

## A Dramatistic Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies of Albania Election 2009



### Political Science

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### Abstract

This paper examines the communication strategies during the 2009 Albanian Parliamentary election, revealing influences in the direction the country takes; and differences of rhetorical choices between the two coalitions' leaders. Twenty-four speeches analyzed were held during the campaign, by the leaders themselves, in twelve districts of the country. The first section of the paper is a description of the situation necessary to understand their rhetoric, the perceived character of the leaders, and the issues discussed. After a summary of the transition rhetoric, the situation in the country, the region, and the European Union issues conclude the first section of the study. The second section is the methodology and the findings of the analysis of the artifact, consisting in five main themes generated from the analysis of the speeches. The analysis of the themes is based on the crossing of Burke's Dramatism as "philosophy of language" with Weaver's concepts of rhetoric, culture, and ultimate terms. The third section is the pentad analyses of both leaders Berisha and Rama, which will be employed to discover the rhetor's motives and Weaver's ultimate terms as an expression of the ultimate values and worldview of the rhetor. The effect of their rhetorical choices and the differences between these choices will be discussed in the fourth section, followed by conclusions, limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research. The rhetoric of 2009 parliamentary election in Albania proved that rhetoric marks the beginning and/or the end of an era. Economic and social changes alone are not enough to mark that transition.

### Introduction

While during communism the rhetoric was barely existent, there is only one way and no room for influences, during transition it comes alive and powerfully influencing and shaping values and judgments. There is a significant gap in the study of rhetoric during these transition periods. The rhetoric during the transition period is unique. It is not the same as crises rhetoric which does not involve fundamental system change. Nor can it be studied the same as a revolutionary rhetoric. The changes during transition are drastic but they are done democratically. The transition period gives birth to a new rhetoric which mirrors what the society is striving for. Albania's election 2009 is a good ground to study the new rhetoric shaped during nearly the last two decades, after 1990. A new culture, distinct from twenty years ago, is created; new patterns of communication in response to the new system are employed. During election it is imperative the choosing of the future based on the calling of the past.

There have been studies in transition rhetoric (see p.6 of this paper) but there is still a gap, which this study will try to fill. The purpose of this study is to examine the communication strategies during the election, revealing influences in the direction the country takes; and differences of rhetorical choices between the two coalitions' leaders. The speeches that were analyzed were relatively short, held during the campaign, by the leaders themselves, in different districts of the country.

## 1. Rhetoric and Transition

The transition period is where rhetoric and history intertwine. Oratoski and Marin studied the relationship between rhetoric and history in the context of the political transformations in Central/Eastern Europe and South Africa. The nature of this intertwining on the whole reaffirms the resistance to the depersonalization of history. (Oratoski, C., & Marin, N. 2006). Rhetoric as a construction of social reality is not only reflected in language and its communication, but it is also constantly renewed by and in communication. We would have to ask how language is related to and affected by processes in which identities change, are lost, and found again or rescued (Schäffner & Porsch, 2001). A study done in Argentina during the period 1982-8 observed and called into question the socialization effects of democratic institutions during relatively short periods in a context of economic crisis and rising discontent (Bacalhau, M., 1990).

The role of leaders in the transition period is important in the transformations in discourse as well. The role of rhetoric during transition is obvious and significant in the media. During the transition to democracy in Spain the role of the media was studied during the beginning of the transition from 1975 to 1978. The significant change in the foci of the content proves the change of values and beliefs during transition (Montero, M. et al, 2008). A study, which examines the role of reconciliation in South Africa's transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy, contends that reconciliation is a mode of rhetorical history making, a complex set of intentional practices that both open time for speech and employ speech to make time (Barry Van WYK, 2005).

## 2. The situation

Albania is a newly accepted NATO member, and inspires to join EU. The country had to undergo numerous reforms to achieve this status, and in order to be fully accepted in the European Union the reforms must continue further to complete the requirement for all the countries in the western Balkan region. EU has twenty seven country members; the laws in these countries have to be the same, and Albania has to do more to bring the legislation closer to that of the EU. The parliamentary elections on June 28, 2009, are an elections test for Albanian society to be free of any manipulation and disturbances that have happened in the past elections for the last twenty years. Both main coalitions programs aim at the same direction, the difference is the means they claim to use to reach their goal, the vision they have to achieve it, and specifically in this election the campaign is focused more on who is better of, who are the people the country should hire to do the job. This study will focus on the rhetorical choices made by the leaders of both main coalitions; the right coalition with Berisha, and the main left coalition by Rama. Berisha is the legendary leader of democrats, and Rama is new leader of socialists and a successful internationally acclaimed mayor of Tirana.

### 3. The dramatistic analysis

Rhetorical choices are strategies realized from the analyses of speeches made by the two leaders during the campaign in the month of June, 2009. The speeches were relatively short, held in the campaign meetings throughout the country. The themes that emerged through analyses are based in the intensity and the frequency of their use, and in the current issues, sensitive for the situation. Burke defines rhetoric as the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce action in other human agents, and he emphasizes that rhetoric is rooted in the essential function of language itself. The persuasion cannot take place without identification, a concept that Burke introduced in rhetoric which is synonymous with consubstantiality, shared substance between individuals. Identification is rooted in division; the need to eliminate this division calls for communication.

The rhetor's identify themselves with the audiences by naming a situation, and providing a strategy for dealing with the situation. It is this solution to the perceived problems, situations, what Burke calls "equipment for living" that the audience needs in order to decide on the future actions or attitudes. Also based on the terministic screen of the artifacts, speeches in our case, we can reveal the worldview of the rhetor, in the terms they choose to use the speakers reflect who they are, and what is their meaning on the subjects and situations. The themes discussed below are generated based on Burke's theory of rhetoric, by investigating the rhetoric that constitutes their terministic screens.

#### 3.1 *The Themes on Berisha's speeches*

The main themes that emerge from the analyses of the speeches are Change, Albania, European Union membership, Albanian people, and Rama - the socialist party leader.

##### *Change*

Change is the motto for the right; it is mentioned in every speech and in their advertisements and posters. The right coalition's motto is "Albania is Changing" as a continuation of the motto from four years ago from the last elections "Time for Change". Since the democrats have been in power for the last four years, the motto "Albania is changing" helps create a picture of successful governance, shows evidence of kept promises from the last campaign, and willingness and determination to continue change in the direction already started.

Having change as the main theme, the rhetoric of this election is the rhetoric of rebirth, with the only difference between the two campaigns on the stages of the rebirth cycle. The rhetoric of rebirth involves undergoing three steps; pollution, purification, and redemption. For democrats the guilt starts with the communist system and all the social tension created by it. The purification is the destruction of the system and the reforms undertaken to establish democracy in the country. The right leader's rhetoric calls for continuation of the reforms as a form of the purification

already started in 1992 and interrupted again from 1997 to 2005 and restarted in 2005. For the right wing the purification lasted all these eighteen years of transitioning to a free society. That means relieving the guilt was through mortification, the sacrifices the people went through, the reforms completely new and different from what they were used to, not only in the economic but in social and cultural aspects as well. The motto in early nineties was, “We want Albania in Europe,” that was the redemption aimed for then and continued to be for the transition years. At present is to be concluded with the EU full membership in 2010. The redemption is moving forward towards the goal. Berisha called this redemption “a dream,” . . . Our dream is for everybody, every Albanian, anywhere they are, because they want their homeland to prosper and flourish with dignity. Dignity means ways that work for everybody, not for a certain elite. We know very well what happens when the country’s ideals are replaced with ideology that worships the elite. We know how the country was destroyed by worshipping the communist dictator. That part of our history is closed forever; Albanians will never buy into that again . . . Europe is what works for everybody, Albania in European Union works for everybody. Let us make our final step to realizing our dream, there is room for everyone in our dream, because a dream that involves everyone is done by all. (Berisha, June 25, 2009).

### *Albania*

Albania is the next major theme that emerged from the analyses of the speeches during the campaign for Berisha the right coalition leader.

For Berisha Albania is now free, strong, and brave soon to be politically involved in the EU and the country will show its full natural and cultural potential. All three of these terms fit with the vision of all people, Albanians or other nationalities that know Albania’s history. Free is the dream of the people for centuries until 1912. Free is also the dream from the late eighties through the nineties, free from communism. Freedom is still the tyrannizing image of the Albanian culture. Free to live and prosper at home, and also being able to move and travel in the world. Strong would exactly describe the courage that the country did need to survive, succeed and progress.

For Berisha love for your country makes anyone strong,

“If you want to know the secret of me staying in politics for this long and triumphing, let me tell you; it is the love for the country. The love for your country does not let you ever give up the dream of seeing its people happy, safe, and moving ahead in prosperity.” (Berisha, Tropoje, June 15, 2009).

Progress is another term used in association with the country and is achieved through investments and reforms, terms which are always clustered around progress. Also brave is a good term in the Albanian culture, as “Only by being brave the people have survived the numerous battles during the history. We should also now be brave by finding the best way, not the easiest, in order to be able to overcome any obstacle we might face in the future” (Berisha, June 18, 2009).

### *Albanians*

The Albanian People was the third theme that emerged from the analyses. Berisha used the terms “you” frequently, directly to the people in the meetings. He used positive terms like; “dream,” “guidance,” and “future.” Also terms like “battle “ and “war” were used in association with the people, mostly to call attention to what they had to go through. He calls the Albanian people as his “guidance” throughout the transition years, and “his strength has come from them,” making them the reason of the success. During his speeches the term “battle” is often associated with the people. The message conveyed to the audience is to be courageous a little more on the path of change already started.

“We have lost some battles, but we won the war. Albanians are free to worship God, if they choose to. None can tell them different. Let me tell you, the war is won because of you, the people. Nobody has fought for their dream more than you have, and now the future is in your hands. Let us focus on the future” (Berisha, June, 15, 2009). For Berisha, “the future” and “the Albanian people’s dream,” are what is worth fighting for.

### *European Union*

European Union is the fourth theme that emerged during the analyses. For both coalition leaders joining the EU is a goal. Berisha sees it as the end of the struggle for freedom and democracy from the Albanian people; “. . . EU is the rebirth of Albania on the European table, following its natural destiny” (Berisha, June 15, 2009). EU would close the cycle started when the communism broke down.

### *Rama – the socialist leader*

Rama the left coalition leader is the mayor of Tirana, the capital city. He did bring change to the city until he became the leader of the Socialist Party. His parents were in the communist elite but he himself has been a rebel artist. In his speeches he calls for a “new politics” which is “beyond left and right” identifying himself with everyone who wants a fresh start, regardless of their political preferences. The key to achieve that is through “removing Berisha from power” by “coming together” for a “new era” (Rama, June 21, 2009). The other terms used by Rama in association with Berisha were “failure”, “destruction”, “past”, “resignation”. Responding to these accusations, Berisha calls Rama unable for “new politics” because his vision is “stuck on the past” (Berisha, June 20, 2009). The terms used by Berisha in association with Rama are “corruption”, and “past”.

### 3.2 *The Themes on Rama's speeches*

The main themes that emerge from the analyses of the speeches are New politics, Change, Albania, Albanian citizens, and Berisha - Democratic Leader.

#### *New Politics*

New politics is the motto for the left campaign rhetoric, and it is the term most often used by Rama's rhetoric. It is always associated with change. Change is also the motto for the socialist coalition with another twist "New politics for change," to create the idea of new ways, new means to the end, the change to a better system of society functioning.

The change comes from Rama and the socialists which want new politics for change,

"What Berisha and his government call change, it is corruption and works in his family's interests only. We will make sure that change comes from up, the change should come from the prime minister's palace. This is the new politics we are proposing, and we are going to bring to the people, after June 28" (Rama, Tirane/Farke, June 16, 2009). The rhetorical perspective presented to the voters by Rama, to choose "new politics" over the "Old politics represented by Berisha, is keeping the Albanian time stuck, with their outdated worldview" (Rama, Shkoder, June 17, 2009).

This new politics is represented by Rama himself. During the campaign the role of Rama as a "new leader" for "new politics" was highly emphasized. Trying to encompass his success as a mayor of Tirana a few years ago, Rama tried to pass it in national level when he said, "What has been done in Tirana will prove effective to be done all over Albania. We need new politics, new politicians, new prime minister" (Rama, Kruje, June 19, 2009). By naming the transition period as a failure, Rama distinguishes himself from socialists who governed for eight years. He wants to be seen as the only "new politics" option by camps, democrats and socialists, when he states, "beyond the left and the right" (Rama, June, 2009). The only way out from the current situation is "new politics" with him as the leader. The change starts with him coming to power.

#### *Change*

For the left coalition leader Rama, the circle of rebirth starts now, with this election. The guilt is the social anxiety and tension created in the eighteen years of transition. The pollution comes from all the past, the communist regime and the transition years naming the latest as a failure for transforming the society. Rama blames Berisha for it and the purification cycle is "to remove him from the governing Albanians."

The process of purification starts with socialists coming to power and directing reforms toward a social cohesion with

The redemption for Rama is the social cohesion within the country, new perspective "bringing Albania back its original dignity and former glory." For the left wing the rebirth starts

with them today and finishes when we have won back “our lost identity”, and resources are within, “The progress comes when all the members of the society look at the same direction, a direction that the Socialist Party has appointed already” (Rama, June 18, 2009).

The redemption “new politics, new rhythm, new era” is achieved through “centralized foundational transformation, in our education and health care system. We need centralized reforms, to control the corruption brought in during last eighteen years of the way of dealing with the issues of education, health, and other public reforms (Rama, June 15, 2009). The means of the purification for Rama would be the changing of the system, where the citizens would yield the results.

### *Albania*

For Rama Albania is blessed by God with everything the country needs to live free, to prosper, and to soar. Rama adds more to the term of freedom when he associates it with God and blessing, also ultimate terms in Albanian culture. By choosing these terms he wants to make the people aware of the great potential the country has naturally and intellectually, all they have to do is open the door to the sun. Sun is another good term in his speeches used to empower people of their great, naturally rich, and beautiful country. In Rama’s rhetoric, the country had the spotlight also on most of his campaign advertisement. He mentioned the national hero of the country, Gjergj Kastrioti, in several of his speeches, in order to make people feel the old dream of all Albanians, of all times in combination with his other campaign motto “get up and go” to reach that dream. For Rama protection of the Albanian culture and values is what should drive people for their next move, and that’s what they should vote for, to protect our national identity and heritage, blaming Berisha for organizing “the massacre” of our national culture because of “his lust for power” (Rama, June 21, 2009). Massacre is a negative term, while culture and power are charismatic terms in Albanian culture.

For Rama EU membership is just one of the processes that should happen, more important is for us to focus on our “Our focus should be on our national heritage, which includes what Europe is all about. We are one of the oldest nations in the world; Let us stop the masquerade of our national heritage” (Rama, June 16, 2009). For Rama, EU membership is not the key, the key lies with the Albanian people and the country’s economic and intellectual prosperity.

### *Albanians*

Rama used the term “Albanian citizens” instead of Albanian people throughout his campaign. He did not directly point out you to the audience. The Albanian citizens are to be honored for their “contribution and hard work on keeping the old Albanian dream alive through the transitions years of failure.” If all Albanians believe and work together anything is possible. He glorifies the Albanian people and blames “the system for not matching the potential of its people” (Rama, June 16, 2009).

Rama’s main campaign advertisement is “get up and go” a highly personalized video implying; Rama is the solution. The video shows Rama going in the mines to work with the

miners, then going in the field to work with the farmers, then in the hospital and schools. In all the locations there are closed doors which Rama opens letting the sun in, lightning up the space. The song calls for action to vote, to make possible this sunlight in their lives; they are powerful if they choose to act, and the time is now. By focusing on “removing Berisha” and with highly personalized campaign advertisements the message conveyed was not on the people but on the leader.

### *Berisha*

The terms used by Rama in association with Berisha were “failure”, “destruction”, “past”, “resignation”. Identifying themselves with whatever Berisha is not, personalizing the campaign against him was one of the socialist rhetorical strategies. During the campaign speeches everyone from the socialist coalition parties leaders purposed to “remove Berisha” (Gjinushi, June 17, 2009) from the politics for good, to “remove Berisha from power.” Rama calls the “removing of Berisha” as the “beginning of the new era.” By emphasizing in every speech of the left coalition parties “let’s remove Berisha” they gave the message to the audience that they do not approve of any achievement done by him, despite the facts that tell it differently.

## **4. Conclusions**

The rhetorical perspective conveyed to the voters during the election was choosing between the past and the future. As the “Change” is important for both campaigns, the change is a rhetorical choice; the “change” is in the worldviews and values, not any more on economic and social reformation. This election marked a “new rhetoric” arising from the economic and social changes taking place in Albania for the last eighteen years. This new rhetoric is the seal of the end of the transition, not the economic and social changes alone. The rhetorical choice was to choose the “change” already underway presented by democrats, or to start a “new change” presented by socialists. The voters chose to continue with the “change” already started and democrats won this election.

A new era started for rhetoric in Albania along with the country’s fully democratic turn. The speeches were held in a festive environment, with each campaign having its own song with the respective motto embedded. The media coverage was 24/7 live during the campaign. Albanian’s vote on June 28, 2009, showed that they do not want to start all new, they want to keep going and to join the European Union. The right coalition won this parliamentary election.

The differences in the rhetorical perspectives between the two coalition leaders linked to the choice between “past” and “future”. The future on Berisha’s speeches was in the hands of the people, they were the driving force. On Berisha’s speeches the terms used more were; “freedom”, “future”, “democracy”, “prosperity”, “investment”, “construction”, “Europe”, “dream” and “life.” His rhetoric was focused on the future; he delivered the speeches being open and energetic throughout his campaign. The future in Rama’s speeches was in the hands of the leaders, the solutions would come from higher up which reminded Albanians of the communist era. Rama had



to construct something all new from what happened during the last eighteen years. By not identifying with the transition politics and calling for “return to identity” he was identified with aspects of communism. This made his claim for “new era” a little out of touch, or at best the message would be let’s start all new.

Also in Rama’s rhetoric there were a few contradictions, he wanted “new politics” and “new era” and at the same time he focused on “return to identity” and “former glory”. There were other themes and sub themes developed during the campaign. The terms most frequently used by Rama were “new politics”, “the power to the citizens”, “new identity”, “return to identity”, “together”, “former glory”. There was a significant change in the delivery of the speeches for Rama, while at the beginning of the campaign he delivered the speeches festively and contained at the same time, towards the end of the campaign his style became more aggressive using terms like “protect”, “chase”, “hit”, “punishment”, “reconstruction”, and “the people”.

Rama employed terminology of the communist time in his speeches. Anytime the regime arrested somebody for being in the opposition with the communist ideology, or when a judge would pronounce the court’s decision, the motto “in the name of the people” was stated, meaning “power to the people”. Rama’s speeches resembled this terminology in his use of the slogan “power to the citizens,” which simply replaces the term “people” with “citizens.” The motto “power to the citizens” reminded Albanians of that time, and did not work well to persuade the voters. Another contradiction was that the left coalition claimed to protect the people and fight poverty, while the candidates chosen to run were among the richest businessmen in the country. The solution to the problems for the left camp would come from higher up, a centralized operation from up to down, which did contradict with ‘the power to the citizens’ claiming during speeches.

Suggestion for future research would be to focus more on the transition rhetoric, as defined for the purpose of this study. Studies based on how these social changes shape the new rhetoric, and how rhetoric shapes and influences these changes during the transition. One suggestion for future studies would be to consider the culture factor in the study of rhetoric. How the culture influences the effect of rhetoric in different countries and within a country, and how the communication strategies are adapted based on culture.

The limitations of this study, at least the ones I am aware of would be two. First, there are other historical and social aspects, not mentioned in this paper, which would provide a deeper explanation of the themes, and the rhetorical choices as well. Second, despite my genuine effort there is a possibility of being biased.

The contribution of this study is that, it is rhetoric that marks the beginning and/or the end of an era. Economic and social changes alone are not enough to mark that transition. The rhetoric of this summer’s election in Albania proved just that.

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