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Why “yes” and why “not” can Albania be Europeanized. Actors and factors.

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Europeanization is indispensable for the state and democracy's survival in Albania. As a process that promotes and fosters democracy, Europeanization requires conformity with conditions for European Union (EU) membership. For the third time (2010, 2011, 2013), Albanians' dream to become part of the European family, not only geographically, failed to do so. In December 2013, the Dutch parliament's decision with a majority of vote of the VVD party (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) obliged the Dutch government to prevent the EC to vote EU candidate status for Albania. While exploring the recent past, the violent domestic political developments of January 2011, and the disability of the political elite to manage the local election process in May 2011, put a question mark on the promptness of Albania, a NATO member, to join EU on 2011. On the other hand, in 2013 the assessment of the Commission was that Albania's delivery to the EU merits candidate status. These dichotomies lead to a question: Why 'yes' and why 'not' can Albania be Europeanized? This paper seeks the answer by identifying and analyzing the actors and factors that errand the process of Europeanization in the country.

Hence, while the net advantages of EU membership have an important systemic impact on the international and domestic performance of Albania, Europeanization associates with major problems in the country. Also this paper points out that international European stakeholders have to consider the state and social culture of the Albanian society and mediate to accomplish the European process in the country, since sometimes one size does not fit to all. A Europeanized Albania represents a strategic necessity for the EU not only because of geographic situation, but also because of the security and economic impact in the future of the Western Balkans (WB), and the latter impact in the Union geo-area.

Keywords: EU, Albania, Europeanization, Euroscepticism, Enlargement

1. On the State of Play¹

*“Tashti mbas mendimit to filozofëve okcidental ma të përmendun, ndërmjetpopullit e
Qeverisekanjikontratëtënënkuptueme e bazuemembiparimin dout dues- po t'ap qi t'apisë”*

Father Gjergj Fishta²

EU and NATO mean the West for Albania. Membership in these organizations represents a main national priority (Pridham 2005) Albanians look to the West because of *nationalism, political survival of the state, national security interests and religious tolerance*. Nevertheless, they seem far away from joining the EU club because of domestic and international issues related to *Albania's statehood, national culture, dilemma of religious diversity, Euroscepticism etc....* Albania is a NATO member from 1 April 2009. Although there is no official link between the two enlargements (NATO and EU), most of EU members are NATO members, too. Thus, the Alliance supported Albanian EU membership. On 28 April 2009, Albania presented its request for EU membership putting into effect the Stabilization Association Agreement (SAA) previously signed on 12 June 2006. Prospects seemed right. The EC progress report 2008-2009 stated that, *“Albania has made progress in aligning its legislation, policies and capacity with European standards. It now needs to enhance its efforts in the implementation of these laws and policies.”* (European Commission 2008). This move of the Albanian government was premature, for EU needed concrete results.

In the years to come, Albania's Europeanization recognized weighty changes that led to continuous refusal of the status. *In 2011*, the state underwent a metamorphosis as institutional and social entity. On 21 January, the political struggle between the two parties Socialist Party (SP) and Democratic Party (DP) going on from the parliamentary boycott of 2009, transformed the pacific protest of the SP, to a violent one: government forces shooting and killing protesters, blackmailed journalists, a bugged political elite that seemed to exploit extra-institutional means to gain or retain power. As a result, the government and parliament juxtaposed with the president and the general prosecutor's office.

In addition, the noncompliance of the local elections of 8 May with EU standards emphasized the absence of political dialogue and stalemate in the country. Both these events contributed to the refusal of Commission granting Albania the EU candidate status, as EC Ambassador Sequi stated in an interview for Top Channel (Sequi, Why EU rejected Albania 2011).

The presidential elections of 2012, was another test from EU that Albania did not pass. Although conducted in line with the Constitution, the election of the president Nishani was not consensual. The ruling majority only voted Mr. Nishani. This absence of political dialogue between the majority and the opposition, contributed to slow reform process in core areas requiring political consensus. (Stern and Wohlfeld 2012)

In 2013, the EC Progress Report considering achievements in key reforms recommended the EU to grant candidate status to Albania. By saying that “*Albania has delivered, and so should the EU*”, Commissioner Fuele (European Commission 2013) meant that “*enlargement policy is only credible when both sides live up to their side of the bargain.*” Few days after, the Brussels December Summit did not deliver what Albanians expected. The Dutch parliament adopted a resolution with a majority of vote of the VVD party (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy) obliging like this the Dutch government to prevent the EC to vote EU candidate status for Albania (Euractiv 2013). Why Europe cannot deliver to Albania? Will there be any future membership for Albania? If yes, how salient will be the impact of Albania’s EU membership for the region of Western Balkans, whose countries link under the Regional Security Complex (Morgan 1997,26).

2. Europeanization- an enzymatic reaction

Globalization shaped the conditions for Europeanization to be a theoretical and political approach explaining: *a) the process of political penetration of the EU system of rules and norms on domestic level; b) the process of identity-formation fitting to EU club and c) the financial cost of the deep impact EU exercises.* (M.Radaelli 2000). Meaning that Europeanization implies a political, institutional and identity metamorphosis of the nation and of the state itself (Hix and Goetz 2000).

In 1990, Europeanization expanded as a *modus vivendi* in the “other Europe” exporting like this the Western influence to the state- building process and to the transformation of societies. In the case of Albania, which experienced “invasions” from East, this *modus Vivendi* proved to be the only way to state survival.

Europeanization concretizes through “*construction, diffusion, and institutionalization*” (M.Radaelli 2000) as components of transformation and integration process. **Construction** regards the state building process and the state identity formation. The norms and rules **diffused** by EU during construction, consolidate through the institutionalization of formal and informal domestic structures. In short, the EU expands to the deepest roots of the state and its society.

Obviously, integration to the European structures cannot be one sided. The local (here *country*) response dwells between state and non-state actors such as state institutions, civil society, business, academia etc. This response identifies specific targets and mechanisms of the process, which rely on the dimensions of: *scope and depth* (Keohane 1989). *Scope* concerns the domains linked to the institutions, *depth* relies to the commonality³, specificity⁴ and autonomy⁵ reflected concretely in the Copenhagen Criteria (DG Enlargement, EC 2012). These Criteria (political, economic criteria and the acceptance of the Community *acquis*) are a test for accession exercised from the EU to the aspiring countries. In order to meet them, certain qualitative and quantitative conditions prevail, such as *stability of state institutions*, “*existence of a functioning market economy*”, “*the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and forces within the Union*” (Mayhew 1998), and lastly a sustainable relationship between domestic EU structures based on EU standards. However, without the proper mechanisms and mediators this relationship cannot be long running.

EU mechanisms aim to a domestic change (here the Europeanization of the aspiring country). The SAA reflects mechanisms as *a country-specific approach; dialogue and partnership; EU coherence and coordination; mainstreaming; international cooperation and visibility.* (European Council 2009). The literature suggests other types of mechanisms: *offering legislative and institutional templates (PHARE), technical and financial assistance (IPA), monitoring the progress achieved concerning the Copenhagen Criteria, EU consultancy to domestic institutions* (Grabbe 2003). The mediators that catalyze Europeanization consist of state and non-state actors (Checkel 1999) that relate with factors of: Costs of adaptation and the external push (Borzal 2011).

In short, Europeanization resembles to an enzymatic reaction where the reactants (EU policies and domestic structures) covert into products (Europeanized country) by assistance of the enzyme catalyst (mediators).

3. The positive sum game of enlargement benefits

Enlargement compares to a business affair affected by benefits that interested parties get from it. In this case: EU and Albania. Whereas EU is interested to regional dominance, Albania is interested to state survival.

a) Benefits of enlargement for the EU. Mayhew lists as benefits the following (Mayhew 1998):

Future survival of the union. History proved that hegemonic expansion of a union of states is driven from a specific ideology that implies policies and actions undertaken by the union. Leffler considers ideology linked to power and threat opportunity (Leffler 1999). This linkage generates that of: domestic political culture linked to strategy, diplomacy, war and peace. Lastly, this one generates another: military capabilities linked to diplomatic initiatives. This sequence explain the fluidity and the development of the political, security and economic conditions for the survival of a union of states.

Historical roots of EU lie at the end of the Second World War. Churchill's declaration (Churchill 1946) on the "United States of Europe" was succeeded with the foundation of the Council of Europe (1949). Cooperative and enlargement policies led to the creation of the Union from 6 (1952) to 28 members (2013). Built on the strands of interdependence and institutional liberalism, the Union promotes member- states' interests and serves as a model of governance for the aspiring countries. The Noble Peace Prize award to EU on 2012 (Noble Peace Prize 2012), highlighted the positive aspects of the Union transformative power. It conveyed the message that enlargement and integration contribute to the future survival of the Union.

Political and security benefits. Enlargement binds the aspiring countries into western European political and economic structures. Cross-Border Co-operation (CBC)⁶ and Regional Development (RD)⁷, aim to enhance sustainability and security in the continent by supporting the regional and sub-regional cooperation amongst states. Examples of such co-operation include: Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Southeast Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP), Central Europe Initiative (CEI), Adrian Ionian Initiative (AII), Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSECO), etc..., with focus on: the fight against organized crime and illicit trafficking; free movement of people; establishment of free trade zones in the region; regional trade energy; regional transport strategies; Corridor VIII; promotion of Euro-Regions etc. .

Security is not just a question of avoiding conflicts. Enlargement helped transform weak democracies with minority problems and border issues into stable and peaceful democracies. This benefits the common good of the Union. The strategic partnership with NATO is also of support for EU to advance its goals for a safe Eurosphere. EU-NATO declaration on ESDP, signed in December 2002 (NATO Press Release 2002) confirmed that collective defense of the EU is organized in cooperation with NATO. In addition, EU ensures the possible involvement of non-EU European members of NATO within ESDP.

Besides, security relates to economic and social disintegration phenomena (Mayhew 1998). The Union cannot remain unaffected from what is happening next door. The Greek economic depression exemplifies this.⁸ Whereas, social disintegration associated with migration to EU area and unemployment of EU citizens home, lead to internal security nudges that EU must solve. In this respect enlargement helps by driving economic convergence between aspiring and current member states.

Economic benefits. Economic instruments are used for political ends. Strengthening the economic statecraft is of vital interest for the EU's influence in the international affairs. *Market expansion* and the *growth of direct investment* coming from enlargement benefit the Union. (Mayhew 1998)

On 2012, the EU exported in of the WB about 20 billion Euro, and imported the half. (DG for Trade 2013). With reference to the same report, the EU is the world's largest investor, hence is the largest recipient of FDI. Enlargement policy tends to make EU markets more attractive, because a growth of trade between East and West, North and South, stimulates economic growth in Europe, and offers new trading opportunities. The enlargement process, also contributes to Europe 2020 to meet the goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive market, delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.

b) Benefits of enlargement for Albania. Most of these are benefits that all members and aspiring countries enjoy; others are specific for Albania.

Decision making in EU. This means that Albania will have a direct impact on the choices of other members. Stemming from geo-strategic differences and the magnitude of their contributions to EU initiatives members have different degrees of influence on EU decisions. However, at the end, no member can force EU to do things that another member opposes.

Consolidated institutional framework. Albania has access to IPA I and II components: Transition Assistance and Institutions Building (I) and Cross Border Cooperation (II). On 2013, Albania was awarded 95 million Euro for both components (European Commission 2013). On 25 February 2014, EU signed with Albania another financial agreement of 64 million Euro to support key institutional reforms in the country. This assistance is important "to attract foreign investments and for the quality of governance enjoyed by Albanian citizens" (EU Delegation to Albania 2014).

According to Doing Business (DB) Report 2013, Albania is 85th out of 185 countries on “Easy doing business”, the 60th - with UK and France- in “Protecting investors” and 94th - with Japan and Italy- for “Easiness on resolving business disputes” (World Bank, International Finance Corporation 2013).

Security benefits. Albania’s position in the WB justifies its quest for strategic partners like EU and NATO. Albania is a partner of EU’s Common Defense Security Policy (CDSP), it participated in EUFOR missions, as Tchad/RCA in Chad (2008-2010) and Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1996-present)(Ministria e Mbrojtjes 2013). In June 2012, EU and Albania structured the cooperation in the security field by signing a framework agreement for the participation of Albania in EU crisis management operations (European Union 2012).

IPA assistance contributes to the internal security of the state in: law enforcement, democratization of society, and fight against organized crime and corruption, and borders management. In regards to the energy sector, the construction and modernization of Balkan Routes, makes the WB countries important actors for the future of the EU, providing peace and welfare for the region itself.

The conduct of an independent foreign policy strengthens the geo-political personality of Albania. Albania’s foreign policy is opportunistic, peaceful, constructive and moderated. This is due to its geographical seizures, national culture, human and material resources. By participating in various economic and security arrangements in the region and beyond, Albania has established diplomatic relations with 113 countries(Ministria e Jashtme 2013)

Economic benefits. For Albania, the EU integration process set the conditions free trade market economy. The liberalization of economy in line with EU regulations, brings some advantages to the development of internal and external market in the country. *Secure market access, easy of doing business, existence of business legal framework, growth of investments and privatization,* are benefits the aspiring country enjoys (Mayhew 1998). Trade figures measure these benefits. (See Fig.1).

Albania is part of World Treaty Organization (WTO) and Central European Free Trade agreement (CEFTA) - supported by the EU. .In 2012, EU was the main trading partner for Albania with of 65, 7 % (world trade share) on exports and 68.5% on imports (DG for Trade 2013). EU funds the WB EDIF initiative introduced on October last year to benefit small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in the Western Balkans. SMEs provide 71% of official employment. In the non-agricultural sector, SMEs account for 47% of exports and 68% of value added (European Commission 2013).Albania also benefits from EU autonomous trade preferences (until the end of 2015), allowing nearly all exports to enter the EU without customs duties or limits on quantities. Investing in the WB, is another benefit that EC encourages various financial institutions to take advantage of EC, by having already a macro-economic dialogue and fiscal programmes with the countries in the WB, offers security for investors (European Commission 2014).

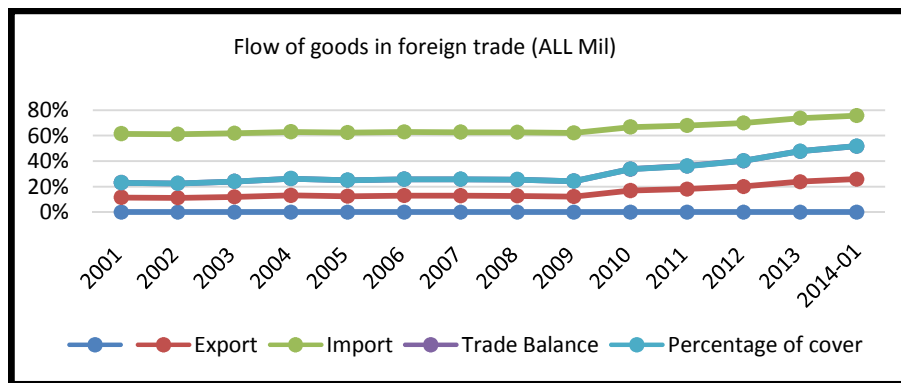


Fig.1 Source: <http://www.instat.gov.al>

4. The Parrondo’s paradox of Europeanization: Albania’s gridlock

Korski’s article on New York Times “Stop Albania’s Self- Destruction” made an accurate analysis of what was not achieved in the country during 21years of democracy (Korski 2011).Democracy Index 2012 identifies Albania as a hybrid regime (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2013). However little has changed until now Europeanization process in the country is in gridlock, because of factors related to *statehood, national culture, religious diversity dilemma* and the rise of *Euroceptisim* outside its borders. Data below seem to support this view-.

a) Statehood problems (mainly) are political, economic, social and state monopoly of force related. They concretize while the country is making efforts to fulfill the EU accession Criteria. The political nudge impedes the reformative process in consolidating the state institutional framework. Even if in 2012, there was some cooperation in adopting reform laws such

as amendments to the civil and criminal codes, the electoral code, and a law on immunity for judges and legislators, nevertheless with reference to the EC Progress Report 2013, Albania still needs to:

“... 1) continue to implement public administration reform with a view to enhancing professionalism and depoliticisation of public administration; 2) take further action to reinforce the independence, efficiency and accountability of judicial institutions; 3) make further determined efforts in the fight against corruption, including towards establishing a solid track record of proactive investigations, prosecutions and convictions; 4) make further determined efforts in the fight against organized crime, including towards establishing a solid track record of proactive investigations, prosecutions and convictions; 5) take effective measures to reinforce the protection of human rights, including of Roma, and anti-discrimination policies, as well as implement property rights.”(European Commission 2013)

The judicial framework is still incomplete. The judiciary system firstly was heavily stunned during the violent domestic events in January 2011. The juxtaposition of General Prosecutor Office with the Prime Minister- because of the arrest of six National Guard commanders connected with the killings of four protesters- proved that the judiciary system is not autonomous. The EC Progress Report 2013 and Nations in Transit Report 2013 (Freedom House 2013), speak of political pressure and interference in the judiciary system, lack of transparency and quasi no immunity of judges. In addition, changes need to be made in the appointment procedure of members of the High Court on meritocracy basis.

High-level corruption has reached the governmental level. The most conspicuous are the cases of the former Minister of Defense Mr. Fatmir Mediu and his involvement in the “Gerdeci “ affair on 2008 (read in next section) and the public scandal involving Mr. Ilir Meta (currently the parliament spokesman) who trialed for about 700.000 Euro in 2011(Koleka 2011). Both cases, unresolved for the public opinion, led to the events of January 2011 (ABC News 2011). Last year, the accusation of the former Minister of Defense, Mr. Arben Imami (2009-2013) of holding a number of illegal tenders for the broadcast of TV adverts for the Ministry of Defense. If found guilty, the ex-minister risks seven years of imprisonment (Likmeta 2013).Corruption Index 2013ranks Albania on 116th place out of 177 countries(Transparency International 2013). .

Fig.2 shows the development of the institutional framework of the Albanian state in 2013, (SeeFig.2)

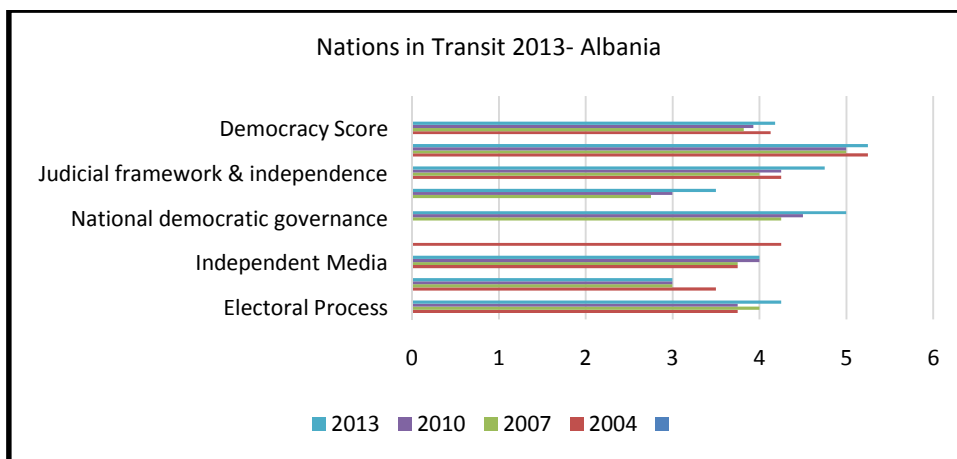


Fig 2. Source: www.freedomhouse.org

The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 = highest democratic progress and 7= lowest (note: the figures reach 6, no 7). The total score of all indicators is Democracy score. In the case of Albania is 4.18, meaning that the country is party free. Political rights and Civil rights for 2014 having a score of 3 (Freedom House 2014), put a question mark on the democracy progress in Albania.

The economic performance of Albania continued to be poor into 2013. The Transition Report 2013 of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) indicates that Albanian needs to strengthen its domestic macroeconomic fundamentals (See Fig.3). In addition, privatization process had some difficulties, as it was the case of the sale of the four hydropower plants hardly completed on 2013, and the failure to privatize Alpet (oil company) because of technical irregularities. The business dispute between the Czech private power company (CEZ) and the Albanian government raised skepticism on the foreign investment sector (EBRD 2013). Indeed, in these times of world financial crisis, Albanian labor market can hardly come out of the clutch. As per INSTAT data, the unemployment rate remained quasi-unchanged during (2012-2013), meaning from 13, 00- 12.8 (INSTAT 2012).Near-term economic growth was not strong enough to support substantial gains in employment in the short run (Worldbank 2013). Albania’s road to recovery seems slow.

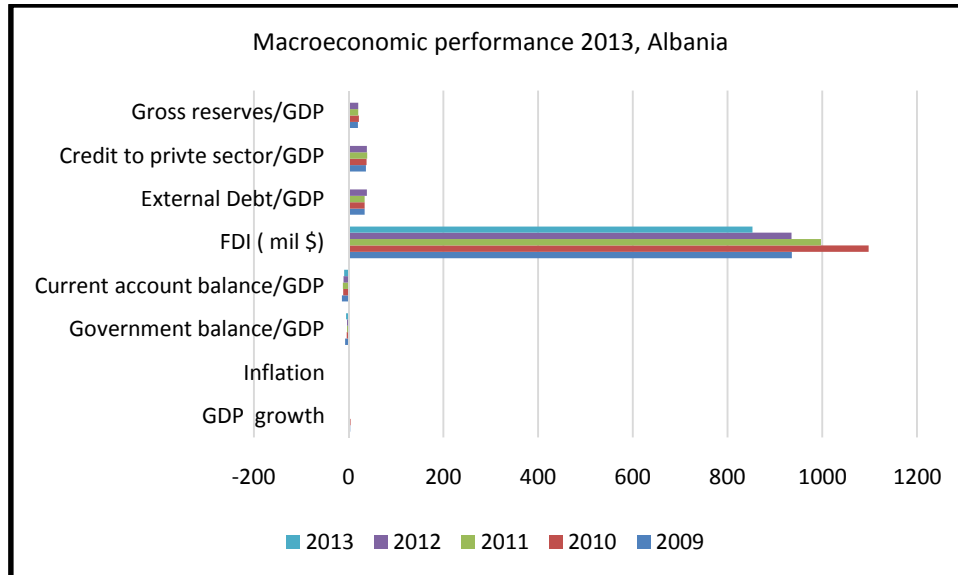


Fig.3. Source: www.ebrd.org

In addition, the conditions under which the *state maintains its monopoly on the use of violence* have changed. Free market, ethnic conflicts, old national boundary disputes, military disparities that came back after the end of Cold War and the resurgences of liberalism, led to the emergence of new agents of conflict. Agents that were not bound to any state and offered security services as market goods. The challenge that state monopoly of force- faces today dwells between public and private. : “*..the power of privatization or the privatization of power....*” as Singer (Singer 2004) puts it. Thus, the illegal market of merchandizing ammunition emerged. Borders facilitated the transport, so illegitimate international and domestic security providers were prompt to do business. In Albania, operate 894 private security companies (SourceSecurity.com 2014).

In the case of Albania, transition in economy means transition of state structures and generates monopolies. An example is the explosion of the ammunition deposit of Girded near Tirana, on 15th of March 2008(C. J. Chivers 2008) The realm of the scandal was the private contractor “AEY”., a licensed Defense Contractor to the United States Government in the fight against terrorism in Iraq. While USA government was engaged in the program of destroying excess small-caliber weapons and 2,000 tons of ammunition in Albania - according to the State Department-“AEY” instead of destroying the ammunition, shopped it in the Army units in Afghanistan. The stockpile, whose 90 percent was more than 40 years old, was provided by China during 60’s-70. On that basis, AEY bought more than 100 million cartridges for the Pentagon’s order, which according to packing lists, dated to the 1960s. Since there was not put any standards to it, it was to shop any kind of product(C. J. Chivers 2008). When the ammunition deposit in Gerdec (where “AEY” conducted the “legitimate” activity) exploded (around 300 injured and 26 victims) (Mero 2013), the investigations discovered the whole truth of “AEY” activity and its relationship with corrupted Albanian governmental structures. Albania’s state monopoly of force was eroded state mechanisms exploited by private security providers.

b) National culture issues emphasize ambiguous aspects of nationalism, opportunistic behavior of the state and Islamophobia.

“Wie alle westlichen Nationalismen ist auch der albanische Nationalismus, wie anderer gleichgeartete Ideologien und Bewegungen- in seinem Charakter Historisch”⁹(Hoxhaj 2004)

Nationalism is increasingly present in Albanian public discourse. For Albanian’s image of state, nationalism has ambiguous impact: progressive -while serving to the development of Western values-, and regressive - exploitable by extremist nationalist movements rising nowadays in the region of Western Balkans. ...”*The Albanian struggle for “political autonomy” during the centuries has been driven by the struggle for “cultural autonomy”* (Vickers 2009, 44). This struggle for “cultural autonomy” succeeded because of the strong Albanian nationalism ideology. Albanian nationalism aims to “*the formation of state itself*”(Etzioni 2004). Everything that is Albanian contributes to the consolidation of the state national identity: *a.* the autochthony of the land; *b.* Albanian language; *c.* high birth rates, Albania placed the second in the region of Balkans, with the highest rate of birth (13),(WorldBank 2011). Albanians *do*

not look for their religious identity, because of their consolidated national identity or legacy of paganism. Lastly, Albanian citizenships is based on the mixture of principles of two western concepts of citizenship: “*ius sanguinis*” and “*ius soli*”. Albanian nationalism contributed to promote them with the Albanian state recognition in 1912.

Nationalism served to the unification of the nation and the country. As said above, Albanian nationalism is like Western nationalisms because of its historical character. Historical facts consider nationalism to be a doctrine, ideology and movement of political elites. Illyrian period (700 B.C.-230 B.C), proves Albanian ancestors to be the oldest inhabitants in the region of Balkans, and one of the oldest in Europe as well. During the Ottoman invasion, the Albanian concept of pan-albanism developed further. It first rooted with Skanderbeg (the Albanian national hero) – who personified his country’s values during 25 years of war against Ottoman Empire “(1443-1468)” becoming like this an important ally for the West and the Christianity. Albanian’s resistance against Ottoman Empire was considered as national resistance against the invader. Albanian’s efforts to unite what was left of their territories were of various forms. In the ‘80s of 18th century Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushatliu - the appointee of the Sultan, reigning all over Northern part of Albania signed an agreement with the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Josef II, to found the “Illyric Confederation”. This project did not succeed (Myftaraj 2009,50)

Especially, the League of Prizren (18 June 1878), and the League of Tosks (24 July 1878) exemplified the Albanian efforts to establish Albanian state. In Brussels 1879, Faik Koniza, an Albanian intellectual, founded the periodical *Albania* which dealt particularly with nationalistic issues on promoting the unification of the country (Vickers 2009). There were also many intellectual nationalistic strands as *Rilindja* (in Italy) and *Bashkimi* (in Romania) with its weekly journal “Kombi”(Vickers 2009). 28 November 1912 marked the end of the historical battle for Albanians to found their state or what remained of it after the decision of the Berlin Congress (July 1878). Western powers also contributed. The correspondence of Sir Groshen the appointed UK HMA in Istanbul, exemplifies this. *We suggest taking in consideration the unification of Albanian territories because that would give a final solution to the Eastern Question in Europe*” (Myftaraj 2009,56)

Albanian nationalism reared its head again during the Second World War. Actually, in Bujan’s Conference, 31st of December 1943 that Albanian and Yugoslavian leaders aimed to unify Albania and Kosovo once the war was over. This also did not happen because of many factors: political, historical and reason of good alliances. “The Burdens of Balkans”, as Durham ((Durham trans.2001) is the long hunt after a consolidated identity, fed by strong pan-albanism principles.

In 1990, with the end of the dictatorship regime in Albania, the motto of people was a resurgent one from past centuries: we want Albania into Europe! This was reflected in the international political and economic initiatives that Albania, firstly signed with the West after 1990¹⁰. Albanian *nationalism* is particular, because the ideology and the movement were not driven from the capital of the Albanian state (Hoxhaj 2004). The Albanians in this perspective tend to strengthen their position on their current territories. Of course, Albania cared about its minorities in Kosovo. The Kosovo Crisis that Albanian government managed with maturity, during (’98-99), was driven by a sentiment of nationalism. Quoting Prifti :“...the independence and the foundation of the Albanian nation state, has been set from entire generations of ideologists and militants, fed by neo-liberal principles for liberty and democracy.”¹¹(Prifti 2001)

Albania, submitted more invasions from West-Southern front, that North–Southern one. But, as many little nations, Albania was built *in opposition* to external powers (Etzioni 2004). Thus, none of them succeeded to assimilate Albanian civilization, culture and furthermore identity. This helped Albanians, to embrace the Western national movements and neo-liberal principles toward its own state-membership building. When talking about nationalism and Western neo-liberalism, these two concepts are at odds to each other. Why in the Albanian case, is the contrary of it, it still to be explored.

The regressive aspect of the Albanian nationalism is related with the rise of populist movements in Albania and outside its territories in the WB, where minority of Albanians live. The Red and Black Alliance, initially was founded as a movement (2011 becoming later as a political party (2012)¹². The Red and Black Alliance, with its actions against the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Albania, the proposal of “Albanising reflects extremism, immature political behavior with consequences in ethnic relations in Macedonia and Serbia. The idea of proper Albania means a war in the Balkans, as proper Greece and proper Serbia would then pretend for their minorities. Balkans is burdened with conflicts and is exhausted from them.

Opportunistic behaviour of the state means also: economic, cultural and elite survival. The pillars, upon which this survival policy stands, are *democratic citizenship, security and economic prosperity*. Albania’s surface is about 28,748 sq. km¹³. With an interesting history of occupations, this country could survive through political, economic and military alliances with the West. Albania linked itself to the Western powers, not only to escape from its past as former totalitarian system, but also to protect the country from the 21st century’s conflicts in the Western Balkans. Two were the main reasons of this survival behavior: *democratic citizenship* and *geo-political situation of the country*.

Democracy is a fundamental reason for state existence in today era. Democracies do not fight each other. When talking about cosmopolitan democracy, (Archibughi 2004, 438) writes that “...*globalization was a process that affected not only production, finance, technology, media and fashion, but also the international political system, leading also to a globalization of democracy...*” In Albania, the political developments of 1991 and 1997 were accompanied by violence

and stunned some of state fundamentals. Leaving like this an obsolete economy and an obsolete political leadership. Bottlenecks of the economy and the civil society have to be settled down through the investments from foreign business and the cooperation of international NGOs with the Albanian government in local and national level.

Stewart defines democratic citizenship as “*the common membership of a shared and imminent community*” (Stewart 1995,75). In political terms for Albania’s case, it refers to the democratic model of the state loyal to the EU community. Albania is among the first in the WB to sign the Trade and Co-operation Agreement with EU in 1992¹⁴. Also the first in the region to ratify the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU on 2006. Albania’s efforts in approaching the EU community culminated in April 2009 for EU membership.

During 1945-1990, Albania’s relations with the West faced a dead period. Exactly when Marshall Plan was firstly implemented in the Western Europe. But the question of why the Marshall Plan was not implemented in Albania belongs as a subject of a future study.

Albania’s military alliances with the West were only for state survival its geographic situation. Albania was the first country in the Balkans to sign the PfP/NATO in 1993, becoming then a member April 2009. Albania is the door to cross East by West and vice-versa meaning it represents a strategic interest.

State survival also implies economic *survival*. Democracy favors everyone, economically speaking. Economic interests lead to the establishment of good relations with the Western Europe. Apart a question of preserving trade relations, it is also a question of benefits that political leaders in the country get from the redistribution of former state monopolies to the private sector. Economy drives the modernization developments in the country. Fukuyama argues that ... “*if a society wanted to be modern, there was no alternative to a market economy and a democratic political system.*” (Fukuyama 2007)

A negative consequence of Albania’s opportunistic behaviour, is the Albanian Europeanization style. This Europeanization style is about the responsive capacity of society to adapt to a new regime of rules imposed by others (in this case EU) (Anastasakis 2005) because of: *an increasingly demanding agenda, externally driven and coercive process, and a weak local response from the domestic actors*. Phenomena of corruption, politicized public administration, a clutching market economy, incomplete judicial system, and the political culture of statism and authoritarianism (Jano 2008) impede the transformative power of EU to make a change in the country. Instead of creating a legislative framework to foster the Europeanization process, the Albanian political elite is *employing extra –institutional means to gain or retain power, instead* (Korski 2011)

The passage from “*a violent disintegration to the institution and policy adaption, experiences governance incapacity*” (Jano 2008,57). The political class lack of the vision to design their state, because they need always an international mediator to communicate amongst them. People feel secure if they are under the tutelage of others and not under their own state institutions. Being between the East and West, the protectors were only Eastern – former Yugoslavia, Russia and China (1948-1970) -and Western –EU and NATO.

Another concern issue is how to identify: identifying Europanly or identifying ethnically, as a European geographical identity exists. As a result, Albania is proving that it cannot stand on its own feet and this impacts on the state’s international image.

c)Religion diversity dilemma represents a sensitive issue for the Albanian society: the Islamophobia. Though a country with majority of Muslim population 70 %, Albanian society is tagged as a tolerant one. 9/11th and the events occurred thereafter, concerned even Albanian society. The Western pressure on Muslims to give proof of their being a “good Muslim” and not a “bad Muslim”, affected the society’s attitude toward Islam as religion and towards West, as well: Albanians do everything to please the West by showing that they are not regressive Muslims.

Albania’s relationship to Islam is not a question of heritage or people’s desire, instead it is about conversion for state survival. One of the major legacies of nearly five centuries of Ottoman rule is Islam. That is why the nation emerged as a Muslim-majority country after independence in November 1912.

Albania joined the Conference of Islamic Countries (CIC) in 1992 because of economic survival (Osservatorio Balcani e Caucasio 2002). Albania’s membership in the CIC organization happened after June 1991, when the Secretary of State, James Baker in his first visit in Albania, went to the Ethem Bey Mosque in Tirana.”...*This was very much unattended from a foreign governmental officer in a secular state, as Albania is.*” (Myftaraj 2009,55) Apparently religion matters. , On 2009¹⁵ a group of Albanian intellectuals created on Facebook a NGO of 4608 followers: “We want Albania out of the Islamic countries ‘conference!’” What does Islam means to the intelligencia? Is Islamism comparing it to Christianity compatible with liberal democracy in Albania and West? Why is it a phobia?

Reports from the Department of State explain this reaction.

- In October 2003, the police arrested Kastriot Myftari, author of the book “Albanian National Islamism” on charges of inciting religious hatred against Islam. According to the prosecutor’s office, several statements in the book demeaned Islam. The prosecutor asked the court for 6 months imprisonment for the author. In June, the court acquitted Myftari of all charges (US Department of State 2004).

- -In April 2008, a novel from the Socialist MP, Ben Blushi was condemned by a number of Muslim NGO's as racist and Islamophobic. According to the NGO's the author shows signs of racism against the Turks, Gypsies and Albanian Muslims in the novel, and portrays the prophet Muhammad in a very disrespectful way.(The Muslim forum of Albania 2008)

-In response to the online release of the trailer of an anti-Muslim movie, Muslim leaders in Shkoder organized educational events and a blood drive in an effort to educate the public about Islam. Several Muslim leaders condemned violence, though. (US Department of State 2012)

Is there an Albanian Islamism? Could this religious ideology go against the emancipatory process of the Albanian society? Can the religious tolerance of society be considered as the key to solve internal social problems, as above? Knowing that cultural tolerance is a crucial element in a European democratic and free society.

C) *Euroscepticism outside its borders.* Euroscepticism opposes enlargement, and that was obvious with the Albanian case, because of a decision of the Dutch parliament in December last year. While for the “other Europe”, EU is God, for the EU members it is not. Eurobarometer data help to understand the exploitative ground of Euroscepticism. The financial crisis going on from 2008, had a considerable impact on the EU area. Economic concerns, associated with social concerns (migration from the “other Europe”, rise of nationalism, populism and racism) pave the way for new developments in the European politics. Within the euro area, people’s opinion for EU going “in the right direction” namely 38%, +1 (right), vs. 33%, +1(wrong).(European Commission 2013).Always referring to the same source: economic situation and unemployment are of concern for more than 45% of all Europeans. Also, people’s scepticism is increasing towards the common currency: 63% pro vs.34% contra. Reflecting on the numbers and being in the eve of the elections for the European Parliament (EP)(22-25 May 2014), it is easy to assume that economic instruments are used for political ends. It goes about gaining seats in the next EP. The Eurosceptic are blossoming in many European countries by exploiting the financial crisis, the economic and social insecurity of their citizens and the instability home. Through a credible, satisfying and defensive platform “in protecting” “their” Europe they aim to attract more voters. Eurosceptic (far right) are a key interlocutor in the EP under the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD group), so the Eurosceptic want to strengthen their position. Analysts have argued that the next Parliament could have a high number of Eurosceptic Members of the European parliament (MEPs)(Euractiv 2014). After this political battle for the European parliament, EU will certainly continue to grow its family of members.

Conclusions

If NATO membership was a present to Albania, the EU membership has to be meritorious. The visa liberalization does not mean that Albania is in EU. What Albania is doing and what is not doing to merit the membership status is regularly reported in the EC analytical and progressive reports; in the statistics on development indicators conducted from International Organizations, Think tank groups, banks, other international and domestic state institutions, (World Bank, Freedom House, INSTAT, EBRD etc...).

The Thessaloniki Summit of 2003 stated “*the future of the Balkans to be within the European Union*”.(European Council 2003) In fact, “*EU has managed to exercise an influence on democratization in favor of consolidation that is almost unique in scope and depth*” (Pridham 2005,96) The process is one-way journey. EU invested much money, policy and passion into the Western Balkans. Once the “bargain” on votes and electoral campaign for the EP will be over, attention will return to Albania and the rest of the region. While the WB need to survive, the EU wants to get profits from these investments. Now with Ukrainian” black swan” at its doors, Europe cannot afford having Western Balkans outside its borders.

Explanatory notes

¹ The EU- Albania Relationship was established on June 1991. For study purposes, this paper focuses on the crucial developments in the period during 2006-2013.

²“Now according to the most famous Western philosophers, between the people and the government exists an agreement based on the principle ‘do ut deus’ – I will give to you, so you will give to me.” Hylli i Drites”, vj. IV, September 1923, nr.IX

³The degree to which expectations about appropriate behavior and understanding about how to interpret action showed by participants in the system.

⁴The degree to which these expectations are clearly specified in the form of rules

⁵The extent to which the institution can alter its own rules

⁶According to Article 86 of the IPA Implementing Regulation (EC) No 718/2007, assistance under IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Component is granted for cross-border cooperation between one or more Member States and one or more beneficiary countries and cross-border cooperation between two or more beneficiary countries.

⁷ According to Article 147 of the IPA Implementing Regulation (EC) No 718/2007, assistance under IPA

⁸“New data showed that the slowing growth raised Greece’s deficit to 10.5 percent of gross domestic product in 2010, exceeding the 9.6 percent target set by the government, while public debt swelled to 142.8 percent of G.D.P., Eurostat said. All of these factors appeared to feed an emerging view that it makes little economic sense for the monetary fund and the European Union to keep lending money to Greece so that the government can pay back private investors at double-digit interest rates — especially as Greek citizens suffer the effects of a severe austerity program.” On line at

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/greece/index.html>, accessed 12.04.2011

⁹ Translation is my own responsibility: Like all the Western Nationalisms, the Albanian nationalism as well the same kind an Ideology and a Movement in its Character”.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidate-countries/albania/eu_albania_relations_en.htm

¹¹ Translation of the text from French to English is my own responsibility

¹² See: <http://www.aleancakuqezi.al/rreth-nesh/>, accessed on 28.02.2014

¹³ <http://www.worldatlas.com/geography/albaniageography.htm>

¹⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidate-countries/albania/eu_albania_relations_en.htm, accessed on 12.02.2014

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/konferencaislamike?fref=ts>, accessed on 12.02.2014

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Bio-note

This paper is the product of an updated research of my MA thesis. Currently I hold a MA in International Relations (University of Sussex) and I am scholar of George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, where I conducted a research project on security privatization in the Balkans. I worked 6 years for the Ministry of Defense in Albania at the Department of Defense Policies. Thereafter, moved to International Organizations, and worked in Hungary at the Regional Environmental Center. Actually, I am preparing for a PhD application to pursue my studies in the International Security field. The focus of my project will link Foreign Military Cooperation and Europeanization process in the region of Western Balkans.

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