,' and 'Kosovo' appears much more often than 'Serbia' in comparison to the *Manifesto*. Even though *Alternativa* portrays fewer anti-colonial or anti-establishment views, it maintains a few of the same political demands, including a change to the constitution, the right to a referendum, and unification with Albania. Whether this political platform should be considered a typical populist program, remains a matter of interpretation. However, it reflects leftist ideology, emphasizing economic equality and social redistribution.

Almost immediately after its consolidation, the LVV government introduced a governing program that included policies typical of the left-wing parties. This program prioritized social welfare, aimed to expand social protection, reduce poverty, and implement comprehensive reforms across the education, health, and energy sectors, including the vetting in the justice system.[46] Nevertheless, as can be observed in Table 3, it differs significantly from previously analyzed programs not only in terms of usage and frequency of words, but also in terms of overall ideological and discourse reorientation, which can be observed between the two

---

[45] Alternativa Qeverisëse: Lëvizja Vetëvendosje! (Governing Alternative: Movement Self-determination!) (Prishtina, 2013), 117 pages, 24,112 words.

[46] Programi i qeverisë së Republikës së Kosovës 2021-2025 [Program of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo], May 2021, accessed January 20, 2025, https://masht.rks-gov.n et/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Programi-i-Qeverise-se-Kosoves-2021-2025.pdf – 61 pages, 20,130 words.

documents. This platform emphasizes inclusivity and equity, using language that highlights social justice and economic development. The need to address domestic challenges such as socioeconomic disparities may have prompted a re-evaluation of priorities. Overall, it demonstrates a transition of the LVV as a governing party, focusing on inclusive policies, and striving to meet increased public expectations.[47]

Conclusion

In the post-conflict period in Kosovo, Vetëvendosje played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape by addressing socio-economic challenges, enhancing civic activism and promoting accountability. Their political activities aimed to fight corruption and clientelism in politics, by exposing scandals and promoting accountability, which are essential preconditions for maintaining trust in public institutions in post-communist states. However, their anti-system stances and radical actions against international administration also exposed the risks to democratic and institutional stability. Although nationalist narratives and radical positions have moderated over time, and liberal policies along with pro-Western positions have evolved, populist tendencies persist. In this context, populist mobilization encompasses not only social movements but also political parties and charismatic leadership. In this case study, these elements are strongly interlinked and complementary, as Albin Kurti's political activities are inseparable from the Vetëvendosje mobilization strategies. The political legitimacy and popularity of the leader, who has adjusted his political discourse and public image over time, play a significant role in the movement's transition and the party's electoral success.

Vetëvendosje effectively utilized grassroots strategies by organizing community meetings, protests, and door-to-door campaigns to engage directly with citizens. In contrast to conventional political parties, which rely on top-down decision-making procedures and established party structures, Vetëvendosje prioritizes direct engagement with the electorate.

---

[47] For a comparison and analysis of the word usage among these programs, see Table 3 at the end of the article.

As a form of participatory democracy and community involvement, this strategy allowed the party to respond to the needs of its supporters, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusion that is lacking in mainstream political parties. As a result of addressing local issues and concerns, they established a strong connection with the voters that not only increased their appearance but also cultivated a sense of solidarity and empowerment among their supporters.

The article builds upon previous research, synthesizing theoretical models of populism with the specific mobilization strategies and contextual dynamics as driving forces for Vetëvendosje's political success. Research findings indicate that the populist mobilization strategy of Vetëvendosje has emerged from a combination of leftist and ethno-nationalist ideologies, along with an anti-establishment discourse and a series of street actions and protests. Some of these protests have escalated into violence, such as the 2007 protest that resulted in the deaths of two activists. These demonstrations have been primarily directed against Serbia's involvement and the UNMIK administration in Kosovo. In this context, Vetëvendosje leveraged widespread dissatisfaction with the political *status quo*, using historical grievances and the collective memory of the past war and the struggle for independence.

Content analysis of Vetëvendosje's *Manifesto*, *Alternativa*, and *Government* Program reveals that the movement's transformation into a political party is evident in its political programs. These documents include pragmatic, policy-based solutions and socioeconomic concerns, indicating a shift from ideological narrowness towards a more open organizational and programmatic structure. Consequently, Vetëvendosje has adjusted its mobilization approach, transitioning from protests to parliamentary activities aimed at influencing broader audiences and attracting more voters. This shift has enabled the party to engage more effectively with various stakeholders and exert influence in formal political arenas. By integrating grassroots activism with policy-making efforts, Vetëvendosje has expanded its electoral influence and attracted a more diverse supporter base. Its strategy succeeded in challenging the entrenched political elite, portraying them as part of a system controlled by international authorities, while combining protest activism with dynamic parliamentary opposition. By appealing to the dissatisfaction of

voters who feel neglected by other political parties, Vetëvendosje has effectively gained support from those seeking overall reforms.

The ideological roots of Vetëvendosje lie in its nationalist rhetoric and socio-economic populism, which are interrelated elements that have contributed to its transformation from a protest movement into a left-wing party. However, the party faces the challenge of maintaining ideological consistency as it seeks to enlarge its electoral support base in the face of competing nationalist perspectives and leftist values. The findings suggest that organizational and ideological shifts have enabled Vetëvendosje to expand its voter base. Through its extensive activities and demands for systematic political changes, the LVV has mobilized voters dissatisfied with the existing mainstream parties, resulting in a typical 'catch-all' party. However, its sudden and tremendous electoral success triggered an internal power struggle and a loss of cohesion, leading to party fragmentation. This fragmentation weakened the party's influence, as splinter groups emerged with differing priorities and agendas. Consequently, Vetëvendosje struggled to maintain its organizational structure and voter base, raising uncertainties about its future electoral performance. In response to persistent calls for systemic change, the party changed itself through ideological, programmatic, and structural transformations.

Vetëvendosje evolved from an anti-establishment, left-wing social movement into a major electoral force and a governing party in Kosovo. This transformation can be attributed to several factors linked to its populist strategies, such as combining nationalist narratives with anti-corruption rhetoric, mobilization of certain demographic groups like youth and the diaspora, and a massive and vibrant presence on social media platforms. While the party has consistently announced 'changes,' its governance capabilities and policy implementation outcomes have fallen significantly below public expectations. Thus, instead of changing the system, the system ultimately changed them. This transition from an anti-establishment movement to mainstream politics has diminished the party's appeal and credibility, resulting in declining electoral support and limited success in enacting substantive reforms.

Table 1

Parliamentary elections: 2010-2019

Party	2010 (%)	2014 (%)	2017 (%)	2019 (%)
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	32.11	30.38	33.74% (In coalition)	21.23%
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	24.69	25,24	25.53%	24.54%
Self-Determination (LVV)	**12.69**	**13.59**	**27.49**	**26.27%**
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	11.04	9.54	33.74% (In coalition)	11.51%
Serb List (LS)	-	5.22	6.11%	6.40%
Initiative for Kosovo (Nisma)	-	5.15	33.74% (In coalition)	5.00%

Source: Central Election Commission (CEC), https://kqz-ks.org/rezultatet/zgjedhjet-per-kuvend-te-kosoves/, accessed January 25, 2025.

Table 2

Parliamentary elections in Kosovo: February 2021-2025

Party	2021 (%)	Seats (120)	2025 (%)	Seats (120)
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	17.01	19	20.95	24
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	12.73	15	18.27	20
Self-Determination (LVV)	**50.28**	**58**	**42.30**	**48**
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	7.12	8	7.06 (In coalition)	8
Serb List (LS)	5.09	10	4.26	9
Initiative for Kosovo (Nisma)	--	--	7.06 (In coalition)	8

Source: Central Election Commission (CEC), https://kqz-ks.org/rezultatet/zgjedhjet-per-kuvend-te-kosoves/, accessed February 26, 2025.

Note: The results from the 2025 elections are not official and final since votes from the diaspora were not included until this date.

Table 3

Content Analysis of Vetëvendosjes's Programs

Keyword	Word frequency (times) Manifesto/Party program/Government program		
People (Citizens)	15	24 (88)	4 (47)
Freedom (State)	18	(56)	(58)
Self-determination	15	7	0
Serbia/Serbs/Belgrade regime	32	10	9
Kosovo	31	35	132
Albanians	10	14	2
UNMIK/Res.1244	5	7	0
Regime/Power elites	13	12	3
Republic	-	24	37
Corruption	-	15	12

Source: Author's content analysis of Manifesto, *Alternativa* Program, and *Kurti II* Government Program.

Note: The numbers in brackets represent word frequency of phrases used as synonyms of the given phrases not in bracket, e.g., the phrase (Citizens) is related to (88) and (47) times.