Modernization of Albanian Totalitarian Nature – Pattern's Survey of Modernity in Ideology and Practice of the Stalinist State in Albania

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Abstract

This aim of this study is to identify the elements of Modernity of nature, ideology, and the practice of Albanian state during the period 1944-1991. The central hypothesis in the author's view is the identification the Albanian Stalinist System as an alternative form of modernization. In this perspective, the cause of existence, the nature and the historical experience of the Albanian Stalinist System are products of formative processes of European Modernity. The methods used by the author is by putting the phenomena in a comparative context in both international and historical, therefore to emphasize the commonalities and particularities between the Albanian Stalinist State and European Modern States and also a comparison between Albanian Stalinist state and early state forms in Albania. This comparative view is extended in different aspects like state's ideology, it's form and practices. This study initiates with a fundamental concept of modernity and its basic features, proceeds with the identification of Stalinism as modernizing/progressive model and concludes with revealing the modernizing elements of the Albanian Stalinist regime.

Keywords: modernity; modern state; illuminism; totalitarian state; Stalinism; international and historical comparative context

1. Origin Denied

The critical treatment of the Albanian totalitarian experience as a result and as an alternative of European modernity is seemingly an antinomy. This is because usually in the Albanian public discourse of the post-communist years – but in fact, earlier in the grounds of anti-communist opposition – Stalinist political model was published as an antithesis to those economic and political elements typical of modern European civilization, where the emphasis was put on the free market and capitalist method of production, on the welfare of social materialism based on high levels of consumption, as well as on legal guarantees with inspiration secure liberal, compared to previous historical periods, individual and collective freedom of thought and social criticism against Government. Implementation in Albania of the Soviet model, under this view, represents not only an outrage to the historical traditions of the Albanian society, but also a deviation from the path of his "natural" policy towards the Western European model (Plasari, 1992, 2007; Pipa, 2007). Thus this period was anathemed as an accidental political experience, but unfortunate, that a whole nation "was taken hostage" by a narrow minority of extremists to impose the will of the majority were helped by the historical circumstances and the international ideological manipulation on population consisting of an illiterate peasant majority and the extreme use of state violence on the population (Pipa, 2007; Zavalani, 1998). Others identified the origin of Albanian Stalinism to certain elements of political culture deeply rooted in the historical consciousness of the Albanians. Under this view, Stalinism Albanian origin was identified to "eastern" cultural heritage, specifically: to Ottoman-Islamic and Byzantine- Orthodox (Plasari, 1992). Others identified the origin of Albanian Stalinism to certain political and cultural elements. Throughout this powerful spirit prevailed euro centrist, or "Orientalist", discourse that can be clearly identified to the Albanian intellectual elite starting from the second half of the 19th century (Sulstarova, 2007).

The core of this intellectual tradition lies in the identification of a cultural character typical of the western European civilization in the genesis of Albanian national character, often endangered by negative eastern cultural influences, whether Ottoman-Islamic influences or Slavic-Communist.

Everything in the Albanian culture that does not contain a purely "western" character is, according to this trend of thought, not only foreign but also harmful. The origin of historical disasters to the nation is exactly this "eastern infection". Consequently, the Stalinist regime in Albania does not represent anything other than historical accident of the queue. It represented the dominance of "eastern spirit" over "the Western one".

The primary aim of the study is just proving the inaccuracy of this perception. First place it should be noted that all of this intellectual tradition is entirely built upon an euro centrist conception extremely outdated (Dalanty, 2006), and

second: because in the case of totalitarian historical experience, the European in general and Albania in particular, have no means of dealing with an "Eastern phenomenon", but rather, as we shall treat below, with a pure creature of ideological-political history of Western Europe. Under the author's view the implementation of Albania's Stalinist model was the direct result of European modernity and presents *an alternative and extreme form of modernization*. Arguments that will appear below trying to prove that the Albanian totalitarian experience is the direct product of historical processes that constitute the major European modernity, namely: as Soviet totalitarianism, Albanian totalitarianism can be considered as the direct successor of *the European revolutionary tradition*, more namely the Enlightenment, through Jacobinism and Marxism.

2. Stalinist Modernization

In the case of the Stalinist model, we are dealing with a highly complex political phenomenon, and in recent decades scholars have debated extensively about the nature, causes and its consequences (Kotkin, 1995; Hoffmann, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2000; McCauly, 2008). The first group of researchers on Stalinism: the so called *Totalitarian School* will constitute the dominant paradigm during the Cold War era, but even the most famous among numerous explanations about the origin and nature of Stalinism. Born in an era of significant political confrontation this interpretation model was thus greatly influenced by ideological rivalry between the two antagonistic systems of the bipolar world. This theory, in essence, considered the Stalinist model as the rule of a powerful and ideocratic state on an atomized society brutalized and indoctrinated into passivity by party-state structures. Primary cause of this "Red Leviathan" was - according to these researchers - the Marxist ideology of which Stalinism was a natural and logic stage (Friedrich, Brzezinski, 1956). As we mentioned earlier in this study, a portion of the earliest critics (Pipa, 2007; Zavalani, 1998) of the Albanian Stalinist phenomenon addressed under the optics of totalitarian theory, emphasizing extra-social elements as state violence, ideological manipulation and international circumstances. Albanian Stalinism under this light was nothing but a kind of foreign occupation, achieved not by an outside attack, but through the imposition of an organized retail from the inside (Plasari, Malltezi, 1996; Skëndi, 1948; Feraj, 2006).

With the softening of the rivalry between the blocks during the years 60 and 70, the views of the totalitarian model came under criticism from a large group of researchers. A good part of these scholars - who would be classified under the so-called *revisionist school* - focused primarily on the basic premise criticism of totalitarian paradigm: that of a totally passive society under state control. For revisionist scholars society was an important actor in the Stalinist system and the nature of society was a determining factor for some of the central features of the Stalinist model. These researchers considered the Bolshevik Revolution as a logical historical process, not as a fatal deviation - thus indirectly recognizing to the communist states a certain degree of legitimacy - while considering the Stalinist experience as a diversion, caused primarily by the backward rural nature, patriarchal and authoritarian structured societies on which this model was implemented (Lewin, 1985). In Albania such a view was affirmed essentially following the collapse of the Stalinist regime, and as we said above: stressing the importance of "eastern" cultural heritage in Albanian society as the main cause of Albanian Stalinism (Misha, 1997; Sulstarova, 2007). Both currents of explaining the origin of Albanian Stalinist regime join at a certain point: Albanian Stalinism is regarded as a diversion to the Western European model, the model that represented the ideal of the majority of Albanian intellectuals from 19-th century on.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the ideological rivalry the attention of Western researchers moved to the Stalinist model sets between contemporary European political models. If interest before the studies focused on the peculiarities already transferred this interest to similarities. On the other hand in social theory the academic concept of "modernity" takes a pluralistic character, losing the original euro centrist nature. Researchers now generally accept that the Stalinist model represents an alternative model to modernity (Dalanty, 2006). The third group of researchers on the Stalinist phenomenon - which constitute the so-called: *Post-revisionist school* - will have as a central premise the origin research of Stalinist model, not within the societies in which extended the authority of this model, but in the international context of the modern era, highlighting the similarities in ideology and practice among different models (Hoffman, 2003). And this because some of the central policies of the Stalinist system are similar to policies undertaken by western European countries through the XX century. Common ideological origins of these state policies identified in the Enlightenment thought which constitute the essence, or the ideological backbone of the modern era (Kotkin, 1995; Hoffman, 2003). The aim of this study is exactly to consider the Albanian Stalinist experience under the optics of post-revisionist school, so research sets between Albanian Stalinist policies in economy, culture and society, policy similar to Western European countries.

According to David Hoffmann: the core of these policies was the re-conceptualization of populations as social entities that can be studied and managed. New methods of social research, particularly statistical studies of population,

gave policy makers the opportunity to re categorize societies that they have under management, was created both the opportunity to act through the state apparatus to give societies a certain shape or to transform them fundamentally (Hoffman, 2011). This trend of thought: that of social processes being considered as scientifically understood and modified, will occupy many scholars and policy makers at the turn of the 19 century and will be the genesis of the policy of so-called "social welfare" across the European continent. Namely, under a comparative view, we see that the Stalinist model shared this feature with ideologically diverse states of Western Europe (Hoffmann, 2003; Hoffmann, Kotsonis, 2000). These state welfare programs, if by one side contained material benefits for the masses, such as health care and economic, in turn represented interventions of normative nature aimed at establishing a rational and productive order in the lives of individuals (Hofmann, 2011). The Soviet case has the particular that these practices joined a radical change of the population agenda, an agenda which was applied widely using coercive state apparatus to be had in many cases of serious human consequences. Under this prism Stalinist model can be regarded as an extreme form of welfare State (Kotkin, 1995). Even the most dramatic element of the Stalinist model: police surveillance and control on society can be seen as the product of this worldview care and progressive action of state policies on society. State police practice in Stalinism aims not only to hit the social elements or certain segments that are identified as potential opponents of the system, but deeper still, seen as an efficient means to eradicate certain social phenomena that were seen as inconsistent with the ultimate goal, in order rational Enlightenment, where the State with his policies intended to lead society. Despite the extreme nature of the Soviet surveillance model, these policies have elements in common with the practices of 20 century western states, especially during periods of war (Holquist, 1997; Weiner, 2011; Ree van, 2002). David Hoffmann, et al. (2000) has summarized four aspects of Soviet Socialism which may find similar parallels in European modernity: a) The spread of bureaucracy and state control, b) Efforts to manage and mobilize the population, c) Efforts to impose a rational order and categorization of the population, d) The rise of mass politics (Hoffmann, Kotsonis, 2000). Below we will try to argue that these are the features of modernity Stalinist Albania.

According to Stephen Kotkin (1995): treatment of Stalinism as an extreme form of modern progressive socialist tradition forces us to research the roots of Stalinism to the origin of the idea of progress: the European Enlightenment, which in its essence was a broad intellectual debate that began with the emergence out the exact sciences in the seventeenth century's. Application of research methods in studying the nature of corporate research was focused towards a rational social order, uncorrupted by the arbitrary authority of absolute states. Kotkin identifies exactly one of the most prominent exponents of the Enlightenment, the Marquis de Condorcet as the ideator of the implementation of the Newtonian model in search of a natural social order. According to Condorcet science will 'light up the road "for the transformation of societies to natural and rational order, as well as tools to achieve this order (Kotkin, 1995). Science promised not only an immediate, but above all a constant improvement of the human condition. Historical event that gave this worldview great strength and showed exactly the vehicle requested by Condorcet, was, according to Kotkin: the French Revolution. The revolution offered the model of how state policies can be used to give societies a certain shape, or also to remake them based on the principles of "science". Not in vain Marxist authoritarian and backward countries of Eastern Europe would turn the French Revolution into a political cult, mainly due to the similarity between political feudal systems that prevailed in these countries until 1945 and the French *ancien régime*. Marxism can thus be seen as modeling the application of the principles of the Enlightenment more courageous social policy and the miraculous power of the modern state machinery experiment by the French Revolution (Kotkin, 1995; Hoffmann, 2011). Erik Van Ree, a Dutch scholar, in his study on Josef Stalin's political ideas will come to the conclusion that Soviet ideological model represents a direct legacy of European Enlightenment thought (Ree van, 2002). Van Ree (Ibid) will highlight in particular two ideological principles inherited from Stalinism from the Jacobin tradition, namely: *the principle of revolutionary dictatorship of the minority and revolutionary patriotism*. The first principle implies the necessity of a revolutionary elite dictatorship which was supposed to lead society towards a rational and unitary social order (Ibid). While the second principle meant that the nation could survive and develop only through a revolutionary change (Ibid). As we shall argue below: these two principles will have a decisive impact on the ideology of the Albanian pre-communist progressive elite, as well as on the official ideology of the Stalinist system in Albania.

3. Modern Elements of the Albanian Stalinism

The Albanian communist regime is still a very complex topic. The complexity of the phenomenon is aggravated by the extreme poverty of genuine scientific studies on it. The aim of this study is not in any way to give answer to basic questions about the phenomenon, but identification of some of its specific features and their interpretation under the prism of contemporary theories.

The author's standpoint is that in many Albanian Stalinist practices we are dealing with typical modernizing policies

of the Stalinist model, and these practices are similar to Western European state policies. These *practices* can be divided into four basic aspects, borrowing the scheme of David Hoffmann: the establishment and consolidation of state bureaucratic control upon society; the management and mobilization of the population; the imposition of a rational and scientific order; the introduction of broad masses in the political process. Regarding the *ideological aspect*, Albanian Stalinism based its legitimacy precisely on the claim of establishing a rational social order and on order based on the principles of the European enlightenment, as in the case of the Soviet model. Two of the main pillars of the official ideology were: *the principle of revolutionary dictatorship of the minority* expressed in the language of the official discourse under the Leninist terminology of the so called: "necessity of Party leadership"; and also the principle *revolutionary patriotism*, who emphasized radical revolutionary transformation in all areas as the only means for survival and development of the Albanian nation. Albanian communist regime in the core of his political discourse has always claimed being a modernizing force, a progressive vanguard that would raise their society toward a more just political and social order (Rezolucioni i Kongresit të Parë të Partisë Komuniste Shqiptare, 1948) - and vice versa: the communist regime de-legitimized the former order by qualifying it as backward one. The regime's claim for social justice was closely connected with the idea of Progress (Hupchick, 2002; Koka, 1985; Zholi, 1990). Just as in the case of Soviet socialism the way towards progress was ideologically predetermined. A typical element of Stalinist dogmatism lies precisely in the Albanian regime's extreme observation of these ideological principles. Communities between the Albanian and soviet modernization drive appear more clearly if we look at the context of the four main social areas where modernization processes surfaced. In political realm the Albanian state had clear Stalinist features (Rakowska-Harmstone, 1982; Pipa, 2007) in legitimacy, competences, in the institutional aspect and in the policies implemented. Ideologically the Albanian "dictatorship of the proletariat" carried the historic mission of radically transforming the old society to the new Marxist order. And on behalf of this mission Stalinist state apparatus will penetrate deep into society. In the economic field (Vjetari Statistikor i Shqipërisë, 1991) similarities with the Stalinist model are also numerous: from total state control and planning of social economy and to those specific features that can be considered as typical Stalinist as collectivization in agriculture and the intensive and rapid drive toward industrialization. As in the case of the Stalinist model, the Albanian regime will turn industrialization into the core mission of in its economic efforts, and this not only to create that majority proletarian class which in theory was the hegemonic power holder, but, as in the case of Stalinism, to create an industrial base for social development, a feature typical of the modern economy. Creating an industrial facility was also an important political target (Hupchick, 2002). It was thought that if the Albanian state would create an industrial economic structure it will be liberated from foreign economic dependency – economic dependency that in Marxist logic meant political dependency (Uçi, 1974). The social impact of the regime might also be characterized as Stalinist (Ibid.) Marxist ideology presupposes that changes in economic structure must necessarily be reflected in the social structure. In that logic, the overthrow of the old social hierarchies constitutes a primary task. The violent overthrow of the old hierarchies had a clear modernizing aim (Ibid.). The old elite, whether be it feudal or bourgeoisie was regarded as an obstacle in the path of development. State social policies to foster the society constitute one of the clearest examples of the modernizing character of the Albanian Stalinist regime (Rezolucioni i Kongresit të Parë të Partisë Komuniste Shqiptare, 1948; Vjetari Statistikor i Shqipërisë, 1991) Massive state economic investments in industry caused a shift of population from rural to urban areas (Vjetari Statistikor i Shqipërisë, 1991). The cultural features of the Albanian Stalinist model of modernization are also evident (Hupchick, 2002; Rezolucioni i Kongresit të Parë të Partisë Komuniste Shqiptare, 1948). A new society (Uçi, 1974) needed a new culture, and vice versa, a new culture was seen as a necessary condition of ideological reformation that totalitarian system wanted to impose on population. The creation of a secular state centered, and ideologically selected, educational system (Vjetari Statistikor i Shqipërisë, 1991; Kondo, 1985) - a central feature of modernity - served to install to the new generation of the population the rational principles of European enlightenment, under the vestige of the soviet model (Rezolucioni i Kongresit të Parë të Partisë Komuniste Shqiptare, Tiranë, 1948).

The Albanian regime used multiple policies for managing and mobilizing the population. Mobilization campaigns were basically two main goals: economic and military. By the economic mobilization planning regime aimed at realizing more and more ambitious economic targets using the human energy to compensate shortages in capital and technology (Instituti i Studimeve Marksiste-Leniniste pranë KQ të PPSH, 1968). In the military field mobilization intended to create a military force of popular character noted that, despite minimal economic and technological opportunities of Albania, will serve as a guarantee in front of the border states generally hostile and technologically and economically more developed (Hoxha, 1975). To create a workforce and military conscientious and efficient population the Albanian Stalinist system will intervene massively in the society with the intend to discipline, to foster loyalty, to promote public health measures and physical preparation. As Hoffmann stated these policies are similar to those employed by the Western countries throughout the 20-th Century (Hoffmann, Kotsonis, 2000). The imposition of a rational order through the state educational system was a prerequisite not only for economic and military mobilization but also for the ideological penetration of the

system into the political culture of the masses. In this regard can be noted that only under the Stalinist system was enabled, for the first time in the history of Albania, the extensive involvement of the population in the political process (Constitution of People's Socialist Republic of Albania, 1976).

Albanian Stalinist regime officially declared the right of every citizen, regardless of gender or social status to formally participate in the decision-making process. Public debates on problems of political nature, although commanded and controlled by the party apparatus, took place in fabrics or in agricultural areas, in military barracks, prisons and forced labor camps. Regardless of educational level, status or gender, all citizens were required political awareness and reflection. Of course, this process remained under the control of party-state apparatus and any opposition to the Stalinist nature of the system was unthinkable, but nevertheless stimulating wider participation of the population in policy, Albanian Stalinism turned the Albanian political system from a closed system elite to a popular system, albeit controlled and monitored centrally. For the first time the population began to think of politics as something that emanated from the will of them, thus shaping in the Albanian political culture a modern conception of citizenship. Even continuous campaigns of terror and intensive police control, distinct features in Albanian Stalinist experience, can be classified, similar to those of the Soviet model, in the wake of those aforementioned state policies aimed at strengthening the discipline and loyalty of the subjects in the process of the implementation of the economic and military objectives from the center. Officially Albanian Stalinist penal policy clearly affirmed it's - to use a term coined by the American sovietologist Peter Holquist (Weiner, 2003) - "prophylactic" nature: the cleansing of those segments of society and social phenomena that were incompatible with the new order programmed by the party-state apparatus (Omari, 1977). The excesses and brutality of the class struggle in the Albanian case is, under the author's view, a product of the deep sense of uncertainty and paranoia that characterizes the leadership of the Labor Party of Albania in times of economic failing and complete international isolation. In the ideological realm the two principles of Western revolutionary tradition, originating from the Jacobin ideology: the principle of revolutionary dictatorship of the minority and revolutionary patriotism are easily identifiable in official discourse of Albanian Stalinism. The first principle states under the Leninist formula of the "revolutionary vanguard" or "unique and leading role of the party". The "leading role" of the PLA during the Stalinist Albanian whole experience was not ever in doubt, even during the 60s when the regime launched intensive populist campaigns in imitation of the Chinese Maoist model. The Albanian Communist Party considered herself as the embodiment of the enlightened ideals of progressive thinkers who have shaped, 19-20 century, the foundations of the Albanian national identity, as a major historical force that carried a messianic mission to save the masses from oppression and centuries-old backwardness (Instituti i Studimeve Marksiste-Leniniste pranë KQ të PPSH, 1968; Uçi, Xholi, 1974). Scattered into every cell of society and state apparatus, the members of the party, the revolutionary elite, had as a primary mission to provide a personal example, if ideologically if practicable, and to control the vast amount of population in their efforts towards the realization of the center's objectives. Revolutionary patriotism is another important principle in the discourse of Albanian regime. The principle, propagated under the term of "socialist patriotism", meant essentially the bond between the people and the communist conception of the nation and his socialist development (Uçi, 1974). The official discourse acknowledged a deeper patriotism in the working class compared to the bourgeoisie because the bourgeois class always puts its economic interests over national ones (Ibid). Only through the realization of the proletarian revolution, and the consequent establishment of the proletarian state, the interests of the working class will amalgamate with national interests. The deepening of the revolution constitutes under this perspective a patriotic act. In the official propaganda the establishment of the Stalinist system represented a revival of Albania from the vulnerable situation where pre-communist elites had thrown it, a refuge from the aggressive intentions of neighboring states and a guarantee for survival and social development of the nation (Koka, 1985; Instituti i Studimeve Marksiste-Leniniste pranë KQ të PPSH, 1968). As we mentioned above: Erik Van Ree identifies these principles as clear evidence of the continuities between Stalinist ideology and Western revolutionary tradition, of Jacobin and Blanquist origin. Accepting as correct the thesis of the Dutch researcher, we would add that Albanian Stalinism inherited these two principles - categorized under the lexicon of dialectical materialism - also from the progressive intellectual tradition from pre-communist Albania. Albanian National Renaissance thinkers had set as a primary duty to themselves to change the medieval mentality and customs of the population and to submit it to the national affirmation and welfare (Frashëri, 2006). This stream of thought continued until the 30-ies, years characterized by an intense intellectual debate on the need and nature of a national modernization drive. In the face of resistance from conservative forces and the apathy of a population overwhelmingly illiterate, most of these thinkers favored radical reforms, although only a small minority preferred the Marxist path towards Enlightenment rational Western model. The triumph of the Stalinist model in Albania, under the author's view, was made possible by the international conjuncture between the years 1920-40, where the Soviet modernization alternative seemed more attractive than Western classical liberalism that in those years was going through an economic and political crisis. Many young Albanian intellectuals saw Stalinism as a more efficient way to modernity,

especially for a backward country with limited resources as in the case of Albania. Now, 20 years after the collapse of Albania's Stalinist system, we can state that Soviet modernization model failed to implement most of the expectations of his supporters during the second half of last century. The radical reforms the system imposed on society had dramatic consequences, human, cultural and economic. However the impact of Albanian Stalinist regime could be regarded as a modernizer character, despite its extreme nature and dogmatic core. This regime was the product of the impact of Western revolutionary tradition on local elites and of the international scenario between during and after the Second World War.

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