

Comparative Representations of Albania in Time and The Economist Magazines¹

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Abstract

Albania depicted as the most mysterious, isolated, forgotten Balkan country on the part of the international news media, is by no means an exception. It is common today as it was almost 100 years ago for western media outlets to find not so flattering exceptionalities in the Albanian land, in its politics and its people. When it comes to this “tiny, little country”, journalistic codes of American and British media give a rather coherent subject in international terms, despite their respective editorial lines. The Economist and Time magazines are compared and contrasted here in accordance with the media functional equivalence approach, despite their different political or editorial alignments, in order to understand their coverage of a rather distant international subject such as that of Albania in the context of the Balkans.

The empirically measured media content on the subject of Albania is dispersed and sporadic through years, events and focus. However, the inconsistent coverage and stance given to the subject does translate into a rather constant view or representation through time. The research shows that this is almost a script 100 years old with few nuances, perpetuating therefore an abnormal image and reputation of Albania and the Balkans overall in international terms. The comparative media content analysis of Time magazine and The Economist show how the western media construction of the country as an “abnormal other” still prevails, despite an evolving historical context for Albania as well as other Balkan countries who are also reported in the same vein

¹ This article reflects a research project that the author has initiated with SEESOX, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford 2019-2021.

over time. To look at this more closely, the search and findings are first organized separately in terms of quantitative and qualitative data and then are compared and contrasted in terms of the extent, nature and frames of their coverage.

Key Words: *Media Representations, Albania in the Foreign Press, British Media, American Media, Time, The Economist, International Media Representations of the Balkans*

Methodology

This study is based on a combined methodological approach from within the empirical tradition of the media studies and research: the textual studies and the study of the agency. Both quantitative and qualitative instruments are used to collect and analyze the data. The content analyzed consists of the news about Albania featured in *Time* magazine and *The Economist*, in terms of their frequency, placement, topics and framings; as well as the language and the discourse used to depict the country, its people and its politics. The study of the agency builds mainly on media studies literature and a few interviews with the editors covering Albania.

Based on the above research, the main argument of this study is that the subject of Albania is approached and constructed in a repetitive constant way over time on the part of *Time* and *The Economist* magazines from their early days to nowadays. The hypothesis is as follows:

“In evolving historical contexts, Albania as a Balkan country remains approached and reported in a constant repetitive fashion over time, perpetuating an abnormal image and reputation of the region in international terms”.

Therefore, this article shall endeavor to support the thesis that, despite an evolutionary historical context, the topic of Albania in the western press, exemplified by *Time* and *The Economist* magazines, is approached, and reported in a constant repetitive fashion, giving as a result a fixed image of the country and its region. Its continuity and repetitiveness are imbedded first in the language used in terms of key words and phrases, taglines, epithets, comparisons and other stylistic means of journalistic expression such as parody and irony. An important part is therefore evidenced in the very headlines and subheadings of the newsmagazines, as well as in their captures.

Secondly, the quantitative data analyses aims at mapping out to what extent the number of features published year after year, its classification in order of rubrics, topics, length, places, words and most mentioned personalities have contributed to a consistent view over time, from one period to another.

Thirdly, the relevant media studies literature and further interviews with *magazine* editors and their codes of practices allow for some introspection linked to the theories of the social production of news and particularly the social construction of the international news². This is to say that the press practices at *Time* and *The Economist* specifically and their institutionalization in terms of the production of foreign news³ as well as their countries international relations in general, fuel its contents or its approaches towards distant and foreign countries like Albania⁴.

First reason for the selection of the media is methodological based on their functional equivalence as international newsmagazines that enables a comparative approach. Also, the criteria of the presence of Albania as an international subject is present in both outlets significantly; the criteria of weekly periodicity and compact body of data and third the criteria of a long-term coverage (1923-2013 for the *Time*) and (1912-2020 for the *Economist*).

Second reason for this choice is the international scope and relevance of both media outlets, with *Time* fulfilling the criteria of a flagship media on the part of the American media spectrum and *The Economist* for the British media spectrum; the choice is also based on the criteria of the significant international audience and impact of *TIME* with 20 million as its total audience, whereas *The Economist* with its broad interest in global affairs has earned the reputation of the co-called “Bible of Global Affairs” by the NYT.

The study classifying criteria for the account of Albania as a study object has been first the name “Albania” mentioned in: Headlines, Subheadings and First Paragraphs; second the subject of Albania referred to as: Foreign state and country, geographical territory, population, government, foreign affairs and international relations, traditions and culture, economy and social life. Only Albanians mentioned as subjects of the state of Albania are included and not as subjects of other states such as Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro or diaspora that might constitute separate study subjects.

Overall, this study addresses a problem that has not been approached significantly in the context of Albania, as a way to understand how the subject of the country is reported and represented by the American and the British media and how it relates to its international relations and public diplomacy as well as in terms of international PR, country branding or image. It might also be valuable so as to its regional scope, applicability and comparativeness with other Balkan countries represented along similar lines.

² Berger Peter L. Luckmann Thomas, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Open Road Media, 2011.

³ Tuchman Gaye, *Making News: a Study in the Construction of Reality*: Free Press, 1978.

⁴ Philo C. Wasburn, *The social construction of international news, We're talking about them, they're talking about us*, London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002.

The periodization of the study according to three different contexts of time for both magazines, was necessary for drawing comparisons between them. In the context of the first period 1912-1944, Albania accounts as independent state, after First World War and during the Second World War. In the second period, that of 1945-1989, Albania is put in the context of the communist dictatorship and in the context of the Cold War and its affiliation with the East Block. Third period covers the years after the fall of the communism, from 1990-today when

Albania accounts as an emerging democratic country in the context of post-communism, in terms of a transitional democracy and as Western Balkan country aspiring the European Union membership and integration.

The study is based on a comparative media content analysis, therefore it is an empirical study with elements of textual/discourse analysis and media agency analysis. The media coverage of Albania accounts also as a case study in the context of Balkan countries. Therefore, the focus is first on the content of the two international magazines on the subject of Albania in terms of: extensiveness of coverage (number and frequency of media contents), topics, framings, discourse, styles, narratives, language, sources and images that are elements of importance to the textual analysis both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The media agency analysis is also relevant to the study, because it helps to understand the impact of the editorial stance of the news media, its international coverage, politics, sources of international news, through relevant aspects of media ownership, management and circulation as well as map out the impact of foreign affairs, editorial boards, international correspondents and audience profile or impact.

The main data-collecting instruments that has been used are the digital archives of Time and the Economist magazines. For Time it is used www.time.com archive, whereas for The Economist it is used Gale as a database for retracting articles with fully searchable complete facsimile editions of the Economist from 1843 to 2015. The selections of the most relevant articles is based on length, place, subjects and classification (about 250 items / each magazine), followed by evidencing of discourses, frames, styles, metaphors and images, epithets as well as most used contexts, most used terms and taglines, descriptions, names and protagonists, sources, etc.

The theoretical research consists of a literature review based on media studies, journalism and international news media, international relations, history and culture studies of the Balkans

Another complementary research instrument is the interview with journalists, correspondents, editors of Time and The Economist. The above data are organized equally in tables of quantitative and qualitative data and findings, combined with the evidencing from interviews as well as an overview of both media profiles complemented with their editorial and reporting practices.

For Time and the American media analysis are interviewed Massimo Calabresi, Actual Editor at Time Washington Bureau, former director of the Vienna Bureau from 1995-1999, who has covered the Kosovo War and the civil conflict of spring 1997 in Albania from Vlora; James Graff, editor of the Vienna Bureau and senior correspondent of Time from 1990 to 1995, who has also covered the first elections after the fall of dictatorship in Albania in 1991; Edward Barnes: War correspondent of Time and Life magazines from 1984 to 2001; Altin Raxhimi, Albanian journalist that has worked as a stringer/fixer for Time from Albania during the Kosovo War and as a freelancer until 2011; Angela Leuker, administrator and reporting support at the Vienna Office for South Eastern Europe and the region of the Balkans in the period from 1983 to 2006 and finally professor Robert Herzstein, historian of Time magazine and Biographer of the founder and first editor in chief of Time magazine, Henry Luce.

For the Economist and the British Media are set to be conducted interviews with Tim Judah of the Economist, Timothy Garton Ash of The Guardian, Gabriel Partos of the BBC, Mathew Parris of The Times and professor Noel Malkolm, renowned historian and author of a recent book on Albanians.

The most important research questions are:

- How it is approached the subject of Albania from Time and The Economist, historically?
- What are the sources and the techniques used to get informed about Albania?
- Is there a constant or different approach, a single discourse or various ways of representing Albania in different periods of time?
- What are the similarities and differences of coverage given to Albania from the American and the British media?
- What are the similarities and differences of representations between Albania and other Balkan countries?
- How the media discourses relate to other agents such as politics, public diplomacy and international relations between respective countries?

Content analysis

The findings from the content analysis show that Albania is often seen on the worst of terms with every other factor, internal or external, as if nothing ever goes on with it. So do get represented its people, territory and politicians, as well as its international relations, politics and developments overall. No matter the specific subject under discussion, its context or how it is taken into account in the first place, the narrative doesn't change much as a way of seeing and unfolding the

subject. The most common frames being used are those of insignificance as a “tiny”, “minuscule”, “forgotten”, “lonely”, “poor”, “isolated”, “obscurest” country; but also frames of defiance and sympathy by contrast to the inferiority schemata. More similar than different, the magazines share frames of a “messy”, “chaotic”, “destabilized”, “undemocratic” country against few positive features mainly related to its natural beauty, beaches and sympathized cultural traditions of honor and faithfulness of Albanians as reliable friends.

Sometimes, negative and positive stereotypes are intrinsically related, from the early days, such as in The Economist article, “Albania and The Adriatic” where Albanians are labelled “*untameable mountaineers*” whose [the Geghs’s] sole interest and lifelong study is guerilla war, but after all, the article states that “*the Geghs should be preserved from ruthless extermination. To see them quickens sympathy and gives substance to an abstract dislike for ravage and massacre. Physically the finest race in Europe, in character the most abnormal, they are a possession Europe can ill afford to lose in these days when civilization tends to eliminate all special characteristics and all peculiar distinction with them*”, going on further stating that “*we can scarcely doubt it in the case of a race whose character is wholly composed of intolerance of domination, whose single want is a good fight now and then and who are quite content to be left to fight each other undisturbed*”⁵.

Often the language or discourse is that of a perennial abnormality and not a flattering exceptionality exemplified in the extreme schemata related to the territory, to the climate, to the people, to the nation as it is referred to as the smallest of the smallest, the worst of the bad, or the least of the last. Extremities of the size are often associated with other exceptional characteristics such as in the phrase: “*Pocked-size Albania has always been the most backward of the Iron Curtain countries.*” or that “*Albania is the tiniest, the poorest and most backward of all communist satellites in Europe and the only one that has no common border with another state in the U.S.S.R’s empire*”. Further on, the enmeshed extremities go hand in hand as in the phrase “*The tiny nation that Russia and Red China are using to work off their ideological aggressions, is tucked away in a remote corner of the Balkans*”⁶. In another report from Time magazine, the extreme of the extremes is depicted as follows: “*Like Dante’s Inferno, Communism has its different levels of horror and misery. At the bottom of the pit, by almost any measure, lies Albania...*” During the communist period it is also referred by Time magazine as “*the only satellite isolated from Moscow by unfriendly territory*”, “*satellite Albania, Soviet Communism only Mediterranean base*”, “*Albania: the black sheep*”, “*the most wretched country in Europe*”, “*the least accessible nation in the communist world today*”, “*a minute, mountainous country... poor in living conditions, rich in anachronisms and completely alone in its bizarre comradeship with Red China...*”,

⁵ “Albania and the Adriatic”, The Economist, July 22, 1911, Vol.073, issue 3543.

⁶ Eagle’s country: The Little Land they are fighting over, Time magazine, 27 October 1961

“the little Balkan dictatorship”, “puppet state of Albania” or “China’s sole friend in Europe...”, “It is Europe’s poorest nation and one of the world’s most closed societies”...

The exceptionality and abnormality is still present after the fall of communism, as Time writes that *“Tiny Albania emerged from communist dictatorship in 1990 only to tumble into a rough world of gangsters, fraudulent financial machinations and incompetent governance, exacerbated by lawless capitalism and devil-may-care politics”*⁷. The Economist also accounts for *“Bad to worse”, “Edge of the abyss” or “Bad gets worse in Albania”* in its headlines after the fall of communism. The entry of the latest article goes like this: *“In Tirana, Europe’s poorest country, things are going even more horribly wrong”*⁸. Occasionally, the exceptions are also positive as in an article by Tim Judah of 8th May 2011 that ends with the phrase: *“Albanians, of all the people in the western Balkans, are by far the most optimistic. Let’s hope today’s battle of Stalingrad ends without casualties and breaks the country’s political deadlock”*⁹. However, the overall schemata of the article is still abnormality, related to the local elections that year, under the headline *“Albania’s Stalingrad”* and the subheading: *“A chance to end a two year political stalemate”*, further stating that *“normal political life in Albania has been on hold for almost two years”,* and *“ever since Albanian politics has rolled from crisis to crisis...”*¹⁰.

Agency analysis

The agency analysis tells that a constant negative approach of the western media towards the subject of Albania through time is based on a set of defining factors such as:

1. Organizational and Professional media practices towards distant foreign subjects; The Power structures and the political economy of the mass media play a pivotal role
2. The fact that there is no regular correspondence from Albania or close in the Balkans related to the centralized organizational structure of the media and the fact that the sources of information about Albania are scarce, indirect, unidentified or distant...

The lack of pro-active information on the part of Albania is considered as a primary limitation for the coverage it gets abroad. Referring to a 100 years old

⁷ Time, “The Trouble with Democracy: Albania’s Worrisome Vote, 21 May 2011 (Time.com)

⁸ “Bad gets worse in Albania”, The Economist, Nr.13, 1993, 329, issue 7837, p.56.

⁹ “Local elections in Albania/ Albania’s Stalingrad?” Ex/communist Europe/Eastern Approaches, Tim Judah, The Economist May 8th 2011.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

article of the Economist, “*News from Albania is at all times untrustworthy – the Albanians themselves have no means of giving their own account of events*”¹¹. In another article titled “Albania and Tito” of 1949, a special correspondent writes that “*The small Adriatic republic of Albania has become important. Information about the country is scarce and reliable information is unobtainable. Authentic western correspondents can seldom visit the country and its government has diplomatic relations with France but not with Britain or America. Attempts to estimate the situation can only be based on the speeches at the Albanian Communist (recently named – Workers) Party conference held in November and reported at length by Tirana radio, corrected by a study of the Yugoslav case put out by Belgrade propaganda.*”¹² But even today it can be argued that Albania doesn’t convey much strategically in terms of international relations but also in terms of the country brand image. Negative perceptions and real problems have to be taken into account when addressing the question of international PR and strategic communication. Also it has to be emphasized that positive stances are often short lived even when they are projected and the negative images are the ones which are well-established and hard to change or transform.

“Letters to the editors”; reactions towards negative representations

However, the reactive approach has also to be taken into consideration, especially in the rubrics “Letters to the editor”. Therefore, the most positive approaches to Albania can be found in the letters sent to the editors of the Economist and Time magazines. In an article that dates back to 1913, may 17, under the headline “*The Sufferings and Needs of Albania*”, Telford Erickson, as director of the American Board Mission in Central Albania with headquarters in Elbasan, writes to the editor of The Economist, based on the information told by the leading Albanian men of Elbasan, Peqin, Kavaja and Durazzo, that “*I am certain that no people in the Balkans are more in need of help and more deserving of sympathy at the hands of England at this moment than the Albanians. After all, they are the victims and not the victors, the spoils and not the spoiled*”.

Another article of the section “Opinion and editorial”, published also as a letter to the editor, reads “*It is no good considering Albania from a superior worldly point of view...*” from Jan Crew and Neil Taylor, Regent Holidays Ltd, “Albania”, April 1, 1978¹³. The letter is a reaction against a correspondent of The Economist that had published an article about a holiday in Albania, on Mars 4th 1978. Having spent a holiday there too, the authors of the letter write that “*the statement that children are apparently taught to abuse, and even stone foreigners is baseless... In a*

¹¹ “Albania and the Adriatic”, The Economist, July 22, 1911, volume 073, issue 3543

¹² “Albania and Tito”, The Economist, Jan. 1, 1949, vol. 156, issue nr 5497 under the section News

¹³ “Albania”, The Economist, April 1, 1978, vol.267, issue 7022.

village we visited a crowd of peasants pressed round us, in the most friendly way. It is no good considering Albania from a superior point of view”¹⁴.

In another reaction letter to the editor dated Jan.22, 1949, R. Westgate writes that “from enquiries I have made I am not alone in finding the Economist anti-Albania obsession one of the less comprehensible oddities of contemporary British journalism. ... I feel it no unreasonable to complain that the writer failed utterly to show just what is intolerable and just how Albania is a nuisance to him and The Economist in any sense that say the Soviet Union is not. With what authority can your correspondent speak of the murder of British sailors by Albania? The International Court at The Hague has not yet made any such finding and seems unlikely to do so as long as Britain’s case lacks any stronger prop than the evidence of a short-sighted discredited Yugoslav emigre. Also is not your journal guilty of a grave moral shortcoming in anticipating a verdict and treating an international body with a contempt it would not dare show towards any court of law in this country? A similar lack of consideration for morals is evident in the means your correspondent advocates for ridding the world of the nuisance that is present-day Albania”... To this letter the editor responds that “Albania is not a greater nuisance to The Economist than is the Soviet Union, but is considerably more vulnerable. To concentrate on removing such nuisances as it seems practically possible to remove is a sound principle of power politics, which the Soviet Government has long pursued. An understanding with Yugoslavia has been advocated by The Economist only on condition that Yugoslavia where to cease intervening in Greece. That Albania has radically readjusted her economic plans as a result of the breach with Yugoslavia wis clearly shown in the speeches made at the Congress of the Albanian Communist Party in November”.

Positive coverage and nuances

Occasionally Albania does get positive coverage in The Economist and Time magazines, such as in a recent article that appeared in the Europe section of the print edition of The Economist, under the headline “The Albanian all-stars”. The online version published on 3rd October 2020 starts with the question “What do Dua Lipa, Rita Ora and Ava Max have in common?” referring to pop stars with Albanian roots that according to the magazine are conquering the world. The Economist states that “Until recently the most famous ethnic Albanians were Mother Teresa (a nun who cared for orphans and lepers in India) and Enver Hoxha (a homicidal communist despot). Now to the saint and the sinner must be added the singers”. “The pop stars, along with a clutch of Albanian footballers in top teams across Europe, play an “incredibly important role” in helping to change Albanians’ image from one of conflict’, says Petrit Selimi, a former foreign minister of Kosovo

¹⁴ ibid.

to the Economist, whereas along the unusual lines of parody the magazine also states that “*Ava Max’s sexy single “Sweet but Psycho” is universally considered more fun than Hoxha’s literary offering, “Albania Challenges Khrushchev Revisionism”*”, whereas referring to Ms Lipa’s father, Dukagjin Lipa, it also states that “*throughout history, Albanians have been squashed, but the success of this generation of musicians shows that “given the chance, we excel.”*” Even though they are labelled the stars of the Albanian diaspora, the story emphasizes the fact that they often perform back home, “wrapping themselves in Kosovar or Albanian flags, because they clearly feel a need to represent the nation and in return earn an outpouring of love. The magazine cites Ms Rexha saying on a visit to Albania that “My heart bleeds Albanian blood”, whereas mentions that Ms Lipa courted controversy by tweeting a map associated with extreme Albanian nationalists showing a vast Greater Albania, even though she later said her post had been “misinterpreted”. On the background of the article, it is stated that the parents of the stars who grew up abroad left the Balkans in the turbulent early 1990s, but theirs was not always a story of refugee rags to riches, because The Ora and Lipa families were part of Kosovo’s elite and both girls attended a top performing-arts school in London.

Findings: comparing periods through quantitative and qualitative data

The quantitative data overall show a constant representation of Albania in terms of rubrics and topics of coverage over time. Frequency of coverage is sporadic in years but relatively constant in periods. The configuration and placement if not always constant. In qualitative terms, the discourse is rather constant, respectively a Discourse of Albanian abnormality and American superiority for Time magazine and in the same vein a discourse of Albanian abnormality and British superiority for The Economist. The most used taglines for the size of Albania are those of a “Tiny Albania”, “Pocket Size country”, “Little Albania”, “Miniscule Albania”, “The smallest country of the region”, “Sandwiched country between Greece, Italy and ex-Yugoslavia”, etc. The most frequent frames of the subject are those of “insignificance” as a “small, isolated, forgotten country” and of “political destabilization” as a “messy country” with “non-democratic tradition”. Sometimes dichotomy is also present as a way of framing the subject in terms of “Poverty/Sufferings” as well as in terms of “Inferiority/Defiance” or “Abnormality/Sympathy”.

The qualitative data show that the main discourse is that of abnormality and exceptionality with extreme schemata related to the territory, to the climate, to the people, to the nation, whereas the taglines for Albania are those of a small, tiny or little Albania and its variants such as the smallest country, the pocket-size country, the very little kingdom. Often the extreme is reinforced as in the example

“the smallest nation in the Balkans” that relates to Albania as the smallest of the smallest, and elsewhere as the worst of the bad, or the least of the last. The analysis next focuses on the findings from Time magazine according to three periods of study, first in the context of free and independent Albania, to the dictatorship period under communism and the third period that explores the developments after the fall of communism to nowadays.

First period: That independent but “small, little, tiny country of Albania” (1923-1944)

The first period (1923-1944) relates to the aftermaths of the First World War and the Second World War that produced battlefields to be covered in the Balkans in general and Albania in particular, as can be seen under the rubric of the magazine: “Balkan Theater”. The language of extremes for this period relates also to the climate, to the poverty as well as to the political developments and to the political leaders. Albania is called “Most primitive and out-of-the-way spot in Europe, most Oriental than Western...” in a long report that dates 17 April 1939. Albanians are also portrayed as “filthy, wretched, impoverished, fly-bitten, famine starved and earthquake stricken” in a report titled “Albania, President into King” that gives a contrast between the state of Albanian people and the King Ahmet Zogu. Often the extreme is reinforced as in the example “the smallest nation in the Balkans” that relates to Albania as the smallest of the smallest¹⁵. The language of extremes relates also to the climate, to the poverty as well as to the political developments and to the political leaders. In a report of the 11 January 1937, Tirana, the capital of Albania has been described as “the worst hole in Europe” in the phrase: “*Tirana, the mountainous little kingdom’s capital, is regarded among diplomats as the worst hole in Europe*”¹⁶. The Time report on Albania on the 21 of March 1927, depicts Tirana as “*that little, vile, ill-favored capital*”¹⁷. The extreme language goes on with other depictions such as in the phrase “*The almost rural silence of Tirana, the small capital perched in the mountains of the tiny Kingdom of Albania*”¹⁸. In other reports Time mentions the “*wild mountains behind Tirana*”¹⁹, or “*Through the jagged mountains of Albania*”²⁰ in a report referring to the extreme reliefs as well as in the phrase “*the mountains peaks and troughs of perpendicular little*

¹⁵ Time magazine, “Albania: a noose for Benito”, 7 June 1943

¹⁶ Time magazine, “Albania: Fatima or Else”, 11 January 1937

¹⁷ Time magazine; “Albania: Agent Provocateur”, 21 march 1927

¹⁸ Time magazine, “Albania: Birth and Death” of the date 17 April 1939

¹⁹ Time magazine, “Albania: a noose for Benito”, 7 June 1943

²⁰ Time magazine, “Zog’s Choice”, 7 February 1938

Albania” in another report²¹. In a long report that dates 17 April 1939 Time depicts Albania as “*Most primitive and out-of-the-way spot in Europe, most Oriental than Western...*”²². Referring to its size again, in a report of the 1924, Time writes “*Albania (about the size of New Jersey plus Maryland)*”²³. As to the Albanian people Time writes “*Albanians: filthy, wretched, impoverished, fly-bitten, famine starved and earthquake stricken*” in a report titled “Albania, President into King” that gives a contrast between the state of Albanian people and the King Ahmet Zogu²⁴. Moreover he is referred to as the “*Bachelor King*”, “*Little King Zog*”, “*His smart little majesty king Zog*”, “*Footlose Zog*”, “*Lonely King Zog*”, “*Hoarse-voiced King Zog*”, etc.

The journalistic style of Time writing is famous for its colors, boldness and parody, especially during the years studied here. Albania gets it all as a subject, but most of all is characterized by parody. Headings such as “*Albania: Footlose Zog*”, or “*Albania: Zog and Jerry*” or “*Albania: International Cough*”, “*Albania: Swiss Laws, Greek Patriarch*” are parodies in themselves. The body of the reports offers other colorful parodies such as in the constructs referring to Albanians as “*fierce-faced... hoped on scrawny donkeys*”²⁵ or “*baggy-trousered clansmen*”²⁶. In other expressions, Time refers to Albania as “*That sharp spur-wheel, Albania: or as “ready to be prodded” (International: Scared, 28 March 1927). Ahmet Zogu himself is often the favorite subject of parody when it is called freely “bachelor king”, “footlose Zog”, “Italy’s puppet”, “His smart little majesty King Zog”, “hog-tied (with a crown), “lonely King Zog” or “hoarse-voiced King Zog*”²⁷.

In a longer version Time refers to him as follows: “*Though Albania may lack roads, she should never lack for royal palaces. Last week Italian workmen and engineers, sent by King Zog’s patron and protector, Dictator Mussolini, laid the foundations of a new royal palace, Zog’s fifth outside the grimy old capital city of Tirana...*” and below: “*Albanians recalled that at the time of King Zog’s coronation last year, only one expresses intention of genuine Scanderbeg descendants to slit Zog’s royal gullet dissuaded the new King from adopting the title of Scanderbeg II*”²⁸.

²¹ Time magazine, “Balkan Theatre: Children of Socrates” published on the 9 May 1938

²² Time magazine, “Albania: Birth and Death”, 17 April 1939

²³ Time magazine, “Albania: Man Sized Revolt, 23 June 1924

²⁴ Time magazine, “Albania, President into King”, 27 August 1928.

²⁵ Time magazine, “Zog and Jerry”, 9 May 1938.

²⁶ Time magazine, “Albania; a nose for Benito”, 7 June 1943

²⁷ Time magazine, Albania: International Caough, 8 July 1929; “Albania; Supreme Removal”, 21 March 1932; “Footlose Zog,” 19 June 1933; “Milestones”, 27 January 1936; “Albania: Fatima or Else”, 11 January 1937; or “Italy: Lost and Found, 3 October 1938.

²⁸ Time magazine, “Albania: Zog, not Skanderbeg”, 17 June 1929.

Second Period: Albania, “a glimpse behind the Iron Curtain” (1945-1989)

The second period (1945-1989) coincides with the Cold War and its significance both for America and Albania as “*a country behind the Iron Curtain*”. The textual data in terms of the language, the style and the way Albania is depicted reinforce the discourse of abnormality for the second period as well, that of the communist dictatorship when it gets more profound and gains continuity for the future decades to come. Abnormal characteristics are attributed to the people, the places and the natural features of Albania as during the first period and for this period they are even more pronounced in the style of the communist regime and its representatives. What is more evident, the extreme schemata constitute the way of seeing Albania in almost every aspect and repetitively as “*the tiniest, the poorest, most backward country*”²⁹. The taglines for Albania remain unchanged with its size mentioned in almost all the reports in the variants “the tiny”, “the little”, “the small”, “the pocked-sized”. Extremities of the size are often associated with other extreme characteristics such as in the phrase: “*Pocked-size Albania has always been the most backward of the Iron Curtain countries*”³⁰. In another report Time states that “*Albania is the tiniest, the poorest and most backward of all communist satellites in Europe and the only one that has no common border with another state in the U.S.S.R’s empire*”³¹. Further on, the enmeshed extremities go hand in hand as in the phrase “*The tiny nation that Russia and Red China are using to work off their ideological aggressions, is tucked away in a remote corner of the Balkans*” (Eagle’s country: The Little Land they are fighting over, 27 October 1961). In another report, the extreme of the extremes is depicted as follows: “*Like Dante’s Inferno, Communism has its different levels of horror and misery. At the bottom of the pit, by almost any measure, lies Albania...*”³².

Similar depictions were also present in a report of the 1951 that declares: “*Albania is the most obscure, backward and isolated country behind the Iron Curtain*”³³. In another report Time writes that “*Life in Albania can be brutish, nasty and short. 14 concentration camps and dozen jails are jammed with an estimated 30 000 prisoners – nearly 2% of the total population*”³⁴. Such depictions are not exceptional and Albania is continuously referred to as a “benighted nation”³⁵,

²⁹ Time magazine, “Communists: a swim in the Adriatic”, 8 June 1959

³⁰ Time magazine, “Albania: Down goes Hoxha”, 2 August 1954

³¹ Time magazine, “Communists: a swim in the Adriatic”, 8 June 1959

³² Time magazine, “Albania, Over the Hill”, 3 June 1957

³³ Time magazine, “Albania, By remote control”, 14 May 1951

³⁴ Time magazine: “Albania: Death to the Muscovites”, 28 April 1961

³⁵ Time magazine, “Albania: Over the Hill”, 3 June 1957

“rugged country”³⁶, “rocky road”³⁷, “The weakest Soviet satellite”³⁸, “The only satellite isolated from Moscow by unfriendly territory”³⁹, “satellite Albania, Soviet Communism only Mediterranean base”⁴⁰, “Albania: the black sheep”⁴¹, “the most wretched country in Europe”⁴², “the least accessible nation in the communist world today”⁴³, “a minute, mountainous country... poor in living conditions, rich in anachronisms and completely alone in its bizarre comradeship with Red China...”⁴⁴, “the little Balkan dictatorship”⁴⁵, “puppet state of Albania”⁴⁶ or “China’s sole friend in Europe... and for the last decade it has been as angry and insulated as Peking itself”⁴⁷, “It is Europe’s poorest nation and one of the world’s most closed societies”⁴⁸.

The list gets long, but the colorful exceptional depictions continue as in the phrase: *“It is a pedestrian heaven; Albania is quite possibly the most earless country anywhere. The people are suspicious, curious, unsmiling- testimony to the effectiveness of Party Boss Hoxha’s moto: “It is fear that guards the vineyard”*⁴⁹. In another report, years latter, Albania is depicted as *“an isolated, mountainous country of 2,9 million people, is a place of bleak statistics. It is Europe’s poorest nation and one of the world’s most closed societies. Its harsh internal policies place it among the last bastions of Stalinism”*⁵⁰. A report of the late years of the dictatorship, after Hoxha’s death, cites: *“Known to his citizens as the “land of the Eagle” Albania is notable in two dubious counts: it is Europe’s poorest nation and a relic of the Stalinist era”* (Albania: The Eagle spreads its wings, 1 December 1986). In another report the exceptionality is depicted in a more lightweight style: *“Last week Communist Albania accomplished an astonishing record: almost perfect parliamentary elections. Every one of the country’s 1, 830, 653 registered voters cast a ballot, and all candidates selected by the Albanian Labor Party won 100% of the votes counted. But alas, a single ballot was declared invalid by officials. Wait till next year”*⁵¹. The last report for this period marks again the exceptionality of the size in the phrase: *“A Maryland-size slice of the Balkans, The People’s Socialist Republic of Albania has for more than three decades peeped warily at the world from behind a stiff veil of Marxist-Leninist rigidity”*⁵².

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Time magazine, “Albania, the rocky road”, 19 July 1954

³⁸ Time magazine, “Albania: a New Stooge”, 17 April 1950

³⁹ Time magazine, “Albania, Down goes Hoxha”, 2 August 1954

⁴⁰ Time magazine, “The Mediterranean: Out of the North, 29 July 1957

⁴¹ Time magazine: “Albania: the black sheep”, 23 June 1961

⁴² Time magazine, “Albania, Benighted nation”, 10 August 1962

⁴³ Time magazine: “Albania, Lock on the Dore, 26 May 1967

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Time magazine: “Albania: Emulating Mao, 23 February 1970

⁴⁶ Time magazine: “China: Don’t fence Mao in”, 26 May 1967

⁴⁷ Time magazine: “The World: Fear that guards the vineyard”, 6 September 1971

⁴⁸ Time magazine: “Albania, Enver Hoxha: 1908-1985, Stalin Disciple, 22 April 1985

⁴⁹ Time magazine, “The World, Fear that guards the vineyard, 6 September 1971.

⁵⁰ Time magazine, “Albania, Enver Hoxha: 1908-1985, Stalin Disciple, 22 April 1985

⁵¹ Time magazine, “Albania: what could be more perfect?”, 16 February 1987

⁵² Time magazine, “Albania: Borrowing from the past, 4 December 1989 (Time Europe)

The depiction of Enver Hoxha is not without contrasts and contradictions when Time in early reports describes him smoothly as “handsome Hoxha”, “spunky fellow”, “hulking, baby faced”, “truculent as a small boy”, “Albania’s youngish (38) dictator”, Enver Hoxha (rhymes with got-cha)”, whereas latter on continues to describe him quite neutrally as “Albania’s party boss Enver Hoxha”. Only after his death, Time calls him “doctrinaire dictator Enver Hoxha”. He once was even admired in a report by Time: “So he [Enver Hoxha] permitted free and secret balloting, under a system rude but effective. It functioned admirably”. In another report he gains also a mostly favorable account from *Time*: “*This same national touchiness is continually displayed by Red Boss Enver Hoxha, and represents much of his strength. Albanians have a Mediterranean fondness for florid and denunciatory speeches, and Hoxha is recognized even by his enemies as a master of this sort of oratory. Tall and handsome, with thick, pomaded hair now greying at the temples, Hoxha draws stormy applause for his insults to Khrushchev. Hoxha’s picture is plastered on just about every wall in the land. His profile adorns Albania’s monetary unit, the lek, and at meetings of the Communist Central Committee (most of whom are related to each other and to the boss by blood or marriage) Hoxha speaks from a podium decorated with a plaster bust of himself. Like his country, Hoxha is full of surprises. Instead of being a rough, tough mountain chieftain, he is a former schoolteacher and was the pampered son of a well-to-do Moslem merchant. Though he has the mentality of a brigand, his manners are those of a cultivated bourgeois and reflect his education at universities in France and Belgium*”⁵³.

Third period: Repetitive Albania, after the fall of communism (1990-nowadays)

The last period, from the 1990-s to nowadays represents drastic changes with Albania free from isolation and toward democracy and the media internationally immersed in the digital revolution, while the USA as well as the rest of the world experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall. The reports on the events right after the fall of the communist regime in the ‘90’s, as well as the episodes of the economic crises after the fall of the pyramid schemes in the year 1997 and the political events of protests like that of the 21 January 2011 constitute a large part not only of the occasions to write about Albania, but also to construct the subject as an exception, with the extreme depictions still dominant. For example in a report of the early days, Time writes: “*Paranoid, reclusive Albania is beginning to reach out and touch someone. The nation opened telephone links with 54 Western countries...*”⁵⁴

⁵³ Time magazine, “World: Albania: Stalin Heir”, 22 December 1961

⁵⁴ Time, “Grapevine, 14 May 1990 (Time US)

Albania continues to be referred to as the poorest, the tiniest, the most isolated as a rudiment of the dictatorship years as shows this report of 1991: *“Despite their landslide victory in Albania’s first free elections last spring, the old communist rulers have had trouble holding on to power as the wave of reform sweeps over Europe’s poorest and most isolated country”*⁵⁵

The serial of depictions as exceptionality continues as the below example shows: *“Only one Communist government in Europe managed to withstand the political earthquake unscathed. Now, nearly six months later, the leadership of Tiny Albania is finally loosening its ultra-orthodox Stalinist grip”*⁵⁶ Speaking of violence and crisis, here it goes in another report from the same year: *“Though the communists won a commanding 162 of the 250 People’s Assembly seats... their victory ignited some of the worst violence the country has seen in more than a year of escalating unrest”*⁵⁷

The repetitive features attract Time magazine coverage years later in the same fashion with more synonymies: *“Foreigners flee as tiny Albania dissolved into Mad Max-Style Chaos”*⁵⁸

This dramatic depiction is described as following: *“Europe looked to its southeast last week to find civilization vanishing down a sinkhole. Perennially under privileged Albania suddenly was no longer an organized society but a state of chaos... [...] what had begun as spontaneous revolts in a few southern cities turned all of the country into a Mad Max movie: children brandishing grenades and automatic rifles; wholesale looting; and frenetic, random gunfire—an utter collapse of civil authority. Small, sun-washed Albania had become the state of Anarchia”*⁵⁹

Continually referred to as “tiny Albania” the tagline doesn’t change for this period either as in the below citation from Time.com publication: *“Tiny Albania emerged from communist dictatorship in 1990 only to tumble into a rough world of gangsters, fraudulent financial machinations and incompetent governance, exacerbated by laëless capitalism and devil-may-care politics”*⁶⁰

The other epithets are also retaken like “remote country” or “the poorest” as in the below fragment from a report on the visit of former American president in Tirana: *“Bush will be the first sitting president to visit the remote Balkan country, the poorest in Europe, and Albanians have outdone themselves in preparations: tens of thousands have thronged to the run-down capital, Tirana, to get a glimpse of the American first couple”*⁶¹

⁵⁵ Time, “Albania: A setback for the Old Guard, 16 December 1991 (Time US)

⁵⁶ Time, “Albania and then there were none, 21 May 1990 (TIME US)

⁵⁷ Time, “Albania: It’s not over by a long shot, 15 April 1991 (Time US)

⁵⁸ Time, No Law or Order in the Land, 24 March 1997 (TIME US)

⁵⁹ Time, No Law or Order in the Land, 24 March 1997 (TIME US)

⁶⁰ Time, “The Trouble with Democracy: Albania’s Worrisome Vote, 21 May 2011 (Time.com)

⁶¹ Albania: “Please Occupy Us!”, 10 June 2007 (Time.com)

Again the protests and the political unrest come as primary subject in an article that states: “*The scandal was enough to spark last week’s protests, the most violent the country has seen in almost 15 years*”⁶²

Even the political figures are referred to in case they represent an exception as in the fragment below: “[*Edi Rama*] used his outsized personality (and physique) to transform his hometown and, with it, much of the country’s politics.”⁶³

Another political protagonist, Leka Zogu is depicted in an exotic fashion like in the fragment below: “*Bonus Royal Factoid: In the 1960s, the self-styled royal [Leka Zogu] struck up a friendship with Ronald Reagan. As a gift, he sent the future U.S. president a baby elephant named Gertie—a moniker deemed unrefined by Nancy Reagan, who rechristened the animal «GOP.»*”⁶⁴

Overall, the period from the year 1990 nowadays is marked by relevant developments both for *Time magazine* and Albania. During this period the magazine itself diversifies and the reports appear in an online publication from the year 1997, namely *Time.com*, as well as in the alternative publications of *Time Europe, Middle East and Africa* or *Time Asia*, whereas the core of it all is of course *Time US*. Even though the periods do not compound equal number of years, the tendency is toward less coverage regarding Albania as well as international coverage in general at *Time magazine* during this period. The diversified media like *Time Europe* or *Time Asia* and the online media like *Time.com* do not add much either. Angela Leuker, former administrator at *Time magazine*, the Vienna Office, from 1983 until 2006, tells about a small bureau centered in Vienna that covered both Central Europe and the Balkans⁶⁵. The chief of the office, James Graff (1990-1995) tells that the events in the Balkans were important during these years and that he travelled to Albania by himself in the first year to cover the first free elections in the country. However, when it comes to the number of reports on Albania that indicates a limited coverage, Graff tells that *Time* and almost all other publications in USA have drastically shortened the staffs not only internationally but also in the country. “I have served as Chicago Bureau Chief in the mid till the end of the ’90’s and *Time* doesn’t have an office there anymore either.... I have been to Octavo, Vienna, Brussels, Paris, London, but in two of these cities, in Octavo as well as in Brussels I have not been replaced by anyone. For more than a decade the office in Vienna doesn’t operate anymore and there will be no more a *Time* office there...”⁶⁶

⁶² Deadly Protests Don’t End Albania’s Power Play, 28 January 2011 (*Time.com*)

⁶³ A Mayoral Makeover, 2 October 2005 (*Time.com*)

⁶⁴ Life after the throne, 5 January 2008 (*Time.com*)

⁶⁵ Interview with Angela Leuker, administrator and supporting reporter for the Vienna Bureau at *Time Magazine* from 1986 to 2006.

⁶⁶ Interview with James Graff, former editor and Bureau Chief at Vienna Bureau, responsible for the coverage of the Central Europe and the Balkans during 1990-1995. Interviewed for this study the 3 February 2014.

There is also a tendency of a fall in the coverage of Albania in comparison to other countries of the region. For example Serbia gets 835 reports whereas Albania only 264 (both of them broadly mentioned, not as first subjects of content). Only compared to Montenegro and Macedonia, Albania still prevails. An Albanian freelancer and stringer at Time Magazine, Altin Raxhimi, tells that the first years of the '90's were the "flourishing" ones in coverage with Albania entering the subject of Kosovo events as well and the logistics that Time had in place in the region naming the most important members of the editorial offices in Europe like Massimo Calabresi, James Graff, but also the war correspondent Edward Barnes, as well as other senior correspondents like Sarah McLeary, without mentioning the supporting staff like drivers, fixers and stringers... Not anywhere close to CNN but still quite an army..."⁶⁷.

Massimo Calabresi, the chief editor of the Vienna Office after Graff left office and Edward Barnes, a senior war correspondent for both Time and Life magazines, tell that the interest in Albania was especially high during the war events and that the coverage at the time was very expensive⁶⁸.

The topics were mainly internal politics, democratic changes, conflicts and turbulent events, international relations and less so Albanian phenomena or social stories.

Massimo Calabresi, actual editor at Time for the Washington Bureau and former chief editor at the Vienna Office tells for this study that they were constrained to limit the number of stories and to be very selective bearing in mind the fact that the publication is weekly and that the staff was much more limited than that of the dailies⁶⁹.

Conclusion

Based on the above research, the main argument of this study is that the subject of Albania is approached and constructed in a repetitive constant way over time on the part of Time and The Economist magazines comparatively. Therefore, this paper tried to support the thesis that, in an evolutionary historical context, the topic of Albania in the western press, exemplified here by two American and British magazines remains approached and reported in a constant repetitive fashion. Its continuity and repetitiveness are firstly evidenced in the language used in terms of

⁶⁷ Interview with Altin Raxhimi, freelancer and former stringer and Albanian collaborator at Time magazine (1999-2011).

⁶⁸ Massimo Calabresi, the chief editor of the Vienna Office responsible for the coverage of the Central Europe and the Balkans during 1995-1999. Travelled to Albania and covered the 1997 events as well as the war on Kosovo..

⁶⁹ *ibid*

key words and phrases, taglines, epithets, comparisons and other stylistic means of journalistic expression such as parody. Secondly, the quantitative data analyses showed that the number of features published year after year, its classification in order of rubrics, topics, length, places, words and most mentioned personalities, places and type of events didn't differ substantially for each period. Thirdly, the interviews with editors and their code of practices allowed for some introspection linked to the theories of the social production of news and the social construction of the international news as well. This is to say that the press practices in terms of the production of foreign news, as well as international relations in general influences its content or its approach towards distant and foreign countries like Albania. Borrowing from a *Time* magazine report on the Balkans, Albania together with other countries are described as follows: "*The crowded area known as the Balkans have exploded regularly in unspeakably cruel wars... in the process, the Balkans: Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and the European part of Turkey, became famous as a scene of intrigue and espionage*"⁷⁰. It comes as a conclusion, in fashion with the title of the above report that the "old script" is not easily changed and so it doesn't in the case of Albania.

Additionally, the agency analysis tells that a constant negative approach of the western media towards the subject of Albania through time is based on a set of defining factors such as the organizational and professional media practices towards distant foreign subjects, whereas the power structures and the political economy of the mass media play a pivotal role. Secondly, the fact that there is no regular correspondence from Albania or close in the Balkans related to the centralized organizational structure of the media and the fact that the sources of information about Albania are scarce, indirect, unidentified or distant. The lack of pro-active information on the part of Albania is considered as a primary limitation for the coverage it gets abroad, as well as the lack of direct public diplomacy with international media and its audiences.

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⁷⁰ *Time Magazine*, "The Balkans: Changing the Old Script", 29 November 1971

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