

Self Presentation of Communist Albania Through the Antagonist Discourse

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Abstract

Given the fact that totalitarian systems use the media as the most powerful tool to produce and disseminate the ideology, the text of this paper is the printed press of that period. I especially selected the journal *Zëri i Popullit* (Voice of People), as it was the main representative press organ of Communist Party which would later become the Labor Party. Understanding the past discourses paves the ground for understanding their continuity or their change during the new systems of governance as it will be after 1990's in Albania. The methodology of this paper is Critical Discourse Analyze. I will use Critical Discourse Analyze at the same time as theory for this study. Since the totalitarian system ruled Albania during that period, the study will be focused on analyzing the hegemonic discourse, seeing antagonism as the basic form of power's self presentation. Also to understand the key moments of self presentation I have selected the articles during the national holidays such as 1st of May the Labor Day 28th of November the Independence Day and 29th of November the Liberation Day. The articles of press during national holidays are selected as key data, because these dates have always been important to deliver messages. This paper aims to establish discursive categories seeing antagonism as main feature of power legitimacy. Based on this argument the research question of this paper is; which are the elements used by printed press for its self presentation to legitimize the power?

Keywords: political discourse, media discourse, critical discourse analyze, hegemonic discourse, self presentation

Introduction

Language is one of the most important elements that help to construct the social structures. As well as language there are several other tools that help to raise up social structures such as; social context, economic context, cultural and political context. The presupposed structures are those concepts build in a society so that society can represent itself. Those structures at the same time help the society to understand the reality and to be part of this reality. Different authors argue the function of language in different ways; some of them argue that language structures the reality and others argues that reality produce the language. The approach followed in this study is the one which describes the language as a reality producer. As I said above the process through which we understand the reality doesn't happen by the spoken language but by the communicative language, therefore I chose the newspaper text as an important communicative text. Newspaper is a very important medium that transmits, produces and distributes messages. Referring to Bertrand (1997) there are four types of regimes of press which coincide with the political regimes during whom they are performing. So to explain the context of newspaper, *Zëri i Popullit*, I have to explain the political system of the period. The case of this study belongs to communist regime of press. Bertrand (1997:16-17) explains that totalitarian governments 'use media to spread the official ideology, to teach this ideology to people, to encourage people to follow this ideology and at the end, to impose it'. He also adds that third world medias pretended to have a very special role to; "serve to development, to educate the people, to conceive in a nation heterogeneous groups and to save the local culture"(Bertrand 1997: 17). By all these means media is used for a proper aim and directly for an effective self presentation. Regarding this approach the question raised is; which are the strategic discursive tools used by printed media during this period? Hypothesis of this paper is; to construct the social reality the communist regime in Albania uses printed media, and the main element through which the antagonist camps are constructed is history. Before arguing the hypotheses I should explain some key concepts such as self

presentation, hegemonic and antagonism that will be followed by critical discourse analyze. Referring to Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) we can summarize Critical discourse analyze in eight components such as;

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

According to these functions of discourse I will try to explain the ideology, the mediated text that is used to spread the ideology and the interpretative forms such as antagonism.

Methodology

Constructing discourse historical approach Wodak sets six types of different kind as 'field of action', one of them is formation of public opinion and self-presentation'(Wodak 2001:68). One of the genres of this field is press release. Because of that, the data collected from the newspaper including all the articles through this dates will help to explain the antagonist forms that the communist party has used to legitimate the power but at the mean time to represent itself. This paper is carried from years 1945 till years 1985 when Enver Hoxha¹ is dead. I especially chose these dates because after the death of dictator the regime turns out to have some changes with the new leader. As discourse analytical approach I will use the dimension of strategy.

Strategy

The first step of historical discourse analyze is the identification of main themes of content. According Wodak this identification is realized through the pilot reading of empirical data, which will be connected with the proper theories of the study (Wodak et al 1999). A second related dimension of analyze is strategy. De Cillia et al distinguish four types of macro-strategies;

(1)constructive strategies; (2)perpetuation and justification strategies; (3) transformation strategies; and (4);dismantling or destructive strategies (De Cillia et al. 1999:160)

Strategy helps to understand the used discourse for the self presentation. Referring to the presumption of this paper I will try to explain the application of these four macro strategies using the historical dates where we chose the empirical data. Constructive strategies describe the various linguistic ways through which we perceive and build the group. Referring to De Cillia et al; Components of constructive strategies are all persuasive linguistic devices which help invite identification and solidarity with the 'we-group', which, however, simultaneously implies distancing from and marginalization of 'others'(1999: 160).

¹ Leader of Communist Party in Albania that ruled from 1945 till April 1985

Through justification and legitimating which are the main components of perpetuation strategies the discourse tries to construct Our-history. Who we are, why we are, why we should be are the most important perspectives of this strategy (De Cillia 1999:161). The continuity, as well as threaten of this continuity help to construct the history of *Us* (Wodak et al, 1999).

The use of discourse to change a deep rooted aspect of self presentation's identity is realized by transformation strategies. During political discourse analyzes the political oriented press or political actors are the possible re-definers of the new meanings.

The destruction of mythic elements through which the mediated tools or politicians fabricate the history is realized by dismantling or destructive strategies. Wodak explains that, while the existing identities are being dismantled by this strategy, they do not get replaced (Wodak et al, 1999)

Strategies of self presentation

For the self presentation process Jones (1990) establish five strategies; ingratiation, competence, intimidation, supplication and exemplification. As I am presenting a self presentation of a political system, I should be aware that there are some differences in strategy making between individuals and systems. Regarding communist Albania I will chose intimidation, exemplification and competence as strategies used by Communist Albanian Party. A better and shorter description of these chosen strategies is made by Dominick (1999:648) as below; Intimidation: Persons using this strategy have power as their goal. Typical characteristics are threats, statements of anger, and potential unpleasantness. Exemplification: The goal of this strategy is to be perceived as morally superior or possessing high moral standards. Characteristics include ideological commitment or militancy for a cause, self sacrifice, and self discipline. Competence: The goal of this strategy is to be perceived as skilled and qualified. Common characteristics include claims about abilities, accomplishments, performance, and qualifications.

Newspaper's text analyses

Beside different articulation such as classes, ideology, friends, education and culture during this study the history is the articulation which affects mostly the discourse. Through the element of history, we will see how the antagonist camps divide and how the social identity is constructed separately in the proper camps it belongs. History will play an important role to reinforce the antagonism between the different camps. The growth of antagonism will increase the hegemony, therefore the power will be more legitimated. As far as self presentation strategies are, intimidation, exemplification and competence, in this study we will see how these strategies interlink and interact with the discursive strategies and how the history became an important tool during this process. The analyze will be based in three important historical dates. Each of the dates, 1st of May, 28th of October and 29th of October will be analyzed separately as an important and different entity of discourse that help in the construction of self presentation identity of the Communist Party.

While analyzing the text I will try to explain how the self presentation strategies ate interfered and integrated with self presentation strategies constructing both precedents of a totalitarian identity of *Us*.

1st of May

Based on Albanian press, is clear that during the years 1945 two main poles are constructed. These two poles as well as save the equivalence inside them will be different one to the other. The first pole is based on concepts such as; people, party, worker class, peasantry and will be the opponent pole of all the former official of monarchy, former land owners, former member of other organizations or parties, during the National War for Independence, who did not fought in the side of Communist Party. 1st of May as an international holiday will serve to empower the group *Us*, making it part of a larger group of a more global group, beyond the Albanian borders. 1st of May will be the holiday of every person part of communist republics from one continent to the other. To reinforce the group *Us*, there is also a transferring from nation to class. Because working class is more comprehensive. Celebrating the 1st of May internationally makes the group larger and stronger. The regime takes the model of celebration from other communist countries, and uses for the unification with these countries. Meanwhile the opposite patterns are, West Europe and the entire West world. Through exemplification that puts on the high moral standards of the group it is analyzed that party identity with the 1st of May has two imperative discourses which are protection and peace. The discourse that expresses the protection of peace aims to unify the group and peace

has the aim to increase the morality of the group. One of examples that is found mostly can be illustrated with the text below;

"Today our country is unbeaten castle, which protect with courage its freedom and independence, and protect the peace in this place of the world. (Zëri i Popullit,01. 05. 1952)

There is also another paragraph that enforces the idea of peace such as;

"The worker in fabric, the farmer in the field, the student in the school, the officer in the office protect the peace in the same way as the soldier in the border; each of them in their own way with their own tools." (Zëri i Popullit,01. 05. 1953)

Self presentation through intimidation is seen using the discourse of war. The power that comes through the war makes *Us* powerful in front of inside enemies the old regime and ex powerful class such as monarch and others but at the same time war empower the group of *Us* against the outside enemies such as imperialist and capitalist world. An illustrative example is;

"... 1st of May is being celebrated as the day of international consolidation of working class, as day of detestation and revenge against capitalism, as day of war for freedom and against ruling class." (Zëri i Popullit, 01. 05. 1950)

Also during the years 1960 there is another text that explains self presentation through intimidation. There is a text cited by Lenin chosen for the front page of the newspaper;

" In this big war there are two worlds that stay one in front of the other: the world of capital and the world of work, world of exploitation and slavery and world of brotherhood and freedom." (Zëri i Popullit, 01. 05. 1960)

In the text of 1st of May 1971 we can analyze the self presentation through the Competence. The group of *Us* is skilled and qualified. But it is important to underline that all these skills and qualifications are thanks to a well organized party and its leader Enver Hoxha. The text below is a summary discourse of such a strategy.

"The party raised up the worker, made him the only powerful god of his country. Today our intelligent folk that parades side by side has realized a wonderful work, embodying the ideals of communist party and lessons of comrade Hoxha"(Zëri i Popullit,01. 05. 1971)

To reinforce the self presentation strategy of competence we will show a quote cited from Enver Hoxha, established on the front page of the newspaper during 1st of May 1968;

" It is a fact that we have a heroic working class, with a great revolutionary spirit and courage, we have a working class closely related with its party and its folk."(Zëri i Popullit, 01. 05. 1968)

28th of November and 29th of November

Analyzing the two of the most important historical dates in Albanian history, 28th of November and 29th of November, I will try to show how the self presentation is well integrated in discourse strategies and how the dates changes their importance through the discourse.

The 28th of November is the international Independence Day for Albania. Albania won independence from Ottoman regime on 28th of November 1912. Till the years 1945 for all the Albanians this was the most important historical day. But later on in year 1945 with the new regime, we can see how the totalitarian regime will capture this date and transform its importance to reinforce and make more powerful the 29th of November which is the known as Liberation Day. The communist regime which was installed on November of 1945 made this date as the key point of Albanian history. This date will become important because it glorifies the Communist Party itself, because it sees and shows it as its own success.

Using the strategy of justification and victimization where the 28th of November will be shown as an unfinished attempt, the Communist Party will represent its self as confident, strategic and powerful through the self presentation strategies.

The discourse strategy in this case will help to transform the importance from 28th to 29th and then to glorify the 29th. Examples extracted by newspaper text will illustrate better the situation.

On year 1959 we can see as at the date of 28th the news paper writes about 29th as below;

“Our folk will happily celebrate tomorrow 29th of November...” (Zëri i Popullit, 28. 11. 1959)

Through the strategy of victimization the newspaper’s text shows that;

“ ...even the declaration of independence the Albanian were not really liberated ...” (Zëri i Popullit, 29. 11. 1951)

Because the 28th of November is seen as an;

“The stage that had its full culmination on 29th of November 1944, when Albanian folk manned from Communist Party and comrade Enver Hoxha...” (Zëri i Popullit, 28. 11. 1965)

In almost all the texts that comes out during the date of 29th of November we a discourse that conclude this date as the most important one. An example of all this is the text that shows the form of celebration of this date;

“ ...graciously we celebrate the 29th of November, the Day of Liberation, the greatest date of our history through the centuries” (Zëri i Popullit,29. 11. 1949)

Fading the date of 28th of November, by shifting the importance to 29th of November, and unraveling the heroes of that date, the communist party will construct the 29th of November by exemplification. Through this strategy the party involves all its ideological superiority and sacrifices. Most of the texts found in the newspaper can be summarized with such a paragraph;

“29th of November marks our history, the border between two worlds, the one where the folk was mistreated from ‘the powerful ones’ and where was nothing true and right and the other where we stand up the pedestal of full master of our fates”(Zëri i Popullit, 29. 11. 1964)

An important point of this strategy is military and to conclude the analyze I have picked a paragraph where the military force plays an important role during the self presentation;

“There was nobody there donating the freedom, we gain it with our blood and our struggle, we didn’t need any allied armies to come at our land and help us” (Zëri i Popullit, 29. 11. 1979)

Conclusion

All the systems not only the totalitarian ones use strategies to self present and by this to gain terrain and to legitimize themselves. The same happened in totalitarian Albania as well. Even the communist party used its force and terror, its full power to convince, the power itself was never sufficient. The long-life of regime, more than 45 years, shows that the communist party used media as well to better legitimize itself. Analyzing the texts of the newspaper Zeri i popullit helps us to understand how the regime presented itself and what it chose to self present.

As seen in the analyze part, most of strategies were present, but differently chosen. If in 1st of May they are altogether to make a self presentation, it is different on 28th of November. In the 28th of November the system uses justification and unraveling the myths more than exemplification, intimidation or competence. More than an international day the 28th was used as a bridge that helped to empower the 29th of November. Meanwhile during the 29th of November the strategy that is mostly used is exemplification. It is not by chance but it is on purpose because, because through this strategy the regime reinforce its values.

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Appendixes

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Konference Solemne – Shefqet Peçi (anëtar i Komitetit Qendror të P. P. SH.). (1951, Nëntor 29). *Zëri i Popullit*, pg. 2

Rrugë fitoresh. (1959, Nëntor 28). *Zëri i Popullit*, pg. 1

Fjalimi i shokut Enver Hoxha. (1964, Nëntor 29). *Zëri i Popullit*, pg. 3

Per beteja te reja, per fitore te reja ne ndertimin socialist. (1965, Nëntor 28). *Zëri i Popullit*, pg. 1

Zëri i Popullit, 1 Maj, 1952, pg. 1

Zëri i Popullit, 1 Maj, 1953, pg. 1

Zëri i Popullit, 1 Maj, 1950, pg. 1

Zëri i Popullit, 1 Maj, 1960, pg. 1

Zëri i Popullit, 1 Maj, 1971, pg. 1

Zëri i Popullit, 1 Maj, 1968, pg. 1