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Political regimes and divergent public cultures of a nation-state: Evidence from Albania

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Abstract

Processes of nation-building in the Southeastern Europe have been addressed on the basis of the interaction between competing strategies of imperial powers in this region and top-down ethno-nationalist cultural and political projects of an indigenous elite. Contrary to the dominant type of ethno-nationalist mobilization and nation-building in the Southeastern Europe, which was based on a shared religious identification, the political and cultural mobilization during the process of nation-building in Albania, after the decline of the Ottoman empire, was predicated on a common language and ethnic origin, due to the multi-religious character of the Albanian community. Relying on the sociological framework of Anthony D. Smith, which identifies a shared public culture as an important element of a successful nation-building, this paper claims that scrutinizing the divergent public cultures of the Albanian nation-state, during the interwar political regime, and the communist dictatorship, reveals the effect of the authoritarian political regimes on the unsteady and limited nation-building in Albania. Therefore, one of the key contributions of the paper is the analytical relevance of the content of the public culture instead of the conventional argument that emphasizes the sources of the public culture, namely, language and ethnicity, or historical mythology. The monarchical rule in interwar Albania and the communist dictatorship, as two types of authoritarian regimes, produced distinct public cultures of the nation-state, despite referring to the same cultural resources of national identity.

Keywords: authoritarian rule; ideology; legitimation; Southeastern Europe; case-study