

ALBANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN RELATION TO OTHER ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

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Abstract

In the process of nation-building in Eastern Europe in general and in particular in the territories that were under Ottoman occupation in the Balkans, the formation of the Albanian national identity is the most atypical and perhaps the most complicated case. This is due to the fact that the Albanians as a nation, after the Ottoman conquest, faced a situation of confrontation with some very strong identities or sub-identities, such as religious identity, provincial identity, dialect-linguistic identities, etc. Particularly problematic is the fact that Albanians as a population and as a nation even today belong to at least three major religious traditions: Catholicism, Islam and Orthodoxy. The clash with these religious sub-identities in the face of the emphasis on ethnicity and language as the projected foundation of the Albanian nation by the intellectuals of the Albanian national Renaissance, but also of the state power of independent Albania, presents the object of study and the importance of this scientific research.

Keywords: Albanian, national identity, religious identities, Eastern Europe.

JEL Classification: H83, K30

1. Introduction

This paper examines a series of configurations made of our national identity in the three historical periods that have been considered, including comparative elements. The contribution of this study is that it seeks to uncover the “discursive battles” that have been waged to build our national identity in the three aforementioned historical periods.

The discursive instruments that have been found by these periods show how our national entity has become with a focus on Europe, and certainly other powers that have exerted their influence on the construct of our identity both when we were oriented towards it and when we rejected it. Here we find many different ways of reading about historical events, even contradictory in function of the political conjuncture of the day. We as Albanians have risen sometimes in favor and sometimes against, sometimes oriented and sometimes disoriented, sometimes as agreement and sometimes as rejection, but it has nevertheless fulfilled the components of its identity in relation to them during the three historical periods.

The three events described above are important on the history of Albania, and the chart above shows that national identity is subject to change, sometimes literalized through interpretations, but many think it is a glue placed under the sole of economic and political interests. My empirical findings are not satisfactory to arrive at exhaustive definitions in the discursive rise of identity, but it is nonetheless a way of approaching, to construct identity.

2. Interpretation of history

The history of a nation is an event, but it is also an interpretation according to the perception that the ruling elites of a country have had the domain of political discourse. These elites begin the creation of identity inspired by the muse of historical myths, a memory of the past associated with identifying figures and symbols.

History plays a key role in the construction of national identity, however from various disagreements it is not so easy to shape this identity. In this study we saw the fact that important historical events are read and interpreted in different ways. It is therefore important to understand that history is not an objective process, occurring within a dimension of time and space and traveling as irrefutable evidence, but it has come down to us in contradictory dichotomies and interpretations, and each of us, living our time, tend to see the past from our point of view and from the conditions we

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live in today. The way the perception is constructed on historical events and myths has had a purpose and has been called to serve a certain political interest.

The poetic Orientalism of the Albanian Renaissance brought an epic "Albania of the past" from wars and heroism, abundant in wealth and prosperity, tribal in virtues and values, completely foreign to the Asian race, oriental culture, or Anatolian rule. According to this, the Albanians were self-sufficient, without seeking to find someone else to identify with themselves. Certainly, important political developments were taking place in the Turkish Balkans at this time. In later discourses: Albania, "a rocky place in the Southeast of the Balkans etc", toponymic identification with a little cultural connotation. In a way, geographical identification with the Balkans was enough. Here, too, self-sufficiency was enough, without the need to align with larger unions. It was the time of a political perversion for our people because some new influences came, without the old oriental influences being undone. The discourse comes: "Orient or Occident".

This is where the identification with a larger union begins, and specifically with the West. The political orientation of the newly created Albanian state was in the same direction. In the second half of the 20th century, the history of Albania takes on a completely different meaning. A doctrinal state is formed and our historical identity is built entirely within the framework of doctrine. Western Europe is rejected in the political and cultural sense, and we sought to identify with the great ideological unions belonging to the Communist East. Our whole history was not made to be identified in the nationalist way, but in the internationalist way. This story with the chapters of the past and the present was called to help the curve of changes in the line of official policy of Enver Hoxha. The works of Kadare that I brought to this research are illustrative examples that try to prove this fact. After the 90s, Albania takes a political development that completely opposes the official line of yesterday's policy, oriented towards the West. Protagonism began again to be identified with the West, and even some protagonists like Kadare and Plasari researched to find the roots of our identity in early Western Christianity. The graph of these assertions, from the National Renaissance to the present day, proves empirically that the construction of historical meaning, such classifications and categorizations have been called upon to come to the aid of a certain political purpose. These important historical periods and the way they are interpreted have brought about the constitution of our national identity.

3. Our national identity in relation to other ethnicities and religion

Proponents of the theory of pure ethnic Albanian identity neglect or ignore important components that have influenced the definition of our national identity. Any nation, no matter how powerful, even with imperial status, has not had enough to make its own ethnic identity. The most powerful emperors in Europe like England, France, or Italy, though emperors, have constructed their historical identity as colonizers along with the colonies. Many scholars who have elaborated on the formation of the nation from conception to the modern form it has today, have described identity as a product that benefits from a process of taking and giving between ethnicities that come in contact with each other, whether they agree or reject the other. From the quotations of many of the authors we referred to above, Britain's national identity has been significantly influenced by Britain's contact with the outside world.

Scholars, often citing Britain as an example, having been emperor for a long time and over large areas, think that other countries (colonies) have served as mediums where Britishism has manifested its "British Self", but that it has also been nurtured by colonies, to approximate behaviors, differences, and attitudes with Others, colonies. Seeley, in one of his books, "The Expansion of England" says: "The history of England is not just in England, but in America and Asia."² And in the logic of these findings, our ethnicity has no way of becoming alone outside of these foreign "pollutions" coming from abroad. As lustful as it may be to present our self-constructed identity, internally conceived in an ethno-cultural virginity, made only within the contours of our ethno-

² Seeley John Robert, *The expansion of England*, 1906 edition by Velhagen & Klasing, Bielefeld und Leipzig.

linguistic entity, the following assertions convincingly overthrow the romantic doctrines of fanatical nationalisms. We, as a nation, have not had enough of ourselves to define our national identity, but we have intertwined this identity in multiple relations with Others, whether these Others are friendly, unfriendly or hostile. From the political point of view we had to be accommodated within the same normative system of the emperor, but also from the social point of view we were asked to approximate the behaviors and attitudes with him, and religiously we were taught to practice those rites insofar as we "agreed" with the religion of invaders. During the Renaissance, the dominant discourse to shape our identity as Albanians arose as a rejection of everything Turkish and Ottoman. We as Albanians became like a projection opposite to the Other who was Turkish, Asian, backward. This was the general motto of the Renaissance discourse, and that was enough, to look at the evil, the Other, the Turk, and thus build ourselves. This discourse served a programmatic purpose of the time, but it did not tell about all those sets of connections that had existed between the two nations for centuries. "Turkey-fication" in a period of 500 years, in one way or another dominated the organization of Albanian life. Numerous customs coming from Turkey guided the conduct of the daily life of Albanians. Sharia had "occupied" many provinces of the Kanun, Islam had greatly weakened Christianity in a large Albanian area. To create our historical identity outside of these events is, as Rexhep Qose says: "neglected reality," or some others who call this "violated reality". Islam as a civilization has crossed the entire Balkans from a cultural point of view. Even the most orthodox countries in the Balkans must not ignore this reality. Islam as a civilization was imposed on the world and as far as it reached no one escaped easily. Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis, who comes from the Orthodox world, must not ignore the fact that the culture of his country is at the crossroads of strong currents that he does not know if they will succeed.

"New forces are rising from the East, as well new forces are rising from the West, and Greece is always between these two impulses that collide and becomes more and more the place of vortices. Greece, between them, the geographical and spiritual crossroad of the world, has the task of reconciling these two great attackers again, achieving their synthesis. Will it be able to? Holy fortune, terribly bitter."

The communist period guides the discourse of identity making towards self-sufficiency. "The Albanian people have paved the way of history with a sword in their hands." This political discourse of Enver Hoxha proved that our people throughout history have only rejected the foreigner. This was more or less the motto that guided the official discourse of the time. This political-patriotic discourse of Enver Hoxha was philologically justified by Ismail Kadare: "In short, the Albanian heroes of the northern epic cycle are neither knights of the king, nor of religion. They are eternal warriors of a kind of ancient, Albanian-Balkan order, of the Order of the Kreshniks, gathered around a Round Table, as Lambreci says, of the Mountains."³

Again, Kadare with his erudition emphasized the fact that Albanians had enough of themselves to be kept alone in history: "Constantine was believed to be a general opponent. He was against laws, institutions, decrees, courts, prisons and the police. He said: all these are obligatory laws that fall on one from the outside, therefore they must disappear and be replaced by other, internal laws to be in the man himself. „What he thought was something tangible, something the seed of which he had recently found here and there scattered in the life of the Arbëresh that he said should be developed, driven to rise in the system."⁴

According to Kadare, Constantine carried on a historic mission with the aim of elevating the life of the Arber according to his system, rejecting any kind of system of thought and belief that had been established up to that time and that came from outside. The "raw material" of this system would be scattered here and there in the life of the Arbëresh. Seen in the context of the time, making our Arbëresh identity in this way, was simply a political exercise for the interests of the day.

In a way, the writer philologically justified the delirium of the dictator's political greatness. The creation of our ethnic identity in this line, disrupted the whole continuity that an ethnic identity is historically formed, even undoing the very essence of our true identity. This logic is poor in

³ I. Kadare, *Autobiography of the people, in verses*, "Onufri 2002", third edition, p.119.

⁴ I. Kadare, "Doruntine", Literary Work No.8, Publishing House "8th of November 1981".

historical and unconvincing arguments, because Kadare presents the life of the Arber as surpassing and triumphing over the crusades of the greatest civilizations of the time, just because it becomes and flourishes in the space of our mountains and hills. According to him, we alone have raised our past beyond these influences. In the same way, the "Constantine" of our days, Enver Hoxha, with the iron sword of ideology, as a martyr of truth would lead to the guillotine of history the heads of the two greatest empires of the time: American imperialism and Soviet social imperialism.

From what we said above, the delusion of self-sufficiency forces you to ignore and erase historical events and realities that may have played a decisive role in the rise of ethnic nationalism. Especially when some nations face the test where their country becomes the arena of the clash of great religions and civilizations. The delusional euphoria of making our historical identity that way, only retorts history by stripping it of important parts of its continuity. Even less serious studies in this field must not set aside religion, let alone exclude it altogether, and even more so when religion takes the emotional realm and becomes the moral guide in human behavior.

Following the claims, I made above, the following references I believe will sufficiently illustrate my assertions. The Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis, quoted above, testifies that the history of Greece was formed under the vortex of those political and cultural currents that have pervaded that country. He wonders if he will save anything in this arena of crusades.

And of course, the writer fears the power of religion, as religion is a unifying ideology that always aspires to flatten ethnic differences. Even in the most consolidated nations, religion is often used as a means to distinguish oneself from other ethnicities, and even as a reference to attest to enlightenment and superiority over others. To further conclude about the role that religion has played in determining national identity let us look at how some scholars have viewed the rivalry and historical conflicts of the greatest nations of Europe, France, England, Spain, Ireland.

Armitage emphasizes; "The British Empire, unlike the empires of our time like the Spanish monarchy as well as the empires of the past, is mainly Protestant, commercial, naval and free."⁵

Smith A.D. argues: "When England seceded from Rome, it also split as a state and nation from the Catholic realm." The British registered Protestantism as a way to strengthen its antithesis when "Protestant Britain" clashed with "Catholic France".⁶

Colley also echoes this thesis "it was a falsified invention first of all by the war. "The British defined themselves as Protestants fighting for survival against the world's largest Catholic power." They call themselves quite the opposite of the French, calling the latter that they really are: superstitious, militaristic, decadent and powerless."⁷

After the Napoleonic Wars, Catholic fear and intimidation shifted from France to Ireland. The negative connotations that the British addressed to the Irish, both fearful and despised, as well as armed revolution and social intoxication, intoxication and social pollution, came because of being a Catholic, "The Other". Haydon emphasized; "In the nineteenth century, English Protestants saw Irish Catholics as 'The Other', many failures and negative values among the Irish came because of the extension of the continental papacy."⁸

Again, it is seen that the distinction between the British and the French is made chiefly on religious characteristics. This distinction continues to highlight two key qualities of the Catholic elite. First, they nurture despotism and tyranny. Spanish personalities were portrayed as "cruel and arrogant" and the French nobleman as "filthy and depraved". Second, "Catholicism was built as a perversion of the Gospel, with groups of monks and nuns with clergy spreading a false doctrine full of grotesque elements completely against the doctrine of the Gospel".⁹

A pamphlet issued by the Association for the Preservation of the Values of Britishness and the Republic denounces French atrocities in Alexandria, Jaffa in Europe, stating that "the same

⁵ Ibid, p. 8.

⁶ Smith. A. D. (2006), *Set in the Silver Sea: English National Identity and European Integration*, P. 447

⁷ Colley, L. (1992) *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, p. 5

⁸ Haydon, C. (1998), *I love my King and my Country, but a Roman catholic I hate: anti-Catholicism, xenophobia and national identity in eighteenth-century England* in Claydon, T. and McBride, I. (eds.) *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland*, c. 1650-c.1850, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 34.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 34, 35.

soldiers, just like them, greedy and bloodthirsty" are ready to invade Britain "as ugly and hungry wolves."

In short, such negative images - from elites, the press and the people - helped create the fundamental difference between Britain and the continent. This relationship can be summarized in what Kumar expressed: "Protestant nations were free, independent, tolerant and prosperous, friendly, prosperous in trade and constitutional freedoms. "Catholic nations were plunged into despotism, dogma and poverty by power-hungry monarchs and clerical superstition."¹⁰

Throughout the twentieth century, this negative image of France remained. At the time of World War II, the images of a France that was subjected to and collapsed so quickly by German aggression, not only "strengthens those essential British national stereotypes of continental corruption"¹¹, but are also harsh and incompatible, because that they are obsessed with the web of self-belief and national myths.

Green pointed out how the values of the Elizabethan era in mercantilism made England well known enough to be a bulwark against papal austerity and a harbinger of trade benefits and freedom. By the end of the nineteenth century challenges from the USA, Germany, Russia, Japan would charge Protestantism as a defining feature of British national identity.¹²

With so much relation that I presented in this research, it is not that I underestimate geographical boundaries, or any component that in one way or another, have influenced the definition of our ethnic identity, but when an entity passes the test of religion, many things of emotional life and its morals, rooted in religion, and to disregard religion, means to leave without meaning and explanation the main behavior of an ethnic entity.

Eventually, our historical identity will come more complete when studies in this field, will dig to discover the relations with other ethnic communities, as well as to monitor the whole path that this people has traversed under the constraints of the unifying ideology of religions.

4. Conclusions

This study added one more effort to contribute to building our national identity, in another way, with Europe in focus. Referring to the statements of many authors cited in this study, they, with their research on issues of national identity report to us that the European Union is a political project that pursues more economic and material interests than spiritual aspirations for cultural unification.

The steps towards enlargement and deepening in the European project do not prove that the creation of a public consciousness with European sensitivity is proceeding at the same pace. Even the data presented by these authors prove that today's Europe does not have enough sentiments, symbols and common historical memory, it lacks political mythology to emotionally unify the Political Project it aspires to.

European nationalisms are long-term historical investments, and the European Union fails to produce a unifying ideology to bridge these ethnic differences. According to many scholars to date, it is not even seen that the European Union has a project to internally "erode" the sensibilities and cultural sentiment of European nationalisms that hinder the integration process.

In this study I have not dealt with the fact how much and how global culture has internally weakened the solid stance on ethnic identity that has been held so far on national sentiments. These effects of Globalization are its benefits and are not discussed here. I am satisfied with how this European political project manages and modifies the sentimental memory of ethnic entities within that community that aims at the project.

Seen in this light, the efforts of that part of the Albanian political and intellectual elite to present themselves only as Europeans, are more evidence of the inferiority complex, than findings and data that refer to the facts and events of Albanian history. I also adhere to the thesis that building the identity of a nation is also a political imperative, but not by deleting events and periods that have

¹⁰ Kumar, K., *The Making of English National Identity*, 2003, p. 164.

¹¹ Wallace, W., *Foreign Policy and National Identity in the United Kingdom*, „International Affairs”, 1991, 67, 1, pp. 65-80 (at 72).

¹² Judd, D. *Britain: Land Beyond Hope and Glory?* „History Today”, 49: 4, pp. 18-24 (at 20) (1999).

played a dominant role in defining this identity.

In the period of the National Renaissance we "fled from the East"¹³ to get "political asylum" in the West and tried to build our identity "locked in asylum" only as a rejection of everything oriental. In the communist period, as we saw above, we closed ourselves to produce our national identity only within the ideological incubator, outside the East and the West, and today, the official version of the discourse, tries to build national identity only within the European political project. This way of making our historical identity does not take into account the sociological component in the formation of ethnic entities. By rejecting everything on the one hand and admiringly embracing everything on the other, it does nothing but severely damage the identity of the sociological construct.

As we have seen, sociological theories conceive of the formation of the nation as a sociological process, in a way, a society is sociologized in order to nationalize it. Tribal society, in addition to blood ties, was also a sociological relationship between members of the tribe. Among them were a series of connections that sought to meet the needs of everyday life, and among them was the sense of tribal belonging. This also gave the tribe social cohesion.

And this process has expanded its dimensions in time and space until it has entered the era of nation-state formation. Thus, the Albanian people, indeed, has not been nationalized under the Eastern Empires, but has previously been sociologized in endless relations with them, in order to preserve ethnic cohesion through this sociologization. Within the framework of the Turkish Empire for nearly 500 years it has established political coexistence and has had Islam as a guide to conduct throughout private and public life.

This way of making our identity scares me also for the fact that it tries to make our identity within closed political systems and limited cultural notions. As a consequence, identity is deprived of the essence that gives identity the ability to change and be fulfilled in continuous evolution conditioned by historical factors.

Those approaches that I referred to in this research, certainly influenced by authors who have elaborated a lot on these issues, I give my conclusion that our "cheers" only as Europeans, darken our view to see the barriers that hinder us today and to build our national identity in the new geopolitical context that has been created; in the whole Albanian-speaking space. We are not interested in what we try in every way to seek to find traces and early traces that connect our history with European civilization, but to find ways and forms to make our national identity in the entire space inhabited by Albanians. What are some of the barriers that prevent us today from unifying our national identity?

Language: It is a barrier that must be overcome. It seems easy, but when you take concrete initiatives, serious difficulties arise.

In thirty years of democracy, all initiatives to make a New Congress for the Albanian language have failed. As it is known, the Albanian language has been established on the basis of the Tosk Albanian dialect and in the change of the new context, there is a need for a negotiating assembly.

Geography: The unification of the two states, is an initiative from above through bureaucratic procedures, will raise a problem that today seems simply as a geographical notion, but tomorrow will become a difficult barrier. The need will arise to unify the capital. Who will it be: Tirana or Prishtina? It seems very easy for today, but tomorrow it gets complicated when it comes to making concessions. Historical memory: It is a moral and national imperative to constitute a common historical memory. To some extent, old historical mythology makes no contradictions.

Skanderbeg is the most conciliatory figure to date. It only arouses some controversy when the emblem of Christianity is placed on his helmet. However, in the era of secularism, although the feelings of religion fade and do not influence our national identity so badly, Skenderbeu (Gjergj Kastrioti) is a figure that should be carefully preserved within ethnic notions and not misused, because he is a symbol. Not only for the fact that he holds our early pride, but because he is a negotiable symbol even if the geopolitical context changes.

Prizren connection: Not so glorious as easy to use. Its historical meaning can be easily negotiated conjunctively. With the Prizren League we can make our national identity creative, flexible

¹³ E. Sulstarova. *Escape from the East*, "Dudaj" 2006, p. 93.

and easily adaptable to new historical situations that seek to provoke us.

Declaration of Independence: We entered the modern political history of Albania with heroes and traitors. To make the name of Prime Minister Ismail Qemali a national figure, we will treacherously shatter the figure of the interior minister in his government, Esat Toptani. This is, in a way, a "jewelry story." In the "guesthouse of the nation" these ornaments hang high to decorate and are not touched. Only that sometimes, the curiosity of a "plan-breaking" child of a researcher goes to touch him, still remains a study. There is no public market for him.

However, this kind of story is kept alive by searching and it will surely be found that the opposite, the evil, does not do the enemy. This political mentality was not only Albanian, it became a global ideology for the entire twentieth century. The enemy would be sought, found, or invented, to unify practices against him. Thus, the Albanian history of this period was a product of this ideology. Ismail Qemali will stay safe on that front until the "populist artillery" marks the betrayals of Esat Toptan. When this political mentality collapses, of course Ismail Qemali has nothing to do alone on that front. This is how the romantic nation is generally made. This kind of nation does not stand without the fortress of glory.

The beginnings of the construction of the first Albanian state bring to the royal front, the monarch Ahmet Zogu. The interests of the great powers leave more than half of the nation outside the borders of the Albanian state. Ahmet Zogu did not enjoy the glory of the monarch, as he was without history as a monarch and king with a fragmented nation. So even this was one more reason why the identity of our nation could not be equated with the monarch as had happened in the western monarchies. And for his misfortune, and of the identity of our nation-state later on his personality weigh the most negative epithets. Even for this reason Ahmet Zogu remains as a historical value, but not a unifying power to identify with it.

The so-called National Liberation War, the most mediated event by political rhetoric for nearly 50 years, raised to the limits of intangible glory with the legendary commander Enver Hoxha. Enver Hoxha, even his closest collaborators are deprived of the sense of legend and glory, and after he bled himself, they declared him dictator. Thus, Enver Hoxha escaped from the pantheon of unifying symbols. And the National Liberation War remains but has descended to the limits of tangible glory. A negligible part within Albania denounces this war as instruments for expansion and Slavic political legitimacy in the non-Slavic Balkans, mainly in the Albanian-speaking area.

They denounce this war as compromised from the beginning by ethnic influence with a Slavic spirit, not by class ideology, so I naturally degrade according to them in the civil war and November 29 as a day that celebrates this war and the beginning of an unprecedented dictatorship in history of Albania, and one of the bloodiest in the history of mankind. Whereas in the other Albanian-speaking space, this day is identified with the celebration of the Serbian, Montenegrin and Macedonian reconquests with the blessing of the official Tirana of that time. Thus, this event, November 29, and Enver Hoxha will be taught to pupils and students in schools, but it can hardly become a negotiable historical meaning.

The highlighting of these problems leads us to think that the formation of our collective identity is a new political and cultural test which will be achieved through the reconstruction of historical meanings in order to form a national consciousness in the new contexts.

This national consciousness is justified within the notions of the nation-state, and the Albanian nation-state must be done from above through bureaucratic institutions.

In this political-cultural enterprise, the question will always be present; How will we complete and negotiate our history in a way that is acceptable to all, not rejected by anyone in order to be called a common experience and memory for the entire Albanian-speaking space?

Where do we look for them and how can we find in those past those rituals and ceremonies of collective identification? In other words, it is required to find out where are more or less all Albanians participating in these common experiences and experiences? And naturally it will be required to know how much they will be welcomed and how much the Albanians will embrace and assimilate these historical-cultural heritages that will surely come through a negotiation process? Certainly, in the interpretations of such events and meanings, the general trend of European

developments, and the global capitalist spirit will influence.

In all the test of new developments that time brings, it will be shown and proven whether a "New Albanian Spirit" can be born to become somehow on its own, in the European environment and beyond? This "New Albanian Spirit" will encode some cultural messages to be standard and then to distribute them to all layers of our society. Again, I will seek to answer the question: Will it be possible to assimilate this cultural message standardized by the Albanian society that lives in a micro and macro social environment.

And most importantly, will there be inspiring power for the younger generation to take joint action to raise our national edifice at the political level? The questions I posed above are not easy to answer, but potentially stand, if the premises are aspired to reformulate national identity. And to do this, it became imperative of our time to set up a new political mythology that is simultaneously, distinctive and comprehensive, to vitalize national sentiment within the notions of secular philosophy. But political mythologies are a little difficult to set up in modern times because they carry with them many flaws. Political mythology only with the ornaments of the past, may sound somewhat archaic, and as such, do not ignite today those emotions that are so necessary to build a solid sense of collective identity. Perhaps just the epic of the Knights Templar, the figure of Skanderbeg, his helmet and sword, may not be enough to easily accommodate himself in the spirit of Western Democracies.

But is it possible to become a nation without myths and historical memory? Doesn't an "Imperial" myth need to be both identifying and guiding us today in modern times? Where do we find them and how can we produce such a myth? What if this myth were hostile and incompatible with our time, would not it be a waste of time and extravagance? This is the biggest dilemma for our national unity. Myths and symbols on the one hand are essential elements in constructing a collective, resonant and enduring cultural identity, on the other hand you can be left out because of them.

Therefore, for us it is a deep dilemma structuring our national identity. Not to hand over any of the myths and not to delete any bandages from our historical memory, which we have really identified with them until today, or to make some concessions to "patch" in a secular way our historical memory, which can be torn to pieces. piece once put in the foot of political and economic interests that are subject to rapid change?

To conclude: finally, according to the theories I elaborated in this research, I am convinced that generally the historical identity of an ethnic entity is composed of the interpretation of events. And in the logic of this, myths, symbols and historical figures are negotiated meanings, they are conventionalized through linguistic graphics, they are solidified as meanings through the dominant discourse to then become "consciousness" and "historical reality".

Such a perception of identity makes it easier to overcome the dilemmas you posed above and gives the inner capacity to formulate and reformulate identity in context. But always, this formulation and reformulation of identity, preferably aimed at fulfilling two dimensions of the nation; the emotional and the utilitarian dimension, that is, to fulfill an inner spiritual need, to say that I am different and at the same time to be able to set the limits of this change, so that in this planet where everyone populates you can more easily accommodate the fulfillment of material aspirations.

5. Future applications

To conclude, this study will be a valuable project and I hope it will make a contribution in other areas as well. It is also important the fact that despite the fact that this research project studies the case of ethnic Albanian identity with Europe in focus, due to the theoretical and methodological structure, it shows in a way the formation of ethnic identities in general. Discursive techniques have been used to verify and test those assertions and hypotheses on issues of identity and these techniques may become valid in the future. In this study, the Self/Other often means inferior and superior relations, and when such relations are constructed, the "Other" is easily demonized and excluded. This way of designing the "Other" as inferior, polarizes the social environment and inspires hostilities that lead to armed conflict.

So, it is a moral imperative to formulate identities in order to understand the "Other" who is

different from us, and to walk more easily toward him, or the "Other" to approach us confidentially.

This study provides ample data on how ethnic identities can be conflicted when they are contrasted with each other, when the image of the Other is charged with negative connotations, and this greatly influences political decision-making in building neighborhood policies and beyond.

This study seeks to complement the components of our national identity with Europe in focus, but certainly by referring to historical periods and our shared experiences that bring us closer than they divide us. We are required to negotiate our historical meanings in order to build a distinctive and inclusive identity.

Such a study thinks that it can make a modest contribution to the construction of Albania's foreign and security policies with other Balkan countries and with the European Union in particular.

At the national level, the discovery of unknown realities makes us learn more from our past in order to create among us as Albanians a basic constructivist premise, to better understand our identity of who We are, and surely, this understanding defines, shapes and influences the Albanian reality where we live and builds more stable premises in Albanian policymaking in relation to the regional and inter-regional environment.

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