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Political Power Between Global Capital and Territorial Sovereignty: The "Flamingo Revolution" Protests in Albania

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ABSTRACT: The literature reveals a significant gap in understanding how political power is perceived and configured under conditions of real or imagined threats posed by globalization. This article addresses that gap through the case of the "Flamingo Revolution", the protests triggered by the Albanian government's agreement granting the island of Sazan for elite tourism development. Building on a literature review that conceptualizes political power as liquid and elusive, the study employed non-participant observation of protest-related Instagram pages and online newspapers, analyzing the material inductively through qualitative content analysis. The findings show three liquid representations of political power: a personalized, mobile power perceived as serving extraterritorial interests, opposed through a normative conception of territorial stewardship; a dispersed, unlocalizable power that undermines the collective capacity to build the future, countered by imagined futures that provisionally solidify it; and a power experienced through anomie and weakened in-group solidarity, redefined through historical precedent and threatened space. Across these representations, liquidity appears alongside idealized forms of power as rigid, predictable, and bounded in time and space.

KEYWORDS: Albania, economic globalism, liquidity, political power, territorial sovereignty

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1. Introduction

The notion of political power during modernity has been the principal factor through which modern society (nation state) was to be controlled from the top down in a manner mostly different from traditional societies. Its configuration was closely bound up with modern theories and philosophies on society and human nature, which have served as self-regulating discourses securing the justification and effectiveness of a power

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endowed with massive resources and with the will to manage society according to a predetermined model (Bauman 2003). For instance, if we look at Modernity and the Holocaust, power is portrayed as the ability to manage society much like a garden, pruning it towards its imagined form of politics (Bauman 2015). In Foucauldian terms, modern power has operated as a meticulous network of discipline aimed at producing 'docile' and economically efficient bodies rather than external violence; a continuous surveillance that led the observed to internalize the constraints of power and apply them voluntarily, integrating the individual into an uninterrupted chain of institutions from the school and the factory to the prison (Foucault 1995). Power in modernized societies has thus been conceptualized as a rigid making capacity in the name of creating a perfect and predictable social order. However, this became possible only thanks to the construction of the nation-state society on a territorial basis.

With the birth of nation states it may be said that political power was closely bound through the concept of 'territoriality', where the state functions as a protective unit whose juridical sovereignty rests upon the physical and strategic capacity to remain impermeable to external forces (Herz 1957). It was the principle of territoriality through which the practices of the state could be legitimated in relation to the management of the subjects and of human society in Foucauldian terms. As Spruyt (1994) has argued, sovereign territorial states prevailed other political entities by centralizing authority, standardizing laws and economies, and ultimately establishing territorial sovereignty as the dominant model of political organization. Similarly, Sack (2017) has claimed that territoriality is a deliberate strategy of power that makes authority visible through clear geographical boundaries, enabling the classification, surveillance, and control of people and resources based on their location.

However, with the expansion of globalizing processes, territorial sovereignty has been transformed as multinational corporations and international regimes increasingly penetrate the state's traditional domain. But as Ip (2010) has observed although this may appear as an 'erosion' of sovereignty, the state has adapted by incorporating global norms into its legal system. Despite power being distributed across complex networks, the state remains central through its control of military and economic resources, national identity, and regulatory authorities. Yet, as Ohmae (1993) has asserted, on the global economic map the borders of genuine importance today are those of 'region states', borders that are not established by political will or decision but are shaped invisibly by the global market of goods and services. According to him, these borders do not create new realities but merely reflect and confirm economic patterns that already exist.

In this regard, globalization has shifted competition among states from territorial control toward competition for global market share and investment. As states increasingly adapt their policies to attract transnational corporations, authority is diffused upwards to international organizations, sideways to global markets and firms, and downwards to regional authorities, weakening the state's traditional capacity to regulate economic activity and exercise sovereign control. (Strange 1995). Globalization operates as a neo capitalist enterprise that views the entire world as a unified system, in which nation states are treated as peripheries that must adopt the political economy of the centre (Ogbinyi and Alagh 2014, 6). Even though states often simulate sovereignty through symbolic practices such as the protection of borders real power has migrated towards private networks that escape democratic control. Thus, traditional sovereignty turns largely into a juridical fiction that masks the domination of capital and the need for new forms of transnational resistance (Volk 2022). Under such conditions, one cannot avoid considering the very context of the interconnection between the state and the population in terms of national sovereignty.

Although Ohmae emphasizes that the borders of region states pose no danger to the territorial political sovereignty of nations, since unlike state borders they require no military protection financed by the taxes of citizens (Ohmae 1993, 78), it must be said that the usurpation by economic forces, disregarding local sentiments and interests, may create contrary impressions and generate conflicts, symbolic or physical, between the state and its citizens, thereby influencing both the readiness of capital itself to enter or to depart

and the political legitimacy of the state authorities in relation to the people as the source of this legitimacy within a democratic system. However, it remains not entirely clear and not deeply explored how and what occurs during this process.

This paper addresses this dynamism through which political power attempts to survive under the continuous scrutiny and expectations of both external and internal factors, focusing on the protests concerning the island of Sazan and the village of Zvërnec in Albania, drawing on the theoretical approach of liquid modernity. The Albanian government announced an agreement granting the island for elite tourism for some 99 years under the use of Jared Kushner. Following the refusal of residents in Zvërnec, which lies opposite the island near the city of Vlora, private guards were filmed and publicized online exercising violence upon protesting residents. This provoked an intense wave of protests in the capital, drew international media attention, and gave rise to the movement known as the "Revolution of the Flamingos". These protests symbolize a phenomenon already common to the globalized world: the liquid nature of political power between the global economy and the territorial sovereignty of the state. In this context, I pose the following research question:

What are the liquid representations of political power in the context of the "Flamingo Revolution" protest, and how are they expressed?

I have chosen this protest because the reasons and motives behind its engagement are related both to territorial sovereignty as the main pillar of a rigid power conceptualization, and likewise to the influence of globalizing processes on the melting of stable forms of representation of political power.

I began with a literature review on the state and politics under economic globalization, defining political power through liquidity as an unstable, unpredictable, personalized experience. Drawing on Bauman's liquid modernity and other authors, I transposed this onto the exercise of political power, tracing how globalization dissolves territorial sovereignty as a solid, stable, predictable notion and experience in time and space. The resulting argumentative structure on liquidity and fluid power guided data interpretation, while the analysis in turn tested the conceptualization provided here.

Through non-participant observation of three protest-related Instagram pages and online newspaper writings, I conducted content analysis, coding inductively within this framework. Precisely because power is elusive and fluid, protesters resisted political authorities by invoking the past, collective mobilization and territorial sovereignty — configured through time and space — crystallizing an idealization of political power against external economic forces.

2. Literature Review and Argumentative Structure: Toward a Conceptualization of Liquid Political Power

Globalization has been widely discussed across various disciplines, bringing to light both its positive and its negative aspects. From an economic standpoint, it may have positive effects on economic development and the quality of life (Samimi and Jenatabadi 2014; Fatima, Hassan, and Shahid 2019; Uddin and Azam Khan 2024; Tabash, Elsantil, Hamadi, and Drachal 2024). Yet it also produces contradictory consequences on identity, culture and policymaking in the level of nation states. For instance, Walter (2021) has argued that the backlash against globalism is not linked solely to the economy but is rather the politicization of that backlash by political actors, expressed politically as opposition to international institutions and socio-culturally as a reaction to emigration and the loss of local cultures.

In countries marked by historical inequalities and political underrepresentation, such as those of indigenous peoples, backlash against foreign investments can increase the risk of conflict, as investments may be perceived as a continuation of historical injustices. Facing power asymmetries between corporations and governments, and lacking formal political channels, indigenous groups may resort to non-traditional forms of mobilization to defend their rights and territories (Jamison, Tadmor, and Henisz 2025). Especially cultural characteristics

associated with nationalism and xenophobia appear to constitute important elements of cultural specificity that influence economic processes such as foreign direct investment, by negatively affecting its absorption (Tocar 2022). When certain powerful versions of nationalism that spring from the everyday sentiments of ordinary people, who share deeply rooted assumptions about the superiority of their nation over others, become predominant, they begin to dictate the way in which multinational enterprises operate, affecting both their external environment and their internal organizational relations. One of the first consequences of this phenomenon is the reinforcement of a kind of national logic through which national values and symbols are placed at the summit of a moral hierarchy, making other logics, such as those of the market or of the corporation, appear secondary. For multinational companies this creates a major obstacle to 'hybridization', since it becomes almost impossible to combine global practices with local values without encountering resistance. In this way, what was once an opportunity for learning and innovation turns into a constraint in which firms are obliged to follow rigidly the norms of the country in which they operate (Edman, Cuypers, Ertug, and Aguilera 2024). It must be noted, however, that the emergence of nationalist or particularist sentiments is more complex and more profound than merely a historical moral inheritance. It is directly connected with the very nature and consequences of globalization, which as I have argued below seems to be linked to the liquidity of present-day modernity and to the indifference of economic entities towards the local context in which they wish to establish and to exercise their power. It appears that revolts, opposition and the empowerment of actors with particularist claims within a country relate to the phenomenon of the liquidity of social life.

Liquidity steps out as a condition through which social structures, institutions and human bonds are no longer stable and can no longer preserve their form over a long period of time. This new condition has radically transformed the nature of the state and of political power, creating a deep separation between them, since real power in the liquid age has become extraterritorial, moving with the speed of electronic signals and detaching from the constraints of physical space, while politics remains local and bound to the territory. The principal technique of this new power is escaping, slipping and the avoiding of territorial responsibility, since global elites live practically 'outside' physical territories, ruling without being obliged to concern themselves with the administration and the management or the welfare of the local population (Bauman 2000). The passage of power beyond the national territory of political institutions such as the state causes not only a weakening of them but also a liquefaction of that power. This is clearly expressed in the way citizens now approach policymaking and state authorities. The loss of trust, the personalization of public space, and the rapid and incoherent change of political decisions without a clear vision for the future create a social ambiguity in understanding how it is implemented, why it is implemented, for whom it is implemented and what the durable results of political activity within a nation state will be. In her study concerning the impact of economic globalization on political trust, Fischer (2012) has asserted that economic globalization lowers political trust because it restricts the freedom of national governments to choose and to implement independent policies. When a country opens itself to international trade and capital, its government loses discretionary power over the domestic economy and finds it increasingly difficult to respond to the specific preferences of its own voters. This process, according to the author, occurs through several mechanisms that operate simultaneously. Firstly, globalization imposes upon governments the need to remain competitive, which often obliges them to pursue similar policies such as lowering taxes on capital or deregulating the labour market, irrespective of their ideological orientation. Secondly, political trust rests upon a kind of 'psychological contract' between the citizen and the state which pushes the citizens to expect the government to act in their interest. However, when external market forces prevent the government from fulfilling these expectations, for instance by being unable to prevent unemployment in certain sectors, citizens perceive this as a lack of reciprocity and the responsiveness of the state weakens. Thirdly, citizens begin to feel that their political institutions no longer hold steering power over the welfare of the country, since economic development is increasingly determined

by external factors and by global financial markets, thus creating a profound sense of loss of control. To conceptualize it through Durkheim's (2013, 248-250) theory of anomie - conceived as a condition that appears when society loses its stable moral regulating markers - political power in global area emerges under conditions of social anomie.

The anomie also characterizes the relationship between the state and citizens whereby political power responds to citizens' desires and imposes limits upon them. The tension occurred here gives rise to a condition of political anomie, marked by the inability of political power to exercise predictable and systematic control. Political anomie can further be understood as a form of institutional ambiguity which, as Stel (2020, 8) has noted, captures processes of institutionalization by producing the repetition and tacit acceptance of ambiguity. Ambiguity has in essence a twofold nature, since it may create spaces for the advancement of democratic agendas in the face of institutional constraints, yet at the same time it may weaken the clear link between citizens and decision making. Its impact upon democratic governance depends on the balance between citizen representation and institutional coherence (Fowler 2023). Unstable political conditions, continuously influenced by an external development not always coherent with the interests of internal actors, together with the incapacity of political power to be exercised legitimately in this respect - designated as political anomie in this paper - prove to relate to economic globalizing processes.

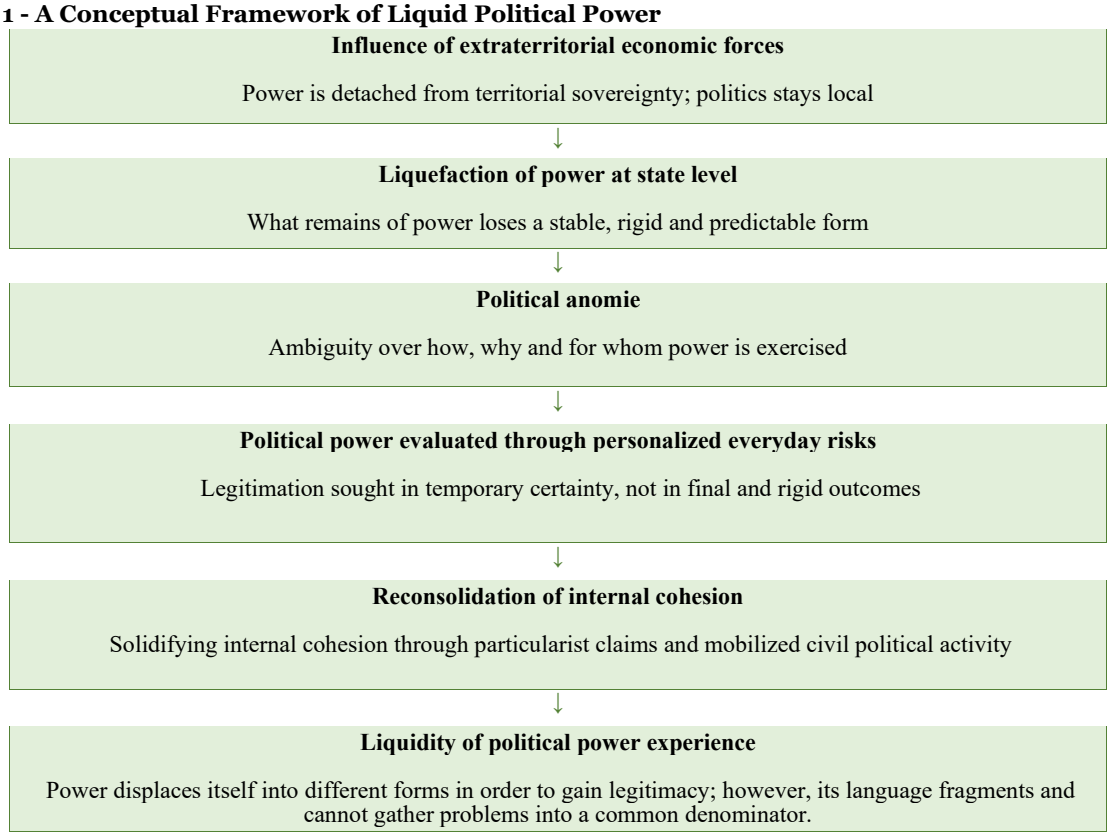
Globalization intensifies economic competition, leaving the "somewheres" - those whose lives and identities of whom are closely tied to particular places - particularly vulnerable and fostering a sense of relative deprivation. This deepens the division between locally coherent worldviews and 'global' elites unattached to place. Through ethnic diversity and large migratory flows, globalization is perceived, especially by conservative groups, as a threat to national and cultural identity, producing the sense of being 'strangers in their own land' (Schäfer 2022) and may be conceived as a condition of irregularity and ambiguity, that is of political anomie, in the relation between politics and the diversity of viewpoints and authorities within globalized societies. I wish to express this through an analysis of authority and of the forms politics has assumed today, in order to conceptualize the liquid nature of contemporary political power.

Liquidity is reflected in the personalization of everyday risks, as political power shifts from one problem to another without producing a coherent framework of meaning or social cohesion. In late modernity, therefore, political power operates increasingly through displacement and less visible mechanisms. Unable to provide socio-economic security against risks generated by globalized markets, the state shifts its legitimacy toward protection from immediate threats, becoming a 'personal safety state'. The state's economic sovereignty is increasingly constrained by global market forces, resulting in the privatization of systemic risks such as unemployment, illness, and economic insecurity, which increasingly become the responsibility of individuals (Bauman 2020). Globalization produces a fundamental asymmetry of power, since capital, information and decision-making move with extraterrestrial speed, while local institutions remain bound to territory and lose the sovereignty to guarantee security or protect citizens. Consequently, the public spaces where the meaning of communal life was once negotiated are displaced beyond local control, leaving the local unit incapable of producing its own meaning and leading towards anomie and existential insecurity. This detachment is deepened by the division between 'unrooted' elites who globalize freely and the population that stays bound to place, creating isolation and loss of communication with the centres of power. In response, neo-tribal and fundamentalist tendencies arise as 'legitimate children' of globalization, attempting to recover identitarian security within closed and local identities. The sense of restricted mobility, experienced as 'imprisonment' before the freedom of the elites, drives this process towards radical political mobilizations and challenges to the law, as a means of making oneself heard within a global system that excludes (Bauman 2010). The essential paradox of our time is that while citizens continue to believe firmly in the principles and ideals of democracy, they are increasingly losing trust in the institutions and authorities that represent them. We are not experiencing a general 'crisis of legitimacy', but a 'crisis of legitimation', in which the mechanisms and narratives that once

justified the exercise of power are no longer valid in a complex world. This decline does not necessarily arise from bad governance, but from the complexity of the global epoch whereby important decisions have been displaced to supranational levels or to technocratic elites, making citizens feel powerless and detached from democratic control. The fragmentation of society into countless interest groups and the growing political sophistication of citizens mean that the old ideals of parliamentary representation no longer satisfy the modern democratic 'taste' (Severs and Mattelaer 2014). Thus, political power becomes liquid, displacing itself into different forms because of and a reaction to insecurity, to gain legitimacy, focusing on directions which, owing to that fluidity, exclude or differ from one another. As Bauman (2011, 32) rightly sets out, the rules and authorities that guide us today often conflict, leaving us continuously before difficult choices; not simply between obeying and violating rules, but between authorities that demand contrary things of us. Every act of obedience towards one authority is at the same time disobedience towards another, and no one can escape personal responsibility for the choice made. What acquires importance, following Luhmann's (1979) analytical approach, is the capacity of power to offer temporary certainty under uncertain conditions rather than the imagined final outcome of political activity.

Unlike earlier power, exercised by controlling and restricting possibilities, in liquid modernity it is exercised through uncertainty. The old elites sought 'cultural capital', whereas today's new elites focus on 'seduction' (Bauman and Haugaard 2008). In a liquid society, political outputs become objects of rapid and intensive change, forfeiting their role in securing institutional stability and political trustworthiness. Where change is rapid and simultaneous, the language of political power fragments, unable to sustain a stable narrative that gathers a multiplicity of problems under a common denominator. Building on the preceding arguments, the following thematic scheme visualizes the fluidity of political power under conditions of economic globalism:

Figure 1 - A Conceptual Framework of Liquid Political Power



Source: *Author's elaboration based on previous literature review*

3. Methodological Design

The data were collected through non-participant observation on Instagram protest contents, focusing on three principal anonymous pages titled "Flamingo Revolution". Literature suggests that Instagram has become a natural environment through which young people voice grievances and demand justice, while anonymous accounts allow them to describe abuses without fear of immediate retaliation. It also serves as a visual embodiment of their identity, where hashtags, geo-tags and comments construct a rapid solidarity that overturns the traditional hierarchy of power, granting the powerless greater influence within networks than the authorities above them (see Ships 2024). Instagram was chosen as a platform predominantly used by the young, given that the protest has been carried out largely by Generation Z.

Passive approaches such as non-participant observation allow efficient navigation of digital data, secure representation and reduce bias while the researcher remains uninvolved with participants. They likewise permit the study of sensitive or stigmatizing environments and suit netnographic work, where network connections are rapid and transient and methods premised upon long standing communities fail (Hanell and Severson 2022). Given that the "Flamingo Revolution" contain material relating solely to this phenomenon, non-participant observation was deemed appropriate for preserving objectivity and anonymity, since protests are politically charged and objective data difficult to obtain through interviews or direct participation. Alongside this, intellectual writings and online newspaper debates were scanned to enrich the data and capture the discursive themes concerning the construction of political power within the protest. Intellectual and journalistic writings are likewise actors that protest, and they have been considered in the same category as the protesters on Instagram pages. In addition to the three anonymous Instagram pages, data were drawn from Albanian online outlets reporting on the protest, including Shqiptarja.com, Balkanweb.com, Citizens.al, flamingorevolution.org, Gazeta Shqiptare, Bulevard News, TRT Balkan (Albanian edition), and Dosja.al. These were treated as part of the same discursive corpus as the Instagram content. All excerpts were translated from Albanian and modified by the author.

The observation period began after the Instagram pages were created and the protest started to attract international attention, and once its discourse began to show signs relevant to the conceptualization of this article. The protest was followed between June and August 2026. During this phase, protesters' narratives were collected from the types of sources indicated, excluding content not directly related to the research object. For instance, I left out narratives about the organization of the protest and calls for assembly, focusing solely on representations of political power and protesters' demands. The theoretical framework guided the selection of information, and among duplicates only those carrying the greatest weight for the theoretical discussion were retained. This selection produced a corpus of 10 Word pages of cleaned data regarding narratives and images, to which I applied coding in order to derive categories that respond to the research question and the theoretical context of the study.

The study follows an ethical approach based on anonymizing users through numbered codes rather than pseudonyms and translates and modifies cited fragments where necessary, so that the original author cannot be traced through search engines, without intervening in the discussions (see Fangen 2020, 458). A similar approach has been followed here. The Flamingo Revolution accounts are anonymous, and the authors of the posts are unknown. The labels P-1, P-2 and so forth are applied alike to posts and to online newspaper texts, which, although public, make no reference to their authors' identities. The data have thus been 'mixed' anonymously, and their translation into English has also reinforced this anonymity further.

3.1 Analysis

The discussions, debates, appeals and evaluations surrounding the protest are focused primarily on the role of state authorities in the decision to sell the island, as well as on the demands advanced by the protesters. The

articulations are expressed through narratives as well as through images. For this reason, I have chosen to employ content analysis, enriched both by textual data and by the images generated around the event, which convey precisely the emotional dimension of the phenomenon. According to Mayring (2000), qualitative content analysis is an approach of empirical, methodologically controlled analysis of data within their context of communication. In the course of the analysis the material is situated within a model of communication, which is then transferred towards qualitative interpretative steps. The principal themes are treated as primary content, while contextual information is treated as latent content. The two central procedures were built on the inductive development of categories from the material.

In this study only the inductive approach has been employed. Reason for that lies in the aim to understand how political power is articulated without imposing rigid preconceived theoretical categories. The theoretical framework functioned only as a systematic orienting device rather than as a constraint on the emergence of new findings. I have selected those contents that bear an analytical relation to the context of the protest, to its messages and to the notion of political power in a globalized world. Thus, the principal ways of the configuration of political power were captured in relation to national sovereignty, economic development and the reactions of protesters towards it, making it possible to understand how the protesters approach the exercise of political power, what they demand of it, and how images of sovereignty and of economic globalism bear upon its configuration. The interpretative analysis was conducted by situating empirical data within the argumentative framework of the literature and of the preceding discussion, to preserve the cohesion and the analytical unity binding the theoretical framework to the empirical material of the study.

4. Results

4.1 The Dichotomy of Political Power's Territorial Stewardship: The Island Between Global Privatization and the Sovereign Common Good

Power is the probability and capacity to make things happen irrespective of the will of others (Weber 1947, 152). However, power is acquired and exercised according to established rules, and those rules must be justified through beliefs shared by the rulers with the ruled concerning the source of authority and the service of common interest. Under the conditions of the contemporary state this assumes specific forms, since legitimate power is hardly attainable without accepting popular sovereignty as the supreme source of authority, without understanding power as necessarily limited by the very rules that confer it, and without a minimal capacity to ensure order, security and welfare. At this point an essential distinction emerges between legitimacy and efficacy: good performance supports legitimation but cannot replace the normative basis upon which it rests. As a result, legitimacy is always a matter of degree and not an absolute condition. As such it is a public act and not merely an internal attitude, and it creates reciprocal obligations: the one who grants it undertakes the recognition of authority, while the one who receives it is bound to remain within the limits that this consent establishes (Beetham 1991). Political power in a nation state is directly connected with the question of legitimacy within the framework of national sovereignty as territorial independence and is conditioned by this notion. In the articulations of the protesters, the real or supposed exercise of power appears as a struggle between the privatization and use of the island for the private interests of state actors, who are accused of serving global actors, and, on the other hand, the defense of the integrity of the territory, which is expressed through the protection of natural ecosystem. Global intervention is perceived as a threat because it is constructed as the uprooting of the image of rigid political power in the service of territorial sovereignty. Unable to grasp the global nature of political power as dispersed, and not wholly oriented toward the nation-state, reactions come primarily in the form of personal acts attributed to political authorities:

> Politicians can be bought. Albania, not. For the protection of nature, for the voice of citizens, for Albania. Against the sale of the coastline. Against corruption. Against the abuse of power. We raise our voice for nature, for transparency, for the future of our people and our country (P2).

> The prime minister may declare the project useful, safe, and with an impact of billions on the economy, but political declarations do not change the fact that the decision preceded the studies, the transparency and the assessment of impacts on environment and economy alike. We are witnesses that, apart from political declarations, there is not a single page of feasibility study, data, figures and so forth, which as a rule accompany the project idea of developments from the smallest to the largest. The case of Zvërnec did not reveal the breach of a few irksome procedures that ought to be cleared from the path of investment. What is at stake are material limits set by national legislation and international obligations for the protection of nature. Environmental assessments, scientific studies and public consultation are not formalities; they must show whether the project can be carried out. In a state governed by the rule of law, first the law, science and the public interest determine whether and how much the territory may be developed. Only afterwards may politics speak of investment (P-3).

What is likewise brought to the fore, as presented in the third quotation, is that the declarations of the authorities concerning economic development are perceived as decorative performance and not as the legitimate stance of a public authority. The ambiguity and the lack of transparency perceived in the implementation of political power obscure the legitimate exercise of power itself. The legitimacy of resistance is taken within the framework of the configuration of the common good through socio-cultural components, the denial of the arbitrariness of political power, identitarian concerns such as the departure of Albanians, and the natural environment of the island as a sovereign space. The sovereign common good is presented in opposition to the privatization of the natural environment by global actors, and political power is tested through this prism. For as long as it refers to permitting global actors to invest in this area, it is delegitimized and turned into an entity against which resistance must be offered:

> What began as opposition to controversial luxury developments linked to Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump has grown into a much broader movement against corruption, disputed land deals and the loss of Albania's coastline and public spaces [...]. It is about environmental protection; it is about public land; it is about transparency; it is about the right of ordinary people to decide the future of their own country. Albania is not for sale! (P-4).

> The idealization of Ivanka Trump makes us feel as though she is harming no one and is merely taking up land left fallow, of interest to nobody and without an owner. In her account, she is spending her own billions to give value to this abandoned habitat that no one has laid claim to […]. She then closes with a deep spiritual effusion, saying with emotion: 'I want to build something that is a tangible manifestation of how people want to live', referring to the fact that everyone's dream is to live in the midst of nature. But of course! Except that this dream is being taken from the impoverished majority, which is placed at the disposal of an affluent minority that purchases with money even the sovereignty of the state, as Ivanka is doing. In the end, the word manifestation that she uses is a *New Age* spiritual rinsing of a billionaire affair (P-5).

Proceeding from the statements above, it may be argued that globalism is not merely a neutral economic process but, as Edman and colleagues (2024) have also argued, is conditioned by the local dynamics of society, as well as by other global notions that function and exist through the refusal of economic rationality, such as elite tourism in the context of this protest. What protesters demand, and what they protest against, is the perceived arbitrary nature of political power and its subordination to external economic forces. Physical territorial space is mobilized as a means of fixing how and why political power ought to be exercised, whereas

the application of political power in the name of declared economic development is linked to the personal interests of global actors. From this perspective, and drawing on the theoretical framework of this paper, it can be argued that territorial sovereignty, expressed through physical space as a common good, constitutes the principal solid node that makes possible both a clear predictability and the legitimation of political power. As the second excerpt directed against Ivanka Trump shows, global intervention in physical territory is perceived as harm to the common good, configuring political power as burdened with interests entirely external to the local.

4.2 Visions of the Future as the Nexus where Political Power's Liquidity is Embodied

What is striking in the protesters' articulations of political power is the very connection of it with its capacity and political will to build the desired future of Albanians; a future which is thought to have been deliberately destroyed by the immaturity and arbitrariness of politicians. Political power in this context is perceived as excessively fluid and in the service of narrow and personalized interests, and not as a solidified force, graspable, calculable and predictable in its function of creating the future of the country. For this reason, the protesters approach the act of protest as an opportunity to solidify political power in a stable and impersonal manner:

> I do not think these are ordinary or normal things for any society whatsoever, but we had the fortune of the spark of the masses in the square, to which we managed to remain faithful for so long. Beneath our concerns, a new way of understanding what we want for the future has been born. It will require yet more time to be formulated, but at present it appears as resistance to an order that makes it impossible for us to desire it. This is why we rightly cry out that it does not represent us. What is happening is no longer the history of thirty-five years of transition ruled by moral corruption, but only the first days of a new epoch in the history of Albanians, characterized once again by the national popular movement (P-6).

> Violence and rancour are not part of our alternative. Father Frederik Kalaj emphasized, on the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the USA, that in thirty-five days of protest not a single pane of glass was broken by the protesters. According to him, we have discovered in ourselves a kind of exemplary citizenship that is not to be found even in the West. Along our path lie citizenship and love — for oneself, for the country and for one another. The question placed before each of us is this: what do we want to do with this, ignore it as a reality and return to the Socialist Party–Democratic Party soap operas with one another, or move forward along this path we have begun together? Here in the square, we have made up our minds: Albania demands Revolution! (P-7).

The future appears not as a political programme, but as an imagined category through which ungraspable power takes on a provisionally solidified form. The subject articulates power first negatively, through what it has destroyed: "an order that makes it impossible for us to desire" the future. Power is named not through institutions, laws or accountable actors, but through its effect upon the collective capacity to desire; that is, precisely, as a fluid, dispersed and unlocalizable force. In Bauman's (2000) terms, we are dealing with that asymmetry characteristic of liquid modernity, where power frees itself from place and long-term commitment, while the ruled remains bound to territory and to the consequences that are produced.

Against this liquefaction, the subject's discourse constructs two nodes of embodiment. The first is about the historical division between "35 years of transition ruled by moral corruption" and "the first days of a new epoch" solidifying liquidity by giving it a desired beginning. To express it in Koselleck's language, this is an attempt to reopen the horizon of expectation after it had been closed by a space of experience saturated with failure: the past no longer serves as a source of orientation, so the future must be founded anew, and precisely

this void requires a body in which to be held while eclipsing the experience of the past (Hartley 2015, 13-14). Because the space of experience (35 years of transition) has been devalued as a source of orientation for political power, expectation detaches from it and assumes a utopian-revolutionary form without formulated content. The second node is bodily-moral: not a single window broken in 35 days, "exemplary citizenship", love for oneself, for the country and for the other. These are the material, countable, tangible proofs that give the vision an exemplary model of the exercise of power where political content remains unsaid ("it will require even more time to be formulated"). The reference to Father Frederik Kalaj and to the 250th anniversary of American independence reinforces this as legitimacy is sought not in a doctrine, but in publicly attested conduct. The contrast between the admission that the alternative is not yet formulated and the categorical call "Albania demands Revolution" is therefore not an inconsistency, but the clearest proof that the node of the vision of the future contains not a doctrine but a way of standing towards liquidity — a way of undoing it by embodying the future as a temporal time category through which actual power's conditions are refused by invoking an ideal form of it through present practices, in the name of an ideal imagination of tomorrow.

On the other hand, the imagining of the future as the node binding the desired experience of clearly understanding the workings of political power is expressed also through negative imaginaries, as in the case of the possible colonization of Albania by Israel:

Figure 2 - A protest banner emphasizing that the colonization of Albania begins with Zvërnec and Sazan



Source: *from data about 'Flamingo Revolution' pages in instagram*

It appears that the protest cannot be reduced to a locally generated grievance voiced through locally available repertoires alone. It is read instead as a displacement of such grievances onto the wider field of global moral concern surrounding the Israel–Palestine conflict, a concern that is translated into a local issue. This translation performs a double function: it lends legitimacy to the act of protesting, while simultaneously expressing a real apprehension that local independence and autonomy might be endangered in the near future, in a way protesters understand as analogous to what has befallen the Palestinians (Zeneli 2026). This signals that the fluidity of political power as an incapacity and an ambiguity in its own function of creating a solidified and clear framework of sovereignty produces not only an exclusion of globalizing processes but also their

instrumentalization, when this is felt to be necessary and when it is demanded that such liquidity be embodied and rendered comprehensible and legible for citizens.

4.3 Hardening In-Group Sentiment against Socio-Political Anomie: Reconfiguring Political Power Through the Categories of Time and Space

The liquid nature of political power — expressed in the personalized terms of political actors, in its perceived servitude towards external factors and in its incapacity to create stability and broad solidarity within society, that is, conditioned by a state of social and political anomie — mobilizes the categories of time and space as coagulating frames that make possible the articulation of the desires, aspirations, pains and divisions of social life, and consequently the reconfiguration of political power:

> But today, the *Vlora* ship is no longer like a vessel that takes twenty thousand people all together. Today we are different, today we have aeroplanes that take Albanians one after another. One hundred and fifty thousand Albanians left between 2023 and 2024. Ten times then *Vlora* ship. And we do not have that moment [as in '91] for the cameras to capture. This is why Albania demands revolution. Whereas for this government the emergency is a concert, for us the emergency is the protection of life, of the forests, of our homes and of our communities. We protest because the state must be in the service of citizens, not in the service of the narrow interests of the political spectacle. The government remains one of spectacles. The state is in a state of emergency (P-8).

Figure 3 - Cartoon depicting Albanian emigrants departing by dinghy for England, bearing the unbridled luxury of politicians on their backs



Source: *from data about 'Flamingo Revolution' pages in instagram*

> Albania is in danger. Nature is being alienated; the Albanian is not being impoverished but robbed. Albanian citizens continue to leave their homeland; the lands of our forefathers are being sold to foreigners and oligarchs. We must awaken. Join the resistance. The protest is alive; the people have that strength" (P-9).

> Honouring our heritage, we recall the League of Prizren (1878) and its endurance and legacy of unity, resistance and struggle for our rights. Just as our forebears united to defend our culture and our land, today we stand against the modern threats of corrupt politicians and of the environmental degradation that endangers our beautiful nature. The state has replaced the foreign empires of the past with transnational capital, acting as a neocolonial intermediary to carve up the Vjosa–Narta ecosystem for the sake of billionaires' luxury resorts. True self-determination cannot exist under capitalism, which turns the living world into a commodity for exploitation. Nor can it exist under a patriarchal and authoritarian governance that decides the fate of our common wealth behind closed doors. By symbolically replacing the traditional double-headed eagle with a flamingo, we commit ourselves to fulfilling the historical aims of the League of Prizren — but this time, our vision of collective liberation includes women, youth, ecosystems and all living beings (P-10)

This follows from the need to solidify the sense of in – group solidarity. The protest is presented as an opportunity of taking power into one's own hands, so that anomies such as migration may be resolved once and for all. It thus appears also as a reaction to the liquidity that accompanies power in a global world. The distinction between the emigration of the *Vlora* ship after communist collapse and departure by aeroplane, unregistered by cameras (global economic power operating silently and privately), or the caricature of emigration by dinghy towards England against a background of political luxury, expresses this phenomenon; it symbolizes also the absence of in-group solidarity and of solid images of the "we" even in crisis, the unregistered departure being a critical form of the same concern. Hence the continual calls for organization, employing historical narratives or current problems.

The reconfiguration of power as the capacity sustaining the in-group and community as national imagination is bound to the categories of time and space. The past, through historical events situated in spaces, such as the League of Prizren, is mobilized to reconfigure an ideal of functionalist power capable of preserving a stable "we" through resistance and the struggle to defend culture and land. The instrumentalization of the past is a type of retrotopia that enables rigid grasps on political power. As Bauman has argued, retrotopia emerges from the ever-deepening gap between power and politics: nation-states are unable to fulfil their promises, so people lose faith that the future will improve the human condition. Its function is to correct the shortcomings of the present by reviving the failed and forgotten potentials of the past. Thus, imagined aspects of the past serve as points of orientation toward a better world (Bauman 2017). The same effort refers to being re-founded to defend the endangered spaces of the ecosystem. Space is presented as vulnerable to foreign forces, politicians, oligarchs and the government, held to be the principal agents of the decline of the land, the resources and the nation. Above all this expresses the need to construct clear boundaries for the functioning of political power: its capacity to create ontological security through territorial sovereignty, stability and social cohesion in the face of the liquidity characterizing globalization.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to conceptualize the liquid representations of political power in the case of the "Flamingo Revolution" protest in Albania. What stands out is that, alongside the liquid representations, they also carry with them idealized forms of how political power ought to be: rigid, predictable, and bounded in time and space.

The first liquid representation concerns an elusive mobility of power, oscillating between territorial stewardship and the narrow interests of global actors. Political power is portrayed as personalized and devoted to external actors, as expressed through accusations of corruption, decisions taken before studies and public consultation, and official statements perceived as decorative performance. Protesters delegitimized political authorities by opposing to this power a normative conception of territorial stewardship, in which nature and public land operate as a language of sovereignty. The call for a predictable power, limited by the common good, thus emerges as an idealized solidification of power in the face of global intervention, which is perceived as harm to the commons.

Second, liquidity is expressed through the relation of power to the future. Power is represented as a dispersed and unlocalizable force, described negatively through what it has destroyed, such as the collective capacity to desire and build the future. In response, the future is imagined as a node that provisionally solidifies power, through a desired historical beginning, exemplary civic conduct as tangible proof, and, in negative imaginaries, the fear of colonization. These representations express a stance toward liquidity rather than a formulated political program.

Third, liquidity is expressed through social and political anomie, which weakens in-group solidarity. In the sources analyzed, the absence of a stable "we" appears in unregistered emigration, invisible to the cameras, and in the luxury of politicians set against those who leave. Protesters redefine power through time and space: the historical past is mobilized as a point of orientation, while space is presented as vulnerable to foreign forces. These representations articulate a need for clear boundaries of political power and for ontological security through territorial sovereignty.

In relation to the conceptual framework presented in the literature review, these three representations reflect some of its components: the influence of extraterritorial forces and the separation of power from territory (the first representation), political anomie and uncertainty over how and why power is exercised (the second), and the reconsolidation of internal cohesion through particularist claims and civic mobilization (the third). The analysis does not demonstrate the causal sequence of the framework, nor did it aim to do so. It shows, however, that the framework's categories serve as an orienting lens for reading how liquidity is expressed in perceptions of power, and how it mobilizes the imagination of solidification as a reaction to liquid conditions.

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