

## **PROPAGANDA IN THE ALBANIAN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO AND FOLLOWING 1990**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research focuses on the differences in the use of propaganda in the political communication in Albania during the totalitarian regime up to 1990, and the use of propaganda in the political communication during the post-totalitarian period following 1990, up to the present. Following the 1990s, in the political communication in Albania can be observed a clear propagandistic approach of different forms, ways and means compared to the propaganda used during the totalitarian regime.

Research question: On which factors depended the emergence and use of propaganda in the Albanian totalitarian regime and on which factors depends the emergence and use of propaganda in the post-totalitarian system?

The Hypothesis of this research is: Propaganda in the totalitarian system was created and imposed by the structure of the political system of the time through the political language and political discourse, while propaganda during the post-totalitarian system is produced and imposed by the media, mainly the television and online media.

This hypothesis aims to explain the reason why in post-totalitarian Albania the political propaganda is as present as it used to be during the totalitarian regime.

Keywords: Please include propaganda, totalitarian, post-totalitarian, discourse, Albanian political communication.

## INTRODUCTION

*“Religion as a “slumberous virtue” according to Marx and presently as the “cocaine of nations”*.<sup>1</sup> as Umberto Eco sais in one of his writings, is an interesting parallelism for understanding the role of religion in present days. To continue with this parallelism in the domain of political communication, it can be said that the role of “slumberous virtue” and “cocaine of nations” in the 21-st century is played by the media, mainly the television and social networks, or more precisely the propaganda they make. These media presently control to a great extend the behaviour of individuals in the society, the actions and non-actions of governments, markets, stock markets, the role of religion in society, moral and ethical norms, etc. The attempts to influence the minds of the others are as old as human communication itself.

Under this context, the topic to be elaborated throughout this research focuses on propaganda in the Albanian political communication during the pre-90 totalitarian period, as well as the post-totalitarian period following the 1990s.

The **Methodology** of the research has a comparative character, and the totalitarian and post-totalitarian propaganda shall be analysed through the element of political language and different media. This analysis shall cover elements like: speeches, declarations, electoral TV ads, etc.

This research consists of three parts. In the first part, we shall present the theoretical background the research is based on, the object and the hypothesis – which shall challenge the research question with theoretical and practical arguments.

In the second part, we shall broaden the theoretical background in such a way that it approaches the research object as well as we shall implement it in the Albanian context. In the third part of this research, we shall summarize the conclusions on what we have already presented, to confirm the research question to the hypothesis.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.respublica.al/arkiv-opinion/kokaina-e-popujve>

## **1. Current theoretical background**

Firstly, we shall explain the concepts we shall come across with in the course of this research. The term propaganda first appeared in 1622, when a branch of the Catholic Church was created under the name of “Congregatio de Propaganda Fide” – (Congregation for Propagating the Faith). It consisted of a group of cardinals who spread the faith to non-Catholic countries. By 1790, the term started to be used for propagandistic purposes even in secular activities. The definition started to gain a negative connotation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the term had already broken up with religion and entered the political sphere during the Great War. After this brief history of the term, we shall give the definitions of propaganda. “*Propaganda is a set of methods used by an organised group, with the aim of creating an active or passive participation of a mass of individuals psychologically unified by means of psychological manipulations within an organisation*” (Ellul, J. (1965): 61). Edward Bernays, otherwise recognised as the “father” of “Public Relations”, defined propaganda as: “*a powerful and sustainable endeavour, to create and shape events, or situations with the aim of influencing public relations concerning an idea, initiative, enterprise or group*” (Bernays, E. (1928) : 52).

*The political communication*, as a concept, is neutral in relation to propaganda. As a rule, there is no political communication without propaganda, even in cases when it seems as if it objectively presents a political event, still it is done with a specific propagandistic objective. While the concept of *pseudo-event* is widely treated by the well-known American historian Daniel Boorstin, who in 1961 wrote: a pseudo-event characteristics: (1) it is not a spontaneous event, but it comes up because someone has planned, created or encouraged it; (2) it is created for an immediate aim to report or reproduce it. The media has played a key role in creating pseudo-events.

The purpose of modern propaganda is not the transformation of opinion, but the revival of an active and mythical faith, says Jacques Ellul. Under his perspective, the current differences between the propaganda used by politics in the western democratic world and the propaganda

used in developing countries like Albania, with an unconsolidated democratic system, could be drawn.

Finally, we shall explain the use of term “totalitarian system”. The use of term “totalitarian” – “totalitarianism”, comes from the fact that these terms have entered the vocabulary of political sciences, especially after the Second World War and onwards while they have been thoroughly treated by reputable researchers like Raymond Aron and Hannah Arendt. *“Nevertheless, no power, regardless of efforts, never manages to cast its rule over everything, thus to suppress all resistance against it. In fact, had it been totally totalitarian, it would almost impossibly be found a power to challenge it. But history slipped through his fingers, in other words, within Albanian society of the time, there was such an energy that spread beyond the space under his control.” (Fuga, A. (2010): 11-12).* In the case of our research, the term “totalitarian system” is used since a more exact definition in the terminological horizon cannot be seen.

### ***Nature of the totalitarian power in Albania and its propaganda***

Totalitarianisms or authoritarianisms can be found to a certain extent in the cultural foundations of a nation. Thus, totalitarianism retakes in a simplified manner those traditions that function according to a symmetrical, homogenous, and dichotomic logic. In our context, the trends of the old Albanian culture that used to encourage the spirit of intolerance as a fundamental principle of human relations were criticised. Firstly, the idea or concept that the “celestial world” is bringing, according to a certain trend, the communist society, a perfect state, free from contradictions, free from want, free from conflicts, a society that needed no further improvement, a world of peace, a world of beauty, of solving all problems, of compensating previous sufferings, of flawless moral, and free from any vice. In this reasoning, we can see the reason why the totalitarian power starts to use a sublogic and substructure of religion.

During 1944-1990, a curious phenomenon is observed according to philosopher Artan Fuga in his book “Birrët e dhisë”. It concerns the metamorphosis of terms related to the organisation of the political system through the words that deal with parental relations in a

patriarchal family or with the clan relations. In the Albanian society of the time, like in the official propaganda, were more and more frequently used words like “mother”, “father”, “son”, “sister”, “brother”, to name different actors of the domestic and international political life, like “fathers of the nation”. Thus, the Albanian totalitarian logic conceptualised the political system like a physical body, with the people conceptualised like the body, the communist party like the brain and heart, the high party leadership like the head, the law enforcement authorities symbolised the fist, the secret police symbolised the vigilant eye, the youth organisations and professional unions the right arm of the party whereas the individuals qualified as enemy like the “excrement” of the nation.

Enver Hoxha’s speeches defined the real dimensions of the language by having a total control over it. The words, expressions, phrases, were all a product of the regime. The definition of language dimensions was in fact the definition of the dimensions of thought. The language creates and influences the thought, said Wittgenstein. By means of the language, the system offered to the masses the structure and essence of thought, by removing any opportunity of thinking or abstraction from the simple individual. Psychologically, the language was the most lethal “weapon” of the system against its “enemies”. “Brainwashing” through language, was communicated to every single individual by the television, radio, newspapers, at work, at school, in the prison, everywhere.

### **Role of political language in the totalitarian and post-totalitarian system.**

As mentioned above, the language entirely served the political power. Consequently, the deprivation and destruction that was haunting all aspects of the society could not leave out those constantly closing iron bars, the most psychological weapon of the system, the language. The compatibility between verbal violence (language) and nonverbal violence (physical) would constitute the backbone of the system, as well as the reason for its long-living existence.

Political language constituted the main means of the totalitarian propaganda, which propagated the marxist-leninist ideology. Language regress seemed unavoidable. Some people might rightly react back saying that not only in the totalitarian system but also in the post-totalitarian system as well as in other kinds of systems, the language would be in service to the respective systems. In fact, every kind of political system would use language to propagate its values, but during the totalitarian system, the propaganda went to extremes by conditioning and limiting the language with which the propaganda would be made. The language is dynamic in itself, as well as the processes that accompany it. This phenomenon was as paradoxical as it was pragmatic, always depending on the point of view. Pragmatic, since each language component was projected, thus not allowing interpretations that would completely undress the system itself. The consequences to the language were to a certain extent a success of the totalitarian regime. Language performance and competence used by the regime were in perfect correlation, which clearly revealed regime's cruelty. This kind of reflection was transmitted beyond the national borders through the standard language which served as an identification card of the regime.

## **2. Comparative analysis**

### ***2.1 Political discourse during the Albanian totalitarian and post-totalitarian regime***

To analyse the political communication in the Albanian totalitarian regime as well as during the post-totalitarian period, one must understand the context, the actors, and the specific features of this political communication, with the aim of understanding the sources of propaganda and explain its (propaganda) use in the current political system. This analysis tries to explain if there is sufficient evidence for confirming the thesis introduced in the opening of this research. As above stated, the totalitarian regime locked its media within a narrow ideology through its propagandistic discourse, by impeding the social diversity as well as the political and

cultural dialogue. *“Totalitarianism locks the individual within the society without giving any kind of autonomy. It equalises the individuals with one another by virtually making them a single person at ideologicistic, propagandistic and certainly the political level.”* (Fuga, A. (2010):276) Under this perspective, Fuga highlights that the “monologue” process was an essential characteristic of the totalitarian system, which essentially and potentially makes the political discourse used at that time into a propagandistic discourse. For a real communication to exist, it needs to meet a number of preconditions, while the most important of them all is: *“to communicate does not necessarily mean to produce and disseminate information, it also means to be attentive to the conditions the recipient receives, accepts, objects, remodels the message in conformity with his cultural, political, philosophical horizon, and replies in turn.”* (Wolton, D (2009):12).

It is obvious that during the totalitarian regime this concept did not work. Thus, the “monologue” to a certain extent was propaganda. In the political discourse, this propaganda was made through an empty signifier. In a meeting held in Himara on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1961, in his speech Enver Hoxha expresses numerous absolutisms like *“Albania’s coastline will be transformed into a flowering garden”* or *“Albania a garden of flowers”* (E. Hoxha, 1961: 388), a typical propagandistic discourse with the aim of hiding/disguising the real problems in Albania at that time. In the same way articulates himself Sali Berisha, the former Albanian Prime minister, in his speeches at different meetings, like: *“Albania, Miss World in tourism”*, *“Albania, a Switzerland by the sea”* or *“Albania, the most beautiful garden in Europe”* and *“Albania, energy superpower in the region”*, while a good part of Albanian population, both in rural and urban parts of the country, suffered power shortages, he was trying to distract them from the more important issues like employment, reforms in the key sectors of the economy, justice, healthcare, etc. As Laclau and Mouffe have stated: *“The truth of the society is that its identity does not exist”* (Laclau, E (2003):189). As consequence of the lack of a positive essence around which it would shape itself, *“the society needs “empty signifiers” in order to shape its identity”* (Journal Polis nr.5, (2007): pg. 8). We shall present the attitudes of two different leaders. One is the totalitarian system leader, Enver Hoxha, and the other is the post totalitarian

system leader, Sali Berisha. These two attitudes concern the nationalistic sentiments expressed by these two leaders within a certain context.

## **2.2 Examples of political communication prior to and after 1990.**

2.2.1 Enver Hoxha's speech to the National Assembly on relations with Greece and the law of war between Greece and Albania.

*"Socialist Albania is a peace-loving country that does not threaten or intimidate anyone. With its fair and correct foreign policy, the People's Republic of Albania has always wanted to live in peace with its neighbouring countries. If any of them does not like this normal neighbourly situation, we do not care. Socialism is flourishing in Albania every other day. Greek monarcho-fascists have been declaring for almost 25 years that they are at war with Albania, for the convincing reason that the fascist Italy that attacked and occupied Albania in 1939, attacked Greece as well. But we tell Greek monarcho-fascists; don't you see that the People's Republic of Albania doesn't give a fig about your declarations that you at war with Albania.*

*It is our duty to warn them to lower their tails, because in case you dare take any action we shall punish you harshly. In case you dare touch our borders, we shall turn you into carrions. In case you think that you outweigh us in numbers and weapons and will devour us easily, give it a try and you will get what you deserve. If you think of bringing fire to our borders, we tell you that the fire you will light will burn your homes to ashes, and it is then when the accounts will be settled. The enormous injustices done to Albania throughout history by the Balkan chauvinistic and imperialistic cliques will be put in place."*<sup>2</sup> In this Enver Hoxha's speech can be clearly seen a casus (law of war between Greece and Albania) to transmit messages not only to the neighbouring country, but more importantly for mobilizing and keeping the Albanian people under pressure.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjN4e11g-Zc>



Like Noam Chomsky described the propagandistic initiative during the First World War, with the “Creel Commission” that managed through propagandistic methods and techniques to turn Americans from pacifistic to hysterically anti-Germans, in the same way, while facing the revisionist and neighbouring countries’ danger, Enver Hoxha repeatedly stated in his speeches and declarations not only the attitude of Albania, but also wanted to send messages to his own people that Albania is constantly facing an eminent danger, and for that reason the Albanians must be ready all the time. (slogan: “Albania-Enver-we are always ready”). The other subtext that was constantly conveyed through these messages was to create the idea that the Party and Comrade Enver were indispensable in such dangerous conditions the country and Albanian people were faced with. As consequence, the nationalistic sentiments served Hoxha to justify the majeure propaganda of the ideology of the system, the propaganda produced by the structures of the system to maintain and strengthen first and foremost the ideological propaganda, which was the conceptual structure used by the system to justify all its deeds.

At first, we can say that from the perspective of public relations and its elements, it worked perfectly. Through a contextual, simple, direct, and brief discourse, a number of messages are being transmitted. Nevertheless, in this brief speech are summarised the four factors that justify the system and its propaganda.

At first, we observe the institutionalisation of the party as a religious institution through labelling it as a “treasure” considering that the “party” represented the “celestial world”. While the patriotic national sentiment is expressed, in a narrative way, by tackling the most important moments from the history of Albania. In such a way, it aims through sublimating the national sentiment, by mentioning the occupations the Albanian nation survived in the course of centuries, to create them the awareness that this is a current danger, and while this nation lived through this danger in the past, it would need to sacrifice in order to survive in the future. Thus, even in cases when this sentiment is used, the aim is to make use of it for further “heightening” the wall of isolation from any potential danger the country would be faced with.

### 2.2.2 Sali Berisha's declaration in Vlota on 27/11/2012.

*“Good evening Vlora! Good evening Albania and Albanians everywhere you are! The warmest greetings from Vlora of the flag, Vlora of Ismail Qemal Vlora, Vlora of independence. The deepest gratitude for this brotherly welcome. I will read here, before you, these few words I wrote on this parchment:*

*To Vlora, its citizens, to Ismail Qemal Vlora and other men of the nation, who on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1912 declared the independence of Albania, the independence of ethnic Albania, the independence of all Albanian territories, from Preveza to Presheva, from Shkupi to Podgorica. Eternal respect to Ismail Qemal Vlora, the father of the independence of Albania, to the men who signed the independence act, to the citizens of Vlora and all Albania! Happy the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary!”<sup>3</sup>*

In this declaration made by the prime minister of Albania at a public manifestation on November 27<sup>th</sup> 2012, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration of independence of Albania, can be observed, like in the above speech of leader Hoxha, the use of an historic event for delivering nationalistic messages for electoral purposes. Unlike the above speech, prime minister's speech does not seem that direct, but the implicit messages “batter” with the same force. Territorial changes due to historical injustices are being invoked. Moreover, this declaration was made on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration of independence of Albania. Nevertheless, it turned out to be a propagandistic declaration, since it generated reaction of Greece as well as reaction of Albanian political actors. The Greek reaction was legitimate to a certain extend. While the reaction of other Albanian political actors, seemed more like a “war” within the political system for gaining the most possible propagandistic space.

### 2.2.3 Declaration of the Chairman of the Socialist Party - Edi Rama.

Another significant example related to the events of January 21<sup>st</sup> 2011, is the first declaration of the chairman of the Socialist Party – Edi Rama, following the event. In this declaration can be

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.balkanweb.com/rajoni/2687/shtypi-dhe-politika-greke-me-prevezen-berisha-provokoi-111299.html>

observed the role and weight of the media in the events of January 21<sup>st</sup> 2011 through the “eyes” of politics, which through visual images built an entire opposing discourse against the government.

*“Sali, where are you? Was this also a montage, was this also made up by a media jackal, was this also a visual plotting of Edi Rama and the bastard opposition to mislead the people you love so much? The people you want stuck to your darkness, the people you murdered so clearly revealed by the images we just saw. The people with whom you have just reopened the old accounts of your blindness while blindingly you have added the lost lives of three innocent people to the wounds of tens and tens of others, arrests, beatings and psychological tortures in police stations all around Albania now that we are talking”.*

*“Mrs Ina Rama, did you see how innocent people of this country are killed like horses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century films? Sali, the coalition of shame, the regime of thievery and extortionists showed us no more or less but the justice of our path, the justice of our endeavour, the justice of our aspiration, the justice of all this road that peaked today with a demonstration turned into a tragedy by a morally fallen power, rotten to its core.”<sup>4</sup>*

After these declarations, we have the right to raise the question: How would the January 21<sup>st</sup> events and post-events have gone on, had they not being covered by the media? Surely, the alibies of both parties would be ten times as much as they currently are. One thing is certain that their propaganda would not be the one they produced because they were based on film footages. The Socialist Party, by pretending the authorship of murders committed by the Guard of the Republic, and the government based on film footages pretending that January 21<sup>st</sup> events were set up by individuals paid the Socialist Party. Both parties based their propaganda on what was brought by the “eye” of the camera.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://ps.al/te\\_rejat/lajmi/berisha-orkestrues-politik-i-kesaj-kasaphane-21-01-2011](http://ps.al/te_rejat/lajmi/berisha-orkestrues-politik-i-kesaj-kasaphane-21-01-2011)

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The use of propaganda is indispensable in the political and social reality since individuals in the present-day society are in continuous need for information, quick and summarized information, and consequently the chances for consumption of propagandistic information are higher. The existence of many channels transmitting political information (televisions, online networks, the press, etc.) makes it necessary for the political parties to increasingly “penetrate” their messages into these media. On the other hand, these media are in need for these political messages since the desire of individuals to consume information makes it unavoidable for the political information to be brought in an inflationist way. In this context, we can say that like in the totalitarian regime in which the autism and monologism of communication were a norm, they appear in the post-totalitarian system as well.

When considering the factors upon which depended the appearance and use of propaganda during the totalitarian regime, we need to first bear in mind that the totalitarian regime, since its genesis, identified itself with the propaganda, through a symbiotic relationship. This system could not be conceptualised without its propaganda; it was born along with its propaganda. As a consequence, those factors, the existence of this system was based upon, were the same factors that determined the appearance and use of propaganda, which needed to take these factors for granted. As mentioned throughout this paper, this system was based on different traditions of cultural formation.

1. At first was propagandised the idea or the mentality of a “celestial world”. It could be observed here the use of a religious sub-logic and sub-structure: the religious institutionalisation with the political one and the transference of the role of religion towards politics.

2. The national sentiment. The use of patriotism and reappearance of renaissance ideas as means of cultural and political isolation.

3. The clan. The metaphoric use in daily communication as well as in political communication of terms related to the organisation of the political system by means of words used to express parental relationships within the patriarchal family or clan. Such words were frequently used in the discourse: “mother”, “father”, “son”, “sister”, “brother”.

4. The fourth factor the system and its propaganda were based on was the language. This element, as observed throughout this paper, was one of the most essential factors used by the system to keep existing, to spread its propaganda while ideologically “fighting” against the “enemies” of the country.

The factors that determined the appearance and use of post-totalitarian propaganda were in fact more straightforward and less complex than the factors that determined the propaganda during the past regime.

1. Political context. The need to defy the old regime propagandistic communication, was the genesis factor of the post 1990-s propaganda.

2. Media context. The tremendous evolution of media and information system determined not only the form the political information was conveyed but also its contents. Currently, it is playing a decisive role in producing such information the politics is increasingly referring to. As illustrated above, politics believes the information produced by the media more than the information produced by politics itself.

3. Language/communicative context. While during the totalitarian regime, for impressing the public, this context was determined by certain cultural and social traditions and norms, in the current system this context is increasingly determined by the media that convey it to the public.

Given that the citizens have no means to empirically verify what is being provided by the media as information, then politics and the citizens subdue themselves to the “televised truth”. As a consequence, our hypothesis that the political communication in democracy needs propaganda, for us the consumers as well as for the media as the provider of the propagandistic product, is confirmed. Shifting from manifestations or “demonstrations” that facilitate the communication

with a large group of people into small sized indoor meetings, with the participation of a public who is aware about the topics to be discussed; introduction of experts' opinions on television as well as the messages coming from the public in order for producing a symmetrical and dialoguing communication; online interactive communication, specifically the social online media; the exploration of new ways to make the word-based communication as catchy as possible to the public, etc, are the forms that will set a better balance between the codes of public communication, thus between the non-linguistic signs (images, indicators) and the words as carriers of critical reasoning culture. Apart from this balance of codes, these forms shall make political communication, amongst others, less propagandistic.

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Enver Hoxha’s speech to the Peoples’ Assembly on relations with Greece and the law on the state of war between Greece and Albania.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjN4e11g-Zc>

Sali Berisha’s declaration in Vlora on 27/11/2012

<http://www.balkanweb.com/rajoni/2687/shtypi-dhe-politika-greke-me-prevezen-berisha-provokoi-111299.html>

Edi Rama’s (head of the opposition) first reaction following the January 21<sup>st</sup> events.

[http://ps.al/te\\_rejat/lajmi/berisha-orkestrues-politik-i-kesaj-kasaphane-21-01-2011](http://ps.al/te_rejat/lajmi/berisha-orkestrues-politik-i-kesaj-kasaphane-21-01-2011)