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National Identity and the "Great Divide" Between Two Theories. Where Does the Albanian National Identity Take Part

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Abstract

According to Tom Nairn, the reason why the dispute between modernists and primordialists is not resolved is that it is irresolvable. This is because the two approaches place different emphases on different aspects of identity formation. Nairn described the debate between Anthony Smith and Ernest Gellner as a courteous difference of emphasis. Hence, the old presuppositions of modernism are losing their hold, but no one is quite sure what new ones will replace them. The great debate in nationalism studies is one between so-called "primordialists" and "modernists". Put simply, primordialists argue that the nation derives directly from a priori ethnic groups and is based on kinship ties and ancient heritage. For their part, modernists insist that the nation is an entirely novel form of identity and political organization, which owes nothing to ethnic heritage and everything to modernism, and the scope of the debate between them fails to offer a satisfactory account of the formation of national identity. In this context, we need to see where Albanian national identity fits. This paper seeks to show how it reacted to the waves of social transition. Where does it find itself, and what connects it with globalisation?

Keywords: national identity, great divide, albanian nationality

Introduction

Adam Lerner says: "... nation, moreover, exist in the minds of the people than in the real world ...". Starting from this statement, determining national identity is the consequence of various perceptions that different theories have of the nation. This paper seeks to examine whether sociological, anthropological, or communication theories have importance and value in explaining the reconstruction of Albanian

national identity in different contexts and different time periods. Also, the paper analyzes the relationship of the nation with different variables that create identity, such as ethnicity, customs, heritage (tribe, race, culture), symbols (blood, flag, anthem), language, regional, territorial, geographic, and religious (faith) elements, spiritual constitution, etc. So the question naturally arises: which theory (or theories) best explains the idea of building the Albanian national identity as a product of all these variables?

It is said that ethnicity and identity represent something more natural than biology, and nationalism represents a certain religion of modernity. So, here we proceed by stating that the theories of national identity worthy of analysis are primordialism, which explains the fundamental variables and essential forms of the nation, and modernism, as a theory that departs from fundamental elements to arrive at connections and contact with the new, leading to globalization and the fear of losing or alienating these values.

In its historical, social, and cultural development, Albanian society was organized into social groups such as family and tribe, as well as larger groupings based on ethnicity, religion, region, etc. In the eighteenth century, in Europe, we see the emergence of new concepts like the nation and its later derivatives, collective and national identity. Obviously, the latter arose from the human need to become involved in a more inclusive community, from which there also flowed a kind of attraction based on common elements. The need to join a group and to feel equality with others in this group, among Albanians, is as old as humanity itself, and national identity is a new phenomenon in this need, closely bound to the political and geographic dimension (nationalism).

When seeking to define the nation, researchers initially analyze the source and origin of the term. The first arguments state that *... has been the process of modernity that did not leave room dynastic and religious authorities and has forced a new form of legitimacy for the central authorities to things. (Giddens 2005: 1, 55-58).* Adam Smith says: "... *the nation is modern phenomenon, but it also stresses that nations have not come from nowhere, but pre-modern ethnicities have been transformed into national identities". (Smith 1998: 63).*

Returning to Adam Lerner, we can say that in his view, the nation can be seen as real and constructed, primordial and modern. Between them there is a "great divide", which offers an unsatisfactory way of understanding the reconstruction of national identity through the data provided by the two sides of the great divide. On the other hand, Lisa Malkki states that *"the nation Operates nor an absolute differentiator, ëhich Makes Certain collusions of people and territory Appear natural and others incommensurable". (Gilroy 1990: 114).*

Theoretical context on the theoretical aspects of national identity.

Among the efforts to find a definition of Albanian national identity, there is the question of to what extent the nation and national identity are modern phenomena, as time dictates. And the answer to solving this dilemma lies in the main division among the fundamental theories of the nation: primordialist, modernist, and ethno-symbolist. In the course of our work, we will analyze and come to the conclusion that the Albanian kombetër identity is less of both these theories.

1. ***Primordialist / essentialist*** - a group of theorists who follow in the footsteps of the German Romantics, Herder, Fihte, Kant, Schiller, and others, defending the idea that nations are essential, eternal entities and early forms of social groups, rather than the result of nationalist political campaigns or imposed top-down from already existing states. This proves that this theory was first literary and philosophical, and only later sociological and anthropological. Even in Albania, during the Renaissance, if not very political, at least literarily and culturally this movement was alive and active, with prominent figures such as the Frashëri brothers, Asdreni, Çajupi, Veqilharxhi, etc.

2. ***Modernists / constructivists*** - belonging to a dominant perspective that sees nations as modern phenomena and social structures. "Constructive social 'names entities and conventional notions created by people in a particular cultural and social context, which exist and operate because people believe that they exist, thanks to their agreement to behave as if they existed. There are different views among the proponents of this approach, but what is common is the belief that nations and nationalisms are modern and contemporary phenomena. They also believe that nations are formed by radical changes in modern times, which have made it impossible to continue the rule of the time, pushing people toward new forms of organization of social and political life. They explain how it was possible and necessary to imagine new forms of collective organization (nations), as the older ones became invalid under the influence of new economic, political, and social circumstances caused by modernity. (Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbsawn). According to them, the education system and communication technology make it possible to transfer the message of the elites to the population. In Albania, in this direction we have a group of authors and researchers after the 90s, who add that the introduction of new conceptions and perceptions was influenced by the opening of borders to the world beyond the Adriatic. This meant that in Albanian culture there is already talk of a mix of cultures and values, which essentially rebuild the idea of national identity in another state.

"Consequently loyalties closer instance, generated by interpersonal contact are replaced with links to wider scale impersonal and anonymous society, whose members never meet, nor have heard of the fellow most their "(Anderson, Gellner, Breuilly, Brass).

Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm defend the idea that nations are social constructs built on myths*. "History continuous and unbroken, it is often rely on fiction EEC half mythical figure, forged documents and symbols such as a flag and images, which are intended to arouse nationalistic feelings". (Hobsbawm 1983: 12).* It is difficult to test the authenticity of a common origin, which means that people have mixed backgrounds, and their ideas of a common past contain many imaginary elements that are more myth than fact.

Myth is distinctive to the idea of a purely ethnic origin of the Balkan peoples. Here, history is interpreted in a way that kontribuojëkrijimit symbols and myths of the nation, and historical events are subject to a selective process that aims to invent myths and symbols of national awareness and origin, paving the way for the recreation and reconstruction of their own national identity. *"The figure of our national hero Skanderbeg and his war against the Ottoman Empire cooperating with other nations of Ballkan, by some non-nationalist currents is used as an argument to link Albanians and Slavic Greek nationalism, while the Albanian nationalists used as proof of Albanian nationalist idea and practice. "(Ferraj 1999: 84).* Thus, the formation of the Albanian nation, as well as that of other Balkan peoples, took place during the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, while maintaining a rather deep embrace of the myths of history and tradition.

3. ***Etnosimbolist***- scholars of national identity theorists (within modernity), under which nations are formed by nationalist elites based on pre-modern ethnic ties or affiliations to a particular population, modern character broom agree with nationalism, but claim that cultures Ethnic early provide the foundation upon which today's national identities constructed. *"While nations may be modern, their origin is not so, but their traces can be found in previous ethnicities, nations are invented out of nothing, but the processes characteristic of modernity of transform these ethnicities in the nation, but without the destroy them". (Smith 1991: 76).*

In this context, the history of the construction of Albanian national identity is very significant.

The common past of the Albanian people with its neighbors and its role in establishing and maintaining national identity.

If we talk about the common past of the nation, we consider shared ethnic, cultural, and other affiliations. *"Often we face common belief, the moral superiority of the community, in the sense that cultural values are a central national community and are irreplaceable , something that can be traced back in time to the cultivation of previously myth of ethnic selection by pre-modern ethnic elites. "(Smith 2008: 111)*. According to Anthony Smith, *ethnicity is a group of people with cultural identity and common language.*

This is preserved where language is written. In this regard, it is worth highlighting the fact that the Albanian language, as an irrefutable part of our culture, was able to preserve a significant part of the collective consciousness, which is unquestionably national identity. Language, in whatever sense it is displayed, is tied to essential elements that have to do with the sense of ethnicity and the nation from which we come. For Albanians, ethnicity is one of the most important aspects of cultural or social identity and therefore even more important in the creation of national identity; hence, the term ethnicity is often used as a synonym for the nation. Ethnic, linguistic, and religious factors have had considerable influence on the formation of the Albanian nation, bearing the weight of a sense of national identity, but the extent of their contribution to the formation of national identity is not entirely clear.

The written Albanian language is crucial in the creation of our nation and the preservation of a sense of national identity, due to the sense of historical and cultural specificity that it evokes in the communities (Albanian or not) that read it. Different peoples define themselves in terms of common origin and language both in theory and in practice. Language and religion are considered the main factors in the definition of national belonging and in wars fought in the name of protecting this value as national identity. *"By resisting erosion of myths, which aimed to raise the notion of class in the highest category, the fact national and religious fact, find echo in the deepest part of the political consciousness of individuals .... Spiritual values of the features that make up the nation should not hide that was directed less noble passions, where the wild one is pride ". (Doja, 2009: 166).*

The process of recognizing national identity among Albanians is both inclusive and exclusionary because it involves people with common features and excludes others, defining the nation as distinct from neighboring nations; all nations have a common perception of the other (the opponent), something that Albanians have rarely lacked. The sense of national identity is displayed when a nation feels threatened by enemies perceived as such. The opponent is not always external, but has often come from within the nation. Kadare states that *"... The problem of understanding or misunderstanding Albanian continent is basically understanding or misunderstanding of themselves." (Kadare 2006: 49).* And whenever one speaks of an enemy of the Albanians, the *"source"* should first be seen from within.

The very context of neighborhood and the common past has left deep traces in the empowerment of Albanians regarding their nation and, consequently, their national identity. The dramatic events that have shaken Europe at different times, especially over the last 20 years, such as the bloody conflict between Serbs and Albanians of Kosovo and the fight for the rights of Kosovars, prompted an international response to protect the model of society and relationships between neighboring social groups. Prof. Albert Doja noted that *"Considering the region as a cultural area should be defined as a mixed field. Albanian populated areas are not only that of a Balkan*

European country ... or even country western extension of some models or on establishing local identities, but all of these at once ". (Doja, 2009: 148).

Modernism in Albanian society, of which we are aware, shows that dynamic unity and awareness of national identity mean bridging the gap between East and West, recognizing the synthetic character of European civilization, and assimilating historical and political traditions in their cultural dimensions. Differences of origin affect relationships using the *"real"*, which can remain latent across generations.

Conclusions

At the end of this work, we can say that it is very difficult to determine whether there is a sharp divide in where Albanian national identity is positioned between these two theories (primordialism and modernity). The difficulty stems precisely from the fact that Albanian society displays specific characteristics that can find a place in each of the approaches. However, we think that both approaches are sufficient to grasp the positioning of Albanian national identity, since the latter creates a kind of correlation and relationship with the concept of national identity for several reasons:

- *First*, the origin of Albanian national identity is spiritually connected to and stems from what constitutes national culture, as well as an essential support, the base of primordialism, which includes: family, tribe, origin, soil, blood, symbols, language, and religion.

Well irrefutable reaffirmation of the roots from which we come, regardless of the time Storm and the wars or assimilation efforts, which have done their job.

- *Secondly*, globalization, a modernist theory of recent years, seeks to exert its effect in this direction, namely in the struggle between preserving the national values of Albanians and a kind of reconstruction or reconceptualization of national identity. *"Given the prospect ones that can connect with the phenomena of globalization and modernity, despite the end of national identities warned of European construction and the globalization of economic, cultural, political, social or purely instrumental character that tend to make human relations We must understand that the idea of citizenship remains very much linked to well-defined national identity ". (Doja, 2009: 166).* The phenomenon of national identity construction reflects reality. The will to impose the model of national identity, as well as the instruments of globalization, is necessarily dependent on local political and cultural economies in order to evoke the discourse on national sovereignty or fundamentalism, where the state plays a key delikapor.

- *Thirdly*, we say that it is and continues to be difficult to speak today of Albanian national identity. Political movements, taking into account the real or alleged differences between different cultures, which are consequently ethnicized, make the dominant model of conflict look like a conflict for renewed recognition and the

recreation of identities. That is why we think that, after the last storm of nationalist ideologies, pregnant and strained by various political movements, Albanians should seek and finally reach what they have in common, building a society with values that integrate the region, Europe, and beyond; because, still being a society in transition, Albanian society will continue for a long time to seek ways and means to position itself and its national identity, as researcher Kim Mehmeti says: *"... we feel good where we are not:* ... and Albanians still do not know where they are ..."

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