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## **A SHORT REVIEW OF THE ALBANIAN POLITICAL CULTURE**

**Muhamet KOLA\***

**Abstract:** After the declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, Albania faced the big problem of the formation of a state with relevant institutions that would guarantee the freedoms and rights of individuals. This paper, through socio-historical analysis, aims to analyze the relationship of Albanians with the political power after the declaration of independence. This period is characterized by numerous political changes experiencing revolutions, kingship and, communism. Albania has always been under foreign rule and has not been able to develop a political individuality in the direction of state leadership. The present study was designed to test the hypothesis that this continuation of the deprivation of the individuals of the political sphere by the high political power elite is the main cause of the lack of development of a political individual that understands the duties and responsibilities pertaining to lawmakers.

**Keywords:** Albania, Political Power, Revolution, Kingdom, Communism.

### **ARNAVUTLUK’UN SİYASİ KÜLTÜRÜNE KISA BİR BAKIŞ**

**Öz:** Arnavutluk 1912’de Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndan bağımsızlığı ilanından sonra bireylerin özgürlük ve haklarını garanti altına alan bir devleti oluşturmak için büyük bir sorunla karşı karşıydı. Bu makale, sosyo-tarihsel analiz yoluyla, Arnavutların bağımsızlık ilanından sonraki ilişkilerini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu dönem, devrimleri, krallığı ve komünizmi deneyimleyen birçok siyasi değişim ile karakterize edilir. Arnavutluk her zaman yabancı bir yönetime tabi tutuldu ve devlet liderliği yönünde politik bir bireysellik geliştiremedi. Mevcut çalışma, bireylerin siyasi hayata

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katılımının yüksek politik elit tarafından sürekli olarak engellenmesinin; kendi hukuki görev ve sorumluluklarının bilincinde olan bir politik öznenin gelişmemesinin temel sebebi olduğu hipotezinin soruşturulması amacıyla tasarlanmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Arnavutluk, Siyasal İktidar, Devrim, Krallık, Komünizm.

## Introduction

The nation-state creation phase found Albania unprepared to be a state, because Albania had not experienced any form of political power before the Ottoman Empire. After the declaration of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, Albanians found themselves unprepared and with a total lack of experience on how state institutions should be formed. This lack of expertise was due to the fact that, for a country to exist as a state there should be common history, language and culture. And it was history the part where Albania had many shortages, although the other two qualities had their problems. The story was too vague with heroes that could raise national consciousness, despite the efforts of intellectuals to find such heroes.

It was precisely this lack of a state-building experience that prevented Albanians from forming a state with relevant institutions. This also led to the concentration of power in the hands of some individuals through nationalist revolutions or pure propaganda. So, this perception of power as private property created some sorts of tribal elites that excluded the formation of political individuals outside their clan group. At the same time, this thing produced a lack of political knowledge of individuals outside the tribal elites or clan groups. That is why these individuals outside the tribal groups could not understand the duties they had toward the state and the obligations that the state had to them.

This is what the main thesis of this paper seeks to study, the link between the lack of an example of a form of power in Albanian history and the acquisition of power through violence and revolution by privatizing it and not allowing any individual outside the clan to be part of power, which brought about the lack of political knowledge of individuals in society.

The study begins with the theoretical explanation of the concept of revolution explained by sociologist Raymond Aron and its dark consequences, which are articulated by German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf. The study then examines the way Albania has experienced political power transitions, experiencing extreme forms of the power of holding power for only a few decades, as the kingdom, republic and communism, formed through revolutionaries.

Finally, the study ends with some conclusions which are reached deductively from the philosophical and sociological perspective of revolutions in theory and practically in Albania, and their effects.

## 1. Political Revolution

In the everyday language of sociology we call revolution the immediate and violent replacement of one power by another<sup>1</sup>. This is the definition that sociologist Raymond Aron gives us about the revolution, explaining below that we should not deal so much with the explanation of this concept as his concept serves us only to understand some phenomena and to look clearly in our opinion<sup>2</sup>. Thus, acknowledging Aron's suggestion, there is a need to go into more concrete and necessary explanations for the revolution, which, as Aron shows, is due to the accumulation of negative energy on the masses of society towards their political leaders who from the other side show some arrogance to the problems of this society, forgetting the central reason why he is at the helm of government.

The French Revolution of 1789 brought drastic changes in the economic and political aspect of the development of the society, but what interests us are the political consequences that it brought, that is, the moment after the revolution. In his famous book 'The Modern Social Conflict' Ralf Dahrendorf does the analysis of the consequences of the revolution, where he says:

"It seems as if everything is being reversed suddenly. What until yesterday was today becomes law of the country, while yesterday's law today becomes treason. Before those who are most enthusiastic, to them, it has been unfolded unprecedented opportunities, 'the power of the people', the melting of the ice, utopia. Many are overwhelmed by a state of rejoicing. It seems as there is disappeared not only the abuses of the old regime, but also the restrictions imposed by society itself. Meanwhile, the honeymoon does not last long. Normality begins to rush back into people's lives. After all, they can't continue daily with demonstrations, and even less with the clashes of a civil war. Individual circumstances are reflected in social conditions. Riots do not serve the development of the economy and the lack of political stability raises the feeling of fear. Suddenly the mood changes face"<sup>3</sup>.

The gloomy panorama that Dahrendorf gives clearly shows the dangerous character of the revolution because very quickly, slogans promising for

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Aron, **Opiumi i Intelektualëve**, Tiranë, Dituria, 2005, p. 51

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 52

<sup>3</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, **Konflikti shoqëror modern**, Tiranë, Dituria, 1997, p. 14

better days are rejected in function of the legitimacy of a new regime of terror<sup>4</sup>.

The revolution itself is a danger even higher than the current political situation, since the coming into power of a new political grouping causes in society a kind of non-fulfillment of all expectations and dreams that the revolution had originally promised or to pass in the other extreme, the revolutions have been the forerunner of the most terrifying totalitarian regimes that mankind's history may have experienced. Here we can mention the triumph of fascist and national socialist ideologies, exercising the "legitimized" power through violence and terror.

Suggesting the revolution as the people's opportunity to put an end to its sufferings, we see that there is some kind of uncertainty about the coming into power of certain groups that are most interested in the revolution. This is precisely the "great trap" that comes to society in the case of revolutions, modifying the emotions of their daily lives by glorifying the revolutionary life, where only the interests of a very small group of this society are hidden.

## **2. Political power**

Before I go through the study and analysis of the achievement of power in Albania, it is necessary first to realize the explanation of some notions, such as state, power, and politics. Of course, the state as a political formation has formed relatively late. The state exists when in a given territory there is a ruling political apparatus whose power is supported by a legal system and the ability to use force to enforce its policies<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, one of these qualities to have a state is the forceful implementation of its policies, which points to a very important and delicate matter such as the fact that the state is the only perpetrator of violence, giving him a daunting power.

Politics is about the means through which power is used to influence the goals and content of government activity<sup>6</sup>. So the question arises, who owns political power? The answer is very simple: Governments are specialists 'in power; they are the source of directives that affect many aspects of our daily lives<sup>7</sup>.

### **2.1. Political Power in Albania before Independence**

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 15

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Giddens, **Sociologjia**, (Teuta Starova, Kastriot Myftiu), Tiranë, Çabej, 2007, p. 298

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 299

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 211

“Albanians are neither good citizens nor good workers; many may be good rulers and some good robbers”<sup>8</sup>, says Eqerem Bey Vlora. He here refers to the words of a representative of the Ottoman Empire, thus leading us to a link to the logic of power and the way of running it. This early claim raises questions when it comes to assess the Albanian elites and their real purpose of coming to power.

If we go a bit back in history and look at the writings of the intellectuals of the 1930s, we realize that this way of thinking is not born out of nothing, but it has been developed over time being transformed into a social norm. This is what we see in the words of Mid'hat Frashëri: Another mentality is that the Albanians not being taught in political life, I mean by not having until now a state, government, and independence, has not understood the burden, duties and the responsibilities arising from an independent life. So, keeping up to date in foreign domination has taught our host nation and hoping for foreigners; has not left the political individuality to develop and the personal initiative has not found time to get strengthened<sup>9</sup>. This political individuality still does not find the right terrain to develop, an element that is indispensable for the development of the Albanian political thought. This shows some passivity of the Albanians, which we can see at some moments where Mid'hat Frashëri says: Even so, for our bad fortune we see today coffee shops and shelves full of dust, hi and mud, stuffed with lazy people that go twenty-four hours of the day with politics opening their mouth waiting for a piece of the European cake<sup>10</sup>.

## 2.2. Political power in the post-independence period

With the Declaration of Independence on November 28, 1912, Albania conducted a fundamentally political 'revolution'; as if we come to see the other sides of social, economic or cultural life we will see that they have not changed at all. The socio-economic norms of the feudal character remained the same, thus feeling the need for another 'revolution' in these areas. Thus, the first and only spark that sought to promote Western ideas about politics, but which was left unchecked, was the moment when Fan Noli's government came to power through a 'revolution'. In order to have a clearer idea of what really happened, Tajar Zavalani comes to our aid, who expresses to the Noli government in this way:

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<sup>8</sup> Eqerem bej Vlora: **Kujtime 1885-1925**, Shtëpia e librit & Komunikimit, Tiranë, 2003, p. 123

<sup>9</sup> Uran Butka, **Kthimi i Mid'hat Frashërit**, Tiranë, Pheonix, CEU & Shtëpia e Librit, 1997, p. 170

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 170

Initially aroused great hopes, but rarely in history, the hopes of any people were betrayed in such a complete way. It soon became apparent that the opposition was a bunch of politicians acting together for opposing some things and not wanting to implement a constructive program of administrative, economic and social reforms. Thus, the first and only Albanian politician's first attempt to 'revolutionize' social and economic aspects is closed down<sup>11</sup>. High political ideals, remained just such, to be later installed in collective forgetfulness.

In an interview with 'Drini' magazine, prominent historian Kristo Frasheri speaks of Noli's government, saying: It is known that Fan Noli's government because of the short time it remained in power failed to implement its reforms. While the goal of the movement was the qualitative change of agricultural land ownership and while the non-implementation of reform took place outside the will of the government, the movement did not lose its revolutionary character. Noli's government could be called a failed government in the field of the implementation of the revolution, but with the task it took over, it remained the revolutionary government until the end<sup>12</sup>.

It can also be said that from a nationalist point of view Noli seemed to be more related to Belgrade than we see when 'Nolism tried to stop the participation of Albanians from Kosovo to the political life of Albania, which according to this imagination, was not considered to be in their homeland.<sup>13</sup>

Another major political stream in the post-independence period is zogism, with Ahmet Zogu as a leader. 'Zogism represents a system of political views and practices that justifies the emergence of non-national politics in Albanian political thought. Obviously superior to the principles of Real politics, the principles of taking, preserving and strengthening political power.<sup>14</sup> "Thus, Feraj suggests that Zog's government did not have profoundly patriotic intentions, saying this modestly, as in fact, the sole purpose of this government was to achieve power and to hold it, like all other governments before or after. Zogu's justification for 'diplomatic' relations with neighboring states was because Albania was considered by him as a small country and lacking the potential to be a determining factor for its fate. Of course, this was another way his agreement with the

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<sup>11</sup> Tajar Zavalani, **Histori e Shqipnisë**, p. 279-280

<sup>12</sup> Revista Drini, **Kristo Frasheri mbi Qeverinë e Nolit**, Tirana, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Hysamedin Feraj, **Skicë e mendimit politik Shqiptar**, Logos-A, 2010, p. 286

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 258

neighbors, who sought political favors for the preservation of power and the status quo.

### 3. Political power in communism

If until now we saw political parties or political party leaders who did not defend the interests of ethnic Albania, an extraordinary connoisseur of the Albanian mentality emerges, who changes political tactics. He is Enver Hoxha, who comes to power with a national-liberation thesis, promising to the people a revolution that would take them away the daily suffering. But what is later revealed is the fact that all these manifestations will attribute or delegate power to a single man, Communist Party leader Enver Hoxha.

The way he played with power, his colleagues, his diplomatic relations with foreigners, and the servility he used with them, putting against each other his political opponents, was the entire trick he was making, only so he could become the ruler of the country. Rulers should let others take anti-populist decisions and should take on themselves everything that would add glory to them<sup>15</sup>. He never forgot this Machiavellian lesson, and he always used it with the sole purpose of coming to power.

However, this does not mean that he found no support in the masses, but exactly the opposite happened; he became an idol, a social model whose destiny everyone wanted to have. Helped by the political vacuum of that time, by the fact that the Communists took power without help from abroad, and by the charismatic leadership of Hoxha, he managed to be in charge of the state. Despite all these efforts to be in charge, the Communists knew that the condition for stabilizing their government and drafting policies in their own interest was the legitimacy of their power. In this way, the protection of the communist government, including the use of methods of compulsion to the rivals of power, became acceptable as necessary and justified in the eyes of the public<sup>16</sup>.

According to the Communist conception, people are perceived as sub-species, which carry in itself an admirable rationality, crystallized in the "folk wisdom" found in the simple man. The class consciousness cultivated by the propaganda and vigilance of the Party aims to protect this 'clarity' from foreign pollutions that try to disturb and distort the way of the people. The people are one and the party is one. Both together, alone, can send Albania to the paradise coast of communism<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, **Princi, Politika dhe Kodi Moral**, Tiranë, Uegen, 2003, p. 91

<sup>16</sup> Fatos Tarifa, **Kërkimi i Legjitimitetit dhe Venitja e Utopisë**, Tiranë, UET Press, 2008, p. 48-49

<sup>17</sup> Ergys Mërtiri, **Shenja**, Logos-A, Shkup, Nr 16, Gusht 2012, p. 43



On the other hand, shrouded in livelihoods, the Albanian Hobbesian sees power as evidence and level of knowledge, evidence of mastery of theory, science, and ideology. And not only from Enver Hoxha, but from every person that had power. After all, is it not the status achieved a testimony of cognitive ability?! And is it not entirely consistent with the Hobbesian doctrine, according to which, what is true and untrue (science), what religion is and what is superstitious (theology), what is good and what is bad (ethics), what is beautiful and ugly (aesthetic) ... the sovereign puts it<sup>18</sup>?" The 'normality' of this situation certainly brought the tragic consequences of only an individual in charge of power, because he was the same person, who developed any form or way to secure his key position as head of the state.

## Conclusion

After an analysis of all forms of political power experienced in Albania after its independence, the study reached some conclusions that relate to the hypotheses raised from the beginning. And one of the conclusions that this study modestly achieved is the analysis of the relationship of Albanians with power after independence. The study showed that this political power had come through revolutions, kingdom, and the concentration of power in one hand as was the case of the communist system.

Another conclusion is related to the lack of a historical precedent of the formation of any Albanian political entity, which created the necessary space for the paternalization of the power by a sole individual or only by a group that never allowed the individuals outside those groups to participate in the political life of Albania. This perception of political power as private property made these political individuals to remain out of the political decisions that were made for them by an individual, group, or family.

This phenomenon of exclusion of individuals from the decisions and political life of the country was due to the underlying lack of a culture of state formation earlier in history. Thus, the persistent deprivation of individuals to be part of the political power has come as a result of the consistent foreign invasions, which have not allowed the formation of a culture on state-building policies or its institutions.

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