Comparison Of Electoral Politics Essay, Research Paper

Comparing the electoral politics of most Western and Eastern European countries is like comparing night and day. While most of Western European countries have a strong political system, thriving economy, and a developed government?most Eastern European countries have just started this idea of a democratic nation. Most governments are corrupt and the political officials are not very trustworthy. The economy is also struggling and there is unrest with the people. This transition from communism is giving Eastern Europe a lot of problems. This is the case when comparing the Republic of Ireland and the Republic of Albania. Republic of Ireland The Republic of Ireland has been recognized as an independent state since 1921 resulting from a powerful revolutionary movement led by the Sinn Fein (?Ourselves Alone?), currently the political arm of the Provisional Irish Republican Army. Once very influential in the Irish government the original Sinn Fein was formed in 1905 to promote Irish independence and led the movement that helped produce a free Irish State. Presently their political aim remains unchanged-?the right of the Irish people as a whole to attain national self-determination?(Local Ireland). Wanting to achieve a United Ireland ?by whatever means necessary? (Local Ireland). Government The Irish government is a parliamentary system with a bicameral legislature. The Executive branch consists of The chief of state, President Mary McAleese (Fianna Fail) was elected in 1997 to a seven year term and is basically a figure-head with no executive powers. The Head of the Government is the Prime Minister Bertie Ahern (Fianna Fail) nominated by the House of Representatives and appointed by the president. The president appoints the Cabinet with previous nomination by the Prime Minister and approval of the House of Representatives. In elections the president is elected by popular vote. The president also appoints the Supreme Court judges on the advice of the government. The Irish Parliament (Oireachtas) consists of the Senate (Seanad Eireann) and the House of Representatives (Dail Eireann). The Senate consists of 60 seats, 49 elected by the universities and from candidates put forward by five vocational panels, while the other 11 are nominated by the Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern. The members serve five-year terms. The House of Representatives has 166 seats elected by direct popular vote and in most counties a proportional representation system calls the single transferable vote system (STV) is used. This complicated system is very rare and is only used in the small Mediterrianian Island of Malta. This system is closely related to the multimember-district system where the voters actually rank their representatives for each district. Each county has from four to seven representatives based on population. The members of the House also serve five-year terms. The Senate is the upper house of parliament and the power of the Senate extends only to delaying for a period of 90 days a bill is passed by the House. The House, like our House of Representatives in the US, proposes the bills. Election The results of the last House election show that the Fianna Fail party received 77 out of the 166 seats. Not a majority. The Irish government achieves majority by forming party coalitions. The other major parties receiving votes were the Fine Gael (54), Labour Party (17), Progressive Democrats (4), Democratic Left (4), Greens (2), Sinn Fein (1), Socialist Party (1), and other independents received 6 votes (Political Handbook 449). In the Senate, the Fianna Fail holds 29 of the 60 seats. Political Parties The Fianna Fail (?Solders of Destiny?) has become the largest and most successful party that Ireland has ever had. It is currently in power in a rainbow coalition with the Progressive Democrats and a number of Independent candidates. Securing peace and unity and independence of Ireland has always taken prominence on the political agenda, along with providing maximum employment, promoting a spirit of enterprise, maintaining Ireland?s neutrality and retaining membership in the European Union (Local Ireland). The party has produced five Prime Ministers being elected a total of 14 times. The Progressive Democrats were formed in 1985 when a group of politicians left Fianna Fail. Their leader, Mary Harney, was the first female to be elected as a political party leader in Ireland. ?They view themselves as modern, liberal, and European in their outlook?, (Local Ireland). They strongly favor the European Union and economic integration within the EU. This coalition is on the center right of the political spectrum. The other governmental coalition consists of the Finn Gael (?Family of the Irish?), the Labour Party, and the Democratic Left Party. This coalition has not been in control since the 1994 elections. The Finn Gael advocates friendly relations, and ultimate union with Northern Ireland, financial encouragement of industry, promotion of foreign investment, and full development of agriculture. This party was in charge until their party leader and Prime Minister at the time, John Bruton was involved in a scandal involving relations that the wealthy part-owner of Ireland?s largest department store chain made a series of large payments to politicians and political parties between 1986 and 1996 that was not properly reported by the recipients for tax purposes (Political Handbook 447). Therefore the Prime Minister was forced to call for early elections that eventually gave power to the Fianna Fail. The Labour Party advocates far-reaching social security and medical services, better working conditions, protection of the home market, and the ultimate union of Northern Ireland. Reformers of the Workers Party launched the Democratic Left Party and they are committed to democratic socialism, rather than a Marxist-Leninism approach as the Workers Party is. Political Issues The major issues in the last election had to deal with the people losing trust in the Fine Gael and gaining more trust in the Fianna Fail due to the scandals of their previous Prime Minister. In re to the Northern Ireland issue the Prime Minister and English Prime Minister, Tony Blair agreed on the need for an IRA cease-fire and opened up Talks with the Sinn Fein for a peace agreement. With the cease-fire continuing to hold, Ahern announced that Ireland was ready to drop its claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland. This was an option that was intensely debated in the 1998 ?all-party? talks in early 1998(Political Handbook 447) Republic of Albania The Republic of Albania is one of the smallest and least advanced of European nation. In 1912 Albania gained independence from the Ottoman Empire but was in a state of confusion until 1928 when a monarchy was proclaimed. They would remain under communist rule and total isolation until 199o when then president Alia proclaimed an end to their policy of total isolation. They would then declare a number of major political reforms such as an end to the ban on religious activity, liberalization of the penal code, increases autonomy in enterprise decision making, and the right to passports to any Albanian to under the age of six. Following widespread demonstrations the Democratic Party of Albania was established. This was the first opposition party since communist rule. Government The Albanian government is a presidential system with a unicameral legislature. The Executive branch consists of The chief of state, President of the Republic Rexhep Meidani (Socialist Party of Albania) was elected in 1997 to a five year term elected by the Peoples Assembly due to the resignation of former Democratic Party president Sali Berisha. The president holds all of the executive power. The president appoints its Prime Minister and approves the cabinet, which is nominated by the Prime Minister. The President however, is not elected by the people but elected by the People?s Assembly. The Head of the Government is the Prime Minister Fatos Nano (Socialist Party of Albania) appointed by the president serving the same time as the current president such as our vice-president would. The Albanian Legislature consists of the People?s Assembly (Kuvendi Popullor). The People?s Assembly consists of 155 seats, 115 of who are chosen by single member district plurality in two-stage balloting. The remaining 40 members are selected by simple proportional representation from party lists on the basis of first-round strength, assuming a minimum vote share of 3 percent (National Threshold). Senior members of the former Communist Party, or members of parliament before May 1991, are not permitted to stand in national or local elections until 2002. Election The results of the last Assembly election show that the Socialist Party of Albania received 101 out of the 166 seats, which is a strong majority. The government of Albania also forms opposition coalitions. There is no coalition formed with the major party but there are two small coalitions formed to stop the Socialists. This is how the voting turned out, with the parties of each coalition in parenthesis. Union for Democracy coalition, 31(Democratic Party of Albania, 28; Movement of Legality Party, 2; Party of National Unity, 1); United Albanian Right coalition, 4(National Front Party, 3; Albanian Republican Party, 1). The other parties that received votes are not part of a coalition but usually side with the Socialists. Social Democratic Party of Albania, 9; Human Rights Union Party, 4; Democratic Alliance of Albania, 2; and the Albanian Agrarian Party, 1. Political Parties The Socialist Party is generally a reformist party just trying to restore order in a government that has lost control. This party is headed by the president and Prime Minster and is located on the left of the political spectrum. It has socialist?s views but wants to keep the idea of a democratic nation. The Union for Democracy consists of four parties as well as the small Christian Democratic Party. The lead party is the Democratic Party of Albania. Once in control of the government, it collapsed due to riots and the resignation of Sali Berisha the former president. This coalition seeks protection against human rights, a free market economy, and improved relations with neighboring states. The Movement of Legality Party, Party of National Unity, and Social Democratic Union are the other parties in the coalition. The United Albanian Right is a coalition of Right Wing parties with not much influence on the government. These parties are anti-Communist. Political Issues The Communist party won Albania’s first multi-party elections in March 1991 and changed its name to the Socialist Party. But its authority faded as Albania grappled with the birth pains of a market economy and political pluralism. Dozens were killed in food riots during the run-up to the second free elections in March 1992. The Democratic Party won a landslide victory over the ex-communists. Sali Berisha, became Albania’s first non-communist president in April 1992. International observers criticized the conduct of a general election in May 1996, boycotted by most of the opposition parties who accused the Democrats of rigging the vote. Berisha’s party won 122 seats in the 140-member parliament. The opposition refused to take up the handful of seats it was given in the chamber. Near-lawlessness prevailed in Southern Albania after riots erupted in February and March 1997 when thousands lost their life savings in the collapse of pyramid investment schemes. More than 1,500 people were killed in the violence, which also brought down the Democratic Party government. In fresh general elections held on June 29, 1997, described by international observers as acceptable if far from perfect, the Socialist Party and allies gained majority. On July 24, the new parliament lifted a five-month curfew in the country and elected Socialist Party secretary-general Rexhep Mejdani as successor to President Berisha who had resigned to take up a seat as an opposition deputy for his Democratic Party. Mejdani installed Socialist Party chairman Fatos Nano as Prime Minister, following the resignation of Bashkim Fino who had led an interim 10-party government charged with conducting the June elections. Prime Minister Nano pledged to move quickly to restore order, to compensate Albanians who lost their savings in the pyramid investment schemes, and to set up a new constitution that guaranteed human rights, the independence of the judiciary and respect for democratic legislation. Albania has been governed by a package of constitutional laws since 1993 after it got rid of its communist constitution of 1974. A draft constitution presented by the Democrats in a referendum in 1994 was rejected by the Albanians because it was seen as giving Berisha unlimited powers. Nano has promised a second referendum on a new constitution in 2000. (Political Handbook, 10) The international community pledged to help Albania rebuild itself, but warned the Socialist-led coalition government must restore public order, improve human rights and adopt sound economic policies. On August 14, 1996 the UN Security Council registered the end of a peacekeeping mission it authorized for Albania on March 28, 1997. The 10-nation force of 7,000, led by Italy and authorized but not organized by the United Nations, was sent to Albania in April after near-anarchy swept the nation. Other problems face this nation such as the protection of the rights of ethnic Albanians outside of the borders; the Albanian majority in Kosovo seeks independence from Serbia, and Albanians in Macedonia claim discrimination in education. Comparison The nations of Ireland and Albania are like night and day. The Irish political system is well developed and in order, their economy is thriving as a part of the European Union and their political goals are small. In Albania, however, there is almost no order what so ever. They are yet to have a set of laws and a constitution to follow. The politics in Eastern Europe are focused on things such as restoring order in the government, stoping increased violence and total anarchy. Eastern Europe seems to be way behind Western Europe in electoral politics. This is because they are just starting the idea of a democratic nation while Western Europe has been established for a number of years now. The future does look bright however if the EU and the UN keep helping these nations along to establish a democracy.