

***Future enlargement of EU: Albania
case, population attitudes towards
membership***

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ABSTRACT

Enlargement is a key transformational force, inspiring democratic change and economic liberalization among those who wish to join. It is at the heart of the EU's soft power to extend the zone of peace, stability and prosperity on the continent. The appeal of the EU has been instrumental in the peaceful democratic transformation of Central and Eastern Europe and it remains the driving force for the reforms in the Western Balkans and in Turkey.

Western Balkan countries surrounded by EU members states turned their hopes towards European membership. Momentarily the enlargement process in this region is frozen due to different reasons (necessity of EU internal reformation, complexities of the region, implementation of a new enlargement strategy and approach). The region feels that there is a lack of vision and they perceive that conditionality tool isn't that effective in bringing major changes and that the 'regional approach' has created problems. It is very important to go back and draw the characteristic of enlargement strategy between CEE enlargement strategy and Western Balkan strategy with the clear purpose in finding the origin of this issues. Albania got its candidate status in 2014, however no chapters were opened so far and the political elites push for 'stabilocracy', preferences are for stability rather than maintaining democratic standards. Compared with other Western Balkan countries, Albania is unique in some directions and we want to analyze its characteristics and developments in order to explain the backwardness of the country's accession process. Even though the EU's conditionality and leverage in the country has weakened there is still a massive support for accession. The analyzes of the Albanian citizen towards the EU integration suggests a number of interesting implications and outcomes like: non-economic judgments of the domestic political process are put ahead of the utilitarian judgements. Albanians citizens rely mostly on cues from domestic politics factors to form their attitudes about EU membership. European Union in accordance to the current developments of the country is seen as the only solution, is not questioned and citizens haven't yet come close enough to the accession in order to form 'critical' opinion towards membership. Support remains higher in countries with lower opportunity costs of transferring sovereignty to the EU and Albania has more to gain then lose in this process. The future of 'enlargement' does not seem clear from the Western Balkan region view, it is shaken by the EU: economic crisis, enlargement fatigues, accession fatigue and Brexit. Analyzing the importance and origin of such a process (between CEE and Western Balkan/Albanian case) may through some light in the upcoming

challenges of enlargement strategy. Trace the developments of Albania-EU relations from (2000 to present). Explore the institutionalist mechanism that have been used to foster this relationship as it may indicate possible future directions for EU-Western Balkan policies. Albanian-EU relations are excellent case-study for analyzing both strategies of transition states in developing their external relations and the development of the EU's external relations with countries in its regional sphere of influence. The Western Balkan is not a homogenous region with uniform views of Europe so the 'Albanian' case expels us the huge work on showing a vast range of perceptions about the EU at a country-level. Review of records and reports and data collection. Parts of this research include indicators and findings from analyzing of the data, evaluation of reports, national and international studies on this subject.

KEYWORDS: *EU enlargement, Integration, Albania, population attitudes*

The purposed methodology

This study is formulated on producing both quantitative and qualitative data collected from several levels of decision-making institutions in Albania.

In this contribution, we take stock on what existing public survey and academic studies reveal about the state (EU enlargement, EU integration) and about the determinates of the opinions, attitudes and evaluations of Albanian citizens about future integration of the country. Parts of this research include indicators and findings from analyzing of the data, evaluation of reports, national and international studies on this subject. This research is descriptive and analytical in nature. Accumulation of information on the topic included wide use of secondary source: books, e-articles, online journals, articles, research papers.

The matter from these sources have been compiled and analyzed to understand the concept from the grass root level. Since we want a standardized and therefore comparable information we will be using sample data survey from Eurobarometer of transition and EU candidate countries, national statistical data's and Gallup Balkan Monitor. We follow a deductive approach and we end with an inductive reasoning as we analyze the data of Albanian attitudes towards EU integration. As it is a case study we narrowed down to an easily specific researchable topic.

The purpose of the study

Creating a coherent road map of Albanian EU integration process and determine the reasons of its population attitudes (supportive) towards future integration.

The objectives of the study

1. Presenting the EU policy and perspective for the Western Balkans, EU enlargement strategy
2. Analyzing and constructing Albania's road map to the EU membership 2000-2016
3. Identifying the country's challenges in adapting the 'EU rules'
4. Determine and analyze the factors that form/drives the Albanians citizens supportive attitudes towards EU integration.

Table of content

<i>Abstract.....</i>	
<i>Methodology.....</i>	
<i>Chapter I: Introduction.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>I.1: Research objective.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>I.2: Research design.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Chapter II: Literature review.....</i>	
<i>II.1: Nation states in the European Integration project</i>	
<i>II.2: Neofunctionalism.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>II.3: Intergovernmental institutionalism</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>II.4: Sociological institutionalism.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>II.5: Europeanization.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Chapter III: Albanian's transition.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>III.1: Albania and the CEE countries.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>III.2: The importance of the elite and the middle classes.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>III.3: Transition into democracy.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>III.4: Democracy struggles.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Chapter IV: European Union Enlargement.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>IV.1: EU enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans.....</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>IV.2: Eastern enlargement vs Western enlargement.....</i>	<i>47</i>

IV.3: The frozen enlargement process question?!	54
Chapter V: Albanian's EU integration	56
V.1: Conditionality principle	63
V.2: Albanian's faces to Europeanization	64
V.3: EU pressure	67
 Chapter VI. Albanian domestic challenges	69
VI.1: Corruption	71
VI.2: Judicial capacity	73
Chapter VII. Albanian's population attitudes towards EU membership	76
Conclusions	88
Bibliography	92

Chap.I: Introduction

In light of the newest developments, this past 5 years enlargement has ‘frozen’. The process has stopped and the European Commission is using this time to prepare membership candidates. The transformative effect of enlargement is being called out and apparently it is not as effective (especially on the Western Balkan region).

The impact of external international factors, approval and offer of membership by international organizations has been a vital factor in the legitimization of new democracies. Integration of the Balkans depends also on external factors (EU).

Is it very valuable to understand how the EU’s attitude to enlargement has changed since 2004 with the new direction on Western Balkans. There are some clear signs of an ‘enlargement fatigue’ as Members States governments have become more reluctant to accept additional candidate countries. EU enlargement has always been a wide-open discussion were link between the ‘widening’ and ‘deepening’ camps has been in a thin line. There are many pros and cons to this argument. ‘The EU enlargement process and its likely consequences for the future are hardly mysterious when viewed from the perspective of national interests and state power, this viewpoint also offers a more optimistic prognosis for the future. Just as occurred in the past, leaders of current EU members are promoting accession because they consider enlargement to be in their long-term economic and geopolitical interest. While some interest’s groups in current members states oppose enlargement because they will bear a disproportionate share of the short-term costs’ (Moravcsik.A & Vachudova.A 2003).

For those who are skeptical of the EU further expansion with 28 members the Union is already teetering on the brink of institutional gridlock. According to them EU cannot afford to expand, any more would overload the system making effective-decision making impossible. Their arguments go even further on putting on the surface that fact that successive enlargements have diluted the aims of the EU’s founding fathers, ever wider Europe has replaced ever greater union. Recent enlargements were already a step to far (Western Balkan) as this country are not ready yet for EU membership (their economies would not survive the competition). On the other hand, for those who are positive about EU expanding ‘freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect of human rights’ are what EU represents so shutting the door on European nations that

share that commitment undermines the EU's credibility. Let's not forget that enlargement has been the EU's most successful foreign policy tool', it can export stability, democracy and economic well-being into a potentially disruptive neighborhood (WB). As we live in a world of emerging superpowers, a bigger EU will be better placed to make its voice and values respected. Enlargement is strategically a success and Europe's greatest treasure as it adds to the cultural diversity. So, analyzing the future direction of the EU enlargement is decisive for the Western Balkan future integration. CEE enlargement strategy does not fit the conditions of the Balkans so in differentiating this two enlargement phases we emphasize the shift change of the EU towards the region. Albania (as a Western Balkan country) does not share the post-communist legacy of other candidate countries, so tracing and analyzing the development Albania-EU relations from 1990 to present by exploring the institutional mechanisms that have been used to foster this relationship, may indicate possible future direction for the EU-Western Balkan policy. Albania shares unconsolidated statehood with EU conditionality and EU has been directed more towards institution building and accession (less towards state building like its sister-countries).

When it comes to Western Balkans and its prospects of EU membership we can find different studies giving us a general information about: attitudes to membership, developments in the applicant's states, Balkans in Europe's future. What we lack is a case study of a candidate country (Albania), showing its chronological road to the EU membership. In the case of Albania there is no specific study showing step by step his approach to the Integration process and the state challenges. The making of this research will give light to the Albanian population attitudes regarding its membership especially in this important phase of having to adapt to EU rules and achieve International and EU standards. A comparison between the previous enlargement phase (CEE countries) and Western Balkan countries is emphasized as a tool to better understand the new approach towards enlargement strategy in this region and from there to filter it in Albanians developments in fulfilling the accession requirements. Albania despite the enlargement frozen momentarily phase and the EU unclear future, remains the most pro-European country in the region. We explore and discover the factors that drive citizens attitudes towards membership. We made a time table of the previous data and used those that serves best to our research.

Our research and analyzes had quite interesting finding; EU's enlargement strategy on Western Balkan differs much from the previous enlargements. European Union had to re-invent its normative power and possibly re-adapt its integration tools. EU enlargement crisis in both the

enlargement fatigue and accession fatigue needs to establish a flexible membership. “The European Commission’s strategy is neither total exclusion nor rapid integration. Its aim is to restructure the Western Balkans in line with neoliberalism to prepare the region for the ‘preincorporation stage’. The Commission’s major initiatives show that this neoliberal restructuring need not end in full membership but remains an open-ended process’ (Turkes.M&Gokgos.G 2006). Of course, there are certain consequences to this for the Western Balkan but in our case for Albania. It’s road to EU was difficult and with lots of set downs. As we identified the country’s challenges in adapting to EU’s new accession rules we discovered the magnitude of the influence of this reforms on domestic level. As we reveal the country’s unique legacy and road in adapting to the EU conditions we also discovered Albanian’s state weakness and immediate priorities in its Europeanization process.

Chap.II Literature review

Nation-States in the European Integration project

Nation-state is a specific form of sovereign state, a political entity on a territory that is guided by a nation (cultural entity) and which it derives its legitimacy from successfully serving all its citizens. It implies that a state and a nation coincide.

The modern state is relatively new to human history, emerging after the Renaissance and Reformation. Some modern nation-states, in Europe or North America prospered in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were promoted as a model form of governance. The League of Nations (1919) and the United Nations are predicated on the concept of a community of nation-states.

The nation-state idea is associated with the rise of the modern system of states, dated to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). The balance of power which characterized that system, depended on its effectiveness on clearly-defined, centrally controlled, independent powers, whether empires or nation-states.

The nation-state received a philosophical underpinning from the era of Romanticism, at first as the 'natural' expression of the individual people, it also developed an absolute value in the philosophy of Hegel. For him, the state was the final stage of march of the absolute in history, taking on a near god-like quality. The concept of the modern state is more and ideal than a reality. In this ideal nation-state, the entire population of the territory pledges allegiance to the national culture. The population can be considered homogeneous on the state level even if there is diversity at lower levels of social and political organization. The state not only houses the nation but protects it and its national identity. This ideal, which grew out of feudal states, has influenced almost all existing modern states, and they cannot be understood without reference to that model. Most of the world's people do not feel that the ruling elite in their state promotes their own national interest, but only that of the ruling party.

The nation-state became the standard ideal in France during the French Revolution, and quickly the nationalist idea spread through Europe and later one to the world.

Nation-state has been associated with modernity, industrial capitalism and with liberal

representative democracy. But, it can also give rise to imperialism, tensions in international relations. Its strongest association has been with liberal democracy and various freedoms associated with that form of political organization. Modern European history is very largely the story of the emergence of the nation-state as the dominant form of political organization. During the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries it was the model to which all newly formed states aspired. The nation-state, in its liberal-democratic manifestation had provided the framework for the exercise of political citizenship and human rights. In the second half of the 20th century it reached its culmination with the arrival of the Welfare State, in which the concept of political citizenship was further developed to include social rights alongside the more traditional political rights of liberal democracy.

The state remains the starting point for many analyses of the European Integration. The Community and after it the European Union, were created by national states. If they did so, it is generally stressed that it is because they felt the development of international cooperation was likely to bring a number of collective benefits. In order to make sure it would serve their interest, structures and procedures were designed to preserve their control over decision-making, hence the weight of the member states in the European political system (Hoffmann, 1996, Garrett 1992)

Maintaining a peaceful nation-state requires ongoing legitimation of both the national ideas and norms and the state regime in the eyes of the citizens. Both the national ideas and government must be able to change and adapt to new circumstances such as: developments in science, economic conditions, new ideas and demographic changes such as immigration. Some interesting changes started to happen after the post-war era. A global political system based on international agreements and supranational blocks emerged. Non-state actors, such as international corporations and trans-national non-governmental organizations were seen as the starter on eroding economic and political power on the nation-states.

Many powerful countries abandoned the idea of a sovereign state, as they accepted willingly regional-level governments like the European Union for many government functions. Traditional states accepted regional courts of arbitration, as they gave up a measure of sovereignty for equal treatment and participation in a global community.

European Union by its very design is a multilateral organization.¹ Decisions are the end-product of negotiations on multiple fronts. An overview of the European integration process reveals an inexorable, gradual transfer of sovereignty from the national to the supranational level. The first European Community developed in today's strong actor on influencing almost every area of policy. Its polity gets the power from the Member States, not as an addition to theirs. By adopting a macro view of sovereign authority in Europe, what the European integration process does, is to alter the balance of power by redistributing sovereignty, typically in the form of concentrating an ever growing portion of it to the supranational level. The government of an EU Member State of the present is far more limited in its options for unilateral action than a government in the mid-twentieth century. The success of the integration process is closely correlated with the relative enfeeblement of the nation state. Then we can overly discuss about the reasons of national governments that willingly have transferred part of their sovereignty to the supranational level. The most agreeable one is based on their revealed preferences in the form of the EU Treaty law and they think of it as a prerequisite to the creation of a solution where everyone benefits.

Whatever might the discussion or speculations on the future prospects of the nation state, European Union is not designed to usurp its member states or compete with them over legitimacy. It's a merely functional extension of the collective will of European nations. It is the nation states that formulate, sign and ratify the European Treaties. The intergovernmentalism inherent to the EU, manifesting in the multitude of input conduits in decision-making available to Member States, is meant to promote and somehow to preserve the vital interests of European nations.

Said this clearly, only nation states have succeeded on the European Integration process. The EC was little more than a strong international regime right up to the 1970s. Today it seems it had rediscovered, at least partially its federal vision of a 'United States of Europe', even if it's not quite yet a federation. It is rather a hybrid type of organization, with some intergovernmentalist features (which recognize the primacy of the national interests of the member states) and with some supranational or federal-type features (which emphasize the primacy of the EU common interest over and above national interest).

¹ P.Stavrou, 'European Integration and the role of the nation state', 2016, Little guide to the EU, pg.2-3

One of the most remarkable periods of modern history was the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. There was a spontaneous response of the Western Europeans, as they welcomed the newly liberated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and some of the countries of the former Soviet Union. It was a desirable goal from the part of the liberated countries but there was a paradox there. The new democracies of the Central and Eastern Europe and of the Baltic and Balkan regions, had won for the first-time national dependence as nation-states. Thus, followed the pattern in adopting what had become the dominant form of political organization. They correctly perceived that this was the path to liberal democracy and social, economic well-being. Albania in this case was fortunate cause it already possessed an 'old' nation-state and clear boundaries.

²This is relevant to Albania because: the country was a small nation which broke off from Ottoman empire and became independent in 1912. Many ethnic Albanians are also found outside its borders, especially in parts of the former Yugoslavia, such as Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia. Besides this territorially-based communities, there is a large diaspora to be found mainly in the United States but also in some European countries (Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland). During the period of communism, Enver Hoxha's aim was to consolidate the independence of the existing states of Albania and not to question the current borders. Despite some evidence of discrimination against Albania communities outside these borders, especially in Kosovo. Hoxha, after Tito-Stalin split in 1914 had little choice but to abandon any plan to incorporate Kosovo and Albanian-inhabited western Macedonia into what Tito believed would become a Balkan Federation including Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The principle of national independence sought by Hoxha, in its turn degenerated into a complete isolationism, as Albania courted bigger powers and then broke relations with them: first with Yugoslavia, then with USSR and finally with China. But the national question came to the shore again with the collapse of the Soviet Union and especially with the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Albania can be regarded as a unitary nation-state following the French model of unity and indivisibility, but with important minorities outside its borders who have an influence on its politics.

² M.Bogdani&J.Loghlin;*Albania and European Union, The Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration and Accession*, 2007,pg.10-14, I.B.Tauris, New York

Quite interesting is that the countries which did successfully negotiate the path to national independence (Yugoslavia, CEE countries) they abandoned their new-found freedom by surrendering parts of their national sovereignty to a fledgling neo-federation, the European Union. ³What is paradoxical is that the federal idea itself was suspect, having been corrupted by the paper federation and even the 'velvet divorce' of Czechoslovakia further damaged the ideas of a federal union. European Union, kept an ideal democracy, prosperity and wellbeing for the former Soviet bloc countries and to them it was irresistible. This doesn't mean that European integration process and globalization threatens the nation-state. The nation-state has more transformed. With the crisis of the Welfare State and the advent of neo-liberal hegemony in the 1980s and 1990s, the state itself, in most of Western countries has refined its role less as 'directing' and 'controlling' in a top-down, and more as 'steering' and 'animating' a variety of interests in civil society. The traditional nation-state had been transformed but obviously retained many of its classical features regarding to the organization of the political and administrative features of democracy. There has been a heated discussion about the role of the supranational organizations (EU, Council of Europe, World Trade organization...) all which were involved in what were once purely domestic affairs internal to the nation-state, but we cannot make a fact out of this argument. What we can mention as a counter-argument is that, particularly within the European Union, national governments are no longer capable of delivering the range of benefits that is associated with the Welfare State. They are constrained by forces which they cannot control: international finance, globalized economic process and new technologies. Centers of real power have shifted from the national locus to centers outside the nation-state. This could pose a challenge for the current national organization of democratic life. This is clearly evident within the EU itself, where over 60% of legislative decisions are made by the EU institutions and are simply adopted into national legislation by the representative assemblies of the member states. There is still struggles of democratic deficit. The new democracies of the former communist bloc not only, are asked to abandon at least some of their hard-won national independence, but also, they must adapt their internal systems to cope with the transformations that have characterized the Western European states as well as the EU

³ M.Bogdani&J.Loghlin;*Albania and European Union, The Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration and Accession*, 2007,pg.15-17, I.B.Tauris, New York

system of governance. Among these new democracies there is many differences and how they will prepare to meet the entry conditions is very variable.

There are some strong arguments from author M.Bogdani & J.Loughlin (2007) doubting, about the idea that western-style democracy could be developed further south in the Balkans. According to her it can be problematic and challenging for these reasons:

- It is the first group of countries that have been able to draw on these historical affinities to adapt themselves to the political, economic, and social conditions necessary for joining the Union

- The experience of the communist rule for forty years or more left all the countries in a dire state politically and economically

- The accession of the new states came just at the moment when existing EU member states where themselves undergoing reforms, when EU integration was accelerating and when the global international scene was changing beyond recognition.

The state remains the primary political arena. This is the level where the various interests at stake confront each other and where the adjustments necessary to accommodate the position of each state come out. Integration therefore is viewed as a two-level political process: determination of national preferences, then intergovernmental negotiations at European Level. This process is summarized: national interest- state preferences-international negotiations-outcome (Moravcsik, 1993).

Integration theories provide an analytical framework that is useful in understanding political events such as the creation, growth and function of the European Union. It provides structure to our interpretation. While European leaders have worked on compromises and bargains over the years, political scientists have produced conceptual frameworks on European Integration. European Union fits within the universe of traditional international-relations theory, which views the state as the main actor and international regimes as centers of interstate cooperation. What is curious about EU, is the fact that is not federation but is more than a regime. It clearly reduces the sovereignty of its members states.

None of the integration theories offers a coherent and conclusive explanation for the integration process but each of them can solve a part of the puzzle on European Integration.

The EU and the processes of European integration are just too complex to be captured by a single theoretical prospectus' (B. Rosamond 2000).

The goal is in understanding better the mechanism of European Political Integration and in explaining European integration, existing international relations literature provides us with basically three research plans: neo-functionalism, Sociological institutionalism, intergovernmental institutionalism and Europeanization.

Neo-functionalism: explaining deepening and broadening

This theory still provides useful insight into the European Integration process, especially through its emphasis on spillover effects. It explains European integration as a process whereby the sharing of 'functions', 'spill-overs' into institutional and eventually political developments. It shares with federalism the aim of transcending the primacy of the nation-state and national governments, but differs from it in placing economic factors above the political.

Critics argue about neo-functionalism's one-side focus on the fact that the EC should be seen as a complex political system (rather than an integration project) and that external factors should also be taken into account. But this seems that it does not touch the core argument of this neo-functionalist theory: the integration of particular economic sectors will create functional pressures for the integration of related economic sectors. The theory suffered a decline in the 1970s and early 1980s, as it seemed that the course of European integration during this period did not bear out its predictions but it made it comeback, in the 1980s with the success of the Single Market programme of Jacques Delors. Contemporary neo-functionalist point to the spillover from the Single Market programme to the accelerated institutional and policy developments, elaborated in the revision of the Treaties at Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice.

⁴The concept of spillover refers to 'a situation in which a given action related to a specific goal, creates a situation in which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition and a need for more action so forth' (Lidberg 1963). R.Hansen argues that in less controversial areas of 'low politics' the concept of economic spillover can provide a plausible account of European integration.

⁴ F.Meerts, Explaining European Integration: The merits and short coming of Integration Theory, 2008, E-International Relations Students, pg.2-6
Rosamond.B, Theories of European Integration, 2000, New York, pg.53-68

For explaining integration in more controversial areas of high politics and explaining the linkage between integration in 'low politics' and 'high politics', neo-functionalism comes up short. According to ⁵Joseph Nye spillover is a limited tool that explains certain processes of integration but cannot account for others and ignores for instance the influence of perceptions of equity of distributions of benefits and costs of integration, common perceptions of external threats and the specific historical context. Satisfaction of welfare and material needs are at issue in the European integration process. It attaches greater importance to the political nature of governance and the context in which occurs. The value of the spillover concept it can explain much on deepening and broadening of the European integration.

It is still important as a theoretical prospectus, it contemplated the replacements of power politics with a new supranational style. Built around a core procedural consensus which resembled that of most domestic political systems. It was a bold claim for an international theory to make and is one that struck at the heart of the realist emphasis on the perpetuity of power politics.

Intergovernmental institutionalism is based on the "modified structural realism", which, on its turn is based on "structural" and on "classical" realism. It contains: the primacy of intergovernmental bargaining, lowest-common denominator bargain and the preservation of sovereignty. It explicitly opposes both federalism and neo-functionalism, arguing that it is the members state governments who are the key actors in the EU (European Council, Council of Ministers). It also empathizes the centrality of national executives, that the states remain the primary actors in the functioning of the EU, whereas neo-functionalist point to supranational institutions (European Commission, European Parliament).

Andrew Moravscik on his article, negotiating the Single European Act argues: national interest and conventional statecraft in the European Community, that the negotiations leading up to the signing of the SEA, can be characterized by intergovernmental bargaining between the three major EC member states: France, Germany and the United Kingdom. He demonstrates convincingly that in the case of the SEA transitional business interests did not initiate but rather followed policy-making and that while supranational authority (European Commission) may have contributed to the remarkable speed of decision making, the substance of policies was almost invariably proposed and negotiated by the heads of government (Moravscik 1991).

⁵ J.Nye, Patterns and Catalysts in Regional integration, 1965, International Organization, 19, Issue 4, pg.18

⁶Moravcsik ties and compares his intergovernmental institutionalism to Keohane's modified structural realist approach on regime creation and maintenance. The first affirms some of the "realist" foundations of the second: states are the principal actors and their bargains reflect national interests and relative power; international regimes provide a framework reducing uncertainty and transaction costs of their interactions, and, thus, shape international politics. Obviously, intergovernmental institutionalism differs from structural realism, since it places more emphasis on the role of the state than to that of the system.

Intergovernmentalism means for Moravcsik that the EC from its inception has been based on interstate bargains between its leading member states. Major initiatives are initiated and negotiated by heads of government, backed by a small group of ministers and advisors, within the European Council or the Council of Ministers. As each government sees EC through its own preferences, EC politics is not but "the continuation of domestic policies by other means".

Bargaining reflects the relative power positions of the member states. As in the EC there is no hegemon to contribute to regime formation by incentives or threats, as the use of linkages and logrolling is limited, and as the small states can be bought off with side payments, fundamental changes rest under the control of the leading member states. Bargaining between them "tends to converge to the lowest common denominator interests.

⁷Intergovernmental institutionalism's assumption of the prime importance of intergovernmental bargaining in the process of European integration provides a good vantage point to explain certain periods and processes of European integration, especially when they involve contentious areas of 'high politics. Intergovernmental bargaining seems to have been the main mechanism behind the initiation of European integration through the European Coal and Steel Community, based for a large part on recognition by states that future wars in continental Europe must be avoided. It can also account for the periods of Euro-skepticism that have at times stalled the integration process or in certain instances even reversed integration. As Moravcsik has shown, intergovernmental bargaining has been the main impetus behind 'treaty making'. There are two main assumptions of intergovernmental institutionalism: lowest-common-denominator bargain, between the big states and the 'buying off' the smaller states with side payments, and strict limits

⁶ Moravcsik, A., Negotiating the Single European Act: national Interests and Conventional Statecraft in the European Community, 1991, International Organization, Vol 45, Issue 1, pg.19-26.

⁷ Kuskavelis, E., Intergovernmental Institutionalism: international politic approach to European Integration, 2017, Research Gate, pg.4-6

on future transfer of sovereignty do not sit well with empirical observations of the integration process as well as established theory on negotiation and international organization (Moravscik, 1991). Only the threat of exclusion from the integration process can result in a compromise above the lowest-common-denominator. Other author like: Marks, Hooghe and Blank (1991) point out that certain decisions, such as harmonization, cannot be characterized as lowest-common-denominator decisions since they are by their very nature zero-sum, involving 'winners' and 'losers'. Moravscik sees that interests and policy goals are 'determined by the domestic political system and by the preferences of policy makers, technocrats, political parties and interest groups. What he ignores in his analysis is the influences of social learning and the constitutive effects of international/supranational organizations.

Participation in the European arena changes interests and can not only raise the level of the lowest-common-denominator but may in many cases result in non-lowest-common-denominator bargaining, especially when states know that a concession will be reciprocated in the future. Intergovernmental bargaining has great explanatory value concerning key moments of European Integration, however we should recognize that it does not revolve solely around domestic interest. But, also involves the processes of social learning and the effects of participation in the European arena. It is very often not lowest-common-denominator bargaining and often involves an intentional or unintentional relinquishing state sovereignty.

Sociological institutionalism:

- Sees IO as autonomous and powerful actors with constitutive and legitimacy-providing functions

- IO are community representatives (Abbot, Snidal 1998) as well as community-building agencies. Their origins goals, and procedures are more strongly determined by the standards of legitimacy and appropriateness of the international community they represent, than by the utilitarian demand for efficient problem-solving.

- International organizations can become autonomous sites of authority, because of power flowing from at least 2 sources: 1) the legitimacy of the rational-legal authority they embody 2) control over technical expertise and information. Due to this source of power IO can impose definitions of member characteristics and purposes upon the governments of its member states

(Finnemore, Barnett, McNeely). They define international tasks and new categories of actors, create new interests for actors and transfer models of political organizations around the world.

Europeanization

European Integration is ‘a deepening and widening, never-ending process of political, economic and security cooperation between nations, with the overall goal of the preservation of peace’ (Rosamond 2000). Although the European Union itself as a political system has a serious democratic deficit, it proved to be an important factor in encouraging democracy in post-communist countries. Europeanization and democratization are seen as complementary processes, both of them are strongly connected with the ‘adaptation’ term.

⁸European Integration’s impact on democratization in post-authoritarian societies has been very important in helping regime consolidation. Integration impacts on democratization are not only long term but they can be evident much earlier if not from the start of the democratization process. This is emphasized by the immediate pressures on accession countries to satisfy a raft of political conditions both in advance of but also in parallel to membership negotiations. It is argued that these impacts are not always positive, given the considerable pressures deriving from accession. Still fragile new democracies undertake a crippling overload of implementing change, involving tight economic as well as specific political conditions, but also extensive tests of their ‘ability to assume the obligations of membership’.

Particularly, national governments play a key role in the Europeanisation of their countries by responding effectively (or not) to the EU demands and by acting on behalf of their countries during negotiations (Pridham 2007). ⁹We can distinguish five possible examples on Europeanization process changes:

Changes in external boundaries: This involves the territorial reach of a system of governance and the degree to which Europe as a continent becomes a single political space. Europeanization is taking place as the European Union expands through enlargement.

Developing institutions at the European Level: This signifies center-building with a collective action capacity, providing some degree of co-ordination and coherence. Formal-legal institutions

⁸ Pridham.G., EU enlargement and consolidating democracy in post-communist states: Formality and Reality, 2002, Vol.40, Nr.3, JCMS,pg.2-3

⁹ Johan p.Olsen, The many faces of Europeanization, 2002, Vol40, Nr.5, JSMS, pg.3-5

of governance and a normative order based on overarching constitutive principles, structures and practices both facilitate and constrain the ability to make and enforce binding decisions and to sanction non-compliance.

Central penetration of national systems of governance: Involving the division of responsibilities and powers between different levels of governance. Implies adapting national and sub-national systems of governance to a European political center and European wide norms.

Exporting forms of political organization: Focusing on relations with non-European actors and institutions and how Europe finds a place in a larger world order.

A political unification project: The degree to which Europe is becoming a more unified and stronger political entity is related both to territorial space, center-building, domestic adaptation and how European developments impact and are impacted by systems of governance and events outside the European continent.

In a frequently used conceptualization, Europeanization is defined along three interrelated dimensions: "national adaptation", "national projection" and "identity reconstruction" (Wong, 2005). The first dimension refers mainly to changes in national structures and processes due to EU demands, which become an increasingly important point of reference for national actors. While filtered by national variables that adaptational pressure from EU acts as a constraint on member states. The second dimension relates to the projection of national preferences and ideas to the European level. Member states 'Europeanize' what were previously national priorities in order to benefit from the advantages of a joint action. And the third-dimension centers on the process of identity and interest, redefinition in the EU context. Frequent interactions among national and European policy-makers generate processes of social learning and socialization which in turn favor the perception of common interest.

Distinction between a bottom-up and a top-down dimension of Europeanization process has been made distinguishing between: the uploading of national domestic preferences to the European level and the downloading of EU demands to the national level. Europeanization in a broader sense is a preparation process for the integration of the countries into the European Union by fulfilling a certain number of conditions (Copenhagen criteria). The central argument on this paper related to the Albanian case is that the country faces some serious challenges in adapting the EU rules and the country's population attitudes towards membership (opinion polls) is merely positive due to the fact that European Union is seen as the only solution to their

problems. There is a disbelief in their domestic political actors and institutions.

Chapt.III Albanian's transition (1990-2000)

Albania as a little unknown and isolated state remained a curiosity for the most Western observers during the communist period. In the perception of the outside world the dominant images were those of a strictest Marxist-Leninist regime, isolated by geography and political choice, a time when Balkans were non-existent and irrelevant to the central issues of international relations. Even though it is wise to mention that Albanians failed to attract the support of Western powers long before the communist regime, its modern statehood dates only from 1912 when the country became independent of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled the region since the fifteen centuries. Apart from a brief experiment in 1924 of a parliamentary government, the history of the country does not offer a strong foundation on which to build democracy. This made it far from being eligible especially in the aftermath of communism, for membership in the European Union. Albania was the last country in the Balkans after 5 centuries to push away Ottoman rule and was the last one to grow out Stalinism.

By the end of the 1980s, old Communist regimes collapsed, which dramatically changed the geopolitical landscape of Europe, more specifically that of Central and Eastern Europe bringing a New World Order. In April 1986, Mr. Gorbachev president in that time of the Soviet Union began the 'pérestroïka' (reconstruction) which was to end the Cold War that brought down the iron Curtain. The 'reconstruction' was proposed in an attempt to overcome the economic stagnation by creating a dependable and effective mechanism for accelerating economic and social progress. This radically changed the policies of the USSR but also the dominant global order. The socialist bloc was far removed from the contemporary world. The economy was in deplorable state, independent civil society was largely in exile and corruption within the state via the Communist Party had become legendary. On the international level, the USSR had lost many allies, because of its social model proved to be a failure. The Soviet Union's strict policies over its satellite and its citizens at home were ultimately making the once powerful world force weaker and were preventing diplomatic relations with many other countries. So, Gorbachev in its reforms introduced also 'Glasnost' policies: formerly censored sections of the libraries were

accessible to the people again, restrictions on the press and media were also lightened. This particularly reform in accredited with creating policies that led to the downfall of the Soviet Union, as citizens became extremely outspoken about the failure of their government. It all backfired for Mr.Gorbachev, as individuals were once again permitted to openly criticize their government without fear of harsh repercussions. The plan was for the Soviet Union to become transparent, and in turn for the leadership of the nation and the Communist Party to be improved, but this move brought them closer to a modern nation and freedom eventually leading to the collapse of its formerly strict government.

Hopes of freedom long suppressed by the Communist regimes in the countries of the Soviet bloc and in the USSR itself, were inevitably fueled by Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist policies, it proved impossible to maintain reformed Communist regimes. Within three years, the Communist regimes collapsed and individual nations gained freedom, initially in the USSR's satellite countries and then within the Soviet Union itself. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, disintegrated the structures of the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union broke up into independent republics. In a most part it was a peaceful transformation with the exception of Romania, where the revolution against the dictator Ceausescu resulted in a heavy bloodshed and the fragmentation of Yugoslavia led to a long civil war. The reorganization of the Central and Eastern Europe, after this dramatic change became the main issue.

Unlike other countries of the eastern communist bloc, Albania seemed unshaken by the events sparked by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. This is due to the self-imposed isolation under the very personalized leadership of Enver Hoxha. Communist regime under Enver Hoxha ruled Albania from 1944 to 1989. It sought to create a united country under the socialist system and to overcome the heritage of regional and religious differences that affected the development of national independence movement during the time of the Ottoman empire. The country, had the misfortune of being ruled by one of the most repressive Communist regimes in the world and for a longer period than any other East European state.

Even though the country has suffered under one of the toughest dictatorship regimes within the entire communist block and was considered Europe's most Stalinist country, ¹⁰Enver Hoxha had

¹⁰ M.Bogdani&J.Loghlin;*Albania and European Union, The Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration and Accession*, 2007,pg.24-26, I.B.Tauris, New York

some more extreme forms of communism. It embraced Soviet Stalinism until Khrushchev started introducing reforms and then Maoism until China began liberalizing its economy. Like other Stalinist countries, it was a one-party state run by the Party of Labor of Albania (PLA). Elections to the parliament were purely cosmetic and the parliament met twice a year to approve decisions already made by the party leadership. Albania came close to a 'totalitarian' regime, where the state tried to control every single aspect of the lives of individuals and society. Freedom of expression and independence of thought were completely crushed. 'class struggle' was invoked in paranoid manner to justify the merciless political persecution of people and class enemies along with their families. Thousands of people vanished in prisons and internal exile or executed. Political and civic pluralism, democratic institutions were forbidden and the country when even further than its friend China in abolishing all forms of private sector activity and private property. There were some strange Chinese-inspired policies that went till the forbidden of all religious institutions and beliefs.

Albania was forced to cut links with Yugoslavia in the late 1940s, with the Soviet Union in the 1960s and with China in the 1970s, on the grounds that these countries were not truly communist. After this move backwards, Hoxha moved even further inwards. After 1978 Albania was cut off, almost entirely from the rest of the world. Isolation became the keynote of its foreign policy. The country resembled a prison on which anyone caught trying to escape was considered guilty of high treason of the homeland. The punishment was imprisonment, execution or shooting people by the border guards. This pathological isolation imposed by a xenophobic communist dictatorship prohibited the free movement of people and information (media, literature, art) and no international organizations were allowed in the country before 1991. Another interesting fact to mention is the 400,000 concrete bunkers built all over the country, as a sign of a paranoia atmosphere in which the regime claimed that the country was surrounded by this invisible 'enemy's'. Of course, a tactic used to justify isolation and economic hardships. The face behind this 'ghost' enemy's, were attached to the two biggest 'fears' of the country in that time; Soviet revisionism and American imperialism. Bunkers as a relic of the past, a reminder of the absurd and ridiculousness of a regime stand still today (part of them) for curious visitors that want to know more about the symbolic of the past regime. A lot of controversy is attached to the creation of Bunk'Art, bunkers from the postwar Hoxha era, opened to the public as the country explores its communist past. Some see it as a sign of reconciliation with the country's own history and

past, some as a memory that want to erase.

Beginning with Hoxha's death in 1985, Albania traces the last decade of Albanian's shaky existence, from anarchy and chaos of the early nineties to the victory of the Democratic Alliance in 1992 and the programs of current government.

¹¹The dominant ethos of the regime was the desire to establish the 'new socialist man' who would be defined by his stable Albanian identity and the communist consciousness. Considered as the highest social achievement of the communism. A creature expected to acquire appropriate communist traits, morality and atheistic ideas as well as to be free of any remnants of the past and bourgeois culture. Connected to this, the peasantry mass was promoted to the level of the working class and pseudo-intelligentsia, all obedient creatures of the communist leadership.

The long years of communism had profoundly affected the people, particularly in their social and economic development. The communist administration depended on a small elite of qualified and intellectually sophisticated personnel in Tirana and other large towns, and the new government has been unable to distance itself from the often elitist and undemocratic habits of thought and political practice of many members of this social group.

Under the communist regime especially after the split from China until 1990, Albania refused all foreign aid or investment. The economy was characterized by fixed prices and salaries, low rates of trade and a very low standard of living. In December 1944, the provisional government adopted laws allowing the state to regulate foreign and domestic trade, commercial enterprises and the few industries the country possessed. The law sanctioned confiscation of property belonging to political exiles and 'enemies of the people'. Major steps were taken in introducing a Stalinist-style centrally planned economy in 1946. It nationalized all industries, transformed foreign trade into a government monopoly, brought almost all domestic trade under state control and banned land sales and transfers. Before Albania received substational assistance from its allies: Yugoslavia 1945-1948, Soviet Union 1948-1960 and China 1961-1978 but Enver Hoxha's principle of self-reliance, listed the country one of the poorest in Europe. Society and economy depended on a Spartan egalitarianism, emphasized especially after the Albanian version of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the '60s in which most of the population lived in aside and in a

¹¹ M.Vickers&J.Pettifer;Albania: from Anarchy to a Balkan Identity, 1997, C.Hurist&Co, London pg.3-6

huge contrast with the ‘privileged’ ones who lived a good life in a special guarded area in the city (Tirana) known as ‘Blloku’ the block. A neighborhood which nowadays ironically, still preserves the reputation of the best place of the city to enjoy bars and restaurants.

Albania was a very backward country, largely agrarian with a great mass of peasantry and a Muslim and semi-feudal society. Communism economy was relied on different pillars: centrally planned and collectivist economy, collectivization of agriculture and mostly state ownership over everything. This Soviet-style economic approaches were the main reason for the collapse of not only Albania but also other countries of the communist bloc. Devastating social consequences came from the Marxism-Leninism country’s official ideology; literacy and education became tools to brainwash the masses. Education was strongly centralized and ideologically driven, even though a wide network of professional and vocational schools was created. Electrification of the whole country was made as a mean to broadcast communist propaganda.

One of the most interesting developments of the communist regime in Albania was building the concept of the New Socialist Man, which was never theoretically elaborated by any of the theorists or ideologists of Albanian Communism.¹² It was more viewed as a collection of propagandistic clichés of the form ‘the New Man is the ultimate goal of the Party and ‘the constructing of the New Man is the Party’s monumental masterpiece’ rather than any set of descriptive cues as to what that concept of the New Man actually represented. That policy was within the logic of a communist regime and of a Marxist theory itself, which after failing to explain and predict the social future, turned to transforming social reality and the human condition in a way that it would fit the theory. The Albanian communist regime was aware of the power of cinema to impact the construction of social reality and employed it as a mean, to draw the physical and moral image of the New Man. Authors argue that the Albania communist cinema organically embraced the New Man enthusiasm and hope during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, it was at the forefront of the efforts to create the New Man utopia. Unlike the regime, which never defined the New Man concept, Albanian cinema had a huge role on visually develop definitional cues about what was supposed to be the New man. The cinema’s ability to visualize concepts and events, its simplified representations of the world, helped spread the political

¹²¹² A.Imami&R.Peshkopia&L.Kristensen, *Constructing and dismantling the New Man Utopia: The Albanian communist and Post- Communist Ontology*, 2016, Kinokultura Special Issue 6, Albania

criteria and technology to create and maintain the New Man. However, failed to clearly display the process. Yet it was clear that the New man experiment failed miserably with the communist regime that promoted such social engineering. The sudden disappearance of it from the Albanian cinema and life even before the collapse of the regime that promoted it might suggest that the New Man was never achieved. We know that social structures impact people's worldviews and consequences of such a repressed society are: conformism, brainwashing and apathy.

Throughout this process Albania retained some of the worst aspects of the traditional and peasant tribal society of the past without developing the positive features of industrialization. As the author M. Bogdani & J. Loughlin said: 'Such a society is not fertile, breeding grounds for political democracy and the creation of a civil society.'

There are three historic moments in Albanian communist end: the collapse of communism in the '90s, the end of the hegemonic of the one-party system with the election of the first coalition government in 1991 and the first democratic elections held in 1992. During the winters of 1990-1992 Albanian society almost degenerated into a general anarchy. Enver Hoxha's death in the 1985 brought up a process of a very slow limited reform under his successor Ramiz Alia. The structure of the communist party, its suffocating system of social and moral values didn't give the regime the space of a gradually collapse, but it was a forcible removal through a popular uprising. Spring 1990, after 50 years of communist rule, the first anticommunist demonstration blasted in the road, precisely in Kavaj and Shkodra cities. Those who initiated the overthrow of the regime in Albania, were students and young people. They were the first to ask for political pluralism and removal of the communist symbols. In the summer of that year, thousands of people invaded the foreign embassies in Tirana, asking for asylum. The 'student movement', lasted from December 1990 until April 1991. This started with protest and demonstrations and culminated with the historic hunger strike in February 1991 and the toppling of Enver Hosha's monument in the main square of Tirana. Following the student's movement were mass street demonstrations, protests in Tirana and other cities and in 1991 a nation-wide strike of workers. The demonstrations and protest occurred avoiding bloodshed, the transition in Albania like in most of other countries on east communist bloc came because of the 'velvet revolution'. A quite different scenario compared on what happened in Tiananmen Square in China or Romania. It is important to mentioned that the intellectuals were reluctant to challenge the system and

unwilling to openly confront the regime, fearing persecution (M.Bogdani & J.Loughlin 2007).

Albania and the CEE countries

¹³In contrast to the experience of other East European countries, communism in Albania was home-grown, not installed in power by an outside force, but won on its own admittedly with some assistance from the Yugoslav Communists. Thus, the country enjoyed more legitimacy than its neighbor countries. The regimes determination in prolonging their domination, prevent the country in following the path towards democratic reforms adopted by the CEE countries. One of the features that distinguish Albania from other CEE countries is the lack of a democratic liberal elite and dissident intellectual groups as initiators and leaders of the democratic movement.

The Visegrad countries for the most part of their history, shared many historical experiences of the West European states such as: Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the 19th industrialization and urbanization. Albania on the other hand was first part of the Byzantine Empire and for 500 years part of the Ottoman Empire (sultanate imperial system and patrimonial/personalist rule). From this the country inherited under-developed state-society relationships, weak institutional capacity structures and a fragmented civil society. Then, the country became an authoritarian monarchy until the outbreak of the Second WW (under King Zog's rule). Albania was considered an 'exception' even among the communist bloc. In these countries, private property had not been totally abolished, religion was not completely forbidden and political and social pluralism were tolerated to some extent. They also had some cooperation and membership in a number of international organizations, in their way they didn't broke the ties with the West. Albania was a country with one of the toughest dictatorship regimes, most repressive communist regimes and most Stalinist country in Europe.

There are few characteristics that differentiated the country from the rest (CEE countries):

- Self-imposed international isolation, even though the other communist countries operated in isolation (except Yugoslavia) during the Cold War, Albania went a step further with its sealed borders, becoming the most isolated country in the world.
- The lack of a democratic liberal elite and dissident intellectual's groups/leaders. The

¹³ M.Bogdani&J.Loughlin;*Albania and European Union, The Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration and Accession*, 2007,I.B.Tauris, New York

communist project of the 'New Socialist Men', free of any past and bourgeois culture resulted in peasantry mass that was promoted to the level of the working class and pseudo-intelligentsia. In an attempt to skip a stage of Marx's model of historical dialectic in which feudalism gave away to bourgeois industrial capitalism which would be replaced by the communist socialism, Albanian communist revolution resembled the Russian and Chinese Revolution. Following this countries example, Albania tried to pass from a rural peasant society to a socialist industrialized one without passing through the intermediate stage of bourgeois capitalism. Therefore, it lacked a well-developed middle class imbued with democratic ideas and principles (M.Bogdani & J.Loughlin 2007). The intellectuals didn't went upfront and challenged the regime for fearing persecution, so there were no intellectual's initiators of democratic movement (students and youth started the first demonstrations)

- Albania did not have traditions of capitalism and democracy unlike some of the other transition countries, which embarked on the era of change carrying this traditions on their backs.

Even in the Marxist ideology the conditions that differentiated Albania from the other CEE countries, were insufficient for the development of a modern socialist society and economy.

The importance of the elite and middle classes (as domestic actors)

Albanian's historical legacy and Ottoman empire also communism had been important factors in blocking its successful transition to a modern democracy. Political culture of Tirana elite under communism was extremely provincial and narrowed especially on the self-satisfaction view on the modest achievements of their country. The communist administration depended on this small elite of qualified and intellectually sophisticated personnel in Tirana and other large towns.

An embryonic middle class appeared in Albania after the independence in 1912, but was crushed during communism. The first period after the communist came in power, witnessed an attack on political and knowledge elites formed before the war and on the bourgeoisie, by confiscating all their properties. This elite who had been almost entirely educated in the west, was gradually replaced by a new intellectual elite, prepared uniformly with the Russian ideology. During a

second phase (1949-1961), the communist attack continued on the fragile and small bourgeoisie, mainly composed of small entrepreneurs, which for the regime that time were considered a reactionary social class. In this way, the pre-communist upper and middle classes/elites were eliminated. Cause of the mediocrity of this communist pseudo-intellectual, Albania did not have a long-established culture of dissident intellectuals.

But let's develop a bit more the importance of the elite and in Albanian case political elite. In the process of European Integration, the prospect of Eu membership demands some domestic reforms. the ownership of this process and responsibility requires some domestic reforms and the support of important factors such as; political, administrative elites alongside with the civil society. What is interesting to dig on, is Albanian's legacy on this particular formation of elite, that most have the knowledge of carrying through the revolutionary transformations. It is argued that one of the reason that Albania has not been successful as a nation-state throughout its history is the lack of leadership qualities. We can't skip the fact that Albanian communist leaders and its dictator had as role models, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung. So, it shouldn't be a surprise that the quality of leadership even in the most important phases of the country's development, leaders not only came from old communist elites but the quality was very low.

Power elite is a term used by American sociologist C.Wright.Wills to describe a relatively small, loosely connected group of individuals who dominate a countries policymaking.¹⁴ These political, economic and military circles share decisions having at least national consequences. As national events are decided, the 'power elite' ate those who decide them. The basis for membership of a power elite is institutional power, namely an influential position within prominent or public organization. Even though these individuals constitute a close-knit group, they are not part of a conspiracy that protects their own interest. They respect civil liberties, follow established constitutional principles, and operates openly and peacefully. The question is; if not from repression and inheritance, where does their power come from? It comes from control of the highest positions in the political and business hierarchy and from shared values and beliefs. The political elites play an important role in relation to the process of transition, democratization, and democratic consolidation. In the late 1970s or early 1980s it was these groups who made the biggest contribution to overthrowing communism in CEE countries.

¹⁴ C.W.Mills, *The Power Elite*, 1956, New York, Oxford University, pg.267

¹⁵Research on elites and political regimes experienced a sudden change after the collapse of communism in the Central and Eastern countries. Sociologists and politologists concerned with the study of elites have asked themselves; what role would the former communist and post-communist elites have in the process of transition from communism to democracy. There are certain defining elements for the way in which the post-communist transitions were conducted; the nature of the communist regime, the behaviour of the communist elites when communism was dissolute and their relationship with the counter-elites (anti-communist). In the process of democratic transition in a country, the activities of the political elites are two-layered: thinking(intellectual) strategy and execution (administrative bureaucracy). During the process of democratization, the political nets play an important role and they are decisive on the outcomes of the process. For Albania, on the other side, there are a lot of controversy about this. Many local authors share the same opinion on this matter; Albania elite does not fulfil any criteria in being called so. The most influential and powerful elite in Albania; the political elite, is a pseudo-elite. They lack on education formation, integrity and they come from provincial backgrounds. In the '90s the people who formed the political class were unexperienced liberal elite, mostly members of the Party of Labour which ironically had lead the transition process to democracy. The formal academic education in Political Science or International Relations in the Communist regime was basic, absent or politicized around the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. So, in its early transition years, Albanian's decision-makers were not equipped with the relevant professional education. As a result of the communist intellectual's mediocrity, Albania did not have a long-established culture of dissident intellectuals. The people who filled the gap and formed the new political class on the 1990s had links with the former communist regime. In her book 'Albania and the European Union, the tumultuous journey towards Integration and Accession' the author Mirela Bogdani and John Loghlin (2007) examine the role of elite and domestic actors, also undermining the elite and middle classes under communism. As she mentions, unlike Visegard countries which were part of the Habsburg Empire and developed an efficient administration and taxation system, the conditions for the creation of a middle class. Albania came out of the communist period without this key group. An embryonic middle class appeared in Albania after independence in 1912, but this was crushed during communism. The first period after the communist came to power (1945-1948), witnessed an attack on the political

¹⁵ C.C.Iftimoaei, *The role of political elite in consolidating democracy*, 2012, PhD dissertation

and the knowledge elites formed before the war on the bourgeoisie, by confiscating all their properties. This shows a lack in the development of an independent, efficient elite in the post-communist countries history.

Albania's transition phases to democracy

The starting point in building a relationship between Albania and European Union was the year of the communist collapse, 1991. Like other post-communist East Central countries, Albania since then has been undergoing multiplied transitions. As one of the most repressive regimes in the world, the country was seen with skepticism in completing the responsibility on transition to a stable and prosperous democracy.

The transition stages started from the end of communism to the collapse of the Pyramid Schemes and the PD government rule 1997-1998. Then the other period is from 1998-2005 the rule of the Socialist Party and the third stage is the comeback in power of the Democratic Party (political transition). Aside the political transition from one party to many, there has been an economic transition from command to market economy and also from a rural society to an urban one. A complicated process that is keeping the country as its prisoner. The adaptation to the liberal democracy for Albania but also for the Balkan as a region, happened at a very late stage of the modern history. It only had some sporadic and short-lived occasions. ¹⁶After the First world war, a rudimentary pluralistic party system appeared with conservative Progressive party led by Ahmet Zogu, which attracted the support of some northern clan chiefs and some Muslim tribal leaders from the south. The Popular Party, led by Xhafer Ypi and People's Party led by Fan S.Noli, who had been educated at Harvard and wished to develop western ideas. But, its forth mention that during this time between July and December 1921 there was a high level of governmental instability, the government changed hands at least five times. This experiment of multi-party democracy was not a great success and soon generated into armed struggle between the different factions for control of the state. During the communist period elections were a facade, people were forced to vote for the only existing party PLA. The first multi-party elections were held on 31 January 1991. The first democratic elections were in March 1992. From 1990-1992, is rooted the process of national renewal and remained as very important key of the

¹⁶ M.Bogdani&J.Loghlin;*Albania and European Union, The Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration and Accession*, 2007,pg.41-42, I.B.Tauris, New York

Albanians political life, also in progress formation of its national identity.

The begging of the '90s was the phase in which economic and political democratization transformation occurred. Things started to change fast and the progress was visible. Democratic institutions were set up within few years and democratic legal framework was introduced. The country started developing its international connections. It was accepted as a member on the Council of Europe, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Its main foreign policy in this period was oriented towards integration into the EU and North Atlantic structures.¹⁷ The economy on the other hand was going in a good direction. It had a boost in mid-1995 with the signed agreement with a consortium of 41 western banks to resolve \$500 million foreign debt that the country inherited from the communist regime. The newly emerging private sector was making the greatest contribution to overall economic growth. Albanian experienced an annual growth rate of 9.5 %. This was a very positive achievement and progress was also made in establishing a legal and regulatory framework for the market economy. The country was finally changing the West negative view towards it and was marketing itself as a successful transition case (at least economically). The country was full of hope and optimism for the future, enjoying the new freedoms. Unfortunately, this didn't last long. Economic transformation from a centrally planned to a market economy was quite challenging and not an easy task, keeping in mind the country past regime. In order to get closer to the West developments, the country pursued neo-liberal policies of the market liberalism model. A drastic step, without being properly ready, or passing through a middle transition of an 'mixed mode' of a socialism market. This radical economic change favored also the development of informal market institutions, known as 'pyramid schemes'.

Initially when transition began (1991) the country was in a desperate poverty and most of the population was completely unfamiliar with market institutions or practices.¹⁸ The 'pyramid schemes' phenomenon, despite its economic scales, political and social consequences of their collapse were profound. At their peak, the nominal value of the pyramid schemes liabilities amounted to almost half of the country's GDP. When they collapsed, the country dealt with

¹⁷ M.Bogdani&J.Loghlin;*Albania and European Union, The Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration and Accession*, 2007,pg.39, I.B.Tauris, New York

¹⁸ CH.Jarvis. *The rise and fall of the Pyramid Schemes.*, 1999, pg.4, IMF working paper

uncontaining rioting, government fell and Albania descended into anarchy and near civil war. One of the most important causes of growth of the pyramid schemes was the inadequacy of the formal financial system. The three stakes banks which dominated the deposit-taking market (holding over 90% of the deposit) were not reliable intermediaries of savings, and private banks were slow to emerge and not particularly interested in attracting domestic currency deposits, devoting their attention mostly to trade financing. Except this, also the payment system was seriously inadequate. Because of these problems and of the general distrust of the banks the public tended to hold unusually high proportion of their financial assets in cash, and were on the lookout for alternative investment opportunities. On the lending side, the banks problems were even worse, which lead to the emerge of the informal credit market. This flourishing of the 'new' market was generally tolerated by the authorities. It consisted partly of foreign exchange dealers (some licensed, some not) and partly of many companies taking deposit and making loans. They were informal and illegal, since they were never licensed to take deposits. They grew out of a credit system based mostly on private loans from migrant workers to friends and family. Operating alongside the informal lending companies and to some extent disguised by them, were a number of companies which also borrowed money at high interest rates but invested on their own account rather than lending funds, these became pyramid schemes.

¹⁹The distinction between the informal credit market and the pyramid schemes is a vital one, but for a long time it was difficult to see the difference between them. It was also difficult for outside agencies, including IMF and World Bank. Neither set of companies were licensed or subject to detailed supervision and in the case of the companies, which invested on their behalf, their reputation for involvement in criminal activities made information difficult and even dangerous to get. Another negative trait was also the legal framework, which was inadequate to combat the pyramid schemes especially with regard to 'enforcement'. Beside this there were strong evidence that the problem was not just a legal one. The government and its members benefitted from and supported this scheme. It went till on till the dangerous point when people were selling their house (except their life savings), chasing the dream of getting reach in a blink of an eye, fast and without working. During the 1996 elections several of the major companies made campaign contributions to the ruling Democratic Party. There was a blind and irresponsible support of the

¹⁹ CH.Jarvis. *The rise and fall of the Pyramid Schemes.*, 1999, pg.6, IMF working paper

government for this illegal scheme, and people took their word. The leader of the party (in that time Sali Berisha) was publicly encouraging the mass to invest. People were encouraged in getting involved in such a 'stupidity' that had fatal consequences later on.

In the course of 1996 when was the highest peak in this manufactured economy, IMF and World bank gave strident warnings but except the fact that they weren't heard, in that phase it was already too late. The leader in that time of the DP Berisha did not take seriously the warnings of the international institutions but led a populist campaign that granted him 90% of the votes. The informal institutions started falling in January 1997. It took four months for the remaining pyramid schemes to collapse, bringing down with them the Democratic Party government and plunging Albania into anarchy, 2000 people were killed in the violence. Almost one million weapons were looted. Large parts of the country were outside the government control. People woke up from the capitalist dream that the party sold to them, for a fast profit that vanished even more faster. The role of political leaders is a key factor of success in the transition process from communism to democracy, unfortunately Albania had struggled always in this direction.

In between this chaos, political situation was full of tensions, as the opposition profited of the situation and took the political stage. Before we analyze this later stage of the country, we cannot leave without mentioning other transition struggles. Firstly, important to mention for its role in the country development is the public administration. It was a heritage of the communist, which lacked managerial class, qualified decision makers and competent civil servants who would be able to surpass the challenges of transition process. Through the transition, there were a lot of problems coming from non-consolidated professional civil servant class, still today we see the consequences and not much have changed. The reasons for this were many: corruption, non-professional human resources, political interference (politicized administration) and not having an adequate legal framework of administration. Adding another important aspect of the transition was the countries' religion revival situation.

Originally Albania was a Christian country, Illyrians the predecessors of Albanians converted to Christianity while under Roman Empire, and after the Great Schism between Rome and Constantinople in 1054 it was split into a Roman Catholic North and an Orthodox South. After the Ottoman invasion Albanians, started their conversion from Christians into Muslims. The biggest religious shift happened during Ottoman rule and by the end of the 17th century, the

majority of Albanians were Muslims. This shift occurred for a lot of practical and survival reasons, when Muslims enjoyed the highest social status and other privileges. In 1991 in the new provisional Constitution, freedom of religious belief was sanctioned, which lifted the ban imposed in 1967 on any kind of religion, Albania proclaimed itself as the first atheist state in the world (M.Bogdani & J.Loughlin,2007). For almost 50 years the country's motto was; the religion of Albanians is Albanianism. Enver Hoxha (communist dictator) succeeded in some way in that time, in replacing religion with communism. After his fall, it occurred a religion revival of the Muslim roots which still today reflects most of the religion belief in the country. The social aspect of the transition process has a big impact on the future of a society, especially the case of Albania. Opening up to the world after a long period of closure brought a lot of positive changes in the mentality and culture of the country. It was a very immediate process without any filter, in imitating the West culture, something denied from a long time. People were eager to leave behind the past and hug the contemporary and cultural life- style of the West and individualism', they went far away from the traditional values of the communist regime and its social solidarity. Even though remains a discussable matter in what extent did this 'imitation' went deeper than just a superficial adaptation, for Albania still it was a positive development and its social life become more open and vibrant.

Democracy struggles

Albania is one of the most unique cases in Eastern Europe not only for its size, location, and history legacy but also in the ways of absorbing and struggling with 'democracy'. Peculiarities of the democratic transition in Albania were strongly determined by political and social components. In this case we see a 'foolish' attempt on building a democratic system from the scratch. The introduction of free elections alone has rarely been sufficient to achieve a transition from dictatorship to democracy, for countries without a strong tradition of democratic majority rule. It is needed also a wider shift in the political culture and gradual formation of the institutions of democratic government. In the communist period elections were a facade, people were voting (forced) for the only existing party PLA. The first multi-party elections were held on 31 January 1991. The first democratic elections were in March 1992. Elections were one of the ever-present obstacles to normality in post-communist Albania. The country has faced serious critics from international organizations related to the manipulation of the elections. The pre-

election and election process are still problematic, in each election were noticed that the losing parties or coalitions refuse to recognize the results and proceed with boycotts of parliament. This was the case with the first elections of 1991 and 1996, 1997, 2000 and 2001 (Vickers,2003). The present electoral system in Albania is a combination of majority voting in constituencies, or a SMDS one (Single Member District System), with a proportional system. The first provides 100 seats and the second 40 seats in the parliament, so the electoral system is primarily a majority one. The majoritarian element has tended to perpetuate the alternation in power of the two major political parties DP, SP. The disadvantage is that it does not create room for political alternatives to gain meaningful representation. The country's political system resembles the old Italian system, before the reforms of the '90s, it is a kind of *partitocrazia* (rule by parties) where people tend to vote for the parties and not for the individuals, and parties dominate all aspects of the system (M.Bogdani J.Loughlin 2007:44). Unproblematic and fair elections is a struggling objective to achieve for the country.

Many foreign authors argued in favor of comparing Albanian transition phase with that of the Latin America countries, which were able to sustain democracy only temporary or in a limited fashion until wider cultural changes established the conditions under which democracy could flourish.

Liberal democracy traces its origins and name to the European 18th century, known as the Age of Enlightenment.²⁰ It is regarded as axiomatic in the western world that the most civilized form of government yet evolved is the western form of democracy. By democracy we mean; a form of government where the legislature is elected directly by universal adult suffrage and the executive government is chosen either directly as in the presidential system or indirectly from among the elected representatives of the people, as is the norm in the parliamentary system. The elections must be free of all interference by the executive government so as to permit complete freedom to the voter, to vote for the candidate or the party of his choice without fear or favor. The elected government in its conduct of the community's affairs is responsible, accountable to those it rules. Some of the essential elements of the western democracy important to mention are: the first is the rule of Law, ensuring that no act is performed without legal authority. Secondly is

²⁰ B.K Nehru, *Western democracy and the Third World*, 1980, Vol.2, No.1 pg.126-127, Taylor & Francis Ltd

independence of the judiciary from all interference, direct or indirect in its task of interpreting the laws. The independence of the judges from the executive is necessary to ensure the third essential ingredient of western democracy, namely the rights and liberties of the individual. Human rights are generally considered as being inseparable from western democracy and consist of equality before the law and the freedoms of person, speech, association, worship, movement and so on. As pre-conditions for liberal democracy, even though they are not part of the system of government, are seen also the modicum of individual and economic freedoms which result in the formation of a significant middle class and a broad flourishing civil society (Lipset 1959).

The big wave of transitions that started (far away from CEE land) with the Portugal's Revolution of the Carnations 1974 that overthrow the authoritarian regime of Estado Novo, was completed with the collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe in 1989. This wave took alongside a common agreed definition of democracy, accepted from all ex-communist countries in their transition process. As one looks more closely at the consolidated and emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and their transition experiences, several similarities emerge. A few of them are worth noting:

²¹*BREAK WITH PAST*: The countries that have made the transition successfully managed to engineer a sharp break with the past. This has generally involved episodes of mass mobilization and/or “electoral revolutions” sufficiently powerful to oust the prior communist ruling elite at least temporarily. Breakthroughs of this type have in most cases been critical in accelerating the pace of democratization and in helping to anchor its sustainability.

ELITES: New or reformed elites have played major roles. These “counter-elites” have both helped to instigate the key mass mobilizations and electoral movements that produced a break with the past and themselves been further shaped by these movements. In some cases, the new reformist elites had their origins in splits within the former communist leadership. In other cases, the popular emotions that drove mass protests brought forth new champions or empowered older leaders who had previously languished after earlier dissident movements were suppressed. *MEDIA*. The rapid emergence of free and diverse media is important, particularly in the early stages of transition and in the consolidation phases. However, maintaining sufficient readership

²¹ M.Otarashvili, *The best of FPRI's essays on Democratic Transition*, 2015, pg.10-11, Foreign Policy Research Institute

and relatively neutral sources of financial support has often proven to be a challenge in the later, “post-euphoric” stages of democratic consolidation.

CIVIL SOCIETY. While an essential underpinning of a strong democracy, the emergence of the not-for-profit, nongovernmental sector has generally proven a slow and difficult process in this region. Developing an independent and well-rooted civil society where none existed before is inevitably an arduous task. A few countries that had been able to retain or regain some degree of domestic pluralism during the communist period, such as Poland and Hungary, had an important head start. Others, such as Romania, Belarus, or other post-Soviet states, inherited much less of a foundation to start with, given the extent to which their societies had been atomized by harsher communist regimes.

POLITICAL PARTIES. As with the NGO sector, durable political parties have in most cases developed only slowly and tend to be consolidated only in the later phases of transition. Often, they have been built up from the fragments of the prior regime: mass movements, splits within prior elites, and defeated communist parties. External assistance, while sorely needed, is hard to deliver effectively.

Albania holds its title of one of the most unique cases in Eastern Europe, its peculiarities were strongly determined by political and social components. Surely it differs as we previously mentioned on the first chapter comparing to CEE countries; the country didn't have a clear break from the past, traces of the communist regime were still found on Albania's transition to democracy; there was no competent elite group to direct the country towards its new regime change; media never maintained its 'free' status detached from any political influence; there was a lack of an already existent consolidated civil society and last political parties are still the main issue on a non-consolidated democracy. Of course, these problems are common in a case of such a huge regime change, Albania passed through the same issues as other CEE countries but with some small differences which deprived the country of being in the same development phase as its post-communist neighbors. It took time for the economy and for the whole social life to adapt correctly and fully to the new conditions. The collapse of communism came very rapidly, it was a delayed entering without any political or economic preparation. Its economic transformation went through a rough phase. The production structure, macroeconomic situation and the institutional restructuring faced a more difficult time than in other ex-communist

countries. Two social 'peculiarities' that were more visible than other transitional countries in Albania were: high levels of unemployment and its close connection with the lowest level of standard of living. This is due to some unique features that stimulate the situation, more than 60% of Albanian population lived in villages and after the political upheaval land distribution began. But as per capita quota of land was small distribution set off mass migrations of farmers to the cities. Also, due to the lack of family planning Albania had one of the highest rates of population growth in Europe consequences of it felt later on in the future, also there were the problem of unemployment that accelerated more than in any country. In 1993 official statistics account an unemployment rate of 23.5 percent which was the highest among Eastern European countries. In 1996 official data show a lower level of 12.4 percent, which is more or less on the European standard but still high if considering the emigrants that are not included.

One of the most important characteristics of the Albanian's change progress was the fact that its transformations, were not accompanied by a deep institutional reform. The lack of a market economy and a developed democracy were set back right at the beginning of the transition process. Lack of a consolidated democracy in the country's past and present history remains its 'Achilles heel'. Many scholars agree on the fact that Albania has built the elements of the procedural democracy but substantive democracy is non-existent. Procedural democracy is a democracy in which the people or citizens of the state have less influence than in traditional liberal democracies. Is characterized by voters choosing to elect representatives in free elections, substantive democracy on the other hand is a form in which the outcome of elections is representative of the people, a form of democracy that functions in the interest of the governed. One of the conditions of procedural democracy is that the elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon (R.Dahl). A substantive democracy must be procedural but the latter may exist without the former. Substantive democracy represents democratic culture of obedience to the rule of law, political responsibility on the part of politicians and citizens, accountability conditions that in Albanians culture don't exist yet in their fullest form. What is also questionable in Albanians democratic journey is its candidate's quality and the process of candidate selection. Unqualified people, majority coming from the business world with the right amount of investment and donations they can be selected easily. a consequence of this was the politicization of the public administration, where high administration appointments are not made on basis of professional qualification but

instead on politics. The countries judicial system and structure went through a large transformation in adapting to the liberal-democratic system, which we will develop more later on, its importance to Albanians approximation of the domestic legislation to EU laws. Democracy does not consist of a single unique of institutions, there are many types of democracy and their diverse practices produce a similarly varied set of effects. Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives, the most distinctive element in democracies are citizens. All regimes have rulers and a public real, but only to the extent that they are democratic do they have citizens. For democracy to thrive specific procedural norms must be followed and civic rights must be respected. Any polity that fails to impose such restrictions upon itself, that fails to follow the 'rule of law' with regard to its own procedures, should not be considered democratic. These procedures alone do not define democracy but their presence is indispensable to its persistence. In essence, they are necessary but not sufficient conditions for its existence.

The process of democratic consolidation, for Austrian politicalist Andreas Schedler starts where the democratic transition ends (from a totalitarian or authoritarian regime to democracy). The democratic consolidation is a complex process that depends on a multitude of internal/national and external. Internal factors such as: the democratic past of the country, the way in which the dissolution of the communist regime was held, the level of economic development, the civil society development, the type of political culture, types of political elites. External factors are: the role of the European institutions, NATO, IMF international financial institutions, the role of the strategic partnership with the USA for consolidating democracy and the development of competitive and operational market economies. The process of democratic consolidation is a longer process comparing it to the process of transition to democracy and also has deeper effects. Albanian transition process was surrounded with uncertainties in this matter.

Even though Western cultural, religion, historic traditions and prior democratic experiences are helpful they are not essential preconditions for democratic consolidation if other factors show a good chance of success. Albania can offer a promising example on the fact that democratization can move ahead in a reasonably way even if the states lack prior democratic legacies or a strong middle class. This is due also to the crucial role of the international community in fostering

successful transition to democracy and market economies, which we will develop more in an next chapter of this paper.

Chap.IV EU enlargement

²² Since its inception in 1951 in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) by the six original members, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands, the original intent of preventing intra-European wars through economic inter-dependency, multi-lateral cooperation, and through the diffusion of institutional political discrepancies has been sustained and kept well alive. The original intent of ECSC was to make war impossible between the Europe's two powerful historical rivals, Germany and France, and then gradually extend this model to other parts of Europe. The Schuman Declaration of 1950, and subsequent treaties that meaningfully transformed the nature, role, and the future of Europe, have the notion of enlargement as an inherent and integral part of it. Without enlargement and multilayered internal integration, the very purpose of the European Union loses its noble appeal and moral force that has served as a catalyst pushing European countries to persevere through the toughest economic times such as that during the "eurosclerosis" in the 1970s and 1980s.

²³ There is some evidence that there existed among the founding fathers an ambition to enlarge to 'continental scale'. For more than three decades after World War Two, the Cold War stood in the way of the realization of that ambition, but the demise of the Soviet Union and the loosening of its post-War grip on its Central and East European satellites in the wake of 1989's so-called 'geopolitical earthquake', Jean Monnet's ambition of a European construction stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals suddenly seemed possible. Thereafter, enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe gradually made its way to the top of the European Union's agenda.

EU enlargement has always been a wide-open discussion, where national politicians shared their concerns on European Union's absorption capacity and its limits. The notion 'enlargement fatigue' has been invoked as a reason for slowing down the enlargement process. Fatigue means

²²Bislimi.F. *EU Foreign Policy towards Balkan: An opportunity or a challenge?*2010, Vol.1,Issue 1,pg.39, Kosovo Public Policy

²³O'Brennan,J. *Enlarging Europe: Re-conceptualizing Europe*,2014,pg.2, Center for European Studies

simply unwillingness to grant the EU membership to new states. The phenomenon in itself is not new as the Communities have witnessed earlier periods of the fatigue beginning with the de Gaulle's two vetoes against UK's membership in the 1960s. There are two main given reasons for the enlargement fatigue; the insufficiently tight conditionality applied to prospective EU members in the pre-accession stage and the EU's crisis of confidence and apparent legitimacy and accountability problems connected mainly with the failed attempt to introduce the Constitutional Treaty following the French and Dutch referenda in 2005, as well the lack of institutional capacity to admit new members.

The link between the 'widening' and 'deepening' camps was addressed by the institutional changes entrenched in the SEA (Single European Act) of the 1986 that was partly driven by the accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal. The changes to the EU pillar structure introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty were a response to the fears that the 1995 enlargement would lead to the institutional malfunction of the EU, especially in the area of foreign affairs and defense policy. The Intergovernmental Conference paving the way for the Nice Treaty in 2000 was to address the approaching institutional challenges of the eastern enlargement. The most recent Lisbon Treaty and the Constitutional Treaty before it, constitutes a natural follow-up of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements. There is a certain importance to the Lisbon Treaty and an undeniable accord from the Communities on the belief that, they cannot function properly without it.

Of course, there are different grounds of discussions between realist and normative perspectives, also their conflict between a strategic and value-based approach on the EU expansion but when it comes to the general approach on perspective members during the negotiations period there is no such differentiation. A very important contribution remains, Keohane's model of rationalist international cooperation that is divided in three stages; the formation of state preferences, interstate bargaining and strategic interaction, institutionalization of the bargain. If we assume states are rational, we can expect that they will first determine preferences across states of the world, then bargain with one another to realize those goals as best they can and finally seek to preserve the result by institutionalizing the bargain. The authors work addresses the theoretical causes of state behaviour at each of these three stages. If transnational relations vary greatly, then preferences can vary correspondingly. Those countries that gain the most by engaging in more intense interstate cooperation, have the most intense preferences for agreement. On the other

hand, normative perspective embarks us on the argument that, in the post-Cold war era, it was clearly seen that for the EU it was no longer enough, to present itself as merely a form of civil or military power.²⁴ Through the process of enlargement and diffusion of democratic norms the EU was able to present and legitimize itself. The concept of normative power of Europe concentrates on the discussion of an ideological power and the goal to move away from the empirical emphasis on EU's institutions or policies. It's more a way to understand EU's international identity. Liberal democratic norms, peace and liberty as the fundamental principles that constitute the EU become essential in the revolution change of communist countries to democracy. The norms represent crucial constitutive features of a polity which creates its identity as being more than a state. Through this identity EU was able to establish credibility and status within the international realm. EU as a 'normative model' through enlargement exerts its power through this norm and convert its standards into intranational rules by providing incentives to do so.²⁵ As for the domestic real, normative perspectives explains that socialization is the primary mechanism through which inter-subjective structures are transformed into individual preferences and actions. The values and norms that constitute the EU are internalized by its members, individual actors become socialized into institutionally defined roles, learn norms and rules associated with these roles and act appropriately by fulfilling their obligations. Of course, the extend of this 'norms' might diminish the role of state as the critics might argue and also can overshadow national interest.

The success of the enlargement has aroused many critics. There are many opinions out there: those who criticize the 'enlargement' idealistic idea, those that criticize the long time it took EU to enlarge and not agreeing in the harsh conditions (for candidates) on this process, last those who fear it as it will fatigue EU institutions (Moravcsik & Vachudova, 2002). As we turn back in discussing on a real proper challenge on EU enlargement, it will be the diversity nature of countries, especially in Western Balkan region but as we have previously mention it was also and wake up call for the EU in adapting to a new normative approach, it found the way to deal with this matter either separately or on groups (the case of Western Balkan Region Integration). An valuable and interesting insight on the last EU negotiation process (CEE countries) is made by

²⁴ Manners, I. 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?' JMCS, 40, (2002), p. 235-238

²⁵ Schimmelfennig, F. 'The Double Puzzle of EU Enlargement: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Decision to Expand to the East' Paper Presented at the ECSA Sixth Biennial International Conference, Pittsburgh (1999), p.19-21

A.Moravcsik; due to the fact that the applicant countries are diverse and numerous is predictable that their bargaining power will increase when they are inside the Union. He points out that applicant countries have consistently found themselves in a weak negotiating position in opposition to their EU partners and have conceded much in exchange for membership. As we lean on the interstate negotiations, if transnational relations vary greatly, then preferences can vary correspondingly. Those countries that gain the most by engaging in more intense interstate cooperation, have the most intense preferences for agreement.

J.Nye and R.Keohane contribution on International theories especially focusing on interstate bargaining, argue that the outcomes of it reflect patterns of asymmetrical interdependence, more interdependent countries tend to benefit more from liberalizing markets and so are willing to make concessions to do so (mostly countries with a low GNP). ²⁶EU bargaining over enlargement was characterized by a specific interstate concessions and compromises that had reflected the priorities of the EU's core countries, the most powerful among them. On the matter on why the existing EU countries are willing to let in new members we are faced with two main arguments. One is related to the economic and geopolitical interest and the other to the norm-based power. The West talked itself into a commitment to admit countries that share its liberal values and this 'rhetorical entrapment' has subsequently sustained enlargement despite the fact that mere association for East European states would have better served the EU's interest. Even though for the best outcome, these two arguments cannot expel each other. Many EU citizens associated enlargement with rising illegal immigration, international crime and unemployment and there is no concrete evidence that this process contributes in this. As a response to the enlargement fatigue there is a certain opinion circulating from the public but also national capitals on slowing down the expansion of the EU.

An interesting perspective of some other authors relies on the argument that EU needs to be more flexible in its internal and enlargement operations. There is a lack of an expanded vision in its institutional design, tight conditionality and attending to the Union's absorption capacity are not

²⁶ F.Schimmelfenning, 'The community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Actions and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union,' *International Organization*, 55, 2001

sufficient to deal with enlargement fatigue, much of which was associated with cultural, economic and psychological reasons. Even though conditionality remains an important device that focuses on the readiness of the candidates in joining EU and ensures its success,²⁷ still it is not sufficient to fully eliminate the fears surrounding the enlargement process. A reviling insight is the fact that the conditionality applied to candidates was ‘too’ soft to assure the harmonious operation of the EU after enlargement so Union has not been able to deal with the ‘fatigue’.

Returning to Moravcsik theory, the future of the EU enlargement process and its consequences are quite unknown especially viewed from the perspective of national interests and state power. Accession process according to members leaders points out in two directions: some consider enlargement to be in their long-term economic and geopolitical interest, while other interest groups oppose it, as to them it could generate a disproportionate share of the short-term costs. EU membership, does bring huge economic and geopolitical benefits and this makes it a matter of national interest. As the enlargement consequences are still to be waiting on, the authors find little reason in the prediction that EU enlargement will cause the gridlock of its institutions. Enlargement is more likely to reinforce current EU trends toward slower legislative and reform output; greater budgetary conflict over structural funding, more pressure to reform the CAP, greater ‘pillarization’ of governance, a stronger Council vis-a-vis the Commission, more recourse to flexibility and coalitions of the willing, a shift in focus from deepening to widening and above all an emergent constitutional compromise in which the regulation of much of the economy is internationalized but social, cultural, educational and other policies remain largely national. Enlargement reveals EU’s maturity and durability (A.Moravcsik & A.Vachudova, 2003).

EU’s enlargement policy towards the WB

The international community can play a crucial role in fostering successful transitions to democracy and viable market economies. The lure of NATO membership has been a powerful

²⁷ A.Szducha, ‘The EU and Enlargement fatigue: why has the European Union not been able to counter enlargement fatigue?’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol.5, Issue 1, 2010, pg.8-13

factor in accelerating Eastern Europe's reforms, as Brussels gradually geared up for its eastward expansion the EU became an even more powerful magnet than NATO and prolonged EU accession negotiations became an effective source of leverage for accelerated reform. Even with all the 'enlargement fatigue' discussions, the United States and Western Europe are still able to exert considerable influence by recognizing and rewarding effective steps towards democratic reform. Once the transition has moved a certain level the democracy has proven to be quite 'sticky'. Regression can only occur to those countries where initial reforms were inadequate. Approval and offer of membership by international organizations has been a vital factor in the legitimization of the new democracies.

In the eyes of Europe and the world, the Balkan region has been known for conflicts, wars, harsh dictatorships, and poor development tracks. Widely recognized as an international actor the EU plays a very important role in defining the future path for the Balkans. Its policies towards the region cover a wide range of issues and all falls under the EU's Common Foreign and Security policy (CFSP) and European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). An interesting task to solve will be also evaluating on how successful have these EU policies been from 1990s and onwards. Even though the European Institutions failed to address the evolving crisis of the 1990's, it seemed on the upcoming years that EU found a way to re-invent its normative power.

EU is largely viewed as a success story and as a cornerstone of European stability and prosperity. It's experience of enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) established that although democracy-building needs to be the outcome of domestic political processes, external actors can play a role in supporting systemic transformation. Strong evidence shows that the Yugoslavia crisis was quite a big challenge for the European foreign policy. For those years its role on the international arena passed in second place as other international actors (US) took an important role on the region. Yugoslavia issue was re-named as a European problem and the inability of the CEE countries to stop the violence was related to the failure of the foreign and security European policy to face such a complex problem. CEE got support after the conflict and not during, due to the un-prepared European institutions on having to deal with armed conflict and such a complex matter. At the time, the 'enlargement process' wasn't took as a useful stabilizing tool. The turning point of the EU's foreign policy towards the region was during the crisis in Kosovo

(1999). Finally, they woke up on the necessity of a general strategy towards the region. There were four main factors that pushed this development:

²⁸-The challenging nature of the problem; after the 2000 elections the Balkans countries had democratic governments. The risk of armed conflict was significantly reduced and this factor led to the development of a global policy towards the region.

-The consensus on the policy towards the Balkans; before the 90's the experience on the Balkans was very scarce so after the crisis the European member states begin to create a strategy and a common analysis of the region. The objective was developing a more ambitious foreign policy

-Increased ability to cope with international problems; the position of the High Representatives increased the EU ability to respond positively and in a rapid way towards the new developments and cooperation with the international actors. EU also began to develop not only civilian intervention skills but also military skills on crisis management. The developments of these new instruments were made in the Balkans. The region has remained a crucial point for expanding security role.

-The states of the region had aspects in common with Eastern European countries; during the 90's the EU had accumulated a large know-how on promoting the integration of these countries in the CEE. This experience contributed even more to the development of attitude towards the Balkan countries.

EU enlargement to the Balkans represents the pursuit of its most successful policy since the fall of the Berlin wall. EU's active role in the region is not only based in its peace example but most also work actively on the ground in: democracy defense, rule of law and anti-corruption (some of the main problems on the region). There are calculations made on cost of enlargement and non-enlargement. The inclusion of the countries of the Western Balkan will represent an addition of some 20 million to the EU's a half a billion citizens. In the context of budgetary restrictions, we should also take an account the fact that the cost of the wars and subsequent recovery programmes has been estimated at 100 billion dollars for the 1990s alone.

²⁸ Bregu.M. *The Western Balkan towards EU: the integration of the region, also the 'reinvention' of the EU?!*, 2014, pg.5, Tirana University Magazine

As the WB region recovers and strengthen its stability and cooperation capacities after an exhausted decade of conflicts the EU has no so clear enlargement agenda in its sight and it relies on the direct involvement of some of its members states in the region to facilitate the accession process, neighboring EU members states (example: Croatia) that can act as facilitator for the “Europeanisation’ process. The way the situation in the region is handled, it refers to a combination of a broader regional picture with the view from the Balkan states themselves, which shows the limits of individual, country-by country approaches to the shared problems. The challenge is shaping a coherent regional approach but there are some obstacles to that. Regional cooperation remains a weak point and one of the political obstacles to its development was the suspicion (immediately after the war) that there was an attempt resembling former Yugoslavia. Even though since the 1990s the regional cooperation has slowly been restored.

Another potential obstacle in the enlargement process from the Western Balkan region is ‘accession fatigue’. ²⁹This has two faces; one is that region’s political elites sometimes use verbal commitments to EU membership merely for political interests and the other side is the massive popular support of EU accession, strongest where it is least advanced (Albania) weakest where it is most advanced (Croatia). The EU agenda for the countries of Western Balkans are: tackling corruption (addressing doubts raised about the rule of law), nepotism and the preference for by-passing legal norm; the use of public sector employment for political patronage and state capture. On the European Union side there also exist some obstacles worth mentioning that can affect the enlargement process. The crisis of the euro poses challenges to the EU’s cohesion and leadership and also EU’s ability to follow the enlargement process is questioned. Because of this it can generate a mutual distrust, where the WB countries pretend that they are preparing for accession and where EU pretends wanting them in its circle. EU seems for the moment uncertain for the outcome of this process and for this need to develop a more coherent regional expansion policy in the region. Expanding EU when its leadership and confidence attributes are in crisis, this combined with some other paradoxes surrounding the EU’s enlargement towards Western Balkan makes it very challenging.

There are legit reasons on why there is a necessity in rethinking the EU approach to enlargement

²⁹ J.Rupnik, ‘The Western Balkans and the EU: The hour of Europe’,2011, European Union Institute for Security Studies,p.19-23

from the Balkans also. Without credible prospects of accession to the EU, its influence will recede among the political elites and more radical forms of nationalism are likely to resurface around the unresolved contentious issues pertaining to the 'unfinished states' of the Balkans. Without a tangible and assertive European commitment to the Balkans, the progress made over the last decade could unravel, at enormous political and financial cost to an EU which then be forced to return to a logic of protectorate (J. Rupnik, 2011). The capacity of each country from this region to deliver is a very important factor on the development of the enlargement process. In order for EU to restore its credibility in the region and at the international level it requires a full coherent commitment to the region's future by revising a clear accession timetable.

In the last decade, with the completion of the process of redrawing the map of the region, the overall thrust of the EU's Balkan policy has moved from an agenda focused on the perspective of the Western Balkan states' accession to the European Union. There was a 'supposedly' familiarity with the policy tools thanks to previous wave of the Eastern Enlargement.³⁰ There are three international factors that have reinforced the EU's role as the key player in the region:

US: There has been a gradual convergence of European and American policies in contrast to the underlying transatlantic tensions that accompanied the two US-led military interventions in the 1990s. The last decade was marked by a steady Europeanisation of the international presence in the Balkans, while the focus of the US attention continued to shift to other international priorities (G-2 with China, a 'reset' with Russia, the war in Afghanistan ect...). The Balkan is in the bottom of the list, EU is seen as the only active actor and it should encourage a continuously engagement especially in view of the fact that the United States enjoys strong credibility in the region (Kosovo and Bosnia) and to assist the region's accession to the EU.

Russia: Moscow focused on its relationship with Belgrade, acquiring a major stake in Serbia's energy sector in exchange for Russia backing of Serbia's position over Kosovo in the UN Security Council. After the ICJ ruling of August 2010 on Kosovo independence and Belgrade's newfound pragmatism, Russia too has had to adjust, Kosovo issue for Moscow remains primarily a bargaining chip to be used for the furtherance of its own geopolitical in its 'near-abroad'.

Turkey's policies are the third positive factor in relation to the EU's role in the Balkans. There

³⁰ J. Rupnik, 'The Western Balkans and the EU: The hour of Europe', 2011, European Union Institute for Security Studies, p.24

have been significant positive developments in relations between Turkey and several Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia), which suggest that old animosities inherited from the past can be overcome. Turkey opened enlargement negotiations with the EU in October 2005 together with Croatia. The latter, however, seems likely to join the EU in 2013 while the Turkish negotiation seems open-ended, suggesting there is no direct connection between Turkey's accession prospects and those of the countries of the Western Balkans.

EU strategy towards the region is in building and shaping a coherent regional approach. There are two main approaches towards the region; one is adopting the EU Commission perspective in its progress reports and establishing a ranking of the Western Balkans countries in their road towards EU membership. The other is to combine a broader regional picture with the view from the Balkan states themselves, which shows the limits of individual, country-by-country approaches to the shared problems and remaining contentious issues and to EU integration.

Relations with the Western Balkans fall within the framework of the Stabilization and Association process, launched in 1999. A framework for relations between the EU and countries in the region and the Stability Pact, a broader initiative involving all key international players. The Stability Pact was replaced by the Regional Cooperation Council in 2008. The 2003 European Council in Thessaloniki reaffirmed that all SAP countries were candidates for the EU membership.

Croatia's accession to the EU on 1 July 2013 constitutes a significant incentive for other countries in the region. Building on the experience with Croatia, the Commission proposed further improvements to its negotiating approach in its 2011-2012 'Enlargement Strategy', including a stronger emphasis on rule-of-law issues. This means that negotiating chapters on judicial reform and fundamental rights (chapter 23) and on justice, freedom, and security (chapter 24) are opened at an early stage in all future negotiations.

The EU's overall strategy for the Western Balkans based on a regional approach that is conceptualized in the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), aims to assist each Western Balkan country in meeting the relevant EU conditions for accession. It is structured with a bilateral dimension and a regional dimension. The bilateral component includes matters such as: enhanced trade liberalization, financial assistance, cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs, and the SAA. In addition to the fact that the SAA produces a definite perspective on membership, it

also provides a contractual framework by which the EU can ensure compliance with more precise conditions outlined for the aspiring Western Balkan countries. The regional dimension, on the other hand, fosters regional cooperation and good neighbor relations between the Southeast European countries. In addition, the Western Balkan countries are also participating in the work of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), which replaced the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in 2008. Second, the Western Balkan aspiring members are facing an additional set of politically sensitive conditions, often colloquially referred to as the 'Copenhagen Plus' criteria, which include the requirement of full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), refugee return, regional cooperation and reconciliation, and the resolution of bilateral disputes or of statehood dilemmas. Additionally, the 'Copenhagen Plus' criteria encompass a strong security dimension, which pertains to the respect for and implementation of various political and peace agreements stemming mostly from the armed conflicts of the 1990s, which distorted the region. They include the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, the Dayton, Kumanovo, Ohrid, and Belgrade agreements, and the Agreement on Normalization of Serbia-Kosovo Relations. Third, the EU has redefined its existing monitoring mechanisms, becoming much more rigorous in the way it applies conditionality. It has introduced new mechanisms, such as intermediary benchmarks and the early screening processes. In addition, the European Commission has devised creative ways to keep the reform process going in situations of domestic or bilateral deadlocks in the Western Balkans. The EU continues to borrow expertise from other international organizations during the monitoring of the implementation of the adopted policies, most notably from the Council of Europe, the OSCE, international financial institutions, and relevant Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Fourth, conditionality for the Balkans features an increased focus on 'good governance' criteria, particularly the maintenance of the rule of law, an independent judiciary and an efficient public administration. The new EU approach on Chapters 23 and 24, introduced for the first time in the Croatian negotiating process, is now fully integrated into the EU's negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia, and will most likely apply to all future accession talks in the region. In this novel approach, proposed in 2011 by the European Commission⁴⁰ and endorsed by the Council, Western Balkan countries are expected to get a head start on the most difficult aspect - rule of law reforms - in order to allow enough time to build solid track records of implementation before opening other negotiating chapters. Furthermore, the 'new 40

European Commission. (Brussels, 12 October 2011). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012, COM (2011) 666 final. Policy Department, Directorate-General for External Policies 14 approach' envisages an interim benchmarking system that would assess the country's preparedness to open and close a negotiating chapter, and introduces safeguard measures, most notably the overall balance clause, as referred to above. The Negotiating Framework for Montenegro's and Serbia's accession places a specific emphasis on Chapters 23 and 24, thus reflecting concerns about matters related to the rule of law, corruption and organized crime.

European integration and regional cooperation are closely intertwined. One of the key aims of the SAP is to encourage countries of the region to cooperate among themselves across a wide range of areas, including the prosecution of war crimes, border issues, refugees, and the fight against organized crime. One of the specific components of the IPA is dedicated to regional cooperation and cross-border programmes. With this we can see clearly the EU regional approach towards Western Balkan and its concrete developments. One of the bigger challenges that the six remaining Western Balkan accession countries will have to deal with its to keep elites and citizens motivated to continue the reform process. There is a need of re-energizing the approach towards enlargement, relying more on soft mechanism such as civil society and interaction that aim to transform the traditional up to down power structures in aspiring members states.

Eastern enlargement vs Western Balkan enlargement

Despite the scale of assistance and effort in the Balkans the international community has failed to offer a convincing political perspective to the societies in the region. There is an urgent need to move the region as a whole from the stage of protectorates and weak states to the stage of EU accession. The classical enlargement model that worked for Central and Eastern Europe in 1990 does not fit the conditions prevailing in the Balkans. To be part of the EU this region needs to undergo to significant changes and also requires a shift in policy towards the region.

The Western Balkans refers to the region of the Southeastern European countries involved in the

EU Stabilization and Association process Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The region has gone through many problems in the political plan as well as in the economic one.³¹ Concerning the political sphere, many ethnic conflicts drove these countries, starting with the dissolution of Ex-Yugoslavia and other social problems like; underdeveloped civil societies, lack of rule of law and destroyed economic systems. The Balkans with its favorable geographic features and economic opportunities has attracted people since the ancient times due to geopolitical situation. It has always been a ground for co-existence of different culture, religions, and peoples over a small territory, making the Western Balkans as multicultural and multiethnic conflict region. The countries' many challenges include: building democratic institutions, easing social tensions and ethnic ground, and functioning of a market economy. The region was perceived as fragile with weak states that requires international support.

European Union strategy as an international organization, is based on state building and integration on the post-conflict reconstruction of the Western Balkan. The tool used in its approach is conditionality (state building), argued by many for its ineffectiveness due to the lack of commitment by the political elites but also the status issues apathy, especially on the policy agenda. The agenda on the post-Yugoslavia conflicts was mainly on establishing a 'minimalist state'. A state that constitutes an effort in addressing the sources of conflicts and state weakness by fostering state structures, which fall shortly from the set of functions most states are widely expected to carry out. They distinguish from weaker or failed states, as the later do not presuppose international state-building efforts and have become synonymous with the failure of domestic or international state building and risk causing conflict, or coexist with a low level of conflict. In the Western Balkans, we identify three examples of such minimalist states. BiH was created as a state by the Dayton Peace Agreement in November 1995. The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (Srbija I Crna Gora, SCG) was formed in 2003 as a successor to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and ended only three years later after the successful referendum on independence in Montenegro in May 2006. The last to mention is Kosovo, it achieved its independence in February 2008 following the failed effort by Martti Ahtisaari in negotiating a final settlement between Serbia and Kosovo. Other countries of the Western Balkans region

³¹ M.Spahiu, The integration of the WB, a need for Stability and Peace, 2013, Vol.3, No.10, International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences,pg.72

(Macedonia, Albania) have an unconsolidated statehood with EU conditionality, the engagement of the EU is directed more towards institution building and accession.

The difference between state building and institution building relies on the fact that the latter has been at the center of EU conditionality in Central and Eastern Europe. State building does include institution building as essential requirements for functional states. State building extends beyond a mere collection of institution-building measures, it focuses on core governing functions and thus directly impacts on the sovereignty of a state. In terms of scope it extends beyond institution building and it focuses on the links between institutions, conceptual understanding, or the state and its less easily definable.

Arguing on the role of a 'state builder' in the Western Balkan, different authors share the conclusion that EU has not been effective. Even though it offers the states more (comparing to UN and United States) full membership, its inability relies in transferring accession conditionality to state building and in the non-fluent way in which this process is pursued. The EU integration process in the Western Balkan, focuses on the nature of state. It seems that EU has a complex relationship towards statehood, it pools the sovereignty of member states and requires its member states to accept EU decision-making, yet at the same time lacks the key functions conventionally associated with states. The challenge of the region relies on reconciling the EU membership requirements with the reality of minimalist states. In this region as confronted with minimalist states EU involved itself on the external state building process, as there is a lack of capacities of domestic state building.

EU has pursued three types of external state building. The first type consists of direct intervention in the structure and construction of the state, through the creation of new institutions, the imposition of laws and other acts which are conventionally reserved for domestic actors. The second type is conducted through coercion and close monitoring of the state builders. Here, international actors do not impose laws themselves but pressure domestic actors to pursue a particular state-building agenda which is internationally defined. On the third form of state building, the conditionality here, as a mechanism of the EU's Eastern Enlargement is transferred to state-building projects. The logic of conditionality suggests that elites will transform the institutions of their country if rewarded by the EU with membership. The EU failed in keeping Serbia and Montenegro together despite their commitment towards membership and from this it

is build the argument that state building through conditionality isn't as successful as conditionality in the context of previous EU enlargement. The reason why the state building has shifted from direct intervention to conditionality, attaches to the incompatibility of direct imposition with democratic governance and rule of law. Also, the legitimacy and commitment crisis of long-term direct intervention.

Conventional EU accession in Central and Eastern Europe has focused on institution building and capacity building. In the Western Balkan, there has been a tendency to replicate this process as part of the preparation for accession. In the Central and Eastern Europe process on the EU accession regional cooperation was a failure, the reason was the non-compliance of all the countries. So, in this case, it is argued that conditions can undermine minimalist states and failure is a n option.

The dual question of statehood and state capacity is a specific feature of the South-East Europe and calls for a modified adapted EU approach to enlargement. Unlike in the aftermath of the 1989 revolutions in the Eastern and Central Europe, the EU's expansion to the Balkans cannot be based on the emotional appeal of the 'return to Europe', cause is one thing for the EU accession prospects to facilitate a reformist consensus among candidate states and sometimes to help tip the political balance in favor of democratic forces, at the expense of post-communist nationalists. But is another to facilitate institution-building and state capacity.

³²On the initiative and with the support of the Robert Bosch Stiftung (Germany), the King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium), the German Marshall Fund on the United States and the Charles Stewart Foundation (US), the new International Commission on the Balkans held its first meeting on April 15 in Brussels. Centre for Liberal Strategies functioned as a secretariat of the International Commission of the Balkans. The objective was to develop a vision for the Integration of the countries of the South-East Europe in to the European Union and other International Structures highlighting the progress made to date, supported by the recommendations for action to the governments of the region and to the intranational community.

³² Report of the International Commission on the Balkans, 'The Balkans in Europe's Future', 2004-2006 , Secretariat Centre for Liberal Strategies, pg.12-17, 29-35

Today, almost a century after the creation of the first International Commission on the Balkans, a third Commission on the Balkans is published a report. Different from the first two, this report is the first that is able to reach beyond war and peace. Even though the countries on the region are relatively stable the International Commission on the Balkans felt the need to solve the outstanding status and constitutional issues in the Balkans and into moving the region as a whole from the stage of protectorates and weak states to the stage of EU accession (especially in the light of Kosovo events, 2004). The International Commission on the Balkans believed that the status quo was a problem and not part of the solution and they argued three major reasons for this. Firstly, the expectation gap; citizens of the region perceive the status quo as a problem. A survey was conducted in November 2004 and demonstrated that people in the region are negative about the status quo and that there was a distrust towards both the government and the opposition. This was compared to a similar poll that was conducted in 2002 and was observed a growing trend of public pessimism and dissatisfaction with the direction of political and economic developments. Secondly is the development gap, the year lost in wars and half-baked reforms have widened the gap between the winners and losers in Balkan societies. The status quo widened the gap between the economic and social performance of the region on the one hand and of the new EU members on the other. If this status quo were to prevail, a new European ghetto would arise in the heart of an integrating continent. The third and the last one is the integration trap; it was clear that the region could not achieved prosperity and stability outside the process of European integration. Also, the dysfunctional states and protectorates that characterize the region actively hinder the inclusion of the Balkans into the European mainstream. In this sense, the status quo is blocking the road to EU accession. Considering all these arguments, a new policy framework was created. The Balkan region needs both, policies that focus on economic and social issues and policies that seek to resolve status questions. It is essential for the region the stabilization and this is done only through the regional approach that EU directed. The interdependence of Western Balkan states is vital for the future of the region and this 'regional approach' is a precondition for development. A dilemma in this case was on how to reconcile the regional approach with the requirements of evaluating countries based on their individual performances.

Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) was initiated. The International Commission argued that the accession strategy in the region should be a mixture of classical state-building policies

with those aimed at transforming nation states into member states. The strategy should be concentrated on a 'member-state building' process, even though there is some doubt on the SAP efficiency as a framework for building member.

The Central and Eastern Europe experience shows that the most efficient way to foster and accelerate the overall political, economic, and administrative reforms in aspirant countries is the institutionalization of the European perspective. This leaves out the fear that might grow on some Balkan societies on left out of the process altogether. NATO as a second pillar of this integration strategy played the role of a fast integration track for the CEE. The constitutions written after the 1990s Yugoslav wars for several states in the region, created governments that remained weak, unpopular, and unable to persuade either their people or the international community that they were ready to enter the European Union. The constitutional frameworks created weak states, where each state must compete with strongly decentralized power (Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro), with parallel structures that are wholly unaccountable to the constitutional frameworks and with intrusive international structures that have near monopolies of power. It is commonly observed, that, often international representatives and local governments shift accountability onto one another and citizens are left with a vague idea on who is responsible for what. The integration of the Balkans into EU remains on constitutional uncertainty. There were many findings and recommendation from the International Commission analysis of the region:

-Regional institutional arrangement and institutionalization of European perspectives are powerful instruments that can work in the Western Balkans

-Assisting the countries of the region in the field of justice and home affairs it's an important priority for the accession process

-The rule of law should be a major criterion in evaluating the progress of Balkan countries, the example of the last round of enlargement on institutional issues, administrative capacity issues and judiciary issues where an unpredictable challenge that must not be left in the end.

-The countries of the region will open to each other only within a broader framework towards the EU

-Europeanisation of the visa issue

-A new generation of policies that focus on democratization and on the quality of political representation are needed, which can consolidate and strengthen pro-reform and pro-European forces in the region.

In the upcoming years (after 2004) we could see that these recommendations were put in life (with few changes), emphasizing the importance and impact of the International Commission on Balkan in pushing concrete changes forwards.

The region is not only populated by weak states and protectorates but they also suffer the legacy of failed nation-building projects. There is a difference on the member-state building strategy compared with other parts of the world and from the EU accession process as typified by the last wave of enlargement. The main objective of all this process is not only building stable, legitimate states whose own citizens will seek to strengthen and not destroy them but also establishing a 'state' that the EU can accept as a full member with absolute confidence. The difference between CEE and Balkans is that in the CEE transition process, the countries were handled on an individual and bilateral basis without being conditional on regional stability, where the Western Balkans is treated as a whole. Where the individual progress was largely based on the progress of the entire region towards stability. The CEE integration had a positive impact on the countries of the WB as these countries could provide valuable assistance and share their own experiences of transition and integration. Since, Albania is our case study in this study and since we also made a comparison on enlargement strategy (between CEE and WB) then we have opened a space in mentioning some of the characteristics of the countries' road to integration compared with other CEE and WB countries.

In its road of democratization and integration compared this with other states like Slovakia, or former entities of the Russia and Yugoslav Federations, Albania had some advantages like; the fact that it has been a state for 80 years, others had to create states as a result of the disintegration of their federations. Being for almost a century and independent state and not having had major inter-ethnic problems (such as Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia) puts the country upfront the integration process. Some of its neighbor's states like; Kosovo, BH, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia have not yet sorted out their constitutional and territorial status as well as their borders. Albania on the other side, despite its location in the region of Europe (very good geo-strategic position) that is part of an overlapping ethnics and religions communities, it is

almost entirely ethnically homogeneous. Albanian's are the 98% of the total population, Greeks the biggest ethnic minority in the country, while other countries in the region are multi-ethnic. The country had clear boundaries, even when it was threatened by spill-overs from the Yugoslav countries. It has experienced little if any of the religious conflict between Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims, which had been an important factor in the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

Because of its idiosyncratic characteristics, Albania escaped the Yugoslav wars and has not faced identity and nation-building challenges like its Western Balkan neighbors. These characteristics include inter alia homogeneity and mass migration after the isolation of the Communist regime (Kalemaj, 2006).

The frozen enlargement process question?!

In the time of Jean-Claude Juncker President it was stated that by the end of the Commission's term (2019) there would be no expansion of the Union. The reasons (as Mr.Hahn) had mentioned are that candidate countries cannot be ready for accession by the year 2019 due to the deep changes that are required from them and 5 years seems not enough. This is the main reason why today there is no more an enlargement commissioner but rather an enlargement negotiator one. The frozen process does not come much from Brussels but rather from the Western Balkan. Especially if we analyze the progress reports of the last five years. They do not differ much and almost every year we can read the same conclusions.

Of course, there has been real tentative from EC to pull the enlargement process out its frozen history, like starting the negotiations from the most difficult chapters 21, 24. This covers very important parts of the countries transitions like: democratic values, rule of law and human rights.

After the 2013 and with the EU economic recession, European Commission approach towards the Western Balkan enlargement changed. An interesting change on the strategy approach is the fact that it will no longer present enlargement strategies every year as it did so far but rather present an overall strategy for the duration of its term. This brought to the surface to issues; by presenting annual strategies the EC was able to quickly shift the focus with the current situation and also practically there is no strategy. What was expected from this strategy was in serving

towards some directions and answering enlargement challenges. Instead what it offers is only superficial changes, nothing in-depth. The document focus on the EC commitment in issues like: rule of law, democracy, political, economic and societal changes (European values and political systems) and the rest presents an analysis of the current situation as a whole and on a state by state basis. The problem does not rely only on the European Commission lack of ideas, but moreover on the non-interested ruling elites in candidate states on fulfilling the changes requested from them. What is obvious with the current situation, is that this model does not give beneficial result especially a sustainable one. We hear that the enlargement process will be beneficial for both parties (EU and candidate countries) is there is a sustainable reform to be maintained. Unfortunately, we are not provided with enough information on how will this be achieved.

As showed from experience, standstill in enlargement is not a solution but more a prerequisite for future problems. The strategy doesn't offer any solution of how to solve the problem of standstill or on the growing skepticism in candidate countries. In 2015 there has been some positive changes. In the new progress reports, very specific recommendations are extended but still we have no idea what will it happen if these recommendations are not followed. The content of these progress reports is very limited, we can only read some progress on the very familiar issue. The overall impression is that the EC strategy towards Western Balkan is not comprehensive and it still remains superficial without addressing the most relevant questions. Enlargement to the Balkans will remain one of the EU's most important projects for generations to come. There is no much progress made in the region, in transforming themselves from war-torn countries into new democracies. The countries in the region are still not fully-effective democracies as enforcing the rule of law remains problematic and accountability channels are still dysfunctional.

Since 1999s, the Balkan states have been striving to build democratic governments and societies. Yet dilemmas relating to security and unresolved statehood continue to dominate political life and influence how the European Union interacts with the region. Fears that discord in one country could spread to the whole region and even the rest of Europe continue to define the EU's engagement policy and the ways in which the accession and pre-accession agenda are articulated. The democratic transformation of the Balkans should be a win-win solution for all. In practice,

even if all agree that it is possible, the road ahead is full of political traps and dilemmas about the best approaches and timeframes to be adopted. Democratic regime-building in the region coincided with state-building and post-war reconstruction. We can speak of a triple transition in the Balkans: from war to peace, from a communist command economy to a liberal market economy, and, from a single-party rule to a pluralist democracy. Resolving statehood issues requires negotiations with neighboring countries, adding with this another argument on the complex challenges that these countries are facing. At the heart of the problem is the state: its weakness is a major challenge for carrying out the necessary reforms for integration into the EU and for the resolution of internal and neighborhood problems. At the heart of the solution is democracy: the only insurance for the region to consolidate its states and societies. The international environment has had a significant influence on the democratic transition of the candidate countries but now it's time to not only develop through pressure. Western Balkan countries need to take serious responsibilities on fulfilling EU requirements. As on how capable are they (Albania case) on delivering such commitment, we will further analyze it through the Albania candidate country

Chap.V Albanians EU Integration (1999-2016)

The European Council meeting in April 1999, launched a new clear strategy for the Western Balkan region. The fifth enlargement process of the EU (May 2004) was a process that had its starting point in the beginning of the 1990s.

On November 2004, the new European Commission headed by Jose Manuel Barroso moved the Western Balkan countries from DG External Relations to DG Enlargement spreading a positive and supportive message for the future of these countries. After the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 Western Balkans region was bordered by EU members states and moving the whole region from the stage of 'protectorates' and weak states to the EU accession process was the right call, in helping the Balkans overcome their past legacies and welcoming it in into European mainstream. Previous enlargements (CEE countries example) had a different scheme then the Western Balkans countries. They had to pass a much easier set of rules and principles of adjusting to European policies and join the Community.

As a really influential and important actor for the region, European Union found its way to transform from a utopian vision to a practical and an ambitious project. The accession process maintains its leading role as the whole process of joining the EU. It involves countries negotiating individually with the European Commission under Article O (1) of the TEU. Is an intergovernmental process, between the governments of applicant countries and the governments in the European Council, consulting with the European Commission and the European Parliament including certain formal steps like:

- The formal application, submitted to the European Council
- The opinion (*avis*); the Council request an Opinion, which is a detailed document that explains the economic and political situation of the applicant country and evaluates its ability to cope with membership from the European Commission
- The Accession Conference; the Council convenes a conference with representatives of the applicant countries (the Council and the European Commission)
- The negotiations; each of the 35 chapters of the ³³*acquis communautaire* is examined, negotiated and upon agreement, provisionally finalized
- The Agreement; upon the finalization of all the chapters the EC makes recommendations to the Council on enlargement
- Approval by the European Parliament (absolute majority)
- Ratification; by all members and applicant states' parliaments and in some cases by referendum.

Most of the previous countries (until 2004 enlargement process) have had established liberal-democratic regimes, they adopted the free market system (being right-wing regimes) and their economies was in a good place. This classical method of accession did not fit neither was applied for the new democracies of the Eastern Europe. As we previously mentioned they need still to fulfil political and economic criteria and undergo through a state-building process (at least some of them). So, EU set a new set of criteria for membership known as the 'Copenhagen

³³ Is the accumulated body of European Union (EU) law and obligations from 1958 to the present day. It comprises all the EU's treaties and laws (directives, regulations, decisions), declarations and resolutions, international agreements and the judgments of the Court of Justice.

criteria’.

Established by the European Council in 1993 and laid down in Articles 6 and 49 of the EU Treaty. Emphasizing that it is extremely importance of following the principles of democracy and the rule of law not only by subscribing to it but also practicing it, in the everyday life, making accession process the power on changing the legal framework in which the society and economy should operate and not only being stuck on the approximatization of legislation. According to it the candidate countries must ensure:

- *Political criteria*: Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respects and protection of minorities

- Economic criteria*: The existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union

- The administrative-technical criteria*: Ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union

- The legal criteria*: The importance of not only incorporating the *acquis communautaire* into national legislation, but also ensuring its effective application through appropriate administrative and judicial structures

For the accession of the Western Balkans the EU came up with a new formula, keeping in consideration its’ past legacy and the challenges ahead of them from both sides. It introduced the SAP Stabilization and Association Process, which was finalized at the Zagreb Summit (November 2000). It consists in two components:

- 1.The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)- A contractual relationship

- Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization (CARDS), an assistance programme.

- 2.The SAA itself had 4 main phases:

- Preparation for the SAA

- Negotiation of the SAA (opening and then signing of the agreement)

-Ratification by EU member states and entry into force

-Implementation of the SAA

This new element made the process of integration longer and more demanding, as the countries during its implementation have to follow up and fulfill the ³⁴‘Copenhagen criteria’. The SAA is a successor of the ‘Europe Agreement’, which was applied to the CEE countries. The ‘Europe Agreement’ contains only the association element, SAA contains two others: stabilization and association. If the period of implementation of the SAA is successful, in terms of fulfilling all conditions and satisfying the Copenhagen criteria, it leads to the final phases:

-Application for the EU membership

-Accession talks, the process of negotiating the 35 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* (including opening and signing the negotiations)

-Signing of the Accession Treaty

-Date of Accession and joining the EU

A country’s satisfactory track-record in implementing its SAA obligations is essential for the EU to consider any membership application. Before the accession negotiation are opened, a country needs to reach a sufficient degree of general compliance with the EU’s Copenhagen criteria; political, economic and legal. Mostly adapting EU’s laws and policies. The first step consists of a check on how far the candidates’ legislation corresponds to the EU, which is a technical process known as ‘screening’. Later the European Council decides whether and when negotiations can be opened, based on recommendation from the Commission. Fulfilment of the criteria in the Stabilization and Association Process and implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement must then continue right up to accession.

Until 1990, Albania was isolated and didn’t participate in any international engagement or relations, it withdrew from the international system and the only organization it remained member was the UN. One of the countries’ first challenges after it started opening up to the

³⁴ Are the rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the European Union. The criteria require that the state has the institutions to preserve democratic governance and human rights, has the functioning market economy and accepts the obligations and intent to the EU

world was establishing its ties with political, economic and military international organizations, especially orienting its domestic developments and external relations towards the EU. European integration starting from 1992 was put on top of the political agenda of Albanian governments.

Tab.1: Interactive timeline Albania-EU

27/06/2014	The Council granted candidate status to Albania
12/11/2013	The EU and Albania hold the first meeting of the High-Level Dialogue on Key Priorities
10/10/2012	European Commission recommends that Albania be granted EU candidate status, subject to completion of key measures in certain areas
01/02/2011	An action plan addressing the 12 key priorities identified in the European Commission opinion is adopted by Albania
15/12/2011	Visa free regime for Schengen area introduced for all Albanian citizens having a biometric passport
09/11/2010	European Commission delivers opinion on Albania's EU membership application
24/04/2009	Albania submits its application for EU membership

01/04/2009	Stabilization and association agreements enters into force
01/01/2008	EU-Albania visa facilitation agreement enters into force
01/01/2007	IPA funds available to help Albania prepare for membership
01/12/2006	Interim agreement enters into force
12/06/2006	Stabilization and Association Agreement and Interim Agreement is signed
01/05/2006	EU-Albania Readmission Agreement enters into force
01/06/2004	Council adopts European partnership with Albania

The first contact of Albania and European Community (as it was called during that time) started in 1991 and in 1992 a ‘Cooperation and Trade Agreement’ was signed. This was mainly established to encourage trade and democratization but it was also a response to the humanitarian crisis of 1991. ³⁵At the beginning of 1995, the country officially asked for the opening of negotiations for the accession agreement. But in that time the European Commission believed that it was a premature step for the country due to the limited free market of the country’s economy. So, in January 1996 the EU council of Ministers asked the Commission to compile a proposal for a new agreement that would strengthen Albania-EU relations that unfortunately didn’t went accordingly the plan. Parliamentary elections that year were disastrous, followed this with the collapse of pyramid schemes, was a step back from the integration process. One of the most important developments towards the EU, was in 1999 where the Commission proposed a SAP for five Balkan countries including Albania. This was endorsed by the Fiera Council in 2000, which confirmed that the EU’s goal was the fullest possible integration of all WB countries into the economic and political mainstream of Europe and recognized them as potential

³⁵ M.Bogdani&J.Loghlin;*Albania and European Union, The Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration and Accession*, 2007.pg., I.B.Tauris, New York

candidates for the EU membership. The 2000 Zagreb Summit was an important step in the commitment of the EU to the Western Balkans, the summit set up an EU/Albania High Level Steering Group with the objective of stepping up cooperation and identifying and supporting the reforms to be carried out by the country in preparation for the negotiation of a SAA. After it, Albania made considerable progress in fulfilling the commitments for opening the negotiations, which was reflected in the report prepared by the Steering Group. The report was presented at the European Council Meeting in Gothenburg (June 2001), on the basis of which the European Commission concluded that it was appropriate to proceed with the negotiation of a SAA with Albania. Draft negotiating directives were submitted to the Council in December 2001 and an EU-Albania Consultative Task Force was set up with the objective of assisting Albania to prepare for the SAA negotiation. In November 2001, the President of the Commission, Romano Prodi declared in Tirana that the opening of negotiations would be in March 2002. The condition for this was the political stability of the country but unfortunately this was postponed due to the severe internal crisis within the Social Party in power. The negotiations were officially launched on 31 January 2003.

There were three years of negotiations on a Stabilization and Association Agreement, starting from March 2004 that were concluded only on 18 February 2006. The negotiating meetings were held every 6 weeks, one political round followed by two technical rounds. In the 7th official round of negotiations which took place in Tirana on 8 February 2006 the SAA was finally initialed at technical level. Commission President Barroso and Enlargement Commissioner Rehn were in Tirana, initialing the agreement. In 2009, Albania submitted its formal application for EU membership and in 2010 the Commission assessed that accession negotiations could be formally opened. The country had still to achieve a necessary degree of compliance with membership criteria and in particular to meet the 12 key priorities identified in the Opinion. In October 2012, the Commission recommended that Albania be granted EU candidate status, the reason was that the country took key measures in the areas of judicial and public administration reform and revision of the parliamentary rules of procedures. Concluding that in June 2014, Albania was awarded candidate status by the EU.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement with Albania was signed on the margins of the June 12 General Affairs and External Relations Council in Luxembourg. The SAA established a

comprehensive framework for reform progress and was an important step on Albanian's path towards the EU. It focuses on political dialogue, enhanced regional co-operation, the establishment of a free-trade area between the EU and Albania within ten years and a gradual approximation of the countries legislation to the EU acquis. From 1999, relevant institutional mechanisms have been created to facilitate the pre-accession and integration process and to foster this relationship. The importance and priority given to this process is reflected in the evolution of structures in charge of European Integration, from a General Directorate of Euro-Atlantic integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Secretary of State for European Integration and finally to the establishment of a fully-fledged institution, the Ministry of European Integration. Created in 2004, it is currently the body with the central role in the European integration process of Albania, whose mission is the technical direction and coordination of the integration process of the Republic of Albania with the EU, through the approximation of the domestic legislation with that of the EU, formulation of integration policies, coordination of financial aids and information of the public about this process. The most important structure remains the EU-Albania Joint Consultative Task force (CTF), that in addition to the official negotiations has been a very good instrument of dialogue between the EU and Albania. Especially for the implementation of the proper reforms. The CTF is composed of working groups and joint committees. These meetings monitor the progress of Albania in all the sectoral reforms based on the first three Copenhagen criteria. Another institutional structure is the Parliamentary Committee for Integration, a bi-partisan committee which was set up in 2002 (M. Bogdani & J.Loughlin 2007).

Albania was eager to conclude the SAA negotiations, because this would imply recognition of reform progress and administrative capacity but nothing was concluded for 3 years, cause no substantial progress was made in crucial areas such as: corruption, organized crime and the judicial system.

Conditionality principle:

Associated with the Copenhagen criteria is also the principle of conditionality defined by the European Council in 1997. The gravity central point of the enlargement process. It implies a relationship in which one partner has leverage over the other through an ability to withhold a desired benefit, EU membership. Since membership is conditional on meeting the Copenhagen

criteria, applicant countries modify their domestic policies and institutions to bring them into line with EU requirements. It set a series of objectives to be achieved within certain deadlines to make the country's legal framework and policies fully compatible with those of the EU. These objectives comply with the EU conditionality and are enshrined in the *acquis communautaire*, in the 'Accession Partnership' and in the Commission's annual reports. Democratic conditionality is achieved by specifying pre-conditions for support, involving the promise of either material aid or political opportunities. It has been like a balance between progress and meeting conditions, imposing rigorous checks on the process but providing appropriate assistance and due rewards for progress. EU conditionality is also applied to other specific unresolved issues in different countries of the region and has become the principal mechanism by which the EU exercises the main external focal point for domestic reforms in the applicant countries.

The hard *acquis* conditionally is tested against the soft/ non-binding EU rules, both before and after enlargement. The study compares the effects of conditionality with the rather general post-enlargement EU pressure, measuring the impact of Europeanization. The rationalist and constructivist theoretical lenses the conditions that would lead to domestic changes as a result of the EU integration. Mechanisms that facilitate national transformations, from coercive measure in the rationalist approach to more persuasive compliance methods in the sociological perspective.

Albania 'faces' to Europeanization

Albania as an applicant state of the EU membership, constitutes a *two-faced* applicant state. Where on one hand legislators have accepted EU recommendations and sought to transpose and implements policy measures on the ground and on the other hand policy implementation has been clearly deficient. Mainly because of recurring problems of inherent state capacity, political polarization and a distinct lack of political will. This has been especially evident in the failure to deliver on commitments made on EU-related reform.

The EU's influence on candidate countries follows a logic of consequences where domestic institutions are the main factors impeding or facilitating changes in response to EU adjustments pressures. Because of this conditionality, is seen as Europeanization's coercive feature.

There are at least three approaches that identify a series of mechanism ranging from hard to soft

corresponding to the Europeanization process: institutional compliance, changing opportunity domestic structure and framing domestic beliefs and expectations. Institutional compliance refers to explicit European policies that prescribe a specific institutional model that has to be introduced in the domestic environment, known as positive integration. It is the hardest mechanism, because the member states have only limited discretion about how to implement the institutional change. The second describes instances where European policies alter the distribution of power and resources between domestic actors, as a result institutional change occurs. This mechanism stays between the hardship/softness description, depending on the instance involved. Softer mechanisms refer to EU preparing the ground for institutional change by altering the 'cognitive input' of domestic actors (Knill 2001). EU prescribes institutional models, but also prescribes certain legislative packages that a member must adhere to. Whether those translate in the end in a new or modified institutional setup at the domestic level, it is considered a consequence of the EU pressure. To present it in a simpler way: a hard mechanism of Europeanization involves coercion of the type take it or leave it. On the other end of the axis, soft Europeanization is all about learning socialization. On the question of how European Integration affects the states engaged in this process remains of a certain importance. In terms of Europeanization outcomes; whether states respond positively to integration pressures or rather resist such forces many scholars have shared their arguments. Hence institutionalist theories allow us to better understand the reality of Europeanization. We meet two main approaches here: the rationalist and the sociological institutionalism. We rely on approaches resumed by Mirela Bogdani and John Loughlin (2007) when writing about the Albanian integration: "Rationalist institutionalism emphasizes the absence of multiple veto points and the presence of supporting institutions, as the main factors facilitating change. Sociological institutionalism points to the socialization of domestic actors, who become 'norm entrepreneurs' and 'change agents'. A cooperative political culture will also facilitate adaptation". (Bogdani and Loughlin 2007: 19, Börzel and Risse) Another important distinction is given by March and Olsen between the 'logic of appropriateness' (LoA) and the 'logic of consequences' (LoC): "The LoA refers to the assimilation of norms by domestic actors, because it is the right thing to do (and therefore appropriate). The LoC refers to the assimilation of norms by these actors, because they are aware that failure to do so will have adverse consequences for them, that is, there is no true assimilation" (Bogdani and Loughlin 2007: 19). Finally, by combining both previous

approaches, Bogdani and Loughlin describe that Europeanization in Albania case, exist multiple veto points to the adaptation of European norms, domestic actors are driven by a logic of consequences rather than a logic of appropriateness, mainly found in the corrupt political class and their criminal connections, and that there is a political culture of conflict and division, rather than of cooperation.” (Bogdani and Loughlin 2007). These questions the effectiveness of conditionality in Albania case.

What is translated from the European Commission, country’ progress report is that the European standards implementation is not entirely satisfactory. Extremally polarized political situation, corruption and rule of law reforms are the cause of this step back. For the Commission, the country ‘on paper’ has adopted the necessary constitutional and legislative reforms regarding the institutions functioning, the reinforcement of the rule of law, but its practical implementation raises a lot of doubts. On the other hand, it is argued that EU is not sufficiently demanding in regard to democratic standards. This comes from the fact that EU does not seem to use enough the coercion leverage in the context of conditionality to maintain and accelerate the pace of reforms. Although we see EU willingness on encouraging the country, perhaps a more vigilant and demanding EU could do ‘miracles’ in accelerating democratic developments. Author Elda Nasho Ah-Pine , states that while the EU has an important responsibility, national political actors have an essential role to play in this case. She further expands Jacques Rupnik (2011) on elite accountability. ‘For the most Euro-enthusiastic interviewers, they think that EU is the only one who knows what is good for Albania. In contrast to the later, the pessimistic elites that that Albania is not ready to join the EU’. This is what we want to pay more attention in this paper but not by focusing to the ‘elite’ but to population attitudes towards the process as they get closer to accession. The question is: Do they really understand the perspective of accession and the country responsibility? If we refer to the social constructivism, Albania doesn’t respond to a logic of appropriateness because it adopts European rules more by obligation than in the assimilation logic of European values. Integration without effective implementation of the EU ‘rules’ and without the European values ‘behaviour’ is a dead empty process. In this case another serious danger that can derive from this, could be that Europeanization is used more to obtain the benefits from the integration and democratization also could be used opportunistically.

The domestic change depends on the existence of a ‘misfit’, the degree of incompatibility

between European requirements and national processes, policies and institutions. The conditions under which a given EU policy would be downloaded and implemented as such, or transported and adopted with amendments are prescribed by the degree of congruence (fit) or incongruence (misfit) between what the European level requires and what already exist at the national level. Furthermore, the domestic outcomes can also feed back into the European integration process, state ‘uploading’ their policy preferences at the EU level. Even though opinion differ regarding the relationship between the misfit and the domestic change, the higher the misfit the higher the adaptational pressure.

EU pressure

Europeanization can trigger many domestic transformations at the level of politics and polity. The literature on Europeanization has predominantly investigated to what extent states converge or not towards a common EU model, neglecting to a large extent the impact of Europeanization on aspects such as the domestic power configuration and conflict or political institutions. *Europeanization*, is operationalized as the EU conditionality and *acquis communautaire*. In this case it is about a coercive pressure steaming from the Union especially on candidates (the strongest EU conditionality applies during enlargement negotiations, when a candidate state has to fulfill at the maximum the prerequisites set by the EU) but also with further implications for members and non-members to reform domestic policies and governance structures in order to meet EU requirements. The transposition of the *acquis* represents the hardest form of the EU pressure. On the other hand, soft rules (recommendations, nonmandatory legislation) are also likely to produce domestic changes. EU integration pressure is considered as both hard and soft legislation or measures advanced by the Union or developed in the EU context.

Europeanization leads to a less inclusive decision-making process, restraining the possibilities for extensive pre- and parliamentary consultations, debate in plenum and dialogue with non-state actors. This is related to the relatively short timeframe within which foreign decisions have to be taken and to the alleged ‘take it or leave it’ character of the EU conditionality (Moravcsik 1998) , that diminishes the chances for law amendments from parliaments and other non-state actors. Europeanization influences the level of conflict in the domestic legislative process by reducing its intensity. Controversial rules are likely to be accepted more easily under the EU pressure by national decision-makers, especially in the case of the CEE countries that displayed an

asymmetric bargaining power vis-à-vis the EU during the integration process. In addition, a general national consent towards accession, without sound public condensation or strong veto players, further diminishes the chances for policy disagreements in sectors affected by the EU integration (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier 2005). Many scholars in the field of Europeanization derive their theoretical framework from either a rationalist perspective (stick and carrots Europeanization mechanisms) or a sociological institutionalism approach (social learning conditions).

Author I. Spahiu (2015) makes a very detailed analysis on exploring the Europeanization process from Albanian Perspective. She mentions that in Albania, there is an interesting configuration. On the one hand, the EU has used Europeanization more rationally (as a strategy for stability in the region) than normatively (to induce domestic change). On the other hand, Europeanization has been used instrumentally in an 'Albanian fashioned-way' without substantive domestic changes of Albanian politics and governance. 'Europeanization by convenience' has brought about merely cosmetic adjustments to respond to EU conditionality. For Albania, EU accession is more an 'obsession' than about social learning or lesson drawing. In the adaption of national and subnational systems to the EU and of EU norms to the domestic systems, Albania and other Balkan countries do not have the power or the position to dictate any rules to the EU. As the poorest country in the Balkans with one of the toughest communist regimes in the world, Albania could only adapt the EU rules incrementally and with some variation. One further change relates to exporting forms of EU political governance beyond the EU territory through conditionality. It is obvious that conditionality is the dominant mechanism of EU influence. However, the EU no longer solely focuses on the Copenhagen criteria, but also on the consolidation of statehood in the region, both external (state borders) and internal (autonomous governance). Albania has not made progress in meeting the EU standards. But on the question why are other Balkan countries performing better than Albania, although they entered the Europeanization process at the same time, if not later? She explains that Albania is still experiencing an ongoing transformation within its political institutions and is not transition ready. There is a striking dichotomy in the Albanian Europeanization versus those of other Balkan candidates. On the one hand, Albanian political elites suffer from incompetency and poor leadership - data shows that they have performed worse than any other Balkan country. At the same time, Albanian citizens have aspired to join the EU for long, and as data shows, more than any other Balkan country. Albanian

politicians have taken advantage of people's aspirations by playing with the EU membership card. The Europeanization process in Albania has been following a pattern that it is here labelled as 'Europeanization by convenience' – using the process to gain the popular vote. Political institutions in Albania follow the logic of consequences - they follow the rules of conditionality to the point of not risking their negotiations with the EU and not disappointing their electorate. As such, Europeanization turns into a means of convenience – it keeps EU negotiations on, by not failing the basic requirements, but also serves as a 'strategy' to win elections. As data shows, Albanian politicians are not utterly committed to responding adequately to all EU adjustment pressures, thus, making only cosmetic adjustments without any substantive change on the Albanian political governance.

Chap.VI Albanian domestic challenges

Since March 2002, the Commission has reported regularly to the Council and Parliament on the progress made by the countries of the Western Balkan region. This progress reports follows this structure: briefly describes the relations between Albania and the Union; analyses the situation in Albania in terms of political criteria for membership; analyses the situation in Albania on the basis of economic criteria for membership; reviews Albania's capacity to implement European standards, that is to gradually approximate its legislation and policies to the *acquis* in line with Stabilization and association Agreement and the European Partnership priorities.

The report is based on information gathered and analyzed by the Commission. In addition, many sources have been used, including contributions from the government of Albania, the Member States, European Parliament reports and information from various international and non-governmental organizations. Progress is measured on the basis of decision taken, legislation adopted and the measures implemented.

As we want to elaborate some of the major domestic challenges of Albanian's accession process, our annual progress reports analyses start right after Albania signs the Stabilization and

Association agreements (SAA, 12 June 2006) as the country with this completes the first major step towards EU membership. The progress reports from (2007-2016) give us a complete detailed journey of the country's road and domestic challenges on completing the Copenhagen criteria. Ever since Albanians free election in 1992 the process of democratization has had many obstacles, merely coming from domestic political actors. Despite it had 20 years of experience in democratic transformation the current situation does not seem to go in the right direction.

The consolidation of democracy is a key point an essential for the country on the road in joining the EU. Even though there has been important progress on this issue, confirmed also by the European Commission annual progress reports, there are certain obstacles that throughout the years (2006-2016) not much progress was made towards them. As part of EU integration, democratization is referred to as the consolidation of democracy, the stability and the reinforcement of the democratic institutions and the rule of law. The country faces many challenges on its European journey, democratic tradition is missing and it leaves an ideological void. As part of the transitional picture, Albania shares many commonalities with other Central and Eastern European countries where political organization, economic and specific legacies majorly affected the country's development could negatively determine its fate. On its way to fulfill the 12 criteria's in gaining the membership status the EU draws attention on the country's deadlock due to extreme polarization of political life.

'Extreme social polarization is determinable to democracy since group polarization is easily transformed into violent fights to monopolize the state (Dahl 1971) this polarization has a very determine position to the country's democratization process and leads in blocking other key reforms for the consolidation of democracy like: institution building and the rule of law. The political crisis which started in 2010 has been a roller-coaster with Albanians. The conditionality policy does not seem to do much progress for democratization at the level where the country needs. Albania does not have much experience neither with a long and sustainable democracy nor with a real political pluralism. The two main parties that dominate the political life have been in a very aggressive confrontation where elections were always contested and questioned. The country's legacy of political passivity and backwardness comes from being the most 'isolated; among its neighbors. As it has experienced democratization for only 20 years demanding the same level of democracy as other EU members states seems not realistic. EU so far, on the

country's annual reports has been positive regarding the democratization efforts so far.

Corruption: The enlargement process in Western Balkan has involved in a way which has placed European Commission monitoring of corruption firmly within the remit of EU policy. Many scholars agree that the problem of corruption runs deep in Albania.

One important internationally respected monitoring body, Transparency International has published reports on Albania and for our paper these constitutes an important source of evidence of the level of corruption this last years. ³⁶TI's corruption Perception Index for 2015 ranked Albania 88th with a score of 36 out of 145 countries surveyed with a value of 2.5, on scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (low corrupt). If we compared the 2004 TI's corruption Perceptions Index Albania was ranked 108 and in 2007 barely moved coming at 105 out of 179 countries surveyed.

The latest available data from the World Bank suggest that after a period of steady improvement in the control of corruption (peaking at a global percentile rank of 37.8 in 2009), the last 4 years have witnessed a gradual increase in perceived levels of corruption: by 2012 Albanian's percentile rank had fallen back to 26.8 (World Bank 2013). In the TI's Corruption Perceptions Index is was ranked as one of the most corrupt countries, 31 out of 100 it performs considerably worse than the regional average. According to it the services perceived to be most susceptible to bribes were judiciary (81%), health (80%), education (70%), police (58%) and civil services (52%). Only 10 per cent of the respondents believe that corruption has decreased in the last two years and 96 per cent believed that in the public sector remains the same level of corruption. One of the most challenges faced by the country is political corruption, as it underpins other forms of corruption and hampers anti-corruption reforms. A significant attempt to curb the political corruption has been made in the road of improving its legal framework (we going to develop it later on).

³⁶ Transparency International, Corruption Index 2006-2016
<https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>

Table 2.Comperative indicators of Corruption in Albania

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
AL	111 (2.6)	105 (2.9)	85 (3.4)	105 (37.8)	87 (3.3)	95 (3.1)	113 (3.0)	116 (3.1)	110 (3.3)	88 (3.6)	87 (3.9)

Source: *Transparency International*

As we could see from the Tab.2, the last two years Albania made a progressive effort towards improvement on corruption matter but it seems that when this is widely discussed among the population, the numbers do not translate very well. Transparency International's recent reports attributes weakness in law enforcement, to captured political systems in which politicians wield enormous influence on all walk of public life, while being close to wealthy private businessmen or even organized crime networks. 'Corruption' attributes to the arbitrary exercise of power which had serious effects on the proves of democratization. The country past and present situation relates to a weak tradition of the rule of law, low level of respects for the law, a weak state that does not function properly, an undeveloped society that creates the ground where corruption has possibilities to flourish. Expect some historical, social and cultural factors we cannot leave outside the most important factor for this century, and that is Albanians economic: underdevelopment, poverty and the eagerness to get rich quick. As M Bogdani and J. Loughlin mentioned: 'At present in Albania, high unemployment, lack of security and the lack of investment needed to create jobs combined this with the high living cost, low salaries in public jobs, the lack of accountability and transparency have all contributed to the increased levels of corruption in the country. From reports and findings of international organizations, corruption has been identified. as the plague that is preventing Albania's development. European Commission (2003): corruption has affected every facet of life and public service but in key areas such as the judiciary system, customs, police and public administration remain a matter of deeper concern.

As we recalled previously, the consolidation of democracy and the reinforcement of the rule of law in the Western Balkans is an essential precondition for EU integration. What is strongly emphasized in the progress report is the lack of adequate judicial system. Weak judicial system as the Council of Europe quoted; is not just weak and lacking in independence but is itself plagued by corruption. So, this is another reason that make it so difficult to fight corruption in Albania. A weak judiciary is also a result of a weak state, a weak state is a result of a non-consolidated democracy. So, all in connected like a chain of issues for the country. It seems that past legacy deficits will influence the country's future in Europe.

Judicial capacity

As we discussed about corruption as an issue of political character, the implementation of a new draft reform in the judicial system is a necessity. What has emerged again in the surface with the annual reports are the reasons on why this inefficient judiciary system has existed for so long in Albania. A few mentions are: political influence on the judicial system, lack of efficiency in the organization of the courts and loss of the trust in the judges and prosecutors. The system suffers from widespread corruption, professional shortages and structural inefficiencies. Public trust in the courts and law enforcement is extremely low, even by the standards of new democracies. This represents an enormous challenge for the rule of law and the Albanian political class seems to agree on the need for justice sector reform.

The people of the country deserve a judicial system that is both independent of politics and accountable to the public. Corruption permeates the judiciary just as much as it does with other organs of state administration and public life. The range of problems within the system underscores the yawning gap between existing Albanian structures and EU norms in judicial arena. On the Commission report (2007) it was clearly asserted that the corruption on the judiciary has led to continued conflict between the executive and the judiciary. An important issue within the Albanian judicial system has been the non-implementation or enforcement of court judgements. Judicial processes remain amongst the slowest in Europe. By 2005 the Commission was reporting some progress on this front, the overall rate of enforcement of judgements in 2004 rose to 6 050 out of a total of 13 329 judgements. The judicial infrastructure remains very weak (2007 EC progress report).

Transparent and efficient judiciary are pre-conditions to integration and the motor to push the process through. Different governmental bodies through the years were aware of the critical situation in the country but none of them took real actions towards it. However, as Albania currently is a candidate state to European Union, as EU has its own rules and regulations they have preconditions and criteria to accept in their family the candidate states.

Albania as a state has started to restrict its democratic values since the corruption is high, there is not an independent and transparent judiciary, the political representatives have high influence on the judicial system and are seeking their interest rather than protecting citizens' rights and decreasing the corruption level in the country. The interference of the international actors in the country shows that Albanian politician cannot control the challenged situation created in the country just by them. In January 2014, the country together with the Venice Commission addressed the concern for a judicial reform that could enable accountability, professionalism and independence in the judicial system. Also in this year, it was approved the amendment for the penal procedures that was implemented in 2012 to restrict the corrupted actions of MPs, prosecutors, judges and other senior officials. The Venice Commission proclaim that the draft of the reform is important since it contains the amendments that are necessary for Albania to integrate in EU and undertake provisions in judicial system to cleanse the system from the corrupt, incompetent and linked to the crime prosecutors and judges. The new draft has been improved more in 2016; all the proposals and the criticisms that are done by the commission are in more details. Pressure has been growing from the European Union to expeditiously adopt such reforms, amend the constitution and restore public trust in the system. When in November (2014) Albanian Parliament appointed the special committee in preparing reform proposal of the justice sector, they were charged with three tasks: undertake a thorough analysis of the justice system, prepare a strategic document outlining the main objectives of reform and draft a comprehensive package of legislative measures, including any constitutional amendments needed to implement the reforms. the committee is being assisted by a panel of high-level experts, a technical secretariat and several external advisors including international experts. This group of experts present the draft package of constitutional amendments and forward them to the Council of Europe's Venice Commission for its considerations and for any approved constitutional amendments, it will require new legislation.

Draft reform faces many difficulties in its implementation and the most important one remains on the politicians and judicial officials as part of the corrupted class that prevents the reform progression. The commissioner of Council of Europe for the human rights (Nils Muiznieks) in the 2014 report recommendation mentioned: depoliticize the judiciary, make the High Council of Justice independent and the Council's members as well should be elected by a competent majority in the parliament. Some progress has been made but the all process lacks transparency on merit-based procedures. Political affiliation and imperfection of the law are the main factors that cause the corrupt practices of the judicial system. Of course, having a corrupted judicial system affects directly the stability of national democratic institutions.

The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Venice Commission, European Committees from Preventing Torture (CPT) and the European Court of Human rights (ECTHR) together with the Albanian authorities are in action to facilitate the judicial system and to meet more closely the European standards. To be part of the EU today, the main requirement is the establishment of the new draft reform in the judicial system that was adopted on June 2016 and is still finding its way to be implemented. This reform will become a direct influential power for the authorities of Albania and raise the living standards of the citizens.

On the European Commission progress report (2015), there were addressed five key priorities with emphasis on the justice reform. The report said that Albania did not yet met any of the five key priorities of the EU. The steps towards judicial reform so far are insufficient. The country has made steady progress in the terms of political criteria, by implementing and consolidating reforms in the field of law enforcement. Implementing reforms in the priority areas, this will be the key factor in finalizing the reform in the judicial system. It seems again that the country is doing great on 'paper wise' but is extremely lacking in practical implementation.

On 21 July (2017), after 18 months of negotiations, accusations and counter-accusations between the majority and the opposition, the Albanian Parliament passed the law to reform the judicial system with 140 votes in favor and none against. However, in a country where the adoption of legislation does not always correspond to its implementation, the political consensus around a decision does not always correspond to a real desire to undermine the *status quo*. So, what are the main changes that this reform will bring: the establishment of the Supreme Judicial Council

and the Supreme Prosecution Council; two structures to ensure their efficiency and independence. A court and a special prosecutor for the fight against corruption and organized crime. There has been much discussion on the so-called 'vetting' process, the verification of the credentials of those who apply for the posts envisaged by the new judicial system. All judges, prosecutors and senior officials will be subjected to a detailed examination of credentials; resume, professionalism, patrimony and possible links with crime. This will be monitor by two other new institutions; the Independent Commission of Qualifications and the board of Appeals. Both will be supported by the Monitoring International Operations, a EU-managed commission with experts in the justice system of member countries with at least 15 years of experience. This is a great progress compared to country's road in EU integration and towards the approximation of domestic legislation to EU laws. We want to keep a skeptical view in this development as 'implementation' progress can risk its backwardness. Political elite is closely attached to every level of state governance and let's not forget that corruption is still in its highest level in Albania. The draft law is undoubtedly difficult to interpret for the public, both for the technical nature of the provisions and the lack of transparency that accompanied the process. So, we will have to bet on a possible progressive turnout of this important change.

Chap. VII Albanian's population attitude towards EU membership

Attitudes toward domestic politics and feelings of social identity have a consistently strong effect. The impact of human capital is contingent on exposure to the distributive consequences of European Integration. As we already developed Albanians road map to EU integration (benefits and challenges) now we have remained to deal with a very important question of your paper: what drives Albanian citizens to support or oppose European Integration?

What are attitudes?!: in accordance with social and cognitive psychology, are latent positions towards social objects. Rokeach (1968) describes attitudes as 'a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner'. Attitudes have a great potential in influencing people's behaviour, built on cognitions, values, social representations, experiences and are expressed through opinions and behaviour.

Attitudes towards the European Union in our case are a consequence of reasons and can be understood also as choices.

There are three leading theories of EU support that make possible understanding citizens' attitudes in the candidate countries. Even though the theories have been developed and tested on West European respondents they remain a strong fundamental theoretical base. We took a micro-level approach and used rational survey data's (Eurobarometer, Gallup Balkan Monitor, national surveys) and relied upon utilitarian and social identity factors.

The utilitarian theory proposes that Europeans consider the potential economic costs and benefits of European Integration when forming their opinion. A specific application of this theory could be human capital, which states that individuals who stand to benefit from integration are more likely to support EU membership. As a state moves through the accession process and attains membership, its citizens are exposed to EU policies and their economic effects and can begin to develop judgments of these effects for their own finances. Thus, individuals develop utilitarian judgments as their state advances through the accession process.

³⁷Other theories of mass support for integration emphasize the noneconomic sources of EU attitudes. It's really important to consider the relationship between domestic political attitudes and support for the EU. Anderson (1998) argues that citizens 'employ proxies rooted in domestic political considerations when responding to questions about the integration process'. Lacking independent knowledge about the EU, individuals simply translate their attitudes about the domestic political system to the European level. There is a positive relationship between satisfaction with the domestic regime and support for EU membership. Another interesting perspective in this issue comes from another author Sanchez-Cuenca (2000): 'citizens may view supranational (European) authority as providing benefits (peace after centuries of war, economic well-being, greater international influence, political stability, broader citizenship) that the national governments cannot. The downside to these benefits is that granting political authority to the EU necessitates a concurrent loss of national sovereignty. This trade-off should appeal to individuals who believe that their domestic political system functions poorly, in which case the

³⁷ Hooghe, L. & Marks, G., 'Calculations, Community and Cues, Public opinion on European Integration', 2005, Vol. 6, European Union Politics, pg. 6-7

McLaren, L., 'Identity, interests and attitudes to European Integration', 2006, Palgrave MacMillan, pg. 8-12

benefits of EU governance outweigh the loss of national authority. Thus, support for the EU should be highest among individuals in countries with poor political economic performance that have little to lose from transferring sovereignty to Europe.

Social identity; strong identification with an in-group or hostility toward members outside groups will reduce one's support for policies that increase levels of political and economic integration with other societies. Two related arguments link group identity with attitudes toward the EU. The common basis for both arguments is the fact that EU membership entails substantial economic and social integration with other members states. First, individuals with strong in-group attachments may oppose EU membership for fear that opening their society will produce negative social consequences. The key concern remains whether the citizen holds a sense of European identity. Individuals who accept a European identity are willing to grant legitimacy to the political authority of the EU. However, those who identify exclusively with their nation, will feel that the EU has no place to oversee the rights of its citizens since the very idea of European citizenship is contrary to their conception of the nation state to which they belong (Carey 2002).

Domestic political attitudes and perceptions of cultural threat are strong predictors of attitudes toward EU membership. O.Elgun and E.R. Tillman (2007) consider the impact of three potential sources of support: personal economic benefit (human capital), domestic political attitudes and social identity, they argue that 'human capital variables do not structure the formation of EU attitudes when the citizen has little experience with the economic consequences of integration , but they gain predictive power as the respondent's country nears accession. The human capital variables have a moderate effect in 2004 accession states but a weaker effect on citizen attitudes in the candidate countries that have taken fewer concrete steps toward accession. ³⁸As citizens learn about the distributive consequences of integration through the accession process, they form and increasingly rely on utilitarian judgments of the EU. Before this process occurs, citizens rely on noneconomic judgments of the domestic political process and on the feelings of social identity. The economic effects of domestic policies designed to meet the accession criteria may be crucial in shaping early support for membership. As the distributive consequences of these policies become clearer, individual's attitudes toward EU membership will begin to reflect these

³⁸ Elgun.O&Tillman.E, 'Exposure to EU Policies and support for membership in the candidate countries', 2007, Vol.60. Nr.3, Political Research Quarterly, pg. 5-8

utilitarian considerations'. Their listed findings:

- Both perceived cultural threat and domestic attitudes have strong effects on support for EU membership in all the countries (their study was concentrated on CEE countries).
- Citizens who evaluate domestic political institutions favorably and who do not perceive a threat to their culture or nationality from integration are more likely to support EU membership.
- The effect of economic factor is conditional upon exposure to the distributive consequences of EU membership.

The development and evolution of attitudes toward European integration is a dynamic process and the effect of utilitarian benefits varies by the respondent's experience with the economic consequences of EU membership. As Anderson (1998) argues; subjective economic evaluations can be expected to influence public opinion on European integration alongside objective factors. European integration is perceived by most citizens to shape their economic welfare in a general sense. Those who feel confident about economic future, personally and for their country are likely to regard European Integration in apposite light, whereas those who are fearful will lean towards Euro-skepticism. The economic approach to public opinion is likely to be most valid when economic consequences are perceived with some accuracy and when they are large enough to matter.

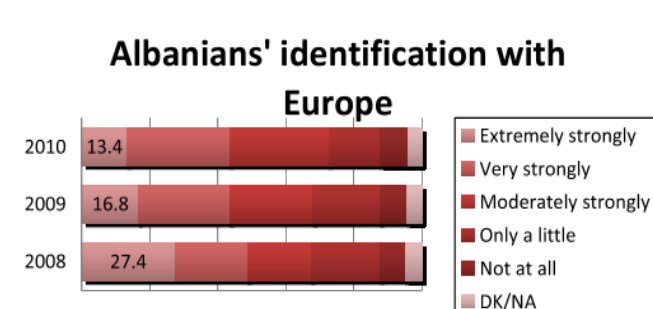
“The literature on public support for European integration identifies an array of determinants of individual attitudes towards the integration process such as; expectations about economic costs and benefits, cultural characteristic, personal values and beliefs, party allegiance and the popularity of incumbent governments. For the purpose of this study three factors are relevant, utilitarian factors and social identity (personal values and beliefs)”

First, we will briefly present a descriptive picture of the development of generalized support for the EU in Albania. To measure support for European Integration we will combine two complementary elements of support; the principle of membership and the desired speed of integration. Comparison over time using Eurobarometer survey data, Gallup Balkan Monitor and some national survey data's (EU policy Hub).

According to a series of opinion surveys conducted by Gallup, Eurobarometer, and Gallup

Balkan Monitor, over the last five years in all the countries of the region, EU-related issues engage the public. People of all ages and from all walks of life have an opinion that they freely express on the desirability of a future within the EU, on the most likely date for their country's accession and the degree to which being European forms part of their personal identity. Public opinion with regard to the EU is not only an important yardstick for measuring the progress achieved by a society, but also an indicator of the kind of future the country is facing: it is a sensitive barometer of societal successes and failures. The level of public engagement with the EU accession project allows us to gauge the availability of emotional resources that can act as a driving force for the transition processes.

In the assessment of the advantages or disadvantages of EU membership, it is useful to look at the degree to which Albanian citizens identify with Europe.

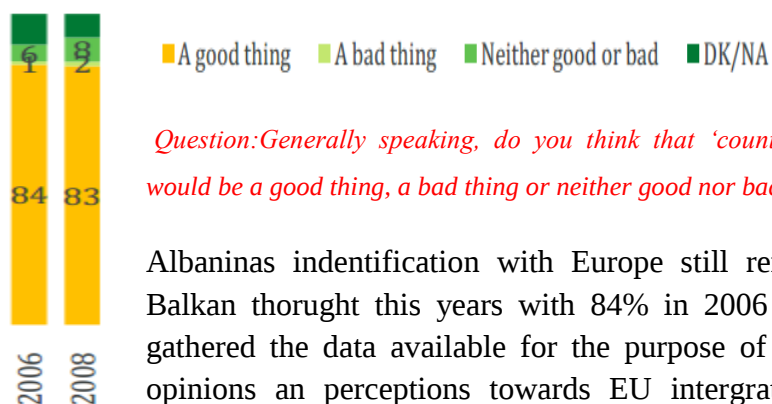


³⁹For Albania identifying with Europe is an important element of how the society defines itself. Its citizens already define themselves as European, with a majority identifying 'extremely strongly' or 'very strongly' with Europe. Even if the country showed high

levels of support for EU since 2006, results were noticeably different during this years. The share of respondents who think that EU accession would be a good think dropped from 88% to 81% in 2010 and it dropped again after the 2014 (when the country gained the candidate status). EU Policy Hub (2016) excreted this statistic from citizens perceptions on European integration 2015-2016 : 77% of Albanians are on the opinion that the EU integration of Albania is very important, 18% think it is important but not a priority and only 4% express that it is not important at all. On the country's readiness to join the EU; 53% of Albanians think the country is ready to join the EU, 43% think it is not and 4% do not know. If a referendum for the EU membership of Albania would take place tomorrow 91% of Albanians would vote for membership, 5% would vote against it, 3% would not cast a ballot at all and 1% does not know. On trust towards EU; 96% of Albanians do trust the EU and 49% do trust the Albanian government. On their personal meaning

³⁹ Gallup Balkan Monitor 2006-2016
Balkan Barometer 2014, 2015, 2016
Eurobarometer 81-71

to the EU membership; to 72% of Albanians the EU means freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU, to 60% it means democracy, to 60% it means economic prosperity and to 59% it means peace. The main problems Albanian people are facing at the moment are unemployment (45%), crime (31%), the economic situation in the country (30%). And on the last citizen perception if EU membership will be a good thing for the country; 87% of Albanians think that the EU membership of Albania would be a good thing and 92% think that Albania would benefit from being a member of the EU. An interesting finding is on the question; How much do Albanians know EU institutions and how they function? The national survey conducted from EU policy Hub (2015) revealed that 57% have given the right answers to some basic knowledge questions on EU institutions, 74% of them had the TV (media) as the prime source of information (54% internet).



Question: Generally speaking, do you think that 'country's' membership of the European Union would be a good thing, a bad thing or neither good nor bad? Source: Tab2: Gallup monitor 2009

Albanians' identification with Europe still remains the highest in the Western Balkan thought this years with 84% in 2006 and 83% in 2009. We have only gathered the data available for the purpose of our paper, specifically on citizens' opinions and perceptions towards EU integration. The European Fund for the Balkans formed a partnership with Gallup Europe for launching the 'Gallup Balkan Monitor', which aims to provide all-encompassing data on people's perception in the Western Balkan region, creating thereby a one-stop shop that delivers strategic insights based on evidence-based social research in the region. It asks more than 100 general and country-specific questions and explores a series of key issues including: social and economic conditions, employment prospects, business conditions, attitudes and perceptions about the EU and international community, good governance, corruption, crime & safety, political activity in the region, ethnic & cultural identities and perceptions of other ethnic groups, religion, well-being and life satisfaction, migratory patterns and the future: outlook and aspiration. The research is conducted annually, thereby providing an up-to-date assessment on the socioeconomic, sociopolitical and multicultural dimensions on the Balkan region. But on the other hand it is not annulay that the research theme is concentrated on attitudes and perceptions towards EU. We have gathered the data available from (2006-2009) and not much noticeable changes have occurred during the last years.

STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION

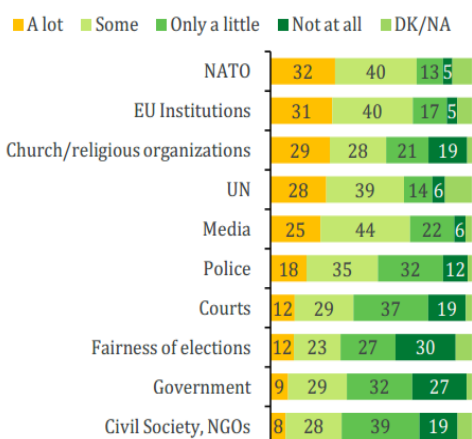
Very well informed Well informed Not well informed Not at all informed DK/NA



ALBANIA

Question: Please rate how much are you informed about the European Union :Tab.3 Source; Gallup Balkna Monitor 2009

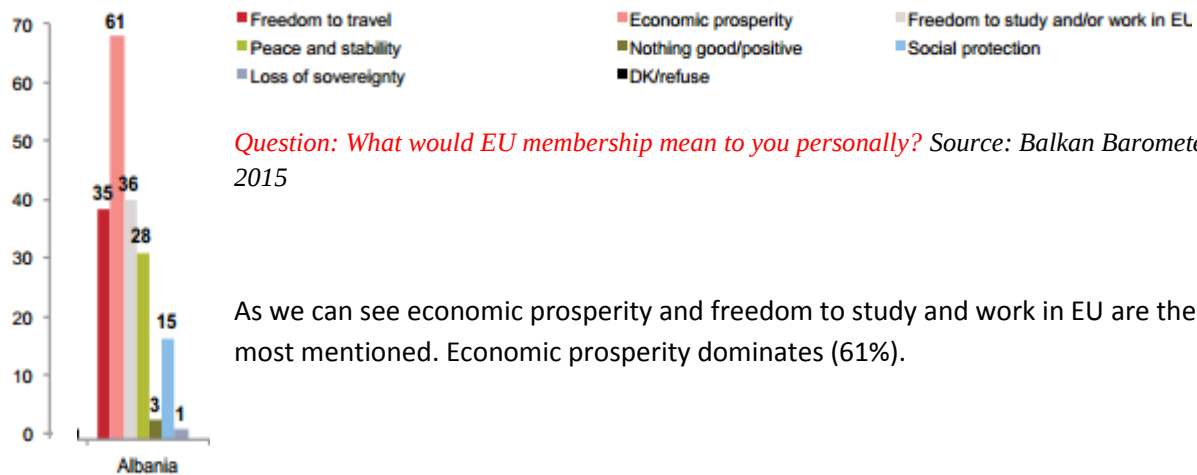
The need for more effective communication about the EU remains high in the Western Balkans. In Albania a majority of people was convinced that the media provides sufficient information about the EU and the road that leads to eventual accession. But still the majority still didn't feel well informed about the European Union, especially the integration process.



Question: for each of the following institutions, please indicate how much trust you put in them?! % base: respondents in Albania. Source: Gallup Balkna Monitor 2009

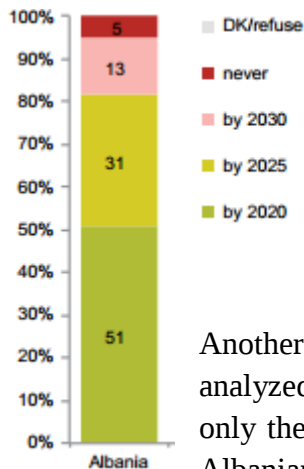
The EU's decreasing commitment to Western Balkan enlargement had no visible repercussions in Albania. In terms of support for EU accession and the feeling of being welcomed by the European Commission, the country has the second highest ratings of the region, remaining stable for the upcoming two years.

This positive attitude was observed across all parts of the population, irrespective of age group, education level or place of residence. In all of them, the conviction that EU accession would be a good thing was above 80%. Albania's unbowed affection for the EU and the International Community in general is visible in these figures for the most trusted institutions; the EU leads the list together with NATO, with 71% and 72%, of respondents in Albania saying that they put a lot or some trust in them.



Question: What would EU membership mean to you personally? Source: Balkan Barometer 2015

As we can see economic prosperity and freedom to study and work in EU are the most mentioned. Economic prosperity dominates (61%).



Question: In general, when do you expect the accession to the EU to happen? Source: Balkan Barometer 2015

Albanians are very optimistic, where half of them expects the country to become an EU member by 2020 and 31% by 2025. Only 5% think that they will never become an EU member.

Another very valuable resource data for analysis is also Eurobarometer. We analyzed the Eurobarometer survey data from 2009-2016, selecting of course only themes concerning this paper, mostly on EU attitudes and perceptions of Albanian citizens. Expectation of Albanian people towards the effects of EU accession will have on the country, have been measured on a scale 0 to 10, where 0 means people expect an extremely negative effect and 10 means people expect an extremely positive effect. The sectors expected to be effected most positively are the education system (76) economy (73) and the environment protection (68). Expectations of Albanian people are lower on the financial system (68), the justice system (68) and the fight against corruption (69).

The results suggest a number of interesting implications and outcomes, but predictable. Albanians are strongly enthusiastic towards EU membership (maybe too much) considering the level of their knowledge towards its functions and institutions.

There are certain divergences between in comparing Western Balkan finding (in this case Albania) and those of the West European studies, the latter can be explained by the role of exposure to EU policies and thus could judge whether integration had benefited them financially. What we exposed here is the fact that Albanians citizens rely on cues from domestic politics and utilitarian factors to form their attitudes about EU membership. Even though we cannot exclude the fact that increased exposure to EU policies and their consequences, through domestic efforts to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria and implement the *acquis communautaire* would allow citizens to form judgments as the accession date draws closer. Easton (1965, 1975) differentiated between specific and diffuse support where the latter has a more profound and enduring impact. Specific support is based on the perceived rewards of short term outputs. Diffuse or generalized support mainly refers to the political community and regime, and it's independent of more short-term outputs. In his conceptualization of various political objects, support for the underlying political community is a fundamental precondition for regime persistence. It is clear that Albanians considering their political situation and domestic problems on: legitimacy, democracy and trust in their elected government their direction is towards a 'specific' support towards a political community (European Union) , with the desire to deal with short term outputs, immediate rewards : economic and freedom to travel and leave abroad. Albanian citizens support the EU on the basis of an 'unconditional support' and general benefits for the country before accession (while personal benefits can become determinant after accession). We know now that domestic attitudes have strong effects on support for EU membership. It's been theorized that citizens who evaluate domestic political institutions favorably are more likely to support EU membership. In Albanians case seems the contrary, citizens put more trust in EU as an external actor that is going to regulate and put in order the mess of the domestic level of their institutions and because of this they cheerfully support the EU membership. On the other hand, as we know from the utilitarian theory, the effect of its benefits varies by the respondent's experience with economic consequences of EU membership. In Albanian citizens case, non-economic judgments of the domestic political process are put ahead of the utilitarian judgements proving the theory. It's important to clarify that personal economic benefits (human capital) variables do not

structure the formation of EU attitudes, when citizens have little experience with the economic consequences of integration. What we find here is that Albania euphoria towards membership is based more on the short-term benefits judgments (since they haven't experience yet strongly enough the economic burden of meeting the membership criteria). On the question of what membership meant to them personally the majority agreed on economic prosperity and the second choice was freedom to travel. From this answer, we can argue freely that their judgments are superficial in this stage and based mostly on domestic political process. Albanians, are more likely to make evaluations based on underlying economic or political values than outright material payoffs. Individual attitudes toward domestic economic and political reforms remain predictors of citizens attitudes about the EU.

Economic effects of domestic policies designed to meet the accession criteria are crucial in showing early support for membership. As the distributive consequences of these policies become clearer, individual attitudes toward EU membership will begin to reflect utilitarian considerations. As a candidate country (Albania) non-economic factors are strong determinants of support for EU membership. As a post-communist country; political change and internal political landscape, political values and cognitive capabilities affect citizens ability to form opinions about distant institutions such as EU. 53% of Albanian citizens believed that they were ready to become a member (not clear what they understood my 'member') and 69% think that the EU should accept the country as a member even if Albania is not ready yet (EU policy Hub 2016). From different EU support theories, the more the respondent's feel to be citizens of EU, the more they agree with EU integration. What is questionable is the Albanians good understanding of the EU as a mechanism of economic and political international trade. EU membership in Albania is not only viewed in terms of an increase in the standard of living but also equaled to strengthening the institutional base for democracy and capitalism. Citizens are convinced (arguable because of the 'lack of information') that membership involves more benefits than costs. Support remains higher in countries with lower opportunity costs of transferring sovereignty to the EU, even though taking in account the actual state conditions and developments in Albanian, there is no surprise that EU membership is see as a light in the end of the tunnel.

As we draw attention in the Central and Eastern European members states, we saw the pattern of a downward trend in support for the EU. In 2003, the year before accession for eight of them, a majority if 57% of the population in the ten candidate countries supported EU membership. This number dropped to an average of 43% in 2011. Citizens in the new CEE members countries were generally less enthusiastic in 2011 than they were in 2003. Formal accession and length membership do not necessarily lead to an increase in support. Support for EU integration changes before and after accession as CEE opinion polls have showed. In Albania citizens attitude towards the EU is influenced by the national political and economic conditions and the speed progress towards the Copenhagen criteria. If the country is in a bad shape the effects of attitudes are lower that if the country is doing well. The conditions of economy and political, judicial reforms aren't progressing so European Union is seen as the only solution. As many researchers on population attitudes towards EU have focused in the individual level, we want to bring the attention toward the macro political and economic conditions as influencers in forming citizens attitudes (mostly on pre-accession phase).

The future of the Western Balkan is unknown as it is the Albanians future under European Union influence. So, for this, Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) "Albania in the next ten years: Politics, Economy, Society-Perceptions" (2012), they conducted a survey focusing on expectations. The aim of the project was to gauge the perceptions of the Albanian public on the period in Albanian history commonly referred to as 'transition' as well as to understand Albanians expectations about the future. A project unique in its kind on the national level. The period of ten years choice was related to the fact that those 10 years (2012-2022) were crucial to the integration of the country in the EU. Some of their findings that complete this chapter of the paper are:

-⁴⁰Key result was that the majority of Albanians, 56% of the respondents did not think that the country was moving in the right direction. Economic issues and perspectives on the political situation on the ground seemed to be the combined reasons behind the overall negative evaluation of the trend of developments in Albania. The percentage of those who believe the country is not going in the right direction are much higher for the 18-25 years old range.

⁴⁰ "Albania in the next 10 years: Politics, Economy, Society-Perceptions", 2012, AIIS (Albanian Institute for International Studies).

-The study showed once again that the role of the international community is high and was expected to be higher in the future (reasonably questionable).

-On the question: What do Albanians expect for their country in the next ten years? (2012-2022), given the confusing nature of the country development' in that time, the responses given showed a level of confusion (combination between pessimism and optimism; satisfaction and dissatisfaction).

-When talking about democracy, 42% of respondents believe that it will be consolidated, while a significant group (one third of the sample) believes that it will reflect the status quo.

-21% believed that corruption was the biggest challenge of Albania and 21% thought that it will be the biggest challenge in the next 10 years (still is in 2016).

-A familiar result was the fact that Albanians do not trust their own local institutions. International community was judged by 76% of the respondents to be just as important as the highest institutions of the state to the development of the country. 30% identified the international community as the greatest contributor to the democracy consolidation.

Even though we couldn't possibly have made a prediction towards future Albanian citizens attitudes and perceptions towards EU integration the study is a fresh air in stating the fact that 'nothing is changed' since 2012. This perception shows us clearly that domestic responsibilities aren't been followed and that the country isn't moving further (expect the much-needed internal reformation of the EU) another determinate factors is that Albanian haven't and isn't doing its homework. This emphasize that Albanian population attitudes towards membership are a good indicator for possible future directions towards EU.

CONCLUSIONS

EU enlargement despite its challenges and the rising of 'Euroscepticism' remains the key transformational force inspiring change and is the heart of the EU's soft power in extending peace, stability and prosperity on the Western Balkan region. The Western Balkan region is dealing with 'frozen enlargement' due to: complexities of the region, non-functional conditionality tool, EU is preoccupied with its internal affairs, lack of the EU vision and strategy for the region, enlargement 'fatigue' and accession 'fatigue'. EU's attitude towards enlargement has changed since 2004, by making its consequences for the future hardly predictable. These changes are reflected on Western Balkan region enlargement strategy. EU role in the region is not merely based in its peace model but it does work actively in; democracy defense, rule of law and anti-corruption. Its new approach to the enlargement process in the Western Balkan region is a combination of a broader regional picture with the view from the Balkan states themselves. This approach is also the weak point due to the low regional cooperation. EU had to remodel its approach to integration in the region comparing to the past enlargement with the CEE countries example. On the past, it had to deal with institutional and capacity building but in the case of the Western Balkan region EU put all its efforts on state building through conditionality tool that resulted ineffective due to the lack of commitment from the political elite. What is perceived and believed is that EU has no clear enlargement agenda as it relies on the direct involvement of some of its members states in the region to facilitate the accession process. It's uncertain for the outcome of this process and needs a coherent regional expansion policy. As the region is experiencing a 'frozen enlargement' except the European Commission and EU uncertainties a problem remains the non-interested ruling elites in the candidate states on fulfilling the changes required from them. Predictable due to the past legacy of the region. What is a concern is that fact that the WB enlargement strategy is more a prerequisite for future problems, is superficial and does not address the most relevant question.

As we build and analyze Albanians (candidate country) chronological road to EU membership we also reveal the unique patterns of the country and how the EU integration affected its transition to democracy. The country past legacy has some interesting characteristics. Firstly, it does not share the same post-communist legacy of the other candidate countries. As an advantage, it poses an old nation-state and clear boundaries. The country went through a rough transition from its dictatorship regime. Its modern statehood dates only from 1912, the history of the country does not offer a strong foundation on which to build democracy. It was the last country in the Balkans

after five centuries to push away Ottoman rule and the last one to grow out from Stalinism. As one of the most repressive communist regimes in the world its pathological isolation didn't allow for the society to be fertile and breed grounds for political democracy and create a healthy civil society. In purpose of our study and comparative analyses we differentiate Albania from other CEE countries in its road to EU integration. The country communism was home-grown, not installed in power by any outside force, also it was part of the Byzantine Empire and for 500 years part of the Ottoman Empire and from this its inherited its underdeveloped state-society relationship, weak institutional capacity structures and a fragmented civil society. As the most repressive regime in the world it does not have a strong tradition of capitalism and democracy. Another factor that differentiate the country from the post-communist CEE countries is that it lacked and still does lack on a democratic elite and dissident intellectuals groups as indicators leaders of the democratic movement. Transition to democracy started only after 1991 and was determined by political and social components. It was a 'foolish' attempt from Albania on building a democratic system from the scratch as we could see it past legacy. But the effect of it is that during those years the country achieved to sustain democracy only temporary. Its full openness to the Western without being ready had it consequences. The country's not clear breakness from the past, its traces of the communist regime, non-competent elite group to direct the country, media being under the political influence and its non-consolidated society made for Albanian to not reach the same development phase as its post-communist neighbors. The collapse of communism came very rapidly and it was a delayed entering without any political or economic preparation. Albania has still a lot of work to do on democracy consolidation. procedural democracy is there but substantive one is non-existent (obedience to the rule of law, political responsibility). Even though all this problematic past legacy the role on the international community (EU, not only) moved the country reasonably ahead and now Albania found some adaptive backgrounds. For Albania EU accession is more an 'obsession' than about social learning or lesson drawing. In the adaption of the national and subnational systems to the EU and EU norms to the domestic level, the country does not have the power nor position to dictate any rules to the EU. In bargaing theory the country needs more the EU and not *visa versa*. Its progress reports show the same pattern and problems through the years without any substance able changes, the conditionality is not making any positive progress for democratization at the level where the country needs (corruption, weak judicial system, the main two problems).Even

though the EU's conditionality and leverage in the country has weakened there is still a massive support for accession

Interesting implications and findings come from analyzing Albanian population attitudes towards membership. Albania despite all maintains the title of the most euphoric pro-European country in the region. Identifying with Europe is an important element of how the society defines itself. Albanian citizen already defines themselves as European. As we discover the factors behind this drive towards EU integration we also found that their knowledge about the process and EU institutions isn't in the right level of forming critics. Albanian citizens rely on cues from domestic politics and utilitarian factors, in forming their attitudes towards EU membership. What we find here is that Albania euphory towards membership is based more on the short-term benefits judgments (since they haven't experience yet strongly enough the economic burden of meeting the membership criteria). On the question of what membership meant to them personally the majority agreed on economic prosperity and the second choice was freedom to travel. From this answer, we can argue freely that their judgments are superficial in this stage and based mostly on domestic political process. We can argue strongly that there it can be different outputs before accession. Non-economic judgments on forming attitudes toward membership are put ahead of the utilitarian ones, since Albanian citizens have little experience with economic consequences on integration. EU is seen as a regulator that will put in order their domestic level mess, so the support towards it is massive. The country's domestic developments aren't going anywhere, Albanian isn't doing its homework so people rely on EU as an outside force to come and solve their problems. External and domestic factors that determine the mechanisms of norm assertion in the domestic area. Somehow, Albania democratization could have a different trajectory without the presence of the EU pushing for and directing reforms, not a positive one.

What makes people support the European Union project has been a topic of constant research in the social sciences during the last decades. It is rather unclear how the new waves of enlargement and critical evolutions of the last decade impact the citizens and their adherence to the European construct. Such changes definitely impact the structure of public opinion towards the European project. Seems that for Albanian not much effects were shown, even though we did discover the factors behind the country's citizens positive attitude towards EU membership due to the unclearness of the current enlargement situation and the fact that things might change after

accession, further research need to be made.

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