



## DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN ALBANIA

### ARNAVUTLUK'TA DEMOKRASİNİN DESTEKLENMESİ

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#### Abstract

This paper concentrates on the theory of democracy promotion and analyzes the case of Albania since the beginning of the 1990s until the recent developments. We start by giving some information on the background of the communist past in political, economic and social spheres, with the assumption that the characteristics of the authoritarian regime should have an impact upon the democratization strategy of the promoter. In the literature, there is a debate on whether democracy should be promoted at the level of political parties and politically oriented civil society groups or transparency and accountability should be targeted as essential factors of national development. Albania experienced both strategies. Firstly, United States was the major external actor that initiated and supported the democratization process in Albania. Then the EU followed with the policy framework of Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) that offered a commitment by the organization to necessary political, financial and personal resources to Balkan countries to complete the fulfillment of democratic principles required for membership. As a conclusion, the external assistance helped advance the level of democracy in the country, however remaining deficiencies show that the democracy promoters should support institutions that embrace democracy as an essential value.

**Key Words:** Democracy, democratization, democracy promotion, external assistance, Albania.

#### Öz

Bu makale demokrasi teorisi çerçevesinde 1990'ların başlarından son zamanlardaki gelişmelere kadar Arnavutluk örneğini incelemektedir. Makaleye, ülkelerin yaşadıkları otoriter rejim deneyimlerinin onların demokrasi girişimleri üzerinde etkili oldukları varsayımından yola çıkılarak Arnavutluk'un komünist geçmişinin politik, ekonomik ve sosyal yönleri hakkında bazı bilgiler verilerek başlanmıştır. Literatürde, demokrasinin siyasal partiler ve siyasal olarak yönlendirilen toplumsal gruplar düzeyinde desteklenmesinin mi yoksa saydamlık ve denetlenebilirlik ilkelerinin ulusal gelişmenin temel faktörleri olarak hedeflenmesinin mi gerektiği konusunda bir tartışma vardır. Arnavutluk bu iki stratejiyi de tecrübe etmiştir. İlk olarak, Arnavutlukta demokrasi sürecini aktif olarak dışarıdan başlatan ve destekleyen en büyük aktör Amerika olmuştur. Daha sonra Avrupa Birliği, İstikrar ve İşbirliği Süreci (Stabilization and Association Process) politika çerçevesiyle Amerikayı izledi. Bu çerçeve, Balkan ülkelerine üyelik yolunda demokratik ilkelerin gerçekleşmesi için gerekli politik, mali ve kişisel kaynakların organizasyonunu taahhüt etmeyi teklif etmektedir. Sonuç olarak dış destekler ülkedeki demokrasi düzeyinin yükselmesine katkı sağlamakla birlikte göstermiştir ki, demokrasi destekçileri demokrasiyi menfaat sağlayacak bir araç olmaktan ziyade onu bir değer olarak gören kurumları desteklemeleri gerekmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Demokrasi, demokratikleşme, demokrasinin desteklenmesi, dış yardımlar, Arnavutluk.

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## INTRODUCTION

The global rise of democratization which started since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but impressively accelerated from 1974 to the end of the Cold War triggered widespread scholarly arguments that democracy had been proven to be a fundamentally better system than any other alternative. It was not a coincidence that the subsequent increase in the number of liberal democratic states at the end of the Cold War was accompanied by a dramatic decline in total warfare and interstate wars.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it was not surprising to witness the enthusiasm within the scholar realm about the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.<sup>4</sup>

Democratization has been one of the most important trends in the international system. Starting since the beginning of the Cold War, which *de jure* was stated to be a war of ideologies between liberalism and communism, until nowadays, the U.S and lately EU have been the most active external actors in the promotion of democracy toward the so-called Eastern European and Third World countries. Therefore, the literature on democracy promotion has attracted significant scholarly attention and highly contributed to the grand debate on the theory and practice of it.

The purpose of this paper is to examine different approaches to democracy promotion by focusing on the case of Albania and analyzing the general strategies applied by different actors through years. Here, we address two main questions: Is it possible to identify a single strategy of democracy promotion in Albania designed according to theories of developmental approach versus the political agenda approach? We also try to determine the similarities and differences in terms of the method and content of the main US and EU democracy promotion frameworks. The paper concludes with an evaluation of the possible impact of EU membership conditionality in democracy promotion in Albania using the variables developed in the literature.

We have decided to analyze the topic of democracy promotion in Albania for three main reasons. First, while Albania used to be the most loyal country to communist practices for about 45 years, in the last twenty years, democratization has been the most important aspect of the country's political life. Therefore, it is was of great interest to explore how external actors managed to access and promote democracy in a country where there was no

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<sup>3</sup>Global Conflicts Trend, 'Measuring Systemic Peace', 11 September 2010, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/conflict.htm> (18 December 2010).

<sup>4</sup>Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History", *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

freedom and proto-democratic practices were not present at all. Second, we were keen on studying the timing of democracy promotion and its extent. And lastly, it was impressive to analyze how Albania's external relations are shaped by the democracy promotion agenda of the major western powers.

We start this paper with some background information of the communist regime in Albania by focusing on the impact of the ideology in political, economic and social spheres. Then, we present an overview of the country's democratic performance from the beginning until recently by looking at the role of political parties, civil society and rule of law. Furthermore, we compare the main democracy promotion theories and actors and look at which of these theories can explain the Albanian case. The last part of this paper makes some remarks on the current situation and provides some recommendations for future outcomes.

### **1. Authoritarianism With Adjectives: Defining The Communist Regime In Albania**

When liberalism announced its triumph at the end of the Cold War, most of the former communist states had engaged in the transition to liberal democracy and market economy. Samuel Huntington called the process as "third wave of democracy" referring to the transition of some thirty countries from non-democracies to democratic political systems.<sup>5</sup> The third wave started since 1974 and even if democratic regimes did not replace all existing authoritarian ones and there were obviously resistance and setbacks, by 1990s the movement seemed to have taken the character of an almost irresistible global wave. Albania, without experiencing any other form of liberalization before, transformed at the end of the decade when the democratic tide engulfed the communist world. Although the process had a vast popular support, it is probably fair to say that the task and the responsibility of democratizing the authoritarian regime has been mostly born by the democracy promoters. However, before we dig into the age of international democracy assistance; the measures undertaken; the actors involved; the range of countries and organizations that operated and the kind of activities it comprised, we need to present a thorough description and analysis of the features of the communist regime in Albania by exploring the political, economic and socio-cultural context, in order to evaluate accordingly the most appropriate strategy to promote democracy in our particular case.

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<sup>5</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, The Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series, v.4, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1993, p.21.

Burnell points out that making a proper definition of a particular authoritarian regime has vital implications for its future political and economic prospects.<sup>6</sup> For instance, the process of democratization of a deeply institutional one-party communist state might not pose the same challenge when compared to the process of democratization of a personal dictatorship or a military bureaucratic rule. Lessons learned in one context might not be useful in another context. Therefore, to be able to conduct this assessment we need to learn the communist past of Albania and should explore whether the theory of path dependence<sup>7</sup>, which means that where you go depends on where you come from, can be applied here as well.

The real and actual world of any regime is not actually characterized by one typical feature and thus it is not easy to strictly define it, rather it can be better summed by the idea of continuum. Toward the end of 1970s and 1980s, the Eastern European totalitarian regimes started to experience some form of liberalization, so it is not proper to place them on one of the two opposing categories of western style democracies and authoritarian regimes, instead they might be cases fitting to liberal autocracies or liberalizing autocracies and so on. In other words, depending on the period of time or the way of classification, most regimes move from one subtype of authoritarianism or subtype of democracy to another diminished subtype. As such, in Albanian political sphere, change took place as well, however in the opposite direction to the global trend. While, around the 1970s, the incumbents in power added liberal features to their regimes, the communist party in Albania approximated isolation and closed the doors to western style democracies and to even slowly liberalizing socialist autocracies. Therefore, this paper will explore who and/or what took control of the process of change in the 1990s and who and/or what determined its current direction.

To start with, the communist party in Albania managed to establish rule and authority in the country for about 45 years in accordance with the strict Stalinist doctrine, which caused full isolation of the Albanian state and society. In 1968, it protested against the Soviet invasion to Czechoslovakia by formally leaving the Warsaw Pact and in 1978 it split from its final remaining ally, China.<sup>8</sup> The isolationist ideology did not only affect the country economically by closing trade channels and any other type of exchanges, but also had a major impact on every single social and private unit by oppressing any other opinion different from the ideological dogma. This is to be noted as one of the main characteristics distinguishing the

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Burnell, "Democracy Promotion: The Elusive Quest for Grand Strategies", *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, Vol.3, No. 204, 2004, p.101.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.101.

<sup>8</sup> Albania and China, April 1992, <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-169.html>, (19 May, 2010).

country from the rest of the Socialist Block and scholars have gone as far as calling the phenomenon as Hoxhaism, i.e. a separate wave within communism.<sup>9</sup>

The continuous government propaganda directed against the external players; the elimination of possible political opposition, intellectuals and dissidents; the ban on private property and religious practices as well as the harsh political persecutions clearly indicated that Albania experienced one of the harshest and idiosyncratic communist regimes compared to all other Eastern European Countries.<sup>10</sup>

Albania had acquired a relatively economic progress due to the substantial assistances coming from Yugoslavia (1945-1948), then Soviet Union (1948-1960) and later China (1961-1978). However after the split, Enver Hoxha and his supporters dragged the country to the lowest standards of living and to the poorest economic incomes.<sup>11</sup> All foreign credits were abolished and Albania aimed to construct socialism based upon the principle of self-reliance. The process showed immediate signs of decline and in the 1990s the industrial sector totally collapsed. At the same time, farmers were forced to join cooperatives and collectivize their live stocks, thus the state continuously extended its domain to the individual private sphere by placing it under full state control.<sup>12</sup>

As a socio-cultural legacy, Marxism-Leninism declared to be the sole official ideology, according to which people had to be protected from dangerous bourgeoisie-revisionist influences from abroad. Illiteracy decreased, however literacy and education was used as a tool to successfully propagate the communist ideology through a wide network of professional and vocational schools. The main goal was to create a socialist mass with appropriate communist traits like morality and atheistic ideas as well as free of bourgeois culture. As an end, the 'cultural' communist revolution attempted to promote the peasantry mass to the level of the working class and to create an intelligentsia that would be fully obedient to the communist leadership.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, in its long socialist journey until the 1990s, Albania retained from communism a traditional tribal society without a well developed middle-class, without any features of industrialization and with no space for creation of liberal political elite.

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<sup>9</sup> R.J. Crampton, *The Balkans Since the Second World War*, London, Longman Press, 2002, p.165.

<sup>10</sup> Shinasi A. Rama, *Probleme Politike Shqiptare:Përmbledhje me Analiza e Materiale, Shkoder, National Albanian Institute, 2006.*

<sup>11</sup> Mirela Bogdani and John Loughlin, *Albania and the European Union: the Tumultuous Journey Towards Integration*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2007, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.28.

<sup>13</sup> Najada Tafili, "Consolidation of Democracy: Albania", *Journal of Political Inquiry*, Issue1,2008, p.2.

To sum up, the end purpose of this background section has been to find an appropriate adjective to the communist authority in Albania by looking at its traits and legacies during the almost 45 year's lifetime. This will aid us to comprise the challenges of democratizing the non-democracy regimes and evaluate the method and momentum to stimulate political and economic change when there is no freedom and proto-democratic practices are not present at all.

## 2. Transition To Where?

Daniel Brumberg argued that a political change does not always translate into a change of regime. Many times the power holders of authoritarian regimes may undertake reforms that might not mean more than simply avoiding or postponing more meaningful, substantive democratic reforms.<sup>14</sup> The regime remains resistant and the significant sections of society indifferent, thus few reforms do not lead the country anywhere. Albania was the last state in Europe to open up to democracy and liberal market reforms. However overt support for democracy became extremely widespread and the citizens of Albanian expressed a favorable opinion of it. Nevertheless, favorable opinions remain superficial if they are not accompanied by deep changes of institutions and orientations of values like trust, participation and self-expression.<sup>15</sup>

In 1990s, Albania underwent multiple transitions from one party to many; from command to market economy and to a post Cold-War international security regime. The transition was fulfilled in a peaceful way but the serious irregularities and the civil crisis in 1997 undermined faith in the democratization process and there was a fear that Albania would experience a turn back to authoritarianism. Despite this, contrary to “in transition to nowhere” thesis, liberal democracy remained as a goal for both the incumbents in power and the society, although not reached yet.

A study conducted by Freedom House that measures initial democratization of countries one year before they experience regime change until the year 1994 gives 4 scores to Albania out of 7 for its democratic performance.<sup>16</sup> This indicates that Albania made important steps in the first transition phase, yet that remained incomplete. For instance, when we analyze the

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Brumberg, “Liberalization Versus Democracy: Understanding Arab Political Reform: Democracy and Rule of Law Project”. *Working Paper, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, No. 37, 2003, p.15.

<sup>15</sup> Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, “Political Culture and Democracy: Analyzing Cross- Level Linkages” *Comparative Politics*, Vol.36, No.1,2003, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> Shale Horowitz, “Democracy for Peace or Peace for Democracy? The Post-Communist Experience”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.43, No.1, 2006, p.4.

political environment, the new regime managed to give an end to one party rule through the formal act in 1990 that allowed the formation of other independent political organizations. In addition, the first elections in 1992 were considered a great step forward and a clear indication of the strong desire Albanians had to embrace democracy in their state and society. Civil society marked signs of progression as well by dealing with awareness campaigns and capacity building and emphasizing the importance of free information. However, to turn democracy into action has not an easy task. Although in principle, political parties aimed complete destruction of communism; in reality, all political and intellectual elite that existed at the time were educated under communism and not trained to deal with regime changes.<sup>17</sup> Apart from it, international and national reports on elections claim that there are no uncontested election results in Albanian election history apart from the 1992 elections which actually had decided for the regime transformation not for the ruling of any political party. Especially in the 1996 elections during the turmoil time, “32 articles out of 79 dealing with the pre-election period and Election Day were violated”<sup>18</sup> and there was a fear of returning back to authoritarianism when the leader of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha, organized a farcical election under martial law for himself to become the new President in parliament.<sup>19</sup> Even the 2005 elections that were followed by a peaceful rotation of power; the resignation of Socialist Party (SP) chairman Fatos Nano following the SP electoral defeat; that lighted some hopes on the country’s progress toward EU integration, ended up in a four month political and institutional crisis among the two main parties.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the rule of law remained the weakest in the first years of transition. As Henderson and Robinson would indicate: “what remained most alarming were Berisha’s inclinations to change the rules of the political game when they did not suit to him”<sup>21</sup> In other words, there was personalization of politics and institutions that undermined the foundation of basis of the rule of law. Lastly, the advancement of civil society sector has been impeded by the negative connotation that the organization of volunteer work was constructed under communism, the dependence on donor funding and outside interference.

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<sup>17</sup> Tafili, p.4.

<sup>18</sup> OSCE.ODIHR, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, “Albania: Parliamentary Elections”, 29 June 1997, [http://www.osce.org/albania/documents?page=28&date\[min\]\[date\]=1994-01&date\[max\]\[date\]=2011-01](http://www.osce.org/albania/documents?page=28&date[min][date]=1994-01&date[max][date]=2011-01), (5 November 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Shinasi A. Rama, *Probleme Politike Shqiptare: Përmbledhje me Analiza e Materiale, Shkoder, National Albanian Institute, 2006.*

<sup>20</sup> Tafili, p.8.

<sup>21</sup> Karen Henderson and Neil Robinson, *Post Communist Politics: An Introduction*, Hertfordshire, Prentice Hall Europe, 1997, p.349.

Therefore to conclude, this section helps us to enunciate the state of democracy in Albania at the beginning of 1990s and to temper the last developments and thus evaluate the current progress. To reiterate, the decision for democracy was highly supported by the Albanians, however it is clear that neither the Albanian society nor leadership had the tools and knowledge, or the mature conditions to consolidate democracy. As such, it is clear that democracy as an action has been largely promoted and diffused by international actors. For this purpose, it is now of great interest to explore the conditions and circumstances in which democracy was promoted in by Western structures. How far was it realized; how fast was it promoted? What type of interventions occurred? And, where did it lead to? Yet, before we discuss it, let us turn to the theoretical debate on democracy promotion.

### **3. Democratization and Means to Democratize**

With the beginning of the Cold War until nowadays, the Western countries led by US embedded in themselves the ideological mission of democracy promotion as a primary objective, emphasizing the moral and strategic imperatives for developing freedom around the world. Even though, the Soviet Union's communist ideology challenged democracy because of the economic model of state ownership and fixed price that produced growth rates higher or equal to capitalist economies for decades, today democracy is stronger as an international norm than ever before and is widely regarded as an ideal system of government.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, engaging in democracy promotion is contentious and the experience from the last decades showed that there is no "one-fits-all" strategy. Therefore, the question "how to democratize authoritarian regimes" has produced several answers.

To start with, some of the suggested strategies revolve around the political approach which focuses on a narrower conception of democracy by emphasizing elections and political liberties. Democracy is viewed as a political struggle where the main catalysts of change are political parties and politically oriented civil society groups.<sup>23</sup> Advocates of political approach support democracy as a value in itself because as Dahl would put it:

"Democracy helps prevent rule by cruel and vicious autocrats, guarantees citizens a set of fundamental rights, ensures a broader range of personal freedoms, helps people protect their own fundamental interests, provides the maximum opportunity for self-determination—the freedom to live under laws of one's own choosing provides the maximum opportunity for

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<sup>22</sup> Michael McFaul, "Democracy Promotion as a World Value", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.1, 2004, p. 2-3.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Carothers, "Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.20, No.1, 2009, p.5.



the exercise of moral responsibility, encourages human development, fosters a relatively high degree of political equality, promotes peace—as modern representative democracies do not fight one another—and generates prosperity.”<sup>24</sup>

In this conceptualization of democracy and democratization, the political approach suggests to help the democrats in a country in their struggle against the non-democrats. This can be achieved through assisting political actors like political parties, associations, politicians, non-governmental organizations (NGO-s) and other politically active civic groups or even political dissidents and exiled opposition groups. Examples of such external actors have been Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), International Republic Institute, The Carter Center etc.

On other hand, critics of the political approach have generally become adherents of the developmental line who support transparency, accountability and responsiveness as basic features of democratic governance that contributes to a more equitable socioeconomic development.<sup>25</sup> They conceptualize democracy as a broader concept, not serving exclusively to political concerns but as a contributing factor in the larger process of national development. In addition, the process of democratization is advised to be slow, iterative, measured in decades and marked by gradual accumulation of small gains. In other words, according to this view, it is better to achieve a basic level of social and economic development together with effective state and rule of law before moving to democratization.

The supporters of the economic approach find it quite hard if not impossible to democratize in a cold economic climate where there exists substantial poverty, misery and great material inequality. As Burnell would argue: “where an economic wasteland is created so as to bring down a regime that is a very inauspicious foundation on which to try to build a new democracy”.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, those who argue for economic support build an indirect method of assisting democracy by firstly promoting social and economic development as a way of supporting democracy and secondly giving attention to political institutions and support good governance rather than stimulating political competitiveness and openness. Civil society projects also should concentrate on local-level projects and aim socio-economic rehabilitation rather than political advocacy.

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Dahl, *On Democracy*, New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Carothers, “Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?”, p.8.

<sup>26</sup> Burnell, p.104.

The comparison of two approaches has generated vast debates among scholars of democracy; however we will not elaborate on it because the purpose in this paper is not to draw conclusions on the best approach but as a case study that this research paper is, we strive to understand the methods used in Albania and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.

Nevertheless, before we conclude it is important to emphasize that apart from the above mentioned conceptualization frameworks, distinctive U.S and European approaches to democracy promotion have also been part of the debate and scholars have questioned if they really differ from each other. Looking at the number and type of actors involved in democracy assistance from both sides, we notice a vast array of different organizations from government agencies, government-funded nonprofit organizations, private foundations and even international organizations (as in the case of European Union), thus, it is hard to come up with a single, unified US or European approach.<sup>27</sup> Yet, while US and European approaches draw from both sides, there is a relative emphasis on one for each. The European democracy assistance has shown to have a dominant development approach and the political approach dominates the global profile of U.S democracy aid although as already stated there exists a mixed combination for both sides.

To sum up, the purpose of this theoretical background was to learn the debate on developmental and political approaches that seeks to find an appropriate strategy for a long term effectiveness of democratic principles. In addition to this categorization we also dealt with the distinction between the US and European approaches so that we become familiar to the discussion when analyzing the US and European efforts in democratizing Albania in the coming sections. Now, this paper will follow with a more detailed study of the Albanian case and look at the practical consequences of the measures undertaken and actors involved.

#### **4. Democratizing Albania**

One very widespread thought in the literature on democracy promotion is the basic idea that promoting democracy in other countries is a particularly American preoccupation. Although this is not the case anymore as Thomas Carothers argues by referring to promoting democracy programs of Germany, Finland, Canada etc. and even France,<sup>28</sup> American approach was quite dominant during the Cold War and at the beginning of 1990s. On its own, the Albanian case also supports this claim.

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<sup>27</sup> André Gerrits, "Is There a Distinct European Democratic Model to Promote?" in Marieke van Doorn and Roel von Meijenfeldt, eds., *Democracy: Europe's Core Value?*, 2007, p.63.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Carothers, "Think Again: Democracy", *Foreign Policy*, 1997 <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=151>, (2 November 2010).

As a matter of fact, although Albania established its first international diplomatic ties with Great Britain when Sir Patrick Fairweather was appointed ambassador in Tirana and Sir Pavli Qesku was accredited as the Albanian ambassador in London,<sup>29</sup> the symbol of freedom as an end to the dictatorship regime was affirmed exactly with the visit of United States Secretary of State, Mr. James Baker. After openly stating the purpose of his visit as “I have come today to bring you a message from another free people –the American people– and my message is “Welcome”; Welcome to the Assembly of free peoples building a Europe whole and free. You are with us and we are with you”, the representative of United States gave start to the first \$6 million economic humanitarian aid to the impoverished Albania and promised more if concrete reforms were to be undertaken towards liberal politics and free economic market.<sup>30</sup> Since then, non-governmental organizations, professional class of advocates, lobbyists and other service providers have managed democracy promotion programs on empowerment, human rights, economic developments etc. One good example is United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which works to strengthen governmental accountability, reducing corruption, increasing private sector competitiveness, reducing trafficking in persons and improving healthcare quality etc.<sup>31</sup>

Another dominant method of promoting democracy in Albania has been through means of international election observations. Albania committed itself to the Copenhagen Agreement in 1990 which exists within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that entails compliance with the principles of free, fair and democratic elections.<sup>32</sup> The political structure in the country is highly polarized and characterized by continuous intense power struggles between the largest political parties, thus the role of OSCE and particularly ODHIR (OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) has been to contribute to the development of democratization under the rule of law. It has been present in the first elections in 1992; it has expressed its doubts in the 1996 elections when they got boycotted by the opposition parties and most importantly; it assumed in 1997, when Albania found itself in the brinks of a civil war, the difficult task of monitoring elections by employing 500 international election observers and they continued to be present

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<sup>29</sup> Owen Pearson, *Albania as Dictatorship and Democracy: From Isolation to the Kosovo War 1946-1998*, London, The Center for Albanian Studies In association with I.B.Tauris &Co.Ltd, 2006, p.654.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> USAID, “Albania”, last updated on 29 May 2002, <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cbj2002/ee/al/> (28.10.2010).

<sup>32</sup> Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, Copenhagen, 29 June 1990, in: Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993*, Dordrecht, 1993, pp. 438-465, sections 6-8.

in other consequent elections as well. The merits of ODHIR on the election observation mission have been attributed to the fact that it achieved to hold the parliamentary elections in Albania open to the international publicity. Therefore, this somehow disciplined the political parties as well as members of the election commissions and maintained a certain degree of transparency to electoral procedures.

However, focusing on these approaches, vast scholar criticisms have been directed not toward the principles of democracy promotion but the practice of it, in other words, the way they are implemented. One problem is that the development aid practices that were so common during the 1990s make less developed countries dependent on donor's continued subsidies.<sup>33</sup> Although, after 20 years of democratic transition Albania should be capable of resuming the responsibility of developing its own economy, it is noticed that this does not happen without the heavy involvement of the international stakeholders.

In addition to it, the foreign donors should be careful in not supporting particular political parties or personalities but should make democratic reforms a condition for aids. For instance, one of the U.S's critical mistakes was of supporting Berisha government unequivocally instead of focusing on the political process. This one-sided advocacy for democratization made it remain silent to many authoritarian measurements in the 1996 elections and human right violations. It is clear that the international actors remained more interested in a short term political stability in the country which would also ensure stability among the other Albanian populations in neighboring countries, rather than a long-term dynamic democratic process.

As already stated before, Albania did not experience any economic liberalization before political liberalization; therefore the first economic aids comprised a political approach of democratic promotion where democracy was defined according to political struggles by stimulating the formation of political parties and politically oriented civil groups as well as on free and fair elections. Nevertheless, since 2000 the US activities have continued to be common especially in areas of justice and corruption. Therefore democracy promotion has partly shifted but not totally transformed to European Union strategies through the enlargement process. The framework policy of the EU of which democracy is promoted in Albania is about stabilization and association. The EU's Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) offers a commitment by the organization to necessary political, financial and personal

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<sup>33</sup> Marina Ottaway and Theresea Chung, "Toward a New Paradigm", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.10, No.4, 1999, p.99.

resources to Balkan countries applying for membership. Through the enlargement process, EU has moved from being a simple economic or political coalition to a broader organization that integrates the promotion of human rights and democracy as important elements of its foreign policy. The possible tools and instruments it uses for democracy promotion have been political dialogue, moral support, financial aid, loan or economic cooperation, election observations etc. This framework resembles more to a developmental approach because it helps and stimulates economic development however in a bigger picture, i.e. including support transparency, accountability and responsiveness as basic features of democratic governance that contributes to a more equitable socioeconomic development.

However, one essential challenge is to decide what makes one approach more comprehensive than any other. Schimmelfennig/Sedelmaier and Kubicek have developed six variables that measure the possible impact of conditionality in democracy promotion. They are listed as below:

1. Attractive Incentive: The incentives that EU offers to Albania are attractive enough for the small country in the middle of Europe. EU integration process and especially full membership acquisition offers rewards from trade liberalization and financial assistance as well as international recognition and public praise. The Albanian support for EU accession has also increased from the already high levels of past years to 88%: together with Kosovo, this was the highest level recorded in the region, does signal that EU membership process is not a political project simply but largely a social goal.<sup>34</sup>
2. Credibility: As Schimmelfennig/Sedelmeier and Kubicek argue “the carrots and sticks offered must be real”. The fulfillment of the promise for free visa travels in the Schengen Area announced in October 2010, increased the credibility of EU in Albania showing that ‘carrots’ are really given when difficult reforms are realized .
3. Lack of alternatives: Lack of alternatives is another important condition for the target country since EU membership might not be supported either by the public or the government if the target country has other sources that offer comparable benefits at lower costs. This phenomenon is clear in the case of Turkey as it is continuously elaborating in other alternatives such as bilateral relations with China, Russia and leadership strategies in Middle East and even the Balkans, therefore there might come

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<sup>34</sup> “Albania's Perceptions and European Integration: Satisfied with the life, satisfied with the EU but happy to leave!”, <http://www.em-al.org/?fq=brenda&m=shfaqart&aid=164>, ( 30 October 2010).

a point where Turkey might realize the principles and benefits of EU without feeling the necessity to be a member of EU. However, this is not the case for Albania. The small country has no economic, military or political power when compared to any of EU members or other influential countries and all of its allies strongly push for EU membership, in other words they as well do not offer any different alternative.

4. Asymmetry in negotiations in favor of EU; For EU to effectively use its ‘stick’ the target country needs to be dependent on the organization. EU has important interests on Albania due to the country’s very good geostrategic position as a bridge between Western Europe and Eastern Europe as well as its potentiality to stabilize the political situation among the ethnic Albanians in the neighboring countries, however these great national advantages have continuously been endangered because of political instability, the weak rule of law, corruption and poor infrastructure. As a consequence, Albania is highly dependent on EU to overcome these challenges and achieve sustainable development.
5. Lastly, we would like to mention about the interests of important stakeholders and veto players that does also relate to the principle on low adoption costs: Again to bring forward the case of Turkey, the EU membership process has been tough and tiring and costs are continuously rising as well public support decreasing because despite democratization reform success, Turkey still faces with veto power of the Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Germany and France which stand against the full membership option due to several conflicts and negative perceptions. Whereas in the Albanian case, this does not seem to proceed so. Albania does not have any intractable conflict with any EU member country and it will gain support and votes as long as it acquires progress. Therefore the costs are not hurting and the barriers are not impassable.<sup>35</sup>

To conclude, this section presented an overall view on the process of democracy promotion in Albania since 1990s until recently. It argues that we notice a shift of strategies however not a complete transformation from a political approach (led by US but comprising other European states and organizations like Germany, Finland, OSCE etc as well) to a

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<sup>35</sup> Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2005.

Paul J. Kubicek, *The European Union and Democratization*, London, Routledge, 2003.

Note: These assumptions are based on a rational-choice model of action and an actor-orientated analysis. From this perspective, actors take their decision to comply with the norms set by the EU following a cost-benefit analysis. The above conditions developed and tested by Schimmelfennig / Sedelmaier and additionally by Kubicek, provide us with useful insights into the possible impact of conditionality in democracy promotion.

developmental approach dominated by European Union enlargement framework. The first democracy promotion steps were directed toward liberties of political parties and political personalities and the conduction of free and fair elections, yet through years the framework broadened to sustainable development based on principles of transparency, rule of law and human rights. We deduce that EU is a valid strategy because despite of being a top-down approach it has acquired huge public support; therefore although initiatives are brought forward by EU the political and civil forces seem willing to comply with the new rules. However is this all that needs to be done? The conclusion section will deal with this question and provide some modest but important recommendations for improvement.

## CONCLUSION

The last report released in December 2010 about the Democracy Index of 165 independent states has graded Albanian democracy with 5.86 points out of 10 and positioned it as the 84<sup>th</sup> country in the world. From a categorization of regimes from full *democracies to flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes*, Albania stands in the third group with *Political participation* and *Electoral Process and Pluralism* being its lowest and highest indicators respectively. Overall, the report argued that for the past two years democracy was in retreat in almost all regions of the world.<sup>36</sup>

The research clearly advocated that free and fair elections are necessary conditions for democracy but it would never be consolidated if there is not a sufficient political participation, a supportive democratic political culture and an efficiently working government.<sup>37</sup> As stated above in the paper, the electoral mechanism and pluralism in political parties was part of the main rhetoric of democracy promoters for the post-communist Albania; however none of the governing institutions in the country succeeded in building strong legal basis to enforce these principles. In addition, the main problem with democratization of Albania comes as a result of the disinterest of the people to participate in voting.<sup>38</sup> For instance, the last elections held in June 2009, recorded a voting turnout of 46% that is less than half of the voting population.<sup>39</sup> Thus, it is of utmost importance to increase the public interest and participation in voting by building effective institutions that will ensure Albanians

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<sup>36</sup> Democracy Index 2010: Democracy in Retreat, A report from the Economist Intelligence Unit, December 2010, p.3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.25.

<sup>39</sup> Jonilda Koci, "Albanian Elections: Free, Fair and too Close to Call", 29 June 2009, [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/features/2009/06/29/feature-01](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2009/06/29/feature-01) (20 November 2010).

that their fundamental right to choose those who will govern them will be fully recognized and respected during and after the vote.

To conclude, democracy promoters especially like US and EU have been crucial external institutions that not only facilitated democratization but even initiated it with the consent of the Albanian public. However, one major problem with such strategies is that democracy is offered as a good rather than a value. For instance, what is it that indeed makes Albania seek for EU membership: Human rights and democracy principles or economic progress and free flow of capital and people? Or, now that we notice problems in the functioning of democracy in leading Western states, how credible these countries are as democracy promoters in accomplishing their goal of ensuring long term consent of the Albanian state and public to democratic principles? These challenging questions may be part of future researches however what we can conclude for now is that, the concern of democracy promoters should be to support institutions that embrace democracy as a value in order to ensure that even in economic crisis or global conflicts, the retreat from democracy should not be an option.

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