

In the Shadows of  
Albania-China  
Relations  
(1960-1978)



# In the Shadows of Albania-China Relations (1960-1978)

By

Enver Bytyçi

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



In the Shadows of Albania-China Relations (1960-1978)

By Enver Bytyçi

Editor:

Prof. Assoc. Dr. Rregjina Gokaj

Reviewers:

Prof. Dr. Hamit Kaba

Prof. Dr. Elmas Leci

Translated from Albanian to English:

Iris Gjymshana

Proof Reader:

Victoria Barry

Design & Layout:

Bler Bytyçi

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2022 by Enver Bytyçi

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-7768-6

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-7768-8

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	7
Chapter I.....	11
An overview of Albania and China.....	11
The position of Albania.....	15
China as a major world power .....	25
Similarities and differences between China and Albania .....	35
Chapter II.....	41
Friendship in political and ideological diversity.....	41
Early shared concepts and political-ideological differences .....	44
Intensification of the ideological debate .....	56
Degradation and the break of Albanian-Chinese ties .....	62
Chapter III .....	75
Determining regional international developments of Beijing and Tirana.....	75
Sino-Albanian clashes concerning attitudes toward the Soviet Union and the US.....	76
The impact of the Chinese policy in the Balkans.....	88
Cooperation for security purposes and views on the international situation.....	96
Albanian efforts for accession of the People's Republic of China in the UN.....	100
The exchange of mutual experience in domestic policies.....	105
deterioration and termination of the Sino-Albanian ties .....	110
Chapter IV .....	119
Economy - the basic link of Sino-Albanian relations .....	119
The beginnings of economic and trade exchanges.....	123
Projects of industrial works as a major contribution of Chinese aid .....	128
Economic aid in the 1966 - 1970 Five-Year Plan .....	129
Economic aid in the 1971 - 1975 Five-Year Plan .....	135

Conviction of the ‘Hostile Group in Economy’ as a warning sign for the termination of Sino-Albanian economic ties .....	146
Degradation and termination of Chinese economic aid. Complete closure and isolation of Albania.....	154
Chapter V.....	165
Chinese aid and investment in the military field.....	165
Cooperation policies to modernise the Albanian military .....	167
The Albanian army benefits from Chinese aid .....	172
The impact of the group of soldiers’ conviction in the military aid of China .....	179
Chapter VI.....	187
Photos and documents of Albania-China Relations Period (1960 - 1978) ....	187
References .....	232
Index .....	236

## INTRODUCTION

This study book is dedicated to an important historical period of the Albanian-Chinese relations development that lasted almost two decades (1960-1978). Albanian-Chinese ties date back to the victory of the Chinese revolution of 1949. They firstly initiated ties between two countries sharing the same ideology. But these relations were strengthened and took on a unique characteristic of its kind after Albania cut off all political, economic, military, cultural and even diplomatic relations with the former Soviet Union in 1961.

This was, in fact, the second time Albanian politics cut off close ties with a communist country of the time. Referring to history, on June 28 1948, Joseph Stalin published a letter on behalf of the Info Bureau, which condemned the 'traitorous activity' of the Yugoslav leader of the time, Josiph Brozz Tito. Meanwhile, the Albanian communist leader, Enver Hoxha, directly sided with Stalin. The close and 'brotherly' friendship between Albania and Yugoslavia was interrupted overnight, although the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and its leader Tito had been called the 'heroes' of the peoples of both countries until that time. The Yugoslav Federation even decorated Enver Hoxha with the highest decoration, denominating him a "Hero of the Peoples of Yugoslavia", as did the Albanians with Tito.

Soon after 20th Congress of the CPSU (\*Communist Party of the Soviet Union) in 1956 and up until 1961 (a period when the cult of Stalin was condemned) the Albanian communist leadership was confronted with the communist leadership of the Soviet Union, led by Nikita Khrushchev.

Albanian leaders preserved the radical Stalinist line of government, while Khrushchev proclaimed a more liberal kind of politics. This conflict ended with the interruption of all ties between the two countries, and with the removal of the military base from the southwestern coastal city of Vlora, according to the Warsaw Pact.

Beijing stood alongside Albania in the political conflict between Tirana and Moscow. Therefore, the People's Republic of China became, what we may call, the 'guardian' of economic and military developments in Albania for at least fifteen years. Chinese investments and aid during the years 1961-1975 compounded almost half of the Albanian state budget.

The Chinese built over 450 industrial, energy, and agricultural works in Albania. Apart from these, according to the former Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Albanian Army, General Rrahman Perllaku, Beijing invested over 11 billion US dollars for the army of this small Balkan country. This investment led Albania to build its factory of conventional light weapons production. It also enabled Albania to expand supply of tanks, armoured vehicles, rocket launchers, submarines and jet aircraft. But officially, Tirana did not understand the fact that China was acting towards openness to the West.

The visit of US President Richard Nixon to Beijing in 1972 was perceived by the Albanian communist leaders as “an act of betrayal of the People’s Republic of China against Marxism-Leninism”! The absurdity of the time was the fact that tiny Albania, with three million citizens, was attempting to impose its ideology and attitudes on the foreign policy of a country of 800 million!

For this reason, the dictator Hoxha started a ‘witchhunt’ in sectors of the army, economy, art, and culture. He justified his actions, including capital punishments, to his close associates, by accusing them of having a supportive attitude towards Beijing. The top leaders of the army, the Ministry of Economy, and some well-known names in the fields of culture and arts, such as the Minister of Defence, Beqir Balluku, the Minister of Economy, Koco Theodhosi, the Chairman of the State Planning Commission, Abdyl Këllezi, Chief of General Staff of the Army, Petrit Dume, etc., were punished and killed. All were also accused of suspicious and secret relations with the exponents of the People’s Republic of China.

The paranoia that China ‘presented a threat’ to the power of the Albanian communist leader led to the breakdown of close ties between Albania and China. Albania finally declared the severance of its ties with Beijing in September 1978, forcing Chinese specialists to leave the country without finishing projects constructing industrial sites, and other works across the country. The Chinese had slowed down investments and planned construction works. They were aware of the official attitude of Tirana against China, although this attitude was not made public at the time, but only at the end of the breakdown.

When the Albanians experienced the tragic consequences of seclusion after the breakdown of these relations, they understood much better the enormous damage brought to the country by the stubborn behaviour of the communist leadership of Tirana. After the cut-off in relations with China, a real ordeal of suffering and deprivation began for Albanians, as a result of the crisis of isolation and hermetic seclusion from the world around



them. It is a painful story, a tragedy, and at the same time, an absurd comedy of a special kind.

This is why I strongly believe that the consequences of the wrong policies undertaken by the communist dictatorship in Albania in its relations with the People's Republic of China, caused Albanians to suffer a lot for the country's lack of development and low economy. If this detachment was because of the opening up of the country to the West, of course, suffering would have been easier or irrelevant. But this did not happen, and it was not even expected to happen. At the time, Albania had a constitution that banned anyone from taking even a single step forward towards opening up to the Western world.

This study shows that the main cause of the breakdown of relations between the two countries was the People's Republic of China's opening up to the West. This means that the hermetic seclusion of Albania and its total isolation had been predetermined. These acts marked the gloomy destiny of the Albanians as they went against national interests.

Unfortunately, such turning points in the mutual relations between states are not unique in the history of international relations. The same turning points occurred in the countries with which the communist leader Hoxha was allied. He made use of the isolationist policy and then cut off all relations to preserve his power, with the excuse of not breaking with the principles of Marxism.

By recalling the whole stream of history, we see that there have been tensions, and even wars between different countries, but it has never happened that the ideological course may dictate and impose so fiercely the international policy of the respective states, as it happened during the period of totalitarian communism in Albania. In no cases, have the diplomatic relations between the countries in conflict been cut off.

If Albania's secession from Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union of the time was justified as a "danger of these two countries for the dominion of the country's territory", in the case of the cut-off of relations with the People's Republic of China, this alibi completely fails. If Yugoslavia was seen as a threat to Albania's sovereignty due to Serbia's expansionist policies, this cannot be said in the case of the ties with the People's Republic of China. If the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact aimed at military and political presence in Albania, China had no such intentions. So, this study shows that Chinese leaders even advised this small Balkan country not to invest so much in the defence of the country. This study also proves the fact that China did not show any territorial interest or ambition regarding

Albania. On the contrary, China's advice on national defence and security was very sincere and uncomplicated.

This study brings in in five chapters, comprising various aspects and dimensions of the development of Albanian - Chinese relations, as well as aspects of the relations between the People's Republic of China and the Balkan region during that period. From this point of view, the book presents an added interest not only to historians and scholars but also to geopolitical experts, as it explains the roots of today's cooperation between the People's Republic of China and Central, Eastern, and South-eastern Europe.

Enver Bytyçi

# CHAPTER I

## AN OVERVIEW OF ALBANIA AND CHINA

Albania and China are two countries very far apart. China is on the Eastern side of the Asian continent, while Albania in South-eastern Europe. Before the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, Albania had no perception whatsoever of opportunities for tangible relations with this country. Meanwhile, China and the Chinese had no intention of establishing close friendship ties with Albania and the Albanians. The victory of the Chinese revolution, led by Chairman Mao Zedong, and the establishment in China of a system similar to Albania, i.e., the communist system, immediately attracted the attention of communist Tirana, aiming at the establishment of not only diplomatic relations, but also political and economic ones. Albania and China were among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations, immediately after the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949.

The historical circumstances of the socio-political rapprochement of China with Albania are interesting and of a unique type. As diplomatic relations, they date back to the year 1949, immediately after the victory of the Chinese revolution of October 1st of that same year. However, the direct political contact is related to developments in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. Albania did have such an experience. In 1948, Albania broke any type of ties with Yugoslavia, to establish a close and comprehensive relationship with the Soviet Union led by Stalin. Although the relationship between Albania and Yugoslavia since the establishment of the Albanian Communist Party was more than close, even labelled as a 'brotherly relationship', especially after liberation from the fascist invaders, it was halted overnight, immediately following the letter of June 28 1948 from the Information Bureau, condemning Tito and his pro-European liberalism, as stated at the time, for his betrayal to the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

This experience of changing political attitudes at international level regarding ideological alliances was utilised in the case of Albania's ties with China and the termination of its relations with the Soviet Union's post-Stalin period. It should be noted that the ascent of Nikita Khrushchev

and his group in the Kremlin after Stalin's death was a blow to Stalin and Stalinism. Khrushchev launched important reforms within the country, by which he openly declared his intention of the de-Stalinization of the society, and revision of the previous ideological and political line. In this context, the new leader of Moscow also changed its policies in terms of international relations. He presented theses and ideas opposing those of Stalin, by projecting peaceful coexistence with so-called American imperialism, i.e., the construction of a bipolar world, which was to be ruled by agreement between the two superpowers of the time, the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

This new policy in the Soviet Union was associated with a change in all communist leaderships in Eastern European countries. The purpose was to overcome the ideological barriers between these parties, and to establish a camp in unity with the ideas of Russian leaders, to increase the strength of competition with the Western bloc, led by the United States of America. The beginnings of a new political line can be noticed in the 20<sup>th</sup> Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Congress, 1956, and later at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congress of this party. When, in 1957, a meeting of the communist and Workers' Parties was held in Bucharest, there surfaced numerous contradictions between Moscow communist leaders and their allies on the one hand, and the Communist Party of China on the other. This could not agree with the domination of the communist countries of the Soviet Union in the political scene. Albania, threatened by pressure for policy changes in its ideological line, was immediately positioned in favour of the communist leaders of China, challenging the new De-Stalinization line of Khrushchev.

Indeed, a deeper analysis of the reasons for a change by Albania of its main ally was not Stalin and his loyalty. Albanian dictator, Hoxha, had no problems with Stalin's attitude towards friends or former friends of his. His main problem was preserving and maintaining power at all costs and by any means. In these circumstances he considered his own convenience, giving up one alliance to build a new alliance with the People's Republic of China. Strategically, this should have been welcomed, as the presence of China in Albania did not threaten its territorial integrity and independence. On the contrary, ties and close relations with the People's Republic of China brought nothing but progress in the economic, military, and other areas of Albania. Meanwhile the presence of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, given the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, was risky both for Albania as well as the region. Moreover, official Tirana itself had allowed the Russian army to use the military base of Vlora.

The changing course of communist Tirana and its new relationship with China also suited the Western bloc countries, because it meant the removal of the Soviet Union and its military power from the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Europe and the Atlantic Alliance were no longer faced with the Russian missile threat to the Bay of Vlora after this divorce, and consequently, not only did they spend as much on self-defence as they used to, but they also felt calm and safe because of the presence of the Albanian-Chinese alliance. Official Tirana's new choice was well thought out. From the standpoint of the international order established in Yalta, Albanian communist leaders felt protected by a possible response of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, because at Yalta, the influence of the West and the East concerning Albania and Yugoslavia was proportional; fifty-fifty. So, despite breaking former ties with the Soviet Union, Tirana prevented and avoided the possibility of a change in the political leadership of Albania, by maintaining positions in power unchanged. On the other hand, Albania obtained assistance in economic, military and other fields, many times greater than the aid it received from the Soviet Union. Also, Albania obtained verbal support from the West by taking this step, because of their interest in keeping the Soviet military power away from their doorstep.

These circumstances favoured the creation of a new alliance in the Beijing-Tirana axis, but this was not instantly achieved. It came after the termination of relations with the Soviet Union, which did not happen right away. After 1957, ties between Tirana and Moscow weakened. High-level visits no longer took place. In 1959 the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, came to Albania. It was the first time in the history of the two countries that the highest leader of the Soviet Union visited Tirana and other cities in this country. Khrushchev also spent some time in the Albanian Riviera, and he personally visited the strategic point of defence and threat which he could utilise toward the military alliance of NATO. Vlora was to Khrushchev the most strategic base of the Warsaw Pact, therefore of the Soviet military superpower. For this reason, it is thought that Khrushchev's visit to Albania had as its aim the melting of icy disputes between the two countries. Khrushchev promised aid and loans for Albania and praised the new political leadership in Albania. On the other hand, he also demanded a greater openness toward Yugoslavia, which also meant liberalisation on the part of the communist Tirana of its view regarding Stalinism, as well as the establishment of collaboration bridges with those condemned by Stalin, namely Tito and Yugoslavia.

The communist leader of Albania, Hoxha, weighed up the new offer from Khrushchev, but did not have enough confidence that he could tolerate his Stalinism. Therefore, he decided to burn bridges of cooperation with the Soviet Union and to build a new political and strategic alliance with the People's Republic of China. This was presented in November 1961, when eighty-one representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties gathered in Moscow. The essence of that meeting was the consolidation of power of the Soviet Union and Moscow's reconfirmation as the only centre of the world's communist movement. But this trend was disagreeable and unacceptable to Beijing. Beijing felt equal to Moscow, and the Chinese leaders did not have the same view of the world's communist domination by the Soviet Union. Therefore, the People's Republic of China was against this course, and by the end of 1960, it defended the Stalinist image and policy, using the argument that the new leaders of the Soviet Union were jointly responsible for what had happened during Stalin's time. During the Great Cultural Chinese Revolution, the rhetoric of Stalin's defence was more present than in other periods. However, the Chinese at the meeting did not go against Khrushchev's liberal views regarding international attitudes. The only one going against these views was the delegation of the Party of Labour of Albania, led by Enver Hoxha. Their speech in that meeting opposed the spirit conveyed by Khrushchev. Thus, an open conflict began to take place between the two parties, Albania and the Soviet Union. The Chinese sided with the Albanians. This assured Hoxha that a powerful ally would now be standing on his side, and on the side of his country. From this moment, unconditional and intense cooperation began between the two countries.

On the other hand, Albania tried to benefit from the termination of political, military, economic and diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The withdrawal of Moscow from its country was a good omen for Beijing. Thus, the official Tirana started paving the way to closer ties between the two countries. Tirana became intrigued by the extremist stance of Moscow, as it presented itself to Beijing like an innocent victim; even a victim in defence of the Chinese policy. This defence became the rhetorical question of Hoxha at the Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow November 1961: Why should China not have the atomic bomb?

To better understand the circumstances and Albanian-Chinese relations, it would be better to start by presenting a description of the position of the two countries, and making some comparisons between them.

## **The Position of Albania**

Like China, Albania had, at that time, the same political and social system based on the same ideology, that is the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The difference lies in the fact that Albania also adhered to the ideology, doctrine and practices of Stalinism, while its ally, China, was in practice not so keen on the Stalinist doctrine of development, although in theory it never declared itself via any anti-Stalinist document, as happened in Moscow. Below, however, we will address the position of the two countries from the standpoint of the current situation, and not merely from the position of that time, although we will find opportunities when comparing differences and common points to achieve this through the confrontation of several data of the time period mentioned.

Albania is part of the Eastern European region and, in a narrow sense, it belongs to the group of countries of the Balkan Peninsula. It borders with Montenegro and Kosovo in the North, with Macedonia in the East, Greece to the South, and the Adriatic Sea in the West, where lies Italy. In the West and South of the country, Albania is washed by the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea for 362km. This makes Albania one of the countries bordering the Mediterranean. This also gives Albania the chance to be part of the Mediterranean countries' initiatives, other participants of which are also developed and powerful countries such as France, Italy, Spain, and Turkey.

After World War II, Albania was politically part of the East, therefore, part of the totalitarian systems in the former communist countries. Initially, it had close ties with Belgrade, even to the completion of a project to become the 7<sup>th</sup> Republic of the Yugoslav Federation. After the divorce of Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union and its satellite communist countries, Albania sided with Stalin and declared its hostility towards Tito's Yugoslavia. Afterwards, Tirana kept very close, vassal-like, ties with Moscow and the Kremlin. As long as Stalin was alive, and after his death, the communist leaders of Albania always displayed loyalty to his doctrine and political line. But during its journey in the late 1950s, official Tirana would change alliance, detaching from a close friendship with the Kremlin and announcing a new alliance with the People's Republic of China. The friendship and close bond of brotherhood with China's Mao Zedong continued for almost two decades. However, alliance with the Chinese would lead to divorce and hostility as well. Three times fraternal intimacy with three countries, namely Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and China,

and thrice the divorce and transformation of friendship into hostility. This trajectory in Albania's relations with its partners gave it the reputation for being a strange country, which adamantly sought to isolate itself in its own world entirely. During the times of close ties with other countries, especially with China, Albania achieved significant results in its economic development. But afterwards, it was completely isolated, counting the hours of its bankruptcy, primarily in the economic domain.

In Albania, the rule of the communist totalitarian regime ended in 1991, and thus the country went through the path of democratic development, constitutionally acknowledging respect for freedom and human rights, political pluralism and the development of free competition of ideas, political platforms and projects, respect for freedom of thought and belief, and the development of the country according to the economic model of the free market. Changing the course of the development from dictatorship to democracy created various opportunities for Albania, not only to become a member of the United Nations, but also to become part of many other international organisations. Albania is already a member with full rights of the Council of Europe, NATO, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Trade Organisation, World Health Organisation, etc. On a regional level, Albania is part of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Council of Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe. Albania is also a member of the Central European Free Trade Convention, a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and a member of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. On the map of the development rate, Albania is defined as a developing country. However, Albanians have been determined on EU integration, and aim to quickly become candidates for admission into this community of values.

Albania is a small country with a total area of 28,748 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of about three million people. It has a favourable strategic and geopolitical position, due to the rugged and mainly mountainous terrain, geographic location, numerous rivers, and the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea, remaining the main gate for the movement of goods and people from Western Europe to its Eastern part. Albania inherited this position from the time of the Roman Empire, when the Egnatia road became the main exit from the Apennine peninsula to the Aegean Sea, connecting with countries of the Near and Middle East. The Strait of Otranto, just 71km long, is also the shortest link road between the Balkans and the Apennine peninsula. Meanwhile, the coastline between the Albanian Ionian coast



and Corfu is less than two kilometres. These short links make the country a strategic location for the wider region. In addition, the construction of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) of Azerbaijan will increase the chances of Albania becoming more developed and more coveted from a geopolitical standpoint.

With the development of its infrastructure, Albania has today laid the foundation for another line of its strategic connection to Europe i.e., the Durres – Morine highway, which stretches from Morine to Merdare in Kosovo, on the border with Serbia. This new transport artery road will stretch further, to connect with the Nis highway, bringing together the Adriatic coast with Eastern and Central Europe. A future project also involves the construction of a railway in the almost-complete highway axis, which will also serve to significantly enhance the capabilities of exchanging goods, which does not happen at the present. These strategic developments will turn Durres into one of the main ports of the Balkans, and create an opportunity for Albania to be seen as a place of great strategic and geopolitical importance to the region of Southeast Europe.

However, at the time of Albania's relations with China, such resources were seen simply as theoretical opportunities because our country was completely isolated, and its infrastructure was extremely outdated. It should be noted that the infrastructural underdevelopment of the time is attributed to the isolationist policies of the government at an economic level. The Albanian constitution prohibited any loans, aid, economic concessions, or foreign investment. These economic policies left our country unable to exploit the geopolitical strategic capabilities at the service of development and welfare of citizens and simultaneously oblivious to the international world of politics, business and diplomacy. Unfortunately, Chinese loans and aid, though numerous and unprecedented in the history of Albania, were not infrastructure-oriented, rather they consisted of the supply of food commodities, textiles and construction of several factories, plants and hydro-power plants. Instead of orienting these loans towards the country's infrastructure, Albania's communist leadership oriented them towards the development of the military, especially for the construction of shelters and bunkers.

Albania is one of the countries ranking first for its underground and above-ground assets. It has the largest reserves of chromium in the world but it also has large amounts of reserves in silicates, nickel, and copper. There are numerous reservations for the production of oil in the country. In addition, Albania ranks second in Europe, after Norway, for water reserves. The rivers of Albania are all from East to the West in their

courses, and constitute incredible potential for the production of pure and renewable energy, a benefit lacking in almost all countries in the region and beyond. Albania has three large lakes; Shkodra, Ohrid, and Prespa, which constitute spatial and touristic developmental potential. It also has hundreds of small natural and artificial lakes. Albania has very favourable weather conditions for the development of agriculture and animal husbandry. In short, the potential for the development of Albania is large and rich. This potential was not utilised during the communist dictatorship, not even during close friendship with the Communist Party of the great Chinese people.

But the greatest potential for the development of the country is the human one. With three million inhabitants, Albania has an average population density of 104 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, the average age of this population continues to be among the youngest in Europe, at only 34 years old. Approximately one-third of Albania's population has migrated during its transition from dictatorship to democracy, mainly to Western countries. Although this phenomenon is considered as a negative development in the life of nations everywhere else, Albania's belief that the phenomenon of immigration can turn into a bonus for Albania and the Albanians is well-founded. This is because more than half of the Albanian emigrants reside in Greece and Italy, which makes it a great opportunity in terms of the financial and economic boom of the country's development, as most emigrants return as a qualified force to create new industrial products and modern services in the country.

In the meantime, during the past 23 years, a major migration of the population within the country has taken place, changing the structure of the urban population and doubling the number of urban residents. This kind of migration within the country has increased competition in the labour market, and has led to more qualified employees, which entices foreign investment in the country, and thus the chances for further employment and development, although the labour market is still cheap, and this also enhances the benefits of foreign investment.

The Albanian population is over 95 percent homogeneous, which means that its inhabitants are overwhelmingly ethnic Albanians, but other ethnicities live in the country as well. The Greeks are the largest national minority community, and according to the latest population census in 2011, they represent 0.87 percent of it. It's worth mentioning that many Albanian citizens with Greek ethnicity boycotted this registration, therefore independent experts estimate that this number is higher, somewhere around 2 percent of the general population. It should be noted, however,

that the largest number of Albanian Greeks emigrated to Greece two decades ago. This has led to significant reductions in their numbers in Albania, compared to the last census of 1989. This minority lives mainly in the South of the country, but a large part of it has migrated within the country, especially in the urban areas of Tirana, Durrës, and some other cities.

They are followed by other cultural and linguistic ethnicities, such as the Aromanians, who in the last census of the population accounted for

0.3 percent of the overall population; Macedonians with approximately 4,000 people, and Roma and Egyptians, as well as several thousand Bosnians, Serbs, and Montenegrins. In terms of the mixed population in the Balkans, Albania has been, and remains, the country with the highest homogeneity of the indigenous population. This is also attributed to the fact that Albania is the only country in the region which borders its fellow compatriots, Albanians in Kosovo, and Albanian territories in Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece. Therefore, national minorities in Albania are created by migration, rather than the territorial continuity of the state. This is also why, historically speaking, there has never been a case of ethnic conflict in Albania. National minorities are always treated with respect, as is reflected in the international documents and the customary code of Albanian hospitality.

Albania, unlike other countries in the Eastern Europe region, is a place of three major religions, Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox. Before World War II, Albania had a structure of beliefs significantly dominated by the Muslim religion, accounting for 70 percent of all believers, while the rest were 20 percent Orthodox and 10 percent Catholic. However, after the Second World War, religious beliefs were condemned, and later on forbidden. At the climax of good relations with China, in 1967, Albanian totalitarian state law forbade the exercise of religion, transforming the country into the first and only atheist state in the world, prohibiting not only the exercising of religious rites, but also beliefs in God and religion.

In 1991, religion and religious faith again became the property of the citizens, and Albanians started to practice the rites according to their beliefs once again. In the last census, the ratio of religions turns out quite differently from pre-World War II. To be exact, the census in 2011 indicated that 56.7 percent of believers belonged to the Muslim faith, 10.03 percent to the Catholic, 6.75 percent to the Orthodox and the rest were Bektashi, Protestants, atheists, or undeclared.

Albania is already recognised as a place of religious harmony. Although, after 1991, Albania experienced a revival of religion, and the influence of many currents of religious sects, the country is not troubled by any

conflict. The vacuum of religious institutions created by the destruction of places of worship at the time of the communist dictatorship in Albania led to the infiltration of numerous religious organisations from the East and the West, intending to increase religious influence on the Albanian population. The Orthodox and Catholic community immediately found support from their partners, the former in Italy and to a lesser degree in Austria, and the latter in Greece, while the Muslim community primarily relied on help from Turkey. But besides Turkey, participating in the construction of Muslim places of worship were also other Arab countries and Iran. Arab currents have been able to penetrate with Wahhabi extremism, but they did not disrupt the balance of harmony and religious tolerance. This because religious relations have already turned into family relationships, since many couples have been created in Albania as a mixture of different faiths, and therefore, the descendants of these married couples bear tolerant concepts and views of religion. In this respect, it must be stated that tolerance and religious harmony make Albania a socially safe and stable country, which also means an attractive place in terms of foreign investment. Meanwhile, religious diversity in the harmony of a particular type appears a tremendous asset for Albania and Albanians.

Albania's official language is Albanian, but in municipalities where minorities reside, the languages of these minorities are also used, including Greek in several municipalities in Gjirokastra and Saranda, and Macedonian in a municipality in the East of the country. However, Albania is recognised as a nation that uses more than one language, i.e., more than the Albanian native language. The use of English is vastly widespread, while Italian has been spread, mostly through the Italian media, since the last decade of the communist dictatorship. Historically, the first widespread foreign language was French, which was introduced in Albania through the schools and high schools of France, created in 1920 in Korca and Gjirokastra. During the time of the royal regime of Ahmet Zogu, the majority of the intellectual elite accomplished their studies in Italy and Austria; therefore, they brought the Italian and German languages back to the country. But after the Second World War, the policy of rapprochement with the Soviet Union led to Albanian schools teaching Russian as a compulsory language. This phenomenon did not occur later on, after breaking with Moscow, and the imposition of Chinese language study. We are referring to the years of friendship and close cooperation between China and Albania. Many Albanians at that time attended their studies in China learning the Chinese language quite well, while many Chinese students came to study at the University of Tirana, mastering the Albanian

language. An Albanian language department was opened in a university of Beijing, which also functioned after the termination of relations between the two countries.

Today in Albania, the study of foreign languages is a common phenomenon, as students cannot graduate unless they prove knowledge of the English language. Departments have also been opened for the study of foreign languages in all public and private universities. In public universities, the curriculum includes, in addition to English, also French, German, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Spanish, etc. In the meantime, Albania has liberalised the educational system, while hundreds of private schools operate in the country. Among the first we can mention are Turkish schools and colleges, which have taught thousands of young people. These schools have spread learning and use of the respective languages, among which the most prevalent is Turkish. Meanwhile, the University of Tirana has been promoting the establishment of a school to teach the Chinese language in collaboration with the 'Confucius' cultural and linguistic Institute of China. According to European and UN statistics, Albania occupies second place in the region, following Montenegro, in terms of the number of educated citizens per 100,000 inhabitants.

Albania's history is different from China's, but the two peoples have early historical roots. Ethnic Albanians are descendants of the Illyrians, and these were the descendants of the earliest inhabitants of the region of Southeast Europe and the Mediterranean, the Pelasgians. Recent studies indicate that the Pelasgian language can be explained only through the Albanian language. Albanian is classified as an Indo-European language with the same status as Latin and Greek. Historical developments in antiquity, from 2,000 years BC in the Western Balkans, relate these events to the Illyrians, who lived in the vast territories of the Danube and Sava in the North to the Pindos Mountains in the Southern Balkans, from the Adriatic in the West, to Nis, Skopje and the Vardar flow in the East.

During the Middle Ages, Albanians found themselves increasingly under the pressure of invasion of several empires, such as the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgarian, the Serbian Empire of Stefan Dushan, and finally the Ottoman Empire. The first Albanian state, according to researchers and historians, was created in 1209, after the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1204. It was called the State of Arbanon. The country's national hero, Scanderbeg, an Albanian leader and prince for twenty-five consecutive years from 1443 to 1468, fought bravely against the invasion of the Ottoman armies, turning the country into a powerful defensive line, not only for the Albanian territories, but also for the Christian peoples in Western

Europe.

After the death of Skanderbeg, Albania and other countries of the region fell under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. For a period of 450 years, the country was part of this empire. During this rule, Albanians would suffer difficult situations, but in certain circumstances, they became a defining element in the sustainability of this empire. According to the Albanian-Turkish scholar, Necip Alpan, for most of the time, the Ottoman Empire was supported on two pillars: the Turks in the East and Albanians in the West. During this period, the vast majority of the Albanian population converted from Christianity to Muslim. A range of social, economic, political, and psychological factors played an important part in this process, although in the beginning, the Ottomans used violence to attain the goal of Islamization of Albanians.

Albanians created their National Revival during the 19th century, through the spreading of various forms of language, literature, poetry and philosophy, and the creation of national identity. It was almost the same period when there occurred awakenings of other Balkan people, which had the advantage of religious unification because their religious identity was different from the identity of the Ottoman rulers, while Albanians had a disadvantage caused by the three religions: Islamism, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism. Meanwhile, other peoples had cultivated their written language, and Albanians cultivated their written language much later. However, unlike their neighbours, Albanians used the Latin alphabet, proving their Western vocation since the Renaissance.

In 1878, the Albanians formed their first national political platform for the creation of the Albanian state, which got underway on June 10 of that year in the Albanian League of Prizren. From this standpoint, it can be stated that the first capital of Albania and the Albanians was Prizren, a historic city in southern Kosovo, bordering the territory of today's Republic of Albania. This road of struggle for freedom led to the historic events of November 28 1912, when Ismail Qemal and other prominent men of the Albanian national movement proclaimed the country's independence, in Vlore.

However, the London Conference of 1913 partitioned Albanian territories, allowing the creation of a weak Albania, separated from its vital parts, such as Kosovo, Chameria and the Albanian territories in today's Macedonia. The creation of the Albanian state in half of the Albanian territories, and the omission of half of the Albanian population in the region, caused Albania and Albanians to remain the weakest element of statehood and state-building in the Balkans, although after the declaration of

independence, the Great Powers brought in a Western prince to govern Albania, which brought no change of political, economic, and social development in the country. Later on, when Albania became a Presidential Republic in 1925, and when it was declared a Hereditary Constitutional Kingdom in 1928, the country created lasting stability, which was effective in improving the legal infrastructure of the territory. This government was discontinued by the fascist Italian invasion on April 7 1939, and Nazi Germany in September 1943.

Albania actively participated in World War II, and was listed as a country on the side of the Atlantic Allies in this fight. The commitment of Albanians in World War II was comprehensive, yet its leadership was dominated by the Communist Party, directed by its leader, Enver Hoxha. After the war, Albania experienced the rule of communist dictatorship of a particular type, often called Albanian Stalinism. It was exactly during this period, from 1944 until 1990, that the alliance of Albania's communist government belonged initially with Josip Tito's Yugoslavia, later with the Soviet Union, and finally, until 1978, with China's Mao Zedong. Albanian political leadership in all three cases, with Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and finally the People's Republic of China, broke up because of Albania's principal conflict with the defence of the Stalinist doctrine of development. The country was completely isolated, and became the poorest country in Europe, to the point of occupying the penultimate place in the world's poverty index. Termination of friendship, and cooperation with the People's Republic of China, led Albania towards an inevitable economic and financial catastrophe, and this separation occurred with no other alibi, but the ideological aspect. If, in the case of separation with Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, they found an alibi for the split consisting of the threat these countries posed to the sovereignty of Albania, in the case of China, the explanation was simply linked to different ideological concepts, alliances, and the making of politics and diplomacy with the world around us.

After 1990, Albania entered the development path of pluralistic democracy and market economy. From that time until today, Albania adheres to the Western orientation of liberal democracy development. From November 1998, the country has had a modern constitution, which guarantees civil liberties and human rights, rule of law, independence and balance of powers, property and market economy. By following constitutional principles, the Albanian parliament has produced modern laws based on concepts of European standards, which have been signed and approved by the parliament. For this reason, Albania was recommended twice as a candidate by

the European Commission to obtain the status of a candidate country for accession to the European Union. But the Commission's proposal has been rejected by several countries which are sceptical as to Albania's progress in practice along the path of meeting democratic standards and criteria for EU integration. The fact is, that Albania suffers some serious consequences inherited from the dictatorship's communist past. Property issues are some of the most serious. Meanwhile, corruption, and the fight against organised crime, as well as law enforcement and rule of law, have been identified as the issues Albania is currently being faced with. Meanwhile, European scepticism grows, if we consider the conduct of Albania in its relations with partners at the time of the dictatorship. If Europeans do not find sufficient reason for breaking off diplomatic relations with third party countries, particularly in Albania's relations with the People's Republic of China, then they have a right to be sceptical of the attitude of Albanian policy towards the European Union. Even more so when the political class conduct in Albania does not respond to European standards of internal and external relations. This inherited burden becomes heavier when the country is governed directly by the heirs of the communist dictatorship.

Over the past decade, Albania has been able to handle the financial and economic crises affecting some countries in the European Union and other regions of the globe, especially the neighbouring countries of Albania, Greece, and Italy. Poverty has been reduced from 28 to 13 percent; according to the World Bank index, unemployment is also running at 13 percent, and inflation has been kept within the limits of 2.5 percent, while the budget deficits, as well as the limit of public debt, have been kept under control. In recent years, the export of goods, especially textiles and minerals, has undergone steady growth. But in some cases, even electricity export has increased. The most important trade partners in the export of goods are Italy, China, Turkey, Greece, Spain, and India, while the biggest partners in the import of goods are Italy, Greece, China, Turkey, and Germany.

In developing external relationships, Albania plays an important role in Europe's Eastern region. From the collapse of communism in 1991 until now, Albania has maintained a moderate stance by helping in the consolidation of peace, stability, and security in the region, and the European continent. Albania's contributions in this regard have been estimated as advantages for admission to NATO, and to come closer to the European Union. Membership of NATO is estimated as a historical step for a country on political and security levels, while visa liberalisation with member countries of the EU Schengen Agreement is the more substantial success, which had an impact on the social and economic life of the Albanians.



## China as a Major World Power

China, or as it was named after 1949, the People's Republic of China, is a world power with a geopolitical, military, economic, and strategic potential, not only for the Asian continent, but also for the globe. In many respects, China's potential as a superpower comes immediately after that of the United States of America. As far as total area, China is third in the world after Russia and Canada, with 9.5 million km<sup>2</sup>. It borders fourteen countries, and in this regard, it shares the first place in the world with Russia for the number of countries it borders with. Neighbouring countries of China are Mongolia, Russia, Vietnam, Laos, Northern Korea, Burma, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

The Chinese population reaches 1.34 billion people, equal to the populations of Northern America, Europe and Russia combined. This figure was given in April 2011, after the last census of the population. In 1949, when the Chinese revolution won, the country had 540 million inhabitants. In 1960, the most rapid growth of population in the history of China occurred. If we refer to the slogans and terminology used at the time, this was the period of "invincible friendship between the two peoples, the two countries, and two parties, China and Albania". Rapid population growth led to the decision of the Chinese communist leader, Mao Zedong, to limit births, allowing only one child per couple. China was among the first countries in the world which allowed abortion by law with the aim of reducing the country's population, as its rapid increase caused hunger and extreme poverty. But this policy of demographic development and planning has led to an increasing number of retirees as well as an increased burden of pension expenses. It expected that by 2050, the total Chinese population will be reduced to 1 billion 300 million inhabitants, if today's trend is preserved, where to each couple, an average of 1.55 children are born. However, there are proposals in different regions to increase the number of births, due to the increasing number of retirees and reduction in contributions to social insurance. According to the largest Chinese newspaper published in English, *China Daily*, dated July 24 2009, Shanghai institutions are discussing allowing couples to have a second child, because 22 percent of the population is now over the age of retirement, and this percentage will rise to 34 percent in 2020.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps for this reason, in

---

<sup>1</sup> *China Daily*, dated July 24, 2009.

late December 2013, the National Assembly of China adopted a law which allows couples to have two children if one of the parents was raised as an only child.

In China, 91.59 percent of the total population is of Chinese ethnicity, the rest are minorities. But the minority population is nearly as big as the entire population of Russia. In the People's Republic of China, the unified Chinese language is used as the official language. However, the use of respective languages is allowed in each autonomous region, as dialects of the regions are quite different from the unified official language. Even in autonomous regions, the use of minority languages, such as Tibetan, Mongolian, the Uyghur language, Korean in the North, and the Turkish language used in Turkic minorities is allowed, along with Chinese.

The People's Republic of China is officially a secular state. Religion is considered a matter for the individual and not the state. By constitution, faith and the activities of religious cults are free. However, the state attempts to control the activity of sects and religions, although state control was not as radical as in Albania, where the law banned religious worship facilities, the exercise of religious rites, and even religious propaganda. In China, since the early 1980s, policy towards religion has been liberal, allowing the free exercising of religious beliefs by citizens.

Some of the more prevalent religious beliefs include Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity. Christianity belongs both to the Roman Catholic faith, and the Protestant faith. These four religions are officially recognised. But there are smaller groups of believers in Russian Orthodoxy, Judaism, and some secret atheist and Agnostics communities, which include a considerable population in their circles. In addition to these, beliefs in Confucianism, which is considered more of a socially ethical ideology than a religion, is also widespread. But Confucianism is widespread in China, as a unique culture; a unique philosophy in the form of regulation of relations in the Chinese society.

The number of residents from 1950 to 2020	
Year	Number of inhabitants
1950	562.579.779
1955	606.729.654
1960	650.660.513
1965	715.546.458
1970	820.403.282
1975	917.898.537
1980	984.736.460
1985	1.058.007.717
1990	1.148.364.470
1995	1.215.787.464
2000	1.268.853.362
2005	1.306.313.812
2010	1.339.724.852
2015	1.361.513.000
2020	1.384.545.000

The number of residents from 2020 to 2050	
Year	Number of inhabitants
2030	1.391.491.000
2040	1.358.519.000
2050	1.303.723.000

The People's Republic of China was established after the merger of all provinces during the civil war of 1949. Only the island of Taipei, and several small islands between it and Japan, remained outside Chinese territory. The Chinese government has since not recognised the right of Taipei for secession, and constantly attempts to have the island join the country. Meanwhile its territory is divided into twenty-two regions, of which five are autonomous regions, four are cities that have their own government, and two are regions with a special status of administration. Among these regions, Tibet was invaded and annexed by military troops in 1950. Its status is, to this day, controversial, and contested by many countries of the international community. Recently, Tibet has been subject to major investments, with the aim of solving social and economic problems of the region under atmospheric pressure factors. Part of the investment is also the construction of the railway, which climbs to a height of over 4000 meters above sea level, connecting Central China with the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The People's Republic of China is a country rich in rivers, while to the East it is washed by the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. Meanwhile, its territory is home to the highest mountain in the world - Everest, at 8848 metres above sea level - and one of the wonders of the world, the Great Chinese Wall. The Chinese territory is divided into eighteen climatic zones, which allows for the cultivation of 6,300 animal species and 30,000 plant species.

The new history of United China starts after the communist-led war against Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek, and the declaration of the People's Republic of China on October 1 1949. When the communist leader, Mao Zedong, proclaimed the People's Republic of China, he also established the foundations of a totalitarian state modelled after the Soviet Union, which had inspired him in building post-revolution China. In the first years, the country marked some significant achievements. The reforms made it possible for some sectors to start developing. Meanwhile, the most important reform was the one dealing with the land, implementing the Soviet model of Kolkhozes, through which lands were united and collectively administered by a community of people. The Chinese leader, Mao Zedong, was perceived as the saviour of the Chinese nation, and consequently he was respected as an idol. When, on July 16 1966, Chairman Mao, then 70 years old, organised and led a massive swimming event in the Yangtze River, the attention of Chinese and many other citizens of the world turned to his personality. In Albania, the event was followed with the curiosity of a mythical work; the "greatest friend of the Albanian peo-

ple” was the then-leader of communist China.

Additionally, during the 1950s, China reinforced state organisation and its defensive capability. But poverty and hunger continued to threaten the lives of Chinese people, because the population was growing rapidly. In 1958, Mao Zedong formulated a new development programme, called the “Great Leap Forward” campaign. But the natural disasters of 1958 caused the agricultural production of livestock to decline, and consequently 20 to 40 million people suffered a hunger crisis, most of them losing their lives due to this. Mao initially apologized, and considered the “Great Leap Forward” as his own mistake. A few years later he organised the so-called proletarian Cultural Revolution, through which he blamed many of the political and military leaders, and representatives of the bourgeoisie for the humanitarian catastrophe and failures in the orientation he had given. The Chinese Cultural Revolution is probably the most extreme event of violent measures which China undertook in its recent history. Violent political battles between the Red Guards and those who were considered enemies of China took place. Among the punished communist leaders were Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. The latter was considered as the brains behind progressive reform and the development of China. Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping came on the scene only after the death of Chinese leader Mao Zedong in 1976.

However, foreign observers viewed the events in a different light. The method of governance and obedience to the political line of the Party and its leaders were a tangible feature of the Chinese Cultural Revolution period. However, some observers from the West expressed their sympathy for the development of those events. At that time, David Rockefeller praised “the sense of national harmony” and felt that the revolution of Mao Zedong had succeeded “in establishing an effective, dedicated and highly moral administration”.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, a specialist of American political sciences maintained that “in him (Mao) qualities were combined in such way that could rarely be found together in one man with such intensity”.<sup>3</sup> Further, according to Han Suini, Mao Zedong differed from Stalin. He was “incredibly patient, believed in debate and rehabilitation, and was always concerned about the practical application of democracy”.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Mao Zedong was quite different from Stalin. His political line was just as extreme as it was logical, and with great curves in conception, planning,

<sup>2</sup> Paul Johnson: *Modern Times - The World from 1920 to 1990* - Albanian edition, Volume II, Apollonia, Tirana 2000, page 138.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, page 139.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 139.

and action. To Stalin, and the Stalinists apology, which at the time of communism was known as self-criticism, was a foreign concept. Meanwhile Mao was the type of leader who would recognise the mistakes he made, and even blamed himself more than he did other associates of his, when he was wrong.

From 1976 onward a new era of development began for China. Initially, following the death of Mao Zedong, a political battle took place for the heritage of power, after the founder and leader of communist China. Zhou Enlai, one of the moderate leaders, and the longest serving prime minister of China, was no longer alive, and as a consequence, the conservative wing led by Wang Hongwen tried to assume the reins of power. But liberal forces, supporters of Deng Xiaoping, were able to assume the reins of leadership of China and set the country on a new course of development.

From this moment, China would no longer be a communist dictatorship, but would become a country with a democratic, and at the same time authoritarian, government. New reforms predicted a continuous development and radical transformation of the People's Republic of China. The Communist Party maintained monopoly power and direction of the country, but in the meantime, it gradually relinquished control of the private life of individuals. Above all, market economy was stimulated, and competition in manufacturing, services, and other sectors of the economy, was encouraged. The state began to play the role of a moderator rather than a tutor of the economy, and relinquished its centralising patterns. Municipalities dissolved, and peasants started to manage resources that would be created from agricultural work of their own. Several free economic zones were created which became China's model of economic and social development. Foreign capital invested in numerous branches of the Chinese industry increased. These measures led to a rapid growth in production, technology improvement, and the implementation of a very fast development pace; even the highest in the planet when compared to other countries. Numerous and great reforms have transformed China into the second largest world producer after the US, in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a country of undisputed competition in many areas of economic development, especially in terms of the textiles industry.

As a result of reforms and rapid development, China has marked an increase in all sectors. For example, in the construction of automobiles, China has made an unimaginable leap. In 1999, it produced 1.8 million vehicles, while in 2011, the number of vehicles produced in China reached a total of 18.4 million. Reforms and adaptation of the Chinese economy to the rules of the market economy, has led to the continued and sustainable