

Neo-liberal Globalization and the EU Integration of the Western Balkans: The Case of Albania

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Abstract

The main rhetoric of the European Union for the Western Balkans, since the mid 1990's has developed around the idea that if the Western Balkans implement the reforms recommended by the EU, they will develop economically, build a healthy democracy based on a functional rule of law system. In case of the failure of the reforms to achieve these objectives, which indeed is often the case, the answer is founded in the (liberal) modernization theory which argues that the reasons for the failure must be found on the domestic problems and the wrong implementation of the reforms whose beneficiary properties are taken for granted. This paper argues that contrary to the modernization theory, despite the fact that Albania faces many domestic socio-economic problems, structural causes and mechanisms/processes, which emerge from the operation of global economic system (neo-liberal globalization) rest at the center of this failure. This paper, based on the insights of the neo-Gramscian perspective, analyzes the EU integration strategies towards Albania as part of the neo-liberal globalization project/agenda. The complex and dynamic relations based on consent and coercion during this process and the role of the European Commission as the main instrument of this strategy will constitute the focus of this paper. Here is underlined the fact that despite the EU discourse on the implantation of reforms on democracy, human rights and the rule of law as pre conditions for full membership, in practice the Commission initiatives are strongly focused and restricted to the neo-liberal restructuring of Albania while leaving no concrete space for full membership. By the same token, reforms on the rule of law and democracy are reduced on the requirements of the neoliberal economic-political model of accumulation. As a result the main elements of the Commission strategies such as the neo-liberal economy restructuring, rule of law and democracy have not developed proportionally, leading to the reproduction of a kind of authoritarian state.

Keywords: Neo-liberal restructuring; Western Balkans; Albania; European integration policies.

Introduction

The objective of this article is to analyze the impacts of global structural changes and the European Union (EU) integration policies as part of neo-liberal restructuring agenda in Albania.

To begin with, it is important to highlight that the concept of transition which has become a buzzword to denote the socio-economic and political transformation of post-socialist countries, cannot be defined as just a shift from a planned economy to a free market democracy, rather it is a complex process of redefinition and restructuring of state society relationship (Shields, 2012: 17-18), which led to the emergence of a new configuration of social power relations. As Hermann puts it, despite the fact that “neoliberalism is an international agenda, the implementation of neoliberal policies is, nevertheless, dependent on local struggles and compromises” (2007: 6). Therefore, a complete analysis of the transition and integration (restructuring/transformation) of Albania, must include both domestic and external actors and factors. Yet it is impossible to touch upon all these factors in this paper. Thus, the examination will be focused on the effects of the international financial institutions policies and the EU strategy towards Albania in the context of neo-liberal restructuring. This is because, the neo-liberal restructuring itself constitutes the very environment where Albanian politics – often accused as the main responsible for the failure to build a state of law – operate. This does not mean that domestic factors does not play an important role, rather it implies that incentives for the actions of domestic actors can be better understood and explained when placed into a structural conditional environment. Thus, contrary to the widespread belief that equates the failure to build a (democratic) state of law with corruption permeating all Albanian society – the latter seen as an intrinsic Albanian problem (Kajsiu, 2014: 5) – it will be argued that the main domestic actors (like political elites) act within the limits imposed by structural factors such as the implementation of neo-liberal policies. The main argument is that the central driving force of transition in post-socialist Albania is the neo-liberal restructuring agenda which is imposed both by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) and the EU integration policies.

The European integration as part of neo-liberal restructuring project

Many Europeans as well as the bulk of them who aspire to be part of the EU, considerate it as an exceptional organization of the global system. Often the assumed exceptional character of the EU is based on the social rights and equality policies that European states offer to their citizens compared with their American and Asian counterparts (Hermann, 2007:1). However, the EU cannot be considered apart and immune from the globalization process. As everywhere else, structural changes in the global economic system reshaped also the socio-economic relations of the EU, which led to the emergence of new social power configurations (Bieler and Morton, 2001: 5). Therefore, Stephen Gill argues that taking into consideration the social structural and political arrangements during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s is crucial for understanding the European integration policies/process (1992: 159), since the neo-liberal restructuring became the underlying driving force of its revival.

According to the neo-Grassian perspective, globalization is the “transnationalisation of production and finance at the material level and the shift from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism at the ideological level” (Cox, 1993: 259-60; Bieler and Morton, 2001: 5). While on the global level, the main driving force was assumed to be the free market, unrestricted capital and financial mobility (Hermann, 2007:2), on the national level, the shift from Keynesianism to neoliberalism was based on low inflation and stability prices, and on the abandonment of the full employment (Cox, 1993: 259-60, 266-7). Indeed these new arrangements caused many serious problems for many countries, particularly for the undeveloped ones. The international financial institutions, such as the IMF and the WB furthered this process through their carrot and stick policies, thus making the granting of credits conditional on meeting the neo-liberal restructuring packets such as budgetary restrictions and privatization of public companies, enterprises and services, and application of low taxes for private sector etc. (Hermann, 2007:4).

Shortly, neo-liberalism become an agenda for restructuring the capitalist economy and the social system (ibid:2). Neo-liberalism imposes a new top down socio-economic order, through consent and coercion mechanisms. That makes governments more responsible for private enterprises or market forces and less responsible or responsive to welfare issues. The security of private sectors remains one of the main objectives of governments (Gill, 2001:47). In this context the rule of law and democracy are required (for developing countries) as long as they serve to neo-liberal restructuring policies. Accordingly, while some developed countries embraced neo-liberal policies for competing with the global market, the rest accepted it in order

to get aids/grants from the international financial organizations since their survival depended directly to this foreign financial assistance.

The revival of European integration process in the 1980s developed also within the context of global structural changes triggered by the neoliberal response to the structural crisis of over accumulation that emerged in 1970s. The policies delivered by the EU and the re-launch of European integration – through the Internal Market (1985) and the signing of the Single European Act (1986)–by no means departs from the neoliberal mainstream. This re-launching coincided with the foundation of the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT), an organization that represents the Europe’s biggest transnational industrial corporations (Apeldon, 2001: 48, 54). The increase of globally oriented capital in the EU, supported by the neo-liberal transnational historical bloc also forced the restructuring of the capital consistent with global capital (Gill, 2001: 75). The ERT lobbied strongly for the integration of the common market (Hermann, 2007: 8).

Gill defines the Internal Market project as a turning point in the European integration process towards neoliberalism (2003: 63). Even though, the Internal Market primarily was introduced as the creation of a big home market in front of global market, it served to the globalization of the EU itself (Apeldon, 2001: 79). Indeed it is an important project for the neo-liberal restructuring of the EU, focused on free market by the deregulation and liberalization of national economies (ibid). Thus, European integration shifted from a “socio-economic and industrial space to...an advanced free trade zone within a free trading world” (ibid).

The Maastricht Agreements and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) also constitute important developments to be discussed in the terms of neo-liberal restructuring discourse (Gill, 2001: 50). As Apeldon puts it “the socio-economic content of Maastricht can in fact be interpreted as reflecting the transnational configuration of social and political forces within the European political economy at the beginning of the 1990s” (2001: 81). The formation of a transnational capitalist class played an important role in this new configuration of the social power relations. It succeeded in incorporating and manifesting its interest as the interests of all and therefore in establishing its hegemony. Contrarily, trade unions remained fragmented and as a result failed to protect their previous gains and efforts. The restructuring of the state-civil society relations such as the privatization of public services like pensions, health and education and the implementation of monetary and fiscal policies in order to increase the credibility for

private enterprises shifted the EU towards the neo-liberal economic system (Gill, 2001: 49). In a nutshell, social democracies were subordinated to the interest of globalizing capital. Consequently, most of social reforms included in the Maastricht treaty failed to be materialized because of big capital's efforts.

In regard to this, the EMU cannot be considered only as an economic project but as an attempt to institutionalize the neo-liberal norms in the region and reconcile regional integration with globalizing forces (Gill, 2001: 52). This was a requirement for the Internal Market (Apeldon, 2001: 80). EMU furthered the neo-liberal economic process by establishing an independent European Central Bank (ECB) with a monetary policy based on low inflation and price stability. Its role was to force states to apply fiscal policies in convergence with neoliberal criteria. Even though the fulfillment of the Single European Market and establishment of the ECB looks as just an economic integration in appearance, it is in fact a process of configuration of the new powers in Europe (Holman, 2010).

As it is shown in this paper, the main issues of the reforms in the EU are focused on enhancing the implementation of neoliberal policies such as free trade, monetary and fiscal austerity policies, and the erosion of employment security. In some aspects, some states in the union have gone further by applying more radical neoliberal policies compared to the runners of neo-liberalism, the US and the UK. All these reforms eroded the social model of European welfare-states. (Hermann, 2007: 23).

In this respect, the EU strategy towards the Western Balkans must be analyzed primarily within this socio-economic structural context, considering the dynamics and complexity of the process of neo-liberal globalization. Otherwise the analysis risks remaining incomplete. Thus, the ideational/cultural factors which are so often utilized to explain the problems facing many developing countries as is the case of Albania, must be placed into this larger structure or process of neo-liberal transformation of the Western Balkans. To this purpose, having argued that the EU is an integral part of neo-liberal process, it will be scrutinized the EU integration policy and its impact towards Western Balkans.

The EU strategy towards the Western Balkans

During the early 1990s the EU strategy towards the Western Balkans was based on financial assistance programmes such as PHARE, the main objective of which was the establishment of

stability through democratic institutions, the rule of law, the return of refugees and protection of human rights etc. (Bartlett, 2008: 197). It was only after the Bosnian war that the EU adopted the “Regional Approach”, for all the Western Balkan countries that did not have any association agreements with it. The Regional Approach included a comprehensive framework for unilateral trade preferences, financial assistance and regional cooperation based on principle of conditionality (General Affairs, 1997). The European Commission defines the level of financial assistance that EU will provide to the respective country, according to the progress that it has done on meeting the required conditions. On the other hand, the starting of bilateral negotiations or association agreements were committed to many other strict and detailed conditions on providing economic reforms. Thus, in addition to the general conditions mentioned above, were required also macroeconomic policies for stabilization of economic environment, liberalization of price and trade, reforms in the rule of law, privatization of public or states enterprises, and reforms in the banking sector. The countries which meet these conditions would be able to benefit from trade preferences, financial assistance and progressing on contractual bilateral relations with the EU (Bartlett, 2008: 198).

Indeed the conditionality was not an exception for the Western Balkans countries, since the EU strategy towards the CEE countries was based on conditionality as well (Türkes and Gökgöz, 2006: 675). The problem here is the so-called “negative conditionality” (Anastasakis and Bechev, 2003: 7), which is meant to offer no promise for a future membership to the EU, and in the case of Serbia even outright sanction. Therefore, Türkeş and Gökgöz define the Regional Approach as:

“The manner in which conditionality applied in the case of the Western Balkans clarified the contours of a distinctly different mode of relations that the EU would maintain with the region: there was no prospect for rapid membership but the countries meeting the conditions were to be rewarded with trade concessions, financial assistance and economic cooperation on the part of the EU. It emphasized the borders of fragmentation in the region, pushing the Western Balkans down to a lower rank in the accession partnership process.”
(2006: 676)

The Kosovo war may be considered as a turning point of the EU policies towards the Western Balkans. It demonstrated that the Commission as an actor and the EU as a structural factor have

been insufficient for the stabilization of the region. Therefore, the EU envisaged a new strategy for the Western Balkans, so-called the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP). SAP would serve as an important contribution of the EU to the multilateral Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe (Hombach, 1999) by taking a leading role in the stabilization of the region, and also presenting a new strategy of the Commission in the Western Balkans (Kramer, 2000). Thereby, SAP would become the cornerstone of the EU strategies in the Western Balkans, as the major policy framework for domestic and foreign policies. According to the Commission's suggestions SAP is focused on six key target areas such as:

“Development of existing economic and trade relations with and within the region; development and partial redirection of existing economic and financial assistance; increased assistance for democratization, civil society, education and institution-building; co-operation in the area of justice and home affairs; development of political dialogue, including at regional level; development of Stabilization and Association Agreements [SAA]” (European Commission, 1999).

In a similar vein with previous strategies, the SAP instruments were based also on conditionality. Therefore, according to the Commission's progress reports, the countries which have made progress regarding the meeting of the SAP conditions, can pass to another level by signing a SAA with the EU. The SAA's main framework focuses on:

“Offering the prospect of full integration with EU structures; Establishing a functioning framework for a continuous political dialogue; Supporting the consolidation of a democratic regime and a state of law; Furthering economic reforms and the development of market structures; Establishing the administrative and economic pre-requisites for the later conclusion of a bilateral free trade agreement; Laying the foundations for extensive co-operation in justice and home affairs; Establishing broad co-operation on all issues that would contribute to reaching these goals” (European Commission, 1999).

In this context, the main financial instrument introduced to the region was the so-called Community Assistance for Association, Development and Stabilization (CARDS). Later, it

would be replaced by the new Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), which aimed bringing institutional reforms into line with the EU standards.

A bigger picture suggests that the SAP and the SAA itself does not offer a really new and inventive EU policy for the region. They do not differ much in kind from other well-known European Agreements concluded between the EU and the CEE countries since early 1990s. Indeed, the novelty remains on the fact that for the first time, the SAA is “offering the prospect of full integration with EU structures” to the Western Balkans. In other words, it opened a process of gradual integration into the EU structures based on the Amsterdam Treaty and the Copenhagen Criteria, for the countries that meet the required conditions. Since then, the EU has also advanced trade relations with all the Western Balkan countries via autonomous trade measures and the early implementation of the SAA trade provisions. All the countries have signed the respective SAAs. In addition, while Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania are officially candidates for accession to the EU.

As it is noticed above, the Balkan countries are involved at different stages in the process of integration (Türkeş and Gökgöz, 2006: 659). But, the fact that Commission has not produced yet any concrete plan or strategy for the full membership of the region or any particular country in the EU, indicates that its recommendations and strategies serve primarily to the purpose of stability in the region in order to avoid that problems of the region expand into the union and second to the neoliberal restructuring of the region rather than the process/goal of full membership. As Mustafa Türkeş and Göksü state, the EU strategy towards the Western Balkans does not include neither exclusion nor a full integration in the short period (ibid). Indeed the EU integration process is seen as a tool for neoliberal restructuring of the Western Balkans. The hegemonic/neoliberal project of the EU in the region, is a complex and dynamic process between the Commission and respective governments which includes both consent and coercion (Shield, 2014: 17-18). The asymmetrical power that the EU holds in this process, have led to a top-down process on the restructuring of the socio-economic relations with the Western Balkans. The impact of this process will be further discussed below through the case of Albania.

The Neoliberal Restructuring of Albania

This part will focus on the impacts of the so-called transition, or neo-liberal restructuring project in Albania. While the neo-liberal restructuring can be seen as an Anglo-Saxon response (hence a project) to counter the structural crisis of over accumulation that began in 1970s, and which was redefined in 1990s with the so-called post-Washington consensus (Wallerstein, 2000; Saad-Filho, 2005), for the countries of the Western Balkans and Albania in particular neo-liberal restructuring became the very structure within which they had to transform themselves. Thus, as was argued in the introduction part of this paper, the concept of transition if is not associated with the redefinition of state-society and state-economy reconfiguration triggered by neo-liberal restructuring, remains a buzzword unable to penetrate both the social and political economy dimension of the transformations taking place in the Western Balkans. In a similar way with the countries in the region, Albania passed from a double transformation process, from a planned economy to a free market economy and from an authoritarian state to a parliamentary democracy. It is important to stress the fact that Albania's transition to neo-liberalism took place in the absence of the welfare-state. In other words, while the transition to neo-liberal restructuring of the Western countries was "tempered" by the presence of the welfare-state mechanisms (against whom neo-liberal agenda was directed), the transformation to neo-liberalism of Albania lacked the supportive mechanisms of welfare-state such as industrial unions important to negotiate the reverse effect of mass unemployment caused by massive privatizations. To put it laconically, Albania entered communism before capitalism and dive into neoliberal globalization before experiencing the Keynesian/welfare-state. Such macro historical and structural constraints have defined the general framework of post-socialist Albania's development.

In 1991 Albania became a full member of institutions such as the IMF and the WB. From this moment the macroeconomic policy in Albania was developed under the influence and in accordance with the interests of global/Western capital (Chossudovsky, 2000: 388). Thus, in 1992 the IMF and the WB agreed to "came to the help" of the new Albanian government by offering financial aids. Additionally again in 1992 Albania signed the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation with the EU (at that time was called European Economic Community) (Relations between Albania and the EU, 1992) and later become part of the EU financial assistance programme, such as PHARE and other similar programs. As it was already mentioned above, all the foreign assistance were based on the principle of conditionality. Therefore, as a condition for aids, it was required the implementation of the "shock therapy"

stabilization policy (Bartlett: 2008, 31) based on the neo-liberal policies such as stabilization, privatization, deregulation, deindustrialization, reduction of the power of labor, and the abandonment of social policies on behalf of social discipline. As a result, all the state companies and services were privatized in a short time while most of the new owners of these companies become foreign citizens. As such, all economic and financial barriers were removed in favor of free market (Chossudovsky, 2000: 388). In this context, the restrictive monetary and fiscal policies imposed in order to decrease the inflation and budget deficit (Bartlett, 2008: 31) and the rapid privatization of public companies and services caused dramatic consequences for all the society. The prevalence of unemployment, low wages, the lack of social assistance and services etc. led to a dramatic increase of organized crime and corruption, paving the way to informal economy, nonfunctional institutions, lack of the rule of law and political and economic instability. Privatization and the removal of customs barriers caused catastrophic impacts on the domestic industry and agriculture. Thus, all the domestic production became totally unprotected from the global market (Chossudovsky, 2000: 388). The lack of advanced technology in industry and agriculture made them unable to compete in the both global and domestic market. Everything (even the most basic nutriment) had to be imported from outside. This was in tune with the neo-liberal claim that “international trade and finance – rather than domestic consumption – should become the engines of development” (Saad-Filho, 2005: 114).

As a result of pursuing the implementation of the “shock therapy”, fiscal and monetary austerity policies increased their impact both on the citizen’s life and in the state mechanisms, causing grave waves of emigration and state failure. These drastic reforms culminated in the total collapse of state in 1997, generally misconceived as a side-effect of the frenetic get-rich-quick behavior of Albanian individuals who invested everything on the pyramid schemes while overlooking its structural roots. Ironically, the very “shock-therapy stabilization policy” that was envisaged to deliver sustained economic growth and rising living standards, let Albania to ruin. Yet the biggest paradox rest on the fact that instead of applying social policies in order to repair the damage in the aftermath of Pyramid Crisis, Albania would enter a more strict neo-liberal agenda “under the tutelage of the IMF and the WB” (Bartlett, 2008: 33) and the European Commission. During this second stage (1997 onwards) the EU via Regional Approach, SAP and SAA strategies would play an even more important role in the neo-liberal restructuring of Albania. The consideration of the EU as a financial source for economic prosperity by the Albanian states elite’s strengthened the Commission’s hand on neo-liberal restructuring of the

region. On the other hand, the lack of domestic production and continuous deindustrialization of the country made the country completely dependent on the foreign financial assistance and loans. This increased the foreign influence on the government's elites and led them to implement all the required reforms without considering the impacts on society. As it is demonstrated above, besides the Albanian economic history and policy choices (domestic factors), global structural changes and particularly top-down neo-liberal restructuring can be seen as the main factors that affected and defined the Albania's post-socialist development. All of the domestic reforms were done in line with recommendations and requirements of the international community, such as the IMF, the WB, and the EU.

Indeed the Pyramid Crisis of 1997 and state collapse, served as a legitimization of the view that the responsibility for the Pyramid Crisis rested mainly on the authoritarian practices of Berisha government and the corruption of ex-communist elites, while it can be viewed more clearly as the rational outcome of implementing the "shock therapy". Thus, Albania instead of interrogating the logic of the socio-economic restructuring they embraced uncritically, and which was already criticized sharply in the countries of origin, 1998 onwards it embarked on furthering the neo-liberal agenda, ironically, under the auspices of the left-wing Socialist Party government of Fatos Nano. It is important to note at this point that both two main political parties dominating the post-socialist politics, the Socialist and Democrat Party embraced the same ideological philosophy (namely neoliberalism) as the only alternative. This ideological collapse became even clearer in the aftermath of Pyramid Crisis of 1997 when neo-liberalism was re-introduced under the Socialist Party. As Kajsiu rightly notes "by blaming corruption as the major obstacle to economic development, the international discourse on corruption diverted criticism away from the shortcomings of the neoliberal developmental model" (Kajsiu, 2014: 8) enabling as such the reproduction and re-introduction of neo-liberal policies such as the privatization of the public sector as central to anti-corruption measures (ibid). Because the corruption problem was equated with the abuse of public property, it offered as a natural solution to this problem the furthering of privatization. This anti-corruption discourse constructed by international institutions and embraced and reproduced by local political elites, in turn legitimized the perpetuating of neo-liberal order (ibid: 9) as the sole alternative to "socialist regime".

In a nutshell, since the 1990's the neo-liberal restructuring led to the emergence of an authoritarian and corrupted state apparatus, whose main concern at the first stage, has been the "primitive accumulation of capital" through illegal ways. While in the other Western countries it was the emergence of a transnationally oriented class that forced the (neo-liberal) transformation (Bohle, 2006: 75), in Albania, as mostly in the Western Balkans political elites were its main perpetrators. Thus this close relationship between business and political elites generated the so-called *crony capitalism*. At this point it is important to argue that the "capitalist class" and government elites in Albania are not independent from each other, rather they nurture/construct each other. Because, the roots of the emerging capitalist class in Albania lie in illegal sources (like money laundering or abuse/appropriation of public property for private gain), they did not possess the capacity nor the will to embark on massive employment initiatives via industrial investments. Therefore at the initial stage, they lacked the "raw materials" to articulate their narrow interests as the interest of all society and construct a hegemony as such. Consequently, their "legitimacy" and "survival" depended on the connections they developed with politicians. On the other hand, the politicians (and high officials) themselves seem not to base their legitimacy on free elections, democracy, the rule of law and in what they offer to the voters, but on the support that comes from this capitalist class, by offering privileges to them.

Another source of legitimacy of Albanian political elites comes from international financial institutions. Because Albania's economy is completely dependent to foreign loans taken from the international financial institutions or the EU, political parties in Albania gain their legitimacy also through the "successful" implementation of neo-liberal reforms (which means deepening the societal crisis) imposed by international institutions and by meeting the conditions required by the EU accession agenda, therefore neglecting the social needs of their voters. In other words, because of austerity policies imposed by the IMF, the WB and the EU, governments except of the rhetoric of democracy, the rule of law and integration to the EU cannot offer anything concrete to the voters like job opportunities, and social policies. All they can offer them is turning a blind eye to corruption, and informality. In other words, while political elites could increase their wealth by appropriating the public properties illegally (this is why often the capitalist class and political elites in Albania merge with each other), the ordinary people were tacitly allowed to "benefit" from the lack of rule of law like letting them

to abstain from paying the taxes and by allowing the persistence of informal economy (Zaimi, 2014).

Thus, it can be argued that in the first stage of Albania's capitalist development, has existed an implicit consensus between the political elites, big private enterprises and ordinary people on the non-application of law and the persistence of informal economy. This situation helped the latter to survive in a fierce social environment created by neoliberal reforms. The current developments (since the last general elections of 2013) on a different directions suggest the dissolution of this implicit consensus. The capital and *crony capitalism* seems now to be fully-fledged, and as such its main duty is to protect the products/fruits of "primitive accumulation" by entering the realm of law (Zaimi, 2014). Thus, the system does not tolerate any more widespread informality. Yet this move must be read as the outcome of the strengthening of capital, since the neo-liberal agenda is alive and well and is re-launched even more furiously under the current policies following the Socialist's takeover in 2013. Ironic as it may seem, neo-liberal order in Albania has acquired its highest legitimacy or hegemony during the "left-wing" governments.

Conclusion

To conclude, the social consequences of the top-down neo-liberal restructuring of Albania are high unemployment, an ever increasing gap between the rich and the poor, reduction of public social services, a high support for big private enterprises even when it has grave consequences for society in general, and high public loans etc. By the same token, the high level of emigration, the organized crime, and the rise of radical religious organization's influence in the region is also encouraged by the increasing poverty and the failure of state instances to develop a solution. In this context, "organic intellectuals", play an important role on presenting the neo-liberal norms as the best model for the development of the country (see Civici, 2014). The fact that in Albanian politics, the "Third Way" approach or "neo-liberalism with a human face" represented by the "left-wing" Socialist Party governance is considered as the famous Thatcherian TINA (there is no alternative), demonstrates that neo-liberal agenda in Albania has acquired an "hegemonic" power. Indeed the neo-liberal promise of rising living standards, in reality has served the process of further subordination of the majority at the degree that has made the hope of change seem futile, paving the way to the greatest wave of emigration toward the EU since the early 1990s.

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