



The Orientation of Ahmet Zogu's Foreign Policy as King During the Years 1929-1939

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Abstract

The paper "Orientation of the Foreign Policy of King Ahmet Zogu" aims to shed light on the history of Albania's foreign policy for almost 10 years. The years 1928-1939 in the history of Albania are already personified as the period of King Zog. The influence of the personality and the way of governance during this period has left a significant mark on the history of Albania, diplomatic relations and foreign policy. He exercised the legitimacy of his power through the Status of the Albanian Kingdom, a period during which relations with neighbouring countries were intensified in all economic, political, military, cultural aspects, etc., historical facts intertwined with internal political and economic aspects development. The importance of this period is reflected by numerous studies, often in disagreement with each other this is the reason for carrying out this study, which brings innovation by focusing mainly on foreign policy in the light of historical facts and being part of many studies of this period. This is a historical period with significant national and international developments in the history of Albania. In the form of governance, the change in the form of organization and constitutional changes is of particular interest while in terms of foreign policy, the diplomatic and political-economic impact of the Great Powers of Europe on the Albanian state is analyzed, as well as Albania's relations with its neighbours and other countries under the leadership of Ahmet Zogut, King of Albania. The whole paper is based on a historical, political and economic analysis based on historical sources and archival materials of the period 1928-1939.

Keywords: Ahmet Zogu, Orientation, Foreign Policy, King

1. Introduction

In this paper, we intend to deal with the foreign policy of King Ahmet Zogu, during the years 1928-1939. This is the historical period with very important national and international developments in the history of Albania. The entire paper is based on a historical, political and economic analysis based on archival sources and historical literature of the period 1928-1939. The paper comprehensively deals with foreign policy and diplomatic relations with Great Britain, Yugoslavia, Italy and other countries, in all political, economic, cultural and military dimensions.

At the center of the paper is the figure of Ahmet Zogut himself and the analysis of his political and diplomatic features, as a result the foreign policy pursued by him. Since he is a highly debated figure, there is a large number of Albanian and foreign researchers who have made a valuable contribution to analyzing the period in question and the figure of Ahmet Zog. The novelty of this thesis lies in the treatment and analysis of all aspects of foreign policy during the entire period that Ahmet Zogu was in government, bringing reflected archival documents on which the objectivity of the paper is based. The paper aims to argue the need that Albania had for the construction of a cooperative foreign policy with their neighbors, in the face of the pressure of the neighboring states and the Great Powers. The main approach of

the paper is the position of the Albanian state in the politics followed by the neighboring states and the countries of the Balkan region in the late 1930s and beyond. Initially, we focused on the internal situation that Albania was going through in the change of the form of organization of the state, from Republic to Monarchy, and further on its engagement in the four Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Pact.

2. Research Questions and the Hypothesis of the Paper

2.1 Research questions

In this paper, we have tried to answer some research questions related to King Zogu's foreign policy, such as:

1. What were the relations that Zogu established with the neighboring countries and those beyond the Adriatic;
2. What were the reasons that influenced the drafting of an Adriatic-Balkan policy of King Zogu; What was the impact of Italian pressure on the Albanian state and foreign policy;
4. Efforts to consolidate power and the relations he established with Yugoslavia regarding the Kosovo Albanians, their treatment after the forced displacement;
5. The attitude he maintained towards Turkey's non-recognition of the Monarchy;
6. Relations with Greece regarding Greek intentions for Vlorë-Epirus, Albanian schools and the Autocephalous Church;
7. In the framework of Ahmet Zogu's foreign and domestic policy, how were Kosovo Albanians treated and what place did they occupy?

We will try to answer these questions and other dilemmas in this doctoral thesis, analyzing the attitude of the Albanian state led by Ahmet Zogu towards the national problem and relations with neighboring countries, the Balkans and beyond.

2.2 Hypothesis of the paper

The novelty of this paper lies in the analysis of the political and economic processes that took place in Albania, seen from the perspective of the interests and politics of the Great Powers of Europe, especially Italy, and their alliances with the Balkan neighbors.

This new approach, which constitutes the essence of the paper, aims to present with scientific objectivity the foreign policy of King Zog in relations with neighboring countries and more broadly European ones during the period 1928-1939. The perception of Noli as a political figure who endangered the economic and political interests of the Great Powers in Albania and who could disrupt order and peace in the region favored Ahmet Zogu's coming to power.

3. Methodology

For the preparation of this paper, we used the classical method of historiography, the problem-chronological method, the method of archival research and other sources, analysis, comparison, synthesis, etc. The most important and basic source for the drafting of the paper was the rich documentation in the archives of the Albanian state, especially that of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, which includes the used files of the years 1928-1939; Funds and a significant number of files for each country under study. The bibliography is very rich and conveys the objectivity of archival documents as well as the impartial treatment of the figure of Ahmet Zogu by foreign researchers. In terms of literature, we have relied on a number of studies and articles by Albanian and foreign authors, where we would especially single out the professional authors who have dealt with issues of the foreign policy of the Albanian state during the period in question. The memories of historical characters and witnesses of the time have also played an important role, such as that of the prominent journalist of Ahmet Zogu's period, Zoi Xoxa, in his book "Memories of a Journalist". The press is a great help in elaborating the topic, although oriented by the politics of the time, in it we find facts and data that complement those of the archives. Through them, the nature of the Albanian government's foreign policy is analyzed, how open it was, how active it was, what its goals were, etc. We think that a basic and modest achievement of this paper is the relatively complete treatment of the problems and cooperation of the Albanian state with the Balkan, European and beyond countries. We hope that this treatment will encourage others to do further research. Secondly, it is the reliance on the original archival sources, especially of the archive of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, but also of the Central State Archive, which have been used and although in a limited way, they occupy an important place in the work.

3.1 *The beginnings of Ahmet Zogut's foreign policy orientation*

Ahmet Zogu's foreign policy was dictated in an emergency and long-term manner. From the emergency point of view, Ahmet Zogu needed the creation of basic state institutions, the army, the gendarmerie, the efficiency of large assets such as oil, the establishment of public administration institutions, the consolidation of the country's educational and cultural institutions, etc. All these tasks should be carried out on a stable modern European legislative system framed in regional and wider contemporary legislation. Ahmet Zogu tried to strengthen the Albanian factor in the Balkans(1).

If in the short term Ahmet Zogu's foreign policy and diplomacy succeeded in creating the necessary situation and conditions for the consolidation of the Albanian state, in the long term it was not as successful, among other things, for the European political conjuncture itself in the period between two World Wars. As in the years 1925-1928, Italy's relations with Albania, even after the proclamation of the Monarchy, outwardly seemed good and friendly, but in essence they had contradictions which would come to be increasingly aggravated(2). The main reason was the rude intervention of Italy in the internal affairs of Albania and the powerful efforts to place it under political and economic control. But Albania always tried to protect its independence and state interests in the political sphere. Even in the economic sphere, the Albanian government tried to effectively use Italian loans and economic aid for the development of the country and to support local capital. While Rome, especially through the SVEA loan, tried to realize some perspective military objectives in Albania and in its ventures to favor Italian enterprises(3).

The relations between Albania and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in this time period are characterized by continuous efforts to normalize neighborly relations, always for their political and state interests. It is a delicate period of interstate relations, since from the first day of the proclamation of the Albanian Kingdom (September 1, 1928), relations between Albania and the Serbo-Croato-Slovene Kingdom were strained because Zogu was declared "King of all Albanians". For this reason, official Belgrade reacted strongly, accusing Tirana that with this act it was also expressing interest in the Albanians of Kosovo and the other three that were within the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian Slovene(5).

It should be emphasized that Albania had a special historical and political position in relation to the neighboring countries, because half of its compatriots, although they lived in their own lands, were outside the political borders of the Albanian state. In its foreign policy, the Albanian state has devoted a great importance and a special interest in all historical periods to the issue of Kosovo, an interest that was understandable and very necessary. If we rely on the diplomatic documents, we see that the Albanian diplomats tried to express their displeasure regarding the denial of the rights of the Kosovo Albanians during the meetings with the heads of the Yugoslav diplomacy. In Albanian-Yugoslav relations in the period 1930-1934, there is no doubt that the Balkan Conferences played a very big role, in which the interests of different countries clashed strongly(6).

3.2 *The recognition of the Albanian Monarchy by different countries*

The support and recognition you gave to the Albanian Kingdom were quick and numerous. The first to recognize it was Italy and, within a short time, the Albanian Kingdom was recognized by many other countries. These recognitions were very important because with them the Albanian Kingdom gained full international legitimacy(7).

Of particular importance was the rapid recognition of the regime change in Albania by the US as well. Even the American representative in Albania, immediately after the proclamation of the Kingdom on September 1, 1928, gave a positive opinion, stating that this change was made "in an orderly manner", expressing the belief that the US government would continue to maintain good relations with the government of Albania. The US government recognized King Zog I in September 1928. A positive demonstration was the quick recognition by the government of Athens which, although it had reservations and hesitations, acted in this way because it was interested in maintaining good relations with Italy, with which it was on the verge of signing the Treaty of Friendship(8).

Only the president of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, did not recognize the Albanian Kingdom for a while. He declared to the French newspaper "Le Petit Parisien" that he would not recognize the Albanian Kingdom. Atatürk started from personal considerations and not from the conditions and specifics of Albania. He made a hasty statement, which aimed to show the international opinion, and especially the Turkish one, that he would remain a partisan of the republican system until the end, wanting to avoid the accusations of his political opponents. This reaction happened at a time when Turkey knew and maintained relations with all the kingdoms of Europe and Asia. Despite the realistic suggestions of the Turkish government, M. Kemal insisted on his position. This state of affairs continued until 1931, when relations between the two countries were normalized(9).

For European diplomacy, although a new and small state, Albania, under Zog's government, became an important

factor in the politics and balance of Balkan affairs. This was also pointed out by the press of the time. The "Tribuna" newspaper, in one of its issues, stated that: "Italy sees a permanent Albanian monarchy as a guarantee for ensuring the national and organic consolidation of its friend and ally, as well as a guarantee for peace in the Balkans and Europe(10).

3.3 *The reasons for the transition from the Republic to the Monarchy by Ahmet Zogu*

The Albanian monarchy presented several advantages compared to the republican system of government.

First, it coincided with the historical tradition of Albanians to offer loyalty to a leader;

Second, a consolidated and hereditary kingdom would guarantee internal political stability from rivalries between politicians during presidential elections;

Thirdly, the monarchy would have the effect of reducing the constant confrontations resulting from the hostile policy of the neighbors. Experience had shown that such regimes, in England, Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece, felt less threatened by foreign intrigues than presidencies with limited mandates.

Finally, there were Bird's personal ambitions for supreme power. The King of the Albanians was appreciated as "one of the most famous military and political leaders, with distinct intelligence and ingenuity, with which he was able to face and solve the complicated problems of keeping the freedom-loving and patriotic Albanian people alive".

4. Conclusions

At the end of the analysis of archival documents and historiographical literature, in this paper, we have identified both the most successful moments and the failures in the political and diplomatic activity of Ahmet Zogu, as a monarch. For this paper, the research methodology was followed based on the rich archival material as well as various publications of Albanian and foreign researchers, the comparison of which leads to inherent historical conclusions on the foreign policy of Ahmet Zog, with the neighboring countries, that Adriatic-Balkan region and beyond.

- The period of the 30s was very important for the diplomatic history of Albania and the Balkan region, where the states themselves show interests and willingness to cooperate. The problems inherited from the past and the unjust decisions of the Great Powers given to this region, undermined the progress and progress of this cooperation, which became necessary with the deepening of the economic crisis.
- The history of the Albanian state, during its 100-year life, has gone through many dilemmas for its existence. For the first time, in the years 1925-1939, it became possible for the Albanian state to be organized and stabilized, both in form and content.
- The Albanian government and Ahmet Zogu showed interest in any initiative of a regional and European cooperative nature. King Zog, in the early 1930s, by participating in the Balkan Conferences, prepared the country towards an Adriatic-Balkan regional policy. The First Balkan Conference served as a concrete positive step for the regional engagement of the Albanian government. The commitment of the Albanian delegation in these conferences stands out in all areas of cooperation. Albania showed cooperation and correctness in many concrete issues in the relations between the Balkan countries.
- King Zog tried to have the Albanian delegation participating in the Balkan Conferences perform all efforts to ensure the recognition of the Albanian Monarchy by Atatürk and the restoration of diplomatic relations between Albania and Turkey.
- Albania's non-participation in the Balkan Pact complicated its positions in the region. The efforts of the Albanian diplomacy to bring Albania closer to the Balkan countries were not successful. Under these circumstances, the only ally remained Italy. But King Zog did not stop his efforts to secure other European partners.
- Italy was the main ally of Albania in the years 1928-1939. King Zog saw the danger that threatened him from the powerful neighbor across the Adriatic, but the political circumstances forced him to have such an ally. On the other hand, Yugoslavia occupied many Albanian territories and continued to organize treacherous traps in the border areas.
- Zogu's foreign policy can be judged in different ways. However, we must admit that Zogu was the inspiration of modern Albania. He fell under Italian influence and tutelage, as he sought to Europeanize the country, as a factor of his personal ambition, but also to ensure the progress and development of his people.
- The Balkan countries as well as Albania, unable to solve their internal economic problems, focused on foreign policy, turning to developed countries in order to find financial support to overcome it.

- Albania, with the transition from the Republic to the Monarchy, tried by all means to create its own political line. Ahmet Zogu, upon coming to power, concentrated it almost in his own hands, through the strategies used, constitutional changes, drafted laws, realized agreements, elimination of political opponents, etc.
- Ahmet Zogu had very clear political goals and international support was one of the main factors that favored the consolidation of his power. To legitimize power, he created the appropriate legal space through the organization of power and organic laws, these changes brought about an internal development and emancipation from the economic and political side of the country.
- In the regional aspect, King Zog found it impossible to successfully develop his Balkan policy due to the influences of the Great Powers and the conjunctures between the parties in the Balkans. He managed to establish balanced relations with regional neighbors. Rapprochement with Yugoslavia became impossible although King Zog tried to convince Yugoslavia of the necessity of relations between the two countries. Greece continued to maintain a non-accepting position with the Albanian side.
- Although it had achieved the consolidation of political power, the difficult economic situation and the great and urgent needs of a poor country, such as Albania, were its weakest point and a fundamental and objective obstacle to an independent foreign policy. A. Zogu tried not to submit and to maintain a dignified attitude in a difficult, unequal alliance and imposed by many factors, which at that time was presented as a single and non-competitive solution for the Albanian state.
- Another conclusion is related to King Zog's diplomatic relations with Great Britain, which supported him economically, politically and militarily by giving the first subsidies, but were violated because of Albania's relations with Italy, since Britain never allowed Italy to have an impact on Albania's policies since it violated its own interests in terms of mineral assets.
- Albanian diplomacy and foreign policy was also included in the Balkan Entente with the interest in the economic empowerment of Albania, given that the Balkan Conferences that took place after the great world crisis of 1929 highlighted the measures that had to be taken to face the economic crisis at the regional level.
- The study shows that the intention of Italy and Yugoslavia was to use Albania to fulfill their goal of stability and influence on the Balkans, as a result of Albania's favorable geographical conditions. The diplomatic policy of King Zog thwarted the declared wishes of these neighboring countries. Balkan peace would have always been in danger because of the geographical position that Albania had, therefore threatening the peace of Europe.
- All the facts presented in this paper openly express the territorial aspirations of the neighboring countries, for this reason King Zog had to neutralize the greed of Yugoslavia for Shkodra and the region that lies in the basin of the river Mat, and from Greece over Northern Epirus, Korca, Gjirokastra and their surroundings.
- Yugoslavian diplomacy during the period of aggravation of Albanian-Italian relations was not interested in the protection of Albania's independence, but it was interested in preserving the security of the country and respecting the Italian-Yugoslav pact for the division of influence in Albania.
- The invasion of Albania by fascist Italy was the result of fascism's strategic plans for world domination. We conclude that Ahmet Zogu's political position after the fascist invasion of the country, going into political exile, was also determined by other circumstances, unfavorable for his stay in Albania
- With the establishment of the Italian conqueror in Albania, through military aggression, the country lost its independence. The process of historical development of Albania, on the normal independent path, was interrupted.

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