



**ALBANIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROGRESS FROM A POLITICAL
CULTURE APPROACH**

MASTER THESIS

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APPROACH

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**ALBANIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROGRESS FROM A POLITICAL CULTURE
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ABSTRACT

This study has a modest contribution in the discourse of democratization process for the post-communist countries from a perspective of political culture. Through the empirical analyses and findings in this research, I intend to find out the correlation that political culture has on the development of democratization process in Albania.

Albania is an uncommon case study for studying democratic consolidation since the country has a distinct political history, *a sui generis* case. This indicates that the country's history over the previous few decades has been marked by multiple government transitions from autocratic to democratic, with each losing democratic qualities and so failing to consolidate democracy.

Furthermore, I am convinced that in order to proceed toward a consolidated democracy, we must first identify the variables that have the potential to influence the process. My objective is to focus solely on Albania's progress over these years of transition in order to expose variables such as political culture.

Key words: Democratization, Political Culture, Albania

ABSTRAKTI

Ky studim ka një kontribut modest në diskursin e procesit të demokratizimit të vendeve postkomuniste nga këndvështrimi i kulturës politike. Nëpërmjet analizave empirike dhe gjetjeve në këtë kërkim, synoj të zbuloj korrelacionin që ka kultura politike me zhvillimin e procesit të demokratizimit në Shqipëri.

Shqipëria është e pazakontë për të studiuar konsolidimin demokratik pasi vendi ka një histori të veçantë politike, një rast *sui generis*. Kjo tregon se historia e vendit gjatë dekadave të mëparshme është shënuar nga kalime të shumta qeveritare nga autokratike në demokratike, ku secili ka humbur cilësitë demokratike dhe kështu ka dështuar në konsolidimin e demokracisë.

Për më tepër, jam i bindur se për të ecur drejt një demokracie të konsoliduar, së pari duhet të identifikojmë variablat që kanë potencialin të ndikojnë në proces. Objektivi im është të fokusohem vetëm në progresin e Shqipërisë gjatë këtyre viteve të tranzicionit për të ekspozuar variabla siç është kultura politike.

Fjalët kyçe: Demokratizim, Kulturë Politike

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The last words of thanks go to my family. I thank my parents and my sister for their patience and encouragement. Their unconditional support inspired me throughout these years.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis, titled “*Albania’s Democratization Progress from a Political Culture Approach*” is my original work except quotations and citations duly acknowledged. I declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree in any university or institution.

(.....)

Sadije Mullaymeri

Date: July, 2022

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Everything is cultural," and hence culture constructs, challenges, and reproduces social order (Michel Foucault 1978). In this context, if people think that by working together, they can act as "free subjects" without fear, and that they can alter unpleasant situations and policies, the impact on government policies will undoubtedly exist, regardless of the extent to which this influence exists. Albanian citizens do not have a high participation on the decision-making and in politics due to the lower trust in their government. There is a relation between the Albanian's political culture that affect their lower trust on government. Then due to lower level in political trust they seem to avoid their participation on politics.

Lack of civic participation is a feature of post-communist countries and, more broadly, post-authoritarian states because they share some common elements that contribute to this lack of participation, such as: people do not believe that their behavior or opposition to certain policies will result in a change in government policies, they fear the consequences that may follow because they are not "free subjects," and people do not trust civil society because they believe that it is corrupted and it doesn't represent their interest. Academicians believe that there is a link between nations that have experienced government persecution for a long time and have comparable behavior based on their studies of political culture at various academic focus groups and discussions.

The purpose of this thesis is to underline the significance of an inherently supportive political framework in encouraging the process of democratization. My plausible explanation is that

Albanian citizens do not have a high participation on the decision-making and in politics due to the lower trust in their government and this is an inherited syndrome for decades. Then due to lower level in political trust they seem to avoid their participation on politics.

Therefore, why would we aim to investigate the democratization process? I would like to address this issue by citing one definition of democracy that will fit our objective in this study. *Thus, democratization is a procedure that results in a more open, more participatory, and less authoritarian society because democracy is a system of government that typifies, in a variety of institutions and instruments, and in the perfect of political sovereignty that depends on the determination of the individuals* (Boutros-Ghali, 1996,1).

Measuring democracy and investigating its evolution in Albania would reveal whether there is a link between the existing states of democracy and autocracy. I am convinced that in order to progress toward consolidated democracy, we must first identify the elements with the potential to influence the process. We may be unable to proceed unless the variables are revealed. The process's performance will be measured by determining where Albania is positioned now in its democratic process and why it is not progressing. In this way, the current examination will help us grasp all of the hidden and evident causes behind it. The process of democracy is critical for a country since it develops, activates, and make society to participate in the public sphere. In a synergistic connection between state and citizens, a democratized government protects rights and shares responsibilities. The more this trend progresses, the less authoritative a society becomes. If we wish to differentiate the amount of development of a certain society, we must look at the level of democratization that society has been able to achieve.

This phrase "political culture" is quite complicated, so various scholars define this differently. Few among them, such as Almond and Verba (1963), believe that political culture is comprised of just few key elements: people's beliefs, values, and attitudes. Almond and

Verba were unable to identify how people influence political systems and vice versa. Clearly, they state that *"a nation's political culture is the distinctive distribution of patterns of attitude toward political objects among its citizens"* (Almond & Verba, 1989, 13). These characteristics are also listed in Ian McLean and Alex McMillan's definition, which states that political culture encompasses *"the attitudes, beliefs, and values that underpin the operation of a specific political system"* (McLean & Alex, 2009).

Various theorists had already tried explaining this process by identifying the factors of successful or failed democratization. Various democratization theories have failed to establish a concrete definition of the conditions that a country must achieve in order to become democratic. Many democratization ideas have identified the characteristics that hasten this process. Albania can never be completely democratic unless the true causes and forces impeding the democratic process are uncovered. The foreign impact is one component that underpins democratization ideas. For many post-communist nations, like Albania, international influence (particularly that of the EU) has had a significant impact on the democratic process by providing technical support. Despite foreign organisations' efforts to aid the transition in Albania, more has to be done to democratize the country. It is important to note in this perspective that tremendous progress toward democracy was accomplished during the initial years of pluralism. *"Albania was the first country in Eastern Europe to sign a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the E.U.,"* the authors write (Tepshi & Qato, 2015, 364). Meanwhile, *"Albania was on the verge of signing a new contractual agreement with the E.U. in 1996, but the disputed parliamentary elections in May 1996, combined with the acute financial and social crisis that ensued in early 1997, put a halt to this process"* (Tepshi & Qato, 2015, 364). Therefore, I claim throughout the thesis that studying internal reasons, such as political culture, political determination, and the sort of decisions taken by leaders, as well as their democratic normative orientation, may assist explain why Albania did not democratize.

Another prominent idea comes from the writings of many researchers who have written on democracy and its relation with economic growth such as Daniel Lerner (1968) and Samuel M. Lipset (1959-1960). They support the theory and the development paradigm. According to this point of view, democratization and economic growth are both causative variables. Albania has faced several obstacles since the demise of communism. Many of these obstacles were removed, including market liberalization and economic prosperity. Despite these achievements, Albania did not reach the level of a complete democracy. Several studies have been conducted to try to understand why Albania is still seeking to democratize.

Conversely, other theorists believe society's function and traits in decision making. According to Lipset, there is a link between development and democracy. He goes on to say that if citizens are participatory and tolerant, and these attitudes spread among the masses, the desire for a state in governance develops and leads to a transformation (Lipset, 1959). Political culture is a key aspect that may help this process. Many scholars have stressed its critical significance in the process of democratization. Putnam (1994), for example, discovered a substantial relationship between the prevailing political culture and the character and quality of a political system (Inglehart, 1997; Newton, 1999). In this regard, it is critical to stress that *"the amount of imutual trust among individuals, which Putnam quantifies, and involvement in various social groups, which is also measurable, raise the quantity of social capital within a community"* (Tzanakis, 2013).

According to Inglehart (1997), the culture of trust and tolerance has boosted levels of information and communication exchange between individuals. According to several experts' beliefs regarding the prerequisites for effective democratization, each country has its unique set of events that may have pushed it toward democratization. Although political culture is important and crucial to one of the primary ideas of democracy, its presence or absence among citizens cannot predict whether or not democratization would be effective. A comprehensive

investigation of the leaders' democratic views will be studied as another independent variable in the current study to strengthen the theoretical framework.

Thus, according to Mainwaring and Pérez-Lián (2013), "*democracy thrives when political leaders pursue moderate policies and show a normative affinity for democracy.*" Furthermore, according to Mainwaring and Pérez-Lián, barriers to the democratic process may arise if the political class supports and adopts strong anti-democratic viewpoints. When political leaders express political views that are diametrically opposite to those of other political players and show no commitment to democratic discourse, the country's political structure becomes more receptive of democratic procedures. Mainwaring and Pérez-Lián support a reasoning that advances the dispute over political culture theory based on this premise. There are, nevertheless, certain similar qualities shared by countries that have successfully navigated the transition period. A democratically inclined leader and a supporting political culture are critical characteristics that can contribute to democracy.

The fundamental purpose of this thesis is to identify and examine all apparent and invisible elements that have hampered Albania's democratic transition. The research will conduct a thorough evaluation of the literature in order to create a conceptual framework that will be utilized to examine Albania's political culture. How the political culture is an impediment to a country's successful route toward democratization.

Using a bottom-up perspective, this thesis presents a comprehensive account of the theoretical foundations of political culture. According to the bottom-up method of analyzing political culture, the people influence and drive the elite to make particular decisions in changing the regime. But in Albanian case, since there is a lack of democratic political culture, I assume that political leaders will not have a normative preference for democracy, which would be reflected in their political decisions.

However, my objective is to focus solely on Albania's progress over these years of transition in order to expose variables (such as political culture) as well as conceptualizing the present status and finding out whether there is any risk of reverting to the authoritarian regime. A qualitative methodology of research is used to find out the relation that political culture and democratically oriented leaders' approach have shaped the process of democratization in Albania throughout these years. In addition, to support the *research question: "How has political culture influenced the progress of democracy in Albania?"* Some other empirical question would be unavoidably (such as: -Are citizens aware of their importance on civic engagement and activities? -What is their engagement extent and their satisfaction with politics? -What are their perception on politics?)

As instrument for the empirical questions, I used the online survey with Albanian citizens to find out the progress done towards democracy through the engagement and participation of citizens and their interest in politics. The method used, will examine specially the Albanian's citizens engagement and their political culture for the current situation. In order for the data gathered to be valid I analyzed them based on the studies done from Albanian Institute of International Studies (AIIS). The parameters of the third wave of the World Values Survey will be utilized in this study to compare the elements of Albanian political culture after the fall of the regime until today's progress of democracy. In order to demonstrate the relationships between the variables, the Freedom House indexes and reports will be evaluated as an intermediary instrument that contains aspects of political culture and democratization in its construction. The Freedom House Democracy Score will be used to investigate the extent of democracy as well as citizens' views toward democratic principles. This comparison will be used to assess and link key aspects that impact democracy (e.g., political culture).

1.1 Contribution of Research

This study would have a modest contribution in the discourse of democratization process for the harsh post-communist countries under the influence of political culture. Democratization is such a complex process where many internal or external actors and factors yield various outcomes in different cases. Through the empirical analyses and findings from the methods used in this research, I intend to find out the correlation that political culture has on the development of democracy in Albania. Furthermore, I would like to discover the progress of Albania in these transitional years after 1990s. And if there is any correlation between the current status of democracy and political culture.

I am convinced that in order to proceed toward a consolidated democracy, we must first identify the variables that have the potential to influence the process. We may not be able to move forward unless we unhide the variables. Previous studies have examined why certain post-communist nations were able to attain a degree of consolidated democracy while others remained in the grey zone. However, my objective is to focus solely on Albania's progress over these years of transition in order to expose variables (such as political culture) as well as conceptualizing the present status and finding out whether there is any risk of reverting to the authoritarian regime.

Citizens' behaviors and beliefs will be shaped by their inherited persistent political culture, which will determine their level of involvement or participation in the public arena. In a liberal government, they may become more aware of their duties and democratic norms, and vice versa. They integrate with society. Under these situations, citizens, whether in various political positions or positions of leadership, are willing to make democratic decisions rather than subjective ones in order to maintain and enjoy the profits of their status.

1.2 Methodology

For this study, a qualitative approach was used as the research method. The research method entails empirical work with the acquisition of facts that might corroborate, contradict, or challenge ideas, allowing for knowledge and clarification of various findings. In qualitative research, a method called as induction is used to collect data, and from the data gathered, I intend to interpret my concepts and theories.

A qualitative approach was regarded more appropriate for doing this study since it allows for additional depth. The study's independent variable or causative element of democratization is political. Analyze of this variable would be carried out using a combination of longitudinal correlations, in observing the same democratic variables over different time periods of Albania's democratization process. The focus would be on the progress done lately in the process of democratization and Albania's currently status. Is there and development of the process during the last years of democratization, how has the behavior and engagement of citizens have changed throughout these years and if this has affected on the process.

These approaches are characterized as suitable for describing casual processes. A qualitative methodology of research is used to find out the relation that political culture has on shaping the process of democratization in Albania throughout these years. In addition, to support the *research question: "How has political culture influenced the progress of democracy in Albania?"* Some other data collection questions would be unavoidably (such as: -Are citizens aware of their importance on civic engagement and activities? -What is their engagement extent and their satisfaction with politics? -What are their perception on politics?) To find out the effects of political culture. Hence on the study I consider political culture merely the belifes and attittudes of interaction between the citizens and politics.

The following methods are seemed as appropriate for carring out this study:

As instrument for the empirical questions, I used the online survey with Albanian citizens to find out the progress done towards democracy through the engagement and participation of citizens and their interest in politics. The method used, will examine specially the Albanian's citizens engagement and their political culture for the current situation. In order for the data gathered to be valid I analyzed them based on the studies done from Albanian Insitiute of International Studies (AIIS). The parameters of the third wave of the World Values Survey will be utilized in this study to compare the elements of Albanian political culture after the fall of the regime until today's progress of democracy. In order to demonstrate the relationships between the variables, the Freedom House indexes and reports will be evaluated as an intermediary instrument that contains aspects of political culture.

I. Survey

As instrument for the empirical questions, I used the online survey with Albanian citizens to find out the progress done towards democracy through the engagement and participation of citizens and their interest in politics. The method used, will examine specially the Albanian's citizens engagement, interest and their beliefs on politics. I used online survey with the Albanian citizens to find out the level of citizens engagement in politics and their trust on institution. Transparency and civic engagement are critical instruments for developing effective governance. Both contribute to provide the circumstances for citizens to understand and assess the choices made on their behalf by the government, as well as to guarantee that their own needs and perspectives are included in the decision-making process.

Transparency and engagement can assist to eliminate corruption and government misbehavior. They are also more beneficial instruments since they contribute to the creation of situations conducive to increased trust. Finally, they assist governments in drawing on individuals' skills and expertise to allow improved decision making and delivery of more effective public services. **My plausible explanation** is that Albanian citizens do not have a

high participation on the decision-making and in politics due to the lower trust in their government and this is an inherited syndrome for decades. Then due to lower level in political trust they seem to avoid their participation on politics. Through conducting this survey, I want to measure if there is any correlation between:

- Political trust and interest of citizens to engage in politics.

I used the snowballing method to reach also Albanian officials, and taking into account also their answers like citizens of this country. Sampling strategy: I use my online platforms connection to reach Albanian citizens. I shared the survey link with them, which means they were randomly selected. I did not employ any stratification or categorization. I intended to choose them at random in order to discover distinct characteristics, so that I could link the sample to my research question.

II. Statistics and Data from the Freedom House Index

The parameters of the third wave of the World Values Survey will be utilized in this study to compare the elements of Albanian political culture after the fall of the regime until today's progress of democracy. In order to demonstrate the relationships between the variables, the Freedom House indexes and reports will be evaluated as an intermediary instrument that contains aspects of political culture and democratization in its construction. The Freedom House Democracy Score will be used to investigate the extent of democracy as well as citizens' views toward democratic principles. This comparison will be used to assess and link key aspects that impact democracy (e.g., political culture).

1.3 Operationalization of Terms

I will examine specially the Albanian citizens' engagement to evaluate if their political culture has been affected changed or not compare that with previous years of transition. A satisfactory theoretical explanation for democracy as well as for its failure would be useful because it could help formulate conscious strategies of democratization and because it would provide a theoretical basis on which to make predictions of democracy in the Albanian case. The structural approach (reflected in the political culture variable) and the agent-oriented approach (represented by leaders' democratic tendencies) made up the theoretical features. Because these two methods are rarely integrated in democratization studies, it may be stated that this thesis adds theoretical value to democratization studies.

Albania is an uncommon case study for studying democratic consolidation since the country has a distinct political history, *a sui generis case*. This indicates that the country's history over the previous few decades has been marked by multiple government transitions from autocratic to democratic, with each losing democratic qualities and so failing to consolidate democracy.

1.4 Literature Review

Keeping in mind that political culture is a component of the structural approach, Lipset's work was also concurrent with theory-building efforts by a number of researchers centered on the link between political culture and democracy (Pye and Verba 1965; Almond and Verba 1963). Many academics had interpreted modernity as a source of a direct link among democracy and a political culture that permits organized involvement of the public, therefore impacting how the elite rule. Despite being significantly different from Lipset's theoretical perspective, the political culture school's theoretical approach highlights the obstacles that civilizations must face for becoming modernized. Because it combined material progress, democracy, and modernity, Lipset's argument was embraced by the writers of the political culture school. Political culture studies are concerned with a society's perceptions and political behavior. In this sense, a country's political culture impacts how it is governed and defines the structure of government.

Gabriel Almond coined the term "*political culture*" in 1960, and it was expanded upon by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963. Almond and Verba's research tried to understand how people impact the political system and vice versa. More specifically, "*political culture relates explicitly to the pattern of individual attitudes and orientation toward politics among political system participants*" (Gabriel Almond & Sydney Verba, 1963). Almond and Verba divide political orientation aspects into three categories: cognitive, affective, and evaluative. Scholars highlight that political culture impacts people's political conduct, which in turn determines the consequences of that individual on the political system.

This phrase "political culture" is quite complicated, so various scholars define this differently. Few among them, such as Almond and Verba (1963), believe that political

culture is comprised of just few key elements: people's beliefs, values, and attitudes. Almond and Verba were unable to identify how people influence political systems and vice versa. Clearly, they state that "*a nation's political culture is the distinctive distribution of patterns of attitude toward political objects among its citizens*" (Almond & Verba, 1989, 13). These characteristics are also listed in Ian McLean and Alex McMillan's definition, which states that political culture encompasses "*the attitudes, beliefs, and values that underpin the operation of a specific political system*" (McLean & Alex, 2009).

According to Almond and Verba (1963), a viable democratic system may be evolved into a society in which a country's political culture corresponds to its democratic institutions. In circumstances when political culture and democratic institutions do not align, the reverse occurs. The consolidation of democracy in that country becomes more complicated in these instances. Political culture is significant and directly related to democratic principles, which "are fundamental to the legitimacy of democratic regimes" (Klingermann, Fuchs, & Zielonka, 2006, 4). As the authors point out, optimal domestic and international structural circumstances are usually insufficient for democracy to survive and grow. It is also insufficient to establish institutions. So, with a large presence of factual evidence, it has become evident that understanding the routes of democracy without addressing political culture is difficult.

Another strategy was studied in the field to explain democracy. This alternate viewpoint highlights the relevance of varied agents who influence the democracy process by their opinions and decisions. This is referred to as the transition or agency paradigm. Devoted actors have a critical role in the establishment of democracy. Having said that, the role and influence of political actors on the democratization process is being assessed once more. In this way, this paradigm emphasizes the relationship between agency and "elite interaction" (Grugel, 2002, 59). The political leadership is an impetus for democratization. Schumpeter

has highlighted the importance of leaders in this process. Individual political motive and determination, according to Schumpeter, are not considered and cannot be recognized as independent as long as they are influenced by the leaders' and political parties' continuing political propaganda. As a result, the instruments of this political framework have had the effect of separating voters from the political repercussions of their actions (Mackie, 2001, 128).

There are several scholars who believe that democratic leadership may spark democracy. According to Diamond, Lijphart, and Linz, "*elites might bring democracy into being and keep it together as long as they are tolerant, moderate, willing to compromise, pacific, successful at finding solutions to pressing problems, and, above all, convinced that democracy is a better form of government than any other*" (Coppedge, 2012, 82). According to the scholars stated above, the relevance of a leader's attitude toward democratic norms and principles is a necessity for building democratic order in a society.

Mainwaring and Pérez-Lián enhance Schumpeter's thesis regarding the relevance of leadership' decisions, focusing on their normative and moral orientations. The authors contend that normative preferences for democracy or autocracy may push actors to favor a certain regime type, even if this jeopardizes the profitability and interest of personal interests. (López, 2015). Although this technique is critical to democratization research, it has limits. In general, actor-oriented theories tend to center the whole process on the abilities of a single political actor. Another of the ideas I suggest to incorporate in this approach synthesis is Leader's democratic normative orientation, as provided by Scott Mainwaring and Anbal PérezLián. They theorized their approach, which primarily focuses on the influence that political leaders have on the result of political development, in order to comprehend regime, transition, and survival. This variable (leaders' democratic normative orientations) is the focus of this study because it "*is located between structural and*

contingent acts or agency methods to understanding political regimes" (Mainwaring & Pérez-Lián, 2013, 29). As a result, these theoretical explanations form the foundation of my research, which concentrates on structural variables like political culture influence and agent-oriented approach components like political leaders' attitudes. Although scholars disagree about the direct relationship between culture and leadership normative orientations, they cannot deny its influence because "*structure and culture influence actors' choices of political regime, and, in some contexts, they exert a powerful influence*" (Mainwaring, S & Pérez-Lián, A, 2013, 30).

In order to contextualize and operationalize the term democratization throughout this thesis, I used the Pridham definition, which considers democratization "*as an umbrella term for the entire process of a regime's transition from authoritarian or totalitarian rule to the establishment of a new liberal democracy*" (Pridham, 2001, 16). Several writers have sought to operationalize democracy. Robert A. Dahl (1971) attempted to distinguish two theoretical components of democratization: participation rights and public contestation. Afterwards, in an attempt to operationalize Dahl's idea of democratization, Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang created a polyarchy scale with 5 variables and 18 categories.

In democratization process for the post-communist countries there are existing many publications and studies specifically explaining their transition, or regime change due to external factors (such as: international support) none of them has been focused on the internal factors such as political culture. This thesis makes an important contribution to our understanding of the specifics of the political culture of CEE countries in their post-communist trajectories. A satisfactory theoretical explanation for democracy as well as for its failure would be useful because it could help formulate conscious strategies of democratization and because it would provide a theoretical basis on which to make predictions of democracy in the Albanian case. The structural approach reflected in the

political culture variable made up the theoretical features. Because these two methods are rarely integrated in democratization studies, it may be stated that this thesis adds theoretical value to democratization studies.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework for Political Culture

2.1 The Concept of Political Culture

Political theories of democratization are categorized as an important subset of the structural approach to explaining the origins of democratization. As a result, in this thesis, these ideas will be taken to create a valid grounding concept. When dealing with the concept of political culture, it is crucial to concentrate on the characteristics of nations' political systems in order to assess if democratic aspects exist in the attitudes, cognitions, and perceptions of Albanian inhabitants. More recent political developments have provided light on certain elements of the impact of political culture on democracy.

After the 1990s, the existence or lack of its competencies resulted in a distinct conclusion. The endeavor to explain political activities through political culture is critical, and it is linked to the roots of political science itself. Political culture concepts and patterns (e.g., subculture, political socialization, elite) may be found in ancient antiquity writings. Political culture concepts were presented in ancient Greece through the writings of famous intellectuals such as Plato and Aristotle. Even if Plato introduces this concept in a crude manner, Aristotle invented the current rephrasing of the term. He emphasizes the factors of political culture and establishes a link between social stratification and political structure in the evolution of political life (Almond, 1992).

The notion that Aristotle stressed in the framework of political culture that assures political system stability is connected to the establishment of the middle class, as the presence of such a class ensures that isocial polarization between " *servants and lords*"

cannot arise. In a sense, a society's middle class is vital since it is accountable for ensuring that public works allocated to them are not abandoned, and they are not to seek or undertake their execution beyond their capabilities to achieve them. According to Aristotle, a society devoid of a middle class creates only "*slaves and lords*" and no free people, and this is far from the optimum form of governance, which he defined as "*the political community*." Aside from Plato and Aristotle, great authors like as Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Machiavelli have also contributed significantly to the formation of the notion of culture.

They didn't provide an analytical account of political culture as part of their theoretical contributions, as Plato and Aristotle did. When discussing political culture, Rousseau, for example, usually used terminology like "clothing" and "opinions." This is because, according to him, they are the laws that are highly significant for the residents of a nation, and they stay crucial even when other laws disappear, despite the fact that they are enhanced every day. Thus, according to him, a country's constitution is comprised of its people's habits, dress, and thinking. Tocqueville has thought about democracy in the United States as well as the origins of the French Revolution. In his speeches, he highlights the significance of political subculture. In doing so, he examines the political inclinations of the French aristocratic elite on the eve of the French Revolution. With the passage of time, the concept of political culture became even more modernized in the late nineteenth century as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which promoted material, moral, and intellectual advancement (Almond, 1992).

Many academics contributed to the development of the phrase "political culture." Among these are the sociological views represented by Weber, Mannheim, Durkheim, and others, as well as the psychoanthropological theories influenced by Freud and including Nevitt Sandford, Ruth Benedict, and many more. According to this viewpoint, political culture cannot be contained solely within the framework of political sciences without stressing its

interaction with other social sciences as long as this word is used to a whole system comprised of individuals' actions, perceptions, and beliefs. Nevertheless, as interest in political culture research grows, there is a need to establish the groundwork for the creation of a modern methodology and research technology known as survey research. (Almond, 1992).

2.2.1 Concept of Political Culture from Almond and Verba

Aside from the varied flows that emerged from the conceptual family of political culture, Almond and Verba attempted to use comparative methods among the five countries under study (i.e., the United States of America, West Germany, Britain, Italy, and Mexico) in their publication "*The Civic Culture*" (1963) in order to discover the correlation between political culture and liberal democracy. They employed the concept of political culture as both a key aspect in democracy and an important theoretical approach, which they developed on extensively in their book "*The Civic Culture*."

This phrase "*political culture*" is quite complicated, so various scholars define this differently. Few among them, such as Almond and Verba (1963), believe that political culture is comprised of just few key elements: people's beliefs, values, and attitudes. Almond and Verba were unable to identify how people influence political systems and vice versa. Clearly, they state that "*a nation's political culture is the distinctive distribution of patterns of attitude toward political objects among its citizens*" (Almond & Verba, 1989, 13). These characteristics are also listed in Ian McLean and Alex McMillan's definition, which states that political culture encompasses "*the attitudes, beliefs, and values that underpin the operation of a specific political system*" (McLean & Alex, 2009). Various theorists had already tried explaining this process by identifying the factors of successful or failed democratization. Various democratization theories have failed to establish a concrete definition of the conditions that a country must achieve in order to become democratic. Many

democratization ideas have identified the characteristics that hasten this process. Albania can never be completely democratic unless the true causes and forces impeding the democratic process are uncovered. The foreign impact is one component that underpins democratization ideas. For many post-communist nations, like Albania, international influence (particularly that of the EU) has had a significant impact on the democratic process by providing technical support. Despite foreign organisations' efforts to aid the transition in Albania, more has to be done to democratize the country.

In addition to expanding on the notion of political culture, their claim is founded on a distinction among three types of political culture: parochial, subject, and participant. Citizens in a parochial political culture are just aware of the presence of the central government, and "*parochial expects nothing from the political system*" (Almond & Verba, 1963, 17). Citizens in a subjective political culture consider themselves as subjects of the government rather than participants in the political process. "*The subject is conscious of specialized governmental power; he is affectively oriented to it, maybe taking joy in it, perhaps loathing it; and he judges it as legitimate or not,*" the authors write. "*However, the interactions toward the system on a broad level, as well as the output, administrative, or 'downward flow' side of the political system; it is fundamentally a passive relationship*" (Almond & Verba, 1963, 19). Citizens with a participatory political culture think that they might contribute to the system while simultaneously being directly influenced by it. Individual members of the participatory polity in this sort of political culture may be positively or negatively oriented toward a "active" role of political objects, according to Almond and Verba. People tend to be oriented toward an "active" role of the self in the polity, albeit their attitudes and assessments of such a role might range from acceptance to rejection... Almond and Verba (1963, p. 18) Almond and Verba note that, although providing a clear distinction based on their features, these sorts of political cultures do not remain

entire or unmodified when new parts of the political culture are introduced. This phrase means that *"when new and more specialized orientations change when participant orientations are required, the parochial orientations must adapt"* (Almond & Verba, 1963, 20).

Almond and Verba's central thesis is that democracy is more resilient in cultures where a parochial political culture is balanced by a participative political culture. Eatwell expands on this supposition, supporting Almond and Verba's theoretical perspective that a stable democracy requires a balance between a 'subject' and a 'participant' culture, as well as a high and stable level of support and social trust, which is created by the participation of people from various groups (Eatwell, 1997, 1). When relating to the idea of "civic" in the context defined by the academics, it restricts individual behavior to rational behavior, which requires the citizen to be *"well informed and to make decisions – for example, his decision on how to vote – on the basis of careful calculation as to the interests and principles he would like to see furthered"* (Almond & Verba, 1963, 29).

In reality, individual engagement in policy-making is an essential aspect in the context of the theoretical basis that emphasizes the relationship of the structure with the agent approach in democratization theories as an activator of political change. Almond and Verba also highlighted the link between micro- and macro-politics. They claimed that *"since political systems are composed of persons, it may be assumed that specific psychological inclinations in an individual or among social groupings are significant for the operation of political systems and their outputs"* (Almond & Verba, 1963, 31). They say that socialization strengthens democratic regimes through patterns that allow individuals to maintain the inevitable contradiction between *"primary, his obedient output, and the role of activist input."* (Almond & Baba, 1963, 35).

Ronald Inglehart describes the theoretical underpinning of socialisation, stating that early socialisation is an incentive factor for cultural change. From this viewpoint, it is critical

to underline those individual inclinations are shaped by culture, notably political culture. Among other things, Inglehart emphasises that political culture cannot be changed rapidly and immediately. Continuing along this line of thought, Inglehart contended that the actions could not have resulted from external stimuli because they reflect early models adopted during the process of socialisation and interaction with other members of society. Furthermore, these patterns are difficult to modify since they are firmly embedded in everyone's uniqueness. He explains that the way in which individuals react to events is impacted by internal models of subjective orientations that are culturally shaped and expanded in the long run. He also believes that these subjective orientations represent changes in the process of socialization, whereby this process itself is altered by early learning that affects subsequent schooling. According to Inglehart, this premise indicates that the behaviors cannot be evaluated as a response of external inputs (Inglehart, 1990, 19).

Those two ideas are linked by the mechanism of socialization, which uses the socialization process to put the person at the center. This procedure is passed down via decades. This means that political culture elements are mirrored in society when the circumstances favor their manifestation. As a result, they have a direct impact on democratizing processes by supporting or inhibiting democratic culture. Under these conditions, the political elite play a role of enormous importance and are crucial in this process throughout their decisions. Welzel elaborates on this point extensively. The author has investigated the power of the political elite on the influence on the democratic tendencies of a country. He has stressed that key individuals representing the opposition regime and the government regime, who comprise the elite strata, are often regarded as critical influencers of democratic processes (Welzel, 2008, 82).

Political culture imply that policymakers should emphasize changing specific cultural attributes of a country's citizens to increase its propensity for greater

“democraticness.” Individual engagement in policy-making is an essential aspect in the context of the theoretical basis that emphasizes the relationship of the structure with the agent approach in democratization theories as an activator of political change. In this study, I assume that democratically orientated leaders and political cultural support can either contribute negatively or favorably to the democratization process. The purpose of this thesis is to underline the significance of an inherently supportive political framework, together with a combination of democratically oriented leaders, in encouraging the process of democratization. Therefore, the thesis's core premise is based on the notion that in a society that reflects a democratic political culture, the likelihood of creating democratically oriented leaders is significant.

Chapter 3: Features of Political Culture in Albania and the process of Democratization

Several nations have been democratized in the years afterwards, and along the varied paths of the democratic process in different countries, whether under the influence of different circumstances. Others, however, have not, and such countries risk becoming authoritarian regimes. In this thesis, the discussion of why Albania's democratic process failed focuses mostly on political culture. Various studies on democracy in Albania say that individuals are not aware that exercising their political rights might contribute to the democratic process. As indicated in research done by Freedom House, a score of 4 out of 7 was assigned to Albania in terms of its democratic performance from one year before its experienced regime transition until 1994 (Horowitz, 2006). (Horowitz, 2006).

Albania has achieved tremendous progress in the first phase of its transformation, as evidenced by this. Nonetheless, its transition is insufficient. The process analysis then shifts to an examination of internal factors, such as political culture, because the political system changed, complementing some prerogatives of democracy both economically through market

liberalization and free competition, and politically through party pluralism and free and fair elections, but Albania remained classified as a hybrid regime. This year it shifted from the “hybrid regime” to a “flaws democracy”. After 32 years of transition process stacked in the hybrid regime, with the last data from Freedom House Analysis, Albania was passed to the phase of a “flaws democracy”. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010), free and fair elections are required for democracy. Such elections, however, would never be cemented unless there is adequate political engagement, a supporting democratic political culture, and a well-functioning administration.

3.1 Albanian’s Political Culture under Communism and in the first years of Transition

Albania's political, economic, and social upheavals throughout the communist period were influenced and have powerfully driven the curse of political faults founded on Karl Marx's ideology and the theory known as Marxism. The significance of Marxism is based on communism belief that it was implemented as part of various socialist groups until 1914, and that it *"initially comprised of three connected ideas: a philosophical anthropology, a theory of history, and an economic and political agenda"* (McLellan & Chambre, 2019). Later, a new Marxist ideology emerged. This is known as Soviet Marxism. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, it was expanded by Vladimir Ilich Lenin and altered by Joseph Stalin to become the official philosophic ideology of the communist parties. This philosophic concept contributed to the establishment of Albania's communist regime. The communist party was so dependent on this concept that Albania had *"the most rigid and Stalinist rule of all the Socialist nations"* (Wilczynski, 1981, 10). The spread of this philosophy would result in the establishment of a totalitarian government in Albania, affecting all aspects of Albanian life. This technique was centered on instilling dread and horror in people. According to Ahmeti (2015), the tragedy of this government in Albania would be not only that it would encourage and reinforce the dictator Enver Hoxha's rule, and that it would also gain popular support *"by*

'enabling' him to acquire the power of absolute authority" (Ahmeti, 2015). Albania became a totalitarian country during Enver Hoxha's government, one of Europe's most secluded locations, where life was controlled and constantly monitored. Policies during those years were aimed at enforcing collective thinking. Albanians couldn't make their own decisions about anything, even how they dressed and who they wanted to marry. State control was all-encompassing. As a result, the structure of social life may be described as thoroughly controlled and monitored.

Terror and disorder gripped all sectors of social life during the communist government. Terror was accompanied by the murder or incarceration of any liberal deputy members, opposition members, and intellectuals who dared to defy Hoxha's authority (Krasniqi, 2004, 28). The party-state maintained comprehensive control over all parts of Albanian social life throughout the communist years, including all arenas of intellectual activity that may influence the beliefs that challenged this authoritarian rule. As a result, colleges, the media, and schools were subjected to enormous pressure. Not only were all activities monitored, but so were the textbooks utilized by these institutions. Intellectuals were persecuted to the point where many left, while others were incarcerated and barred from practicing their profession. There was no free press. Before being disseminated and put at the service of the people, all published materials had to fulfill the party's requirements (Dedej, 2015).

The media, like every other institutional and social component, was controlled by the state and used to disseminate the ideology that kept the totalitarian dictatorship in place. To achieve this goal, the content disseminated by the media was well-structured in order to propagate the state-ideas party's and ideology. The government run and controlled all element of social life in this manner by mobilizing the people to establish the "*Socialist*" Albania. When referring to the press, this included the written press, which was also used to

disseminate collective propaganda (Paja, 2015). As a result, Albania's communist regime, which lasted over 50 years, utterly resisted democratization. Elite communists did not allow the establishment of democratic preconditions because "*maintaining its power with ideology as an instrumental tool to control the masses*" was crucial to them, and "*any kind of reform was considered valid as long as it did not threaten their political power*" (Çullhaj, 2017, 26). The isolation of Albania, as well as the development of these harsh policies, had a considerable impact on the country's fate after the 1990s.

The O'Donnell and Schmitter's idea are applied in the thesis and helps to support the empirical framework of the investigation. They stress that "*the 'transition' is the period between one political system and another.*" "O'Donnell and Schmitter (1991, p. 6) They emphasize this specifically "*Transitions are defined, on the one hand, by the beginning of the process of dismantling an authoritarian regime and, on the other hand, by the establishment of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative*" (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1991, 6). In order to determine where Albania is in this transition, I examined the most crucial events that have affected the process's development. Many young people began to look to the West in July 1990. They broke through the barricade of foreign embassies in search of asylum. This incident appears to signal the beginning of the end of the communist era that transformed Albania into a totalitarian dictatorship, and the beginning of a new age: the period of a lengthy and unending democratic transition.

Albania, located in the periphery of Europe, was not only the final country to remain loyal to the communist regime (and so became more isolated than other former communist countries), but it was also "*the last East European Communist domino to fall*" (Biberaj, 1999, 64). As had previously occurred in history, Albania was heavily affected by and participated in regional political movements. This timeframe and all these years of transition

have determined the fate of Albania's future and may have been crucial in the creation of mass psychological traumas that have in some ways stopped time and have placed Albania in a status quo situation from which it can neither retreat nor advance as other democratized countries have. While attempting to construct a state, the government, comprised of people with little expertise, encountered challenges inherited from the previous system. Due to the pressures of negative economic conditions, Albania was forced to seek aid from international institutions such as the Monetary Fund, World Bank, and others. Abrahams, the Associate Director for Human Rights Watch program, who has worked in Albania for many years, would describe the economic scenario of those years as follows: inflation reduced by 10% and the economy rose by 11% in 1993, more than in any other European nation (Abrahams, 2015, 115).

Efforts were also made during the Democratic Party's tenure in office to restructure the court system, set the groundwork for a democratic country, and construct necessary institutions. It should be emphasized that the persons allocated to certain roles lacked experience, which was frequently reflected in the responsibilities they performed. Another difficulty that Albania faced in the post-1990s was the widely debated question of restoring land to previous owners that had been stolen from them owing to the Communist Party's collectivizing practices. For many years, this subject has been at the heart of arguments between ruling and opposition parties. The form and manner of compensation has long been a cause of contention, and it is frequently a prominent topic in political elections. The situation was exacerbated further by the destruction of private property during the initial years of transition, which was unprecedented in any other communist country (Biberaj, 1999, 117). Despite the ongoing emergence and resolution of political crises, the construction of a permanent conflict culture, partially inherited but quickly ingrained in Albanian political heritage, frequently gave the appearance that Albania was on the way to democratization at

times. In terms of the existence of democratic characteristics during the early years of transition, the country was characterised by fairly weak institutional performance, non-professional administration that was readily swayed by political propaganda, and, above all, significant levels of corruption. *The scarcity of a democratic culture, inherited since the period of state formation has somehow altered the leaders not to make democratic political decisions in the nation's interest, but mostly make decisions directed on their personal interests. This has profoundly impacted the process of democratization by persistently inhibiting it.*

3.1.1 Civic and Political Rights during the First Years of Transition (1990-1997)

Albania was not only the region's last communist domino to fall, but it was also riddled with issues in the post-communist period, making it much more difficult to overcome subsequent crises until the 2000s. According to Biberaj (1999, 148), Albania was the least equipped of all the former communist nations to undertake meaningful reforms that would result in beneficial consequences for political and social life. Due to the country's difficult economic circumstances and significant political problems up to 1997, the level of crime and corruption was high.

Corruption, as one of the signs of a failing country, was highly prevalent, particularly among public administration employees. What defined them and other high-position holders in that era was the embracing appropriations of property too rapidly, which was also owing to the precarious economic circumstances they found themselves in. In this context, it is demonstrated that *"many authorities and politicians who were role models in 1992 fell victim to the greed and the craze for rapid gains, siphoning off monies designated for economic growth"* (Biberaj, 1999). Whereas many others were involved in illicit operations in an attempt to obtain financial power, resulting in advantages from privileges similar to what had happened with their predecessors during communism, imparting the concept and perception

among the populace that nothing had changed. Despite frequent pronouncements by government leaders that the battle against corruption was the major aim, the war was not comprehensive, therefore contributing in some manner to the formation of a culture of impunity.

The rule of law. Crime has infiltrated society so completely that foreign publications frequently accused the official machinery of complicity by failing to prosecute criminal organizations. When a result, *"as street crimes like as robberies, muggings, rapes, prostitution, and smuggling increased, organized crime's tendrils stretched deep into society"* (Biberaj, 1999, 175). Constitutional laws were developed in 1992 in response to the necessity for legal adjustments in order to implement certain reforms. "Draft constitutions" were also drafted in other post-communist nations as a functioning legal instrument to cover the voids left by political system changes. The formation of the separation of powers – the executive, legislative, and judicial – as one of the most fundamental elements of democracy was the cornerstone of this document. Despite efforts to improve the regulation of this independence, *"the proposal reflected a mix of a presidential and a parliamentary government"* (Biberaj, 1999, 175). Many inherited concerns influenced the troubled legal system, which would come to dominate Albanian society even today. During the communist era, several judges were replaced by newcomers who were not sufficiently prepared. This resulted in the formation of a gap associated with several issues in this subject (Biberaj, 1999, 175).

Free and Fair Elections. Albania has long had problems with elections, whether parliamentary or local. The primary issues have been allegations and counter-accusations about voting distortions, family voting, voting manipulation, vote stealing, and so on. Only the 1992 elections were acknowledged by the opposition in the history of parliamentary elections, while all others were disputed as rigged. The 1996 legislative elections mirrored the

context and tradition of election dispute, boycotts, and electoral crises. The 1997 legislative elections will be remembered for being held in a situation of high tension and linked with anxieties and terror; yet, foreign observers deemed them acceptable given the conditions at the time (Bogdani & Loughlin, 2007, 129).

It appears that the communist rule in Albania, via harsh measures and control over every element of life, not only prevented the formation of a liberal elite, but also established the legitimacy of compliance and indifference that would later on define the civil society.

The scarcity of a democratic culture, inherited since the period of state formation has somehow altered the leaders not to make democratic political decisions in the nation's interest, but mostly make decisions directed on their personal interests. This has profoundly impacted the process of democratization by persistently inhibiting it.

3.2 Civic and Political Rights in Albania from 2001 -2022

	Status	Freedom Rating	Civil Liberties	Political Rights
2002	Partly Free	3.5	4	3
2003	Partly Free	3	3	3
2004	Partly Free	3	3	3
2005	Partly Free	3	3	3
2006	Partly Free	3	3	3
2007	Partly Free	3	3	3
2008	Partly Free	3	3	3
2009	Partly Free	3	3	3

2010	Partly Free	3	3	3
2011	Partly Free	3	3	3
2012	Partly Free	3	3	3
2013	Partly Free	3	3	3
2014	Partly Free	3	3	3
2015	Partly Free	3	3	3
2016	Partly Free	3	3	3
2017	Partly Free	3	3	3
2018	Partly Free	3	3	3
2019	Partly Free	3	3	3

Source: Freedom House (1 = best, 7 = worst)

Civil Liberties and Political Rights for Albania; 2002 – 2019

According to reports spanning several years, the situation in Albania in terms of civil liberties and political rights has remained unaltered over this time. As a consequence, despite being towards the end of the third decade following the fall of the communist government, Albania remains a partially free country. In 2014, Freedom House launched components aimed primarily at civil and political rights. In reality, this categorisation presented a clear picture of the country's good accomplishments as well as its stumbles and regressions over the years. Albania has been classified as follows:

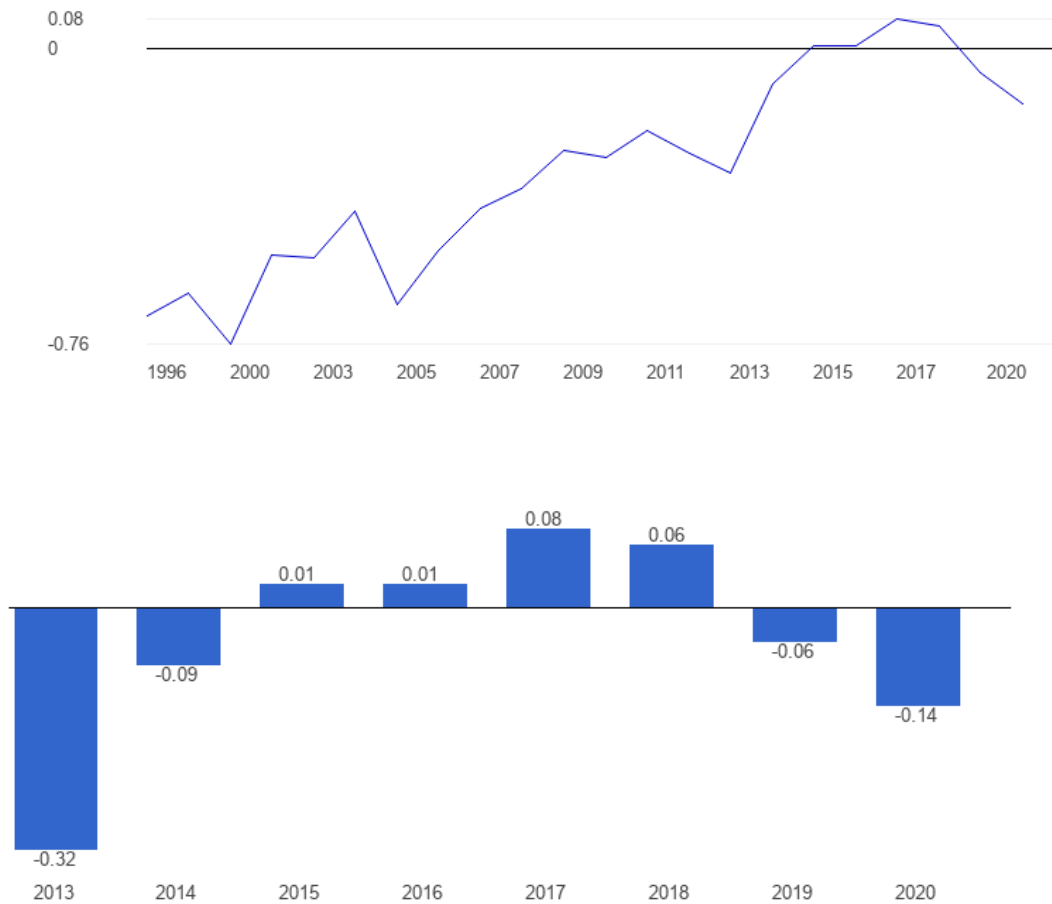
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Political Rights (ToT)	27/40 (+3)	27/40	27/40	28/40	28/40
Electoral Process:	8/12	8/12	8/12	8/12	8/12
Political Pluralism and participation:	13/16 (+3)	13/16	13/16	13/16	13/16
Functioning of Government:	6/12	6/12	6/12	7/12 (+1)	7/12
Civil Liberties:	40/60 (+1)	40/60	40/60	40/60	40/60
Freedom of Expression and Belief:	13/16	13/16	13/16	13/16	13/16
Associational and Organizational Rights:	9/12 (+1)	9/12	9/12	9/12	9/12
Rule of Law:	9/16	9/16	9/16	9/16	9/16
Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights:	9/16	9/16	9/16	9/16	9/16

Table 3 – Categorization of Civil Liberties and Political Right for Albania; 2014 -2018

The table above demonstrates a minor improvement in the domain of government functioning in 2017, although there have been no substantial changes overall. In terms of civil liberties, the studies highlight several challenges connected to women's rights and organized crime dealing with human trafficking, despite increased attempts to combat them. Furthermore, the study highlights drug manufacturing and trafficking as ongoing phenomena impeding Albania's road to integration and democratization.

Judicial System and Rule of Law have always been difficult all across the years of democratic transition because *"the judiciary's independence has been frequently damaged by arbitrary involvement from politicians from both the ruling and opposition parties"* (BTI, 2006, 5). The issues in this arena are diverse and not novel in Albania. They concentrate on issues carried over from the early years of transition, such as corruption and unfit and under-trained judges. The appointment of judges is another method through which political pressure is used to the judicial system. This situation has frequently resulted in deadlocks that have jeopardized the independence of the court. As a result, *"the court has typically failed to fight corruption in the judicial system and is commonly believed to be political,"* according to a 2016 report (Freedom House, 2016).

Government effectiveness, measures perceptions of the quality of public services, the civil service and its independence from political constraints, the quality of policy creation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies.



Source: Global Economy Index

Albanian democracy was put to the ultimate test in 2021, with the country's tenth multiparty parliamentary elections since communism's demise. The incumbent Socialist Party was re-elected for a third term, a record no political party had previously accomplished in post-communist Albania, maintaining 74 seats in Albania's unicameral parliament, the Kuvendi. Nevertheless, much of the pre- and post-election public discourse was filled with reciprocal recriminations and divisive language from the leaders of the major political parties and the president, resulting in episodes of public intimidation, injuries, and even deaths during the electoral campaigns. The parliamentary elections, which were based on an updated Electoral Code in 2020, had various novelties, including electronic

voting in certain polling places as part of a test project and preferential voting on party lists. The modifications made it possible for party leaders to run for parliament in up to four districts at the same time. This gave them an unfair edge over other candidates, which contradicts the democratic concept of equal opportunity.

The election's integrity was not completely intact, as genuine charges of vote buying, intimidation, and violence were revealed. On May 6, the Special Prosecution Office against Organized Crime and Corruption (SPAK) announced the opening of 35 criminal procedures, the majority of which included vote buying. The opposition Democratic Party formed a team entitled "Protect the Vote" to combat vote buying during the election, however this was viewed as a paramilitary operation and probably unlawful because parallel institutions to the police and army are outlawed by Albanian law. However, it points to deeper concerns of public skepticism in institutions that Albania has yet to provide for its inhabitants, namely a working liberal democratic system in which Albanians may freely pick their representatives without being pressured or intimidated.

President Ilir Meta actively campaigned against the incumbent Socialist Party in the run-up to the legislative elections, urging voters to use violence if their vote was compromised. Following Meta's outbursts, the US and the EU encouraged the country's top political leaders to "*show moderation*" and "*clearly oppose violence*." The Albanian president is mostly ceremonial and widely seen as apolitical. However, Meta went on to openly accuse the United States and the European Union of assisting Prime Minister and Socialist Party Chairman Edi Rama in seizing control of the state and the judicial system. In recent years, and particularly during 2021, factions within the Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI, founded by Meta in 2004) and the Democratic Party have increased their harsh rhetoric toward the United States and the European Union, claiming that they are meddling in Albania's sovereignty and internal affairs.

This anti-US and anti-EU rhetoric stems from significant political and financial foreign investment in various new law-enforcement bodies and the vetting process of the justice system, which has raised high expectations for investigations into abuse of power and corruption by current and former public officials. The Socialist Party reportedly stole a database containing sensitive personal data of 910,000 persons from e-Albania, (a government platform for the delivery of public services). The Socialist Party first disputed the existence of the database, but PM Rama eventually admitted that his party has kept an internal database since 2009 by collecting information from door to door in a so-called *patronage system*. Although no inquiry into this "system of patronage," or more broadly into how political parties get and use individuals' personal data, was launched.

National governance in Albania is democratic, yet it is controlled by *clientelistic party politics*. Elections are often competitive, but they are regularly plagued by *voting fraud*, manipulation, and other flaws. The civic sector participates in public discourse and interests to some extent, although it suffers from limited resources and is not effectively involved in policy discussions as required by law. Although the media is partially autonomous and provides some examination of public officials, most outlet owners utilize their platforms to influence the government and political parties. Local self-government is democratic, yet it is severely underfunded and incapable of providing necessary services to inhabitants. The judiciary is now under vetting until the end of 2024 and therefore only partially functioning; since the vetting process began, there has been a lot of hype that the judicial system will be more effective and independent, but it has yet to show real signs of working freely. Corruption is pervasive and creates dysfunction in several areas of government, despite the fact that new law-enforcement agencies founded since 2019 have shown promising successes in tackling corruption and organized crime.

3.3 Political Trust as an Indicator of Democracy Approval

Political trust is a very important indicator which synthesizes the positive perception of the actions of individuals and organizations. It can also be seen as a subjective phenomenon that shapes behaviours. Trust in the government may be established as the trust among the citizens that the government acts in the fairest possible way (Easton, 1965). Various reports based on actual studies related to the behaviours of Albanians towards the public institutions repeatedly testify that a logical basis instills a lack of trust in governmental institutions.

This fact is reported by the BTI (2003), which specifies that the efficiency of democratic institutions often is negatively influenced by interferences and influences exerted by the political actors. Under these conditions, these institutions often fail to protect and preserve their bias. Various problems have been noticed that seem to have influenced the loss of trust of the citizens towards the institutions.

The results that are found among the platforms of the political parties which seem more oriented towards certain personalities and interests than towards clear ideas and visions. Despite the repeated disappointments that the domestic political class has caused during the transition years, it seems that the Albanians are willing to embrace democracy. This is demonstrated by various polls. “The European Social Survey” conducted in 2012 shows that per cent of Albanians found it important to live in a democratically governed country, which was the highest share among 28 European countries and exceeded the unweighted average of 12 postcommunist countries by nine percentage points (BTI, 2018).

The process of decisionmaking, which often has resulted oriented by the interest more than by well-defined objectives to reach good governance, has shaped a half-democracy and a continuous political bloc that periodically reverses the process of European integration and

steady development. This condition has produced a low level of public trust, mainly in the Albanian governmental institutions, which are perceived as less trustworthy than international institutions like NATO and the EU, which inspire confidence. The results are specified in these parameters and in the report drafted by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (2020), which, through questionnaires, reached some conclusions related to aspects of civic engagement and participation as well as political trust in Albanian public institutions, which ask “citizens to rate their level of trust towards a number of Public Institutions at the central and local level as well as towards other important actors (Media, Civil Society etc)” (Lame & Pepa, 2020, 13-15). The authors also explain that:

- 2020 data show that the most trusted institutions in Albania are NATO and EU, which enjoy 74% and 72% of public trust, respectively (% of surveyed citizens expressing “I have great trust” or “Basically I trust”). In the midst of low trust levels in other institutions, Religious Institutions enjoy the third highest trust rating. More than one in every two Albanians (52%) state that they trust religious institutions; 15% do not have any opinion. Roughly one in three Albanians surveyed trusts the Government; the Government (34%) appears to enjoy greater trust than the Parliament (22%).

Chapter 4: Findings and Data Analysis

I assume that political cultural support can either contribute negatively or favorably to the democratization process. The purpose of this thesis is to underline the significance of an inherently supportive political framework, in encouraging the process of democratization. Therefore, the thesis's core premise is based on the notion that if a society reflects a democratic political culture, the likelihood of creating a consolidated democracy it will be significant.

Many indicators are used to collect data on the level and causes of democracy. The following characteristics of democratic political culture are analyzed and compared:

- The level of interest about political issues between citizens
- Engagement of the civil society
- Measuring citizens' perception of how the country is governed
- Citizens concrete behavior which shows their commitment to the political issues
- Citizens political trust in the legitimacy of the institutions.

I used **online survey** with the Albanian citizens to find out the level of citizens engagement in politics and their trust on institution. Transparency and civic engagement are critical instruments for developing effective governance. Both contribute to provide the circumstances for citizens to understand and assess the choices made on their behalf by the government, as well as to guarantee that their own needs and perspectives are included in the decision-making process. Transparency and engagement can assist to eliminate corruption and government misbehavior. They are also more beneficial instruments since they contribute to the creation of situations conducive to increased trust. Finally, they assist governments in drawing on individuals' skills and expertise to allow improved decision making and delivery of more effective public services.

My plausible explanation is that Albanian citizens do not have a high participation on the decision-making and in politics due to the lower trust in their government and this is an inherited syndrome which it has its roots in the political culture of Albania. There is a relation between the Albanian's political culture and citizens participation that affect their lower trust on government. Then due to lower level in political trust they seem to avoid their participation

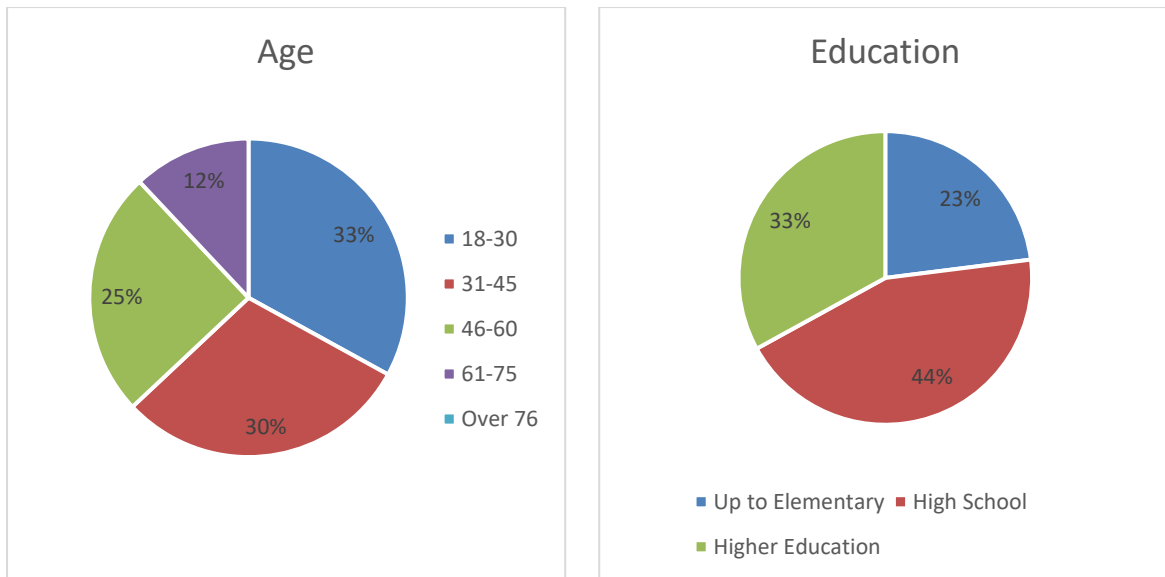
on politics. Through conducting this survey, I want to measure if there is any correlation between:

- Political trust and interest of citizens to engage in politics.

4.1 The main indicators used on survey for the “Engagement”

- i. **Knowledge and interest;** How well individuals believe they understand politics and political institutions, as well as their level of interest in the issues/ institutions.
- ii. **Engagement and participation;** The degree to which citizens engage in a wide range of political and civic activities/ initiatives.
- iii. **Efficacy and satisfaction;** The extent to which individuals think that political participation may bring change, as well as their level of satisfaction with political institutions.
- iv. **Citizens' perceptions** regarding parliament performance, MP accountability, political party funding, and voter involvement.

Part I: Demographics

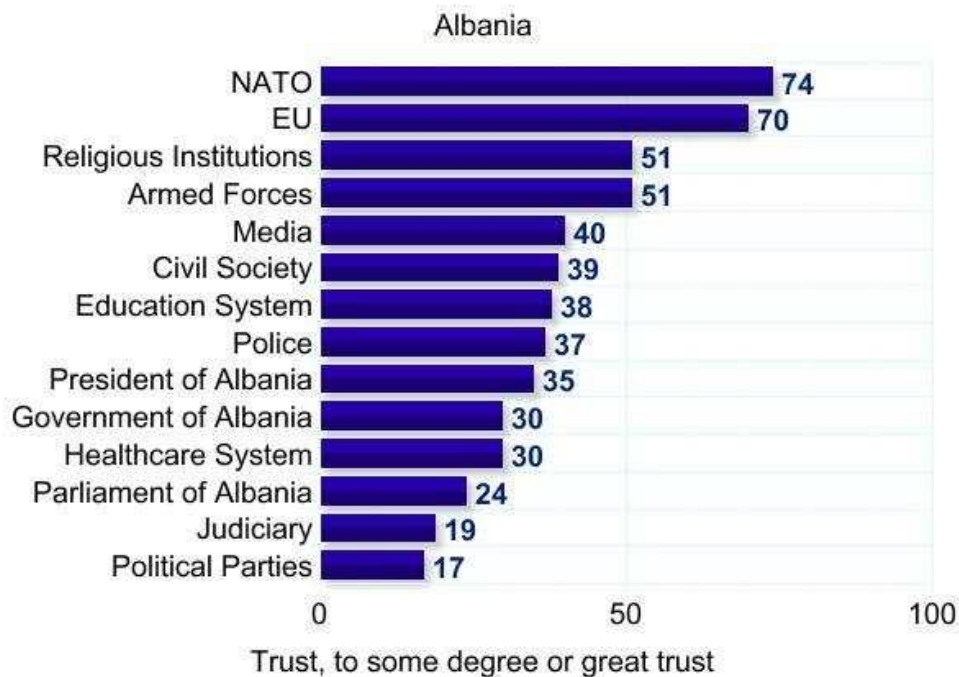


There were 47% male and 53% female. The distribution of survey was as follow; 64% urban and 36% rural.

Part II

- Low Interest in Politics

According to the data, half of the survey participants have little interest in politics, which allows politicians to make whatever decisions they want. Every second participant feels they have no capacity to influence decision-making at the local level, while two out of three believe the same at the national level. Part of the problem is that respondents associate politics solely with '*political party politics*,' which are seen negatively and defined as '*conflictual*' and 'focused on personal rather than citizens' interests'. And, given that barely one in every five participants believes that one may engage in politics without being a member of a political party (21.9 percent), this effectively excludes citizens from political participation.



Lack of civic participation is a feature of post-communist countries and, more broadly, post-authoritarian states because they share some common elements that contribute to this lack of participation, such as: people do not believe that their behavior or opposition to certain policies will result in a change in government policies, they fear the consequences that may follow because they are not "free subjects," and people do not trust civil society because they believe that it is corrupted and it doesn't represent their interest. Academicians believe that there is a link between nations that have experienced government persecution for a long time and have comparable behavior based on their studies of political culture at various academic focus groups and discussions.

- Political Engagement

Participants were readier and more willing to take actions if they felt strongly about an issue, where an increase in engagement is seen, particularly, in formal ways of participation such as '*taking an active part in a civic campaign or protest*', '*seeking information from state organs*' or '*participating in a meeting of the local council*'. The

majority of participants (80.9 percent) would be willing to engage for personal reasons/ benefits, to help family and friends (87.5 percent), or to pursue an interest shared with other people or their community (82.3 percent). Only 45.9 percent of participants said they would be willing to engage for a cause they believe in but that does not directly affect them.

During the last two decades, the Albanian people have typically participated in protests that were directly related to them, such as a perceived threat to one's life in the case of chemical weapons demontation in Albania or a concern for money in the case of the government raising taxes on a specific category.

- Efficacy and Satisfaction

More over one in every two participants (58.7 percent) felt they had no influence at all in decision making in their local region, and more than two in every three felt the same way about the country as a whole.

- Perception about the Parliament and Elected Representatives

Concerning the makeup of the Albanian parliament, nearly two out of three participants (65.4 percent) disagree that the Albanian Parliament is made up of recognized members of society who operate ethically, or that it has a fair representation of all parts of society (almost 60 percent). Every second participant (53 percent) disagrees that the Albanian Parliament operates in a transparent manner.

4.2 Main Findings

- Albanians are dissatisfied with the work of governing institutions and opposition parties, with two-thirds expressing dissatisfaction.

- Access to public information is vital to more than two-thirds of respondents.
- Citizens demand to know who supports political parties' and politicians' electoral campaigns, and how those funds are used.
- Citizens believe that civic projects offer more options for involvement than political parties. Albanians are more willing to take action on topics that are important to them.
- Undecided voters or those who are unlikely to vote (52 percent of the sample) think they are not represented by political parties, while 27 percent believe parties will not deliver on their campaign promises.

■ Political “ hybridity”

For the past three decades, Albania has had no actual ideological affiliation of political parties, instead opting for " *hybrid*" parties that pick and choose which stream is more expedient for a specific problem. Simultaneously, they have utilized the left-right argument as an electoral instrument to protect the status quo via a tailor-made election statute. Instead of " hybrid" political parties, the country requires established parties, as well as respect for the rule of law, political morality, transparency in government and opposition, democracy, and internal rotation. In politics, the hybrid approach represents the extremely complex character of society and the people. Individuals experience a range of realities, and their ideological attitudes change throughout time as a result of individual, familial, societal, and environmental variables. However, any party in power is required under the constitution to be devoted to justice and fair opportunity for all. Albanian national governance professes to be democratic, but is controlled by clientelistic party politics. Elections are often competitive, but they are regularly marred by vote " buying,"

manipulation, voter fraud, and other flaws. The civic sector is engaged in public debate and interests, but it is not well represented in policy dialogues.

4.3 Instrument Design and Ethical Deliberations

I utilized straightforward and plain language, avoided difficult words, and kept the questions brief but thorough. In order to avoid misinterpretation of the questions' idea. I used one open-ended question to allow people to express themselves freely, and then I coded their responses. Then I largely used closed-ended questions to generate clean data for analysis by classifying their responses. In circumstances where there were not enough possibilities, I utilized partly ended questions where respondents may add their own. I did include the rating scales to evaluate the level of political trust on Albania citizens.

Sample and Sampling

The sample of this study includes all the Albanian people as well as experts and governmental authorities of Albanian. ***My Sampling*** includes only 100 Albanian citizens, I used the snowballing method to reach also Albanian officials, and taking into account also their answers like citizens of this country.

Sampling strategy: I use my online platforms connection to reach Albanian citizens. I shared the survey link with them, which means they were randomly selected. I did not employ any stratification or categorization. I intended to choose them at random in order to discover distinct characteristics, so that I could link the sample to my research question.

Bias: There was a small number of people selected from the entire population, which does not proportionally represent the population and the study is limited.

Ethical Deliberations

I reminded responders of the importance of knowing why the study is being undertaken and what it entails. I told them to read the following material slowly and to contact me if anything is unclear. I assure them that their privacy and sensitive data will be respected, and that the information will only be used for research reasons. I did respect their confidentiality and their right to choose whether or not to participate.

Conclusions

"Everything is cultural," and hence culture constructs, challenges, and reproduces social order (Michel Foucault 1978). In this context, if people think that by working together, they can act as "free subjects" without fear, and that they can alter unpleasant situations and policies, the impact on government policies will undoubtedly exist, regardless of the extent to which this influence exists. Albanian citizens do not have a high participation on the decision-making and in politics due to the lower trust in their government. There is a relation between the Albanian's political culture that affect their lower trust on government. Then due to lower level in political trust they seem to avoid their participation on politics.

Lack of civic participation is a feature of post-communist countries and, more broadly, post-authoritarian states because they share some common elements that contribute to this lack of participation, such as: people do not believe that their behavior or opposition to certain policies will result in a change in government policies, they fear the consequences that may follow because they are not "free subjects," and people do not trust civil society because they believe that it is corrupted and it doesn't represent their interest. Academicians believe that there is a link between nations that have experienced

government persecution for a long time and have comparable behavior based on their studies of political culture at various academic focus groups and discussions.

Transparency and civic engagement are critical instruments for developing effective governance. Both contribute to provide the circumstances for citizens to understand and assess the choices made on their behalf by the government, as well as to guarantee that their own needs and perspectives are included in the decision-making process. Transparency and engagement can assist to eliminate corruption and government misbehavior. They are also more beneficial instruments since they contribute to the creation of situations conducive to increased trust. Finally, they assist governments in drawing on individuals' skills and expertise to allow improved decision making and delivery of more effective public services.

The process of democracy is critical for a country since it develops, activates, and make society to participate in the public sphere. In a synergistic connection between state and citizens, a democratized government protects rights and shares responsibilities. The more this trend progresses, the less authoritative a society becomes. If we wish to differentiate the amount of development of a certain society, we must look at the level of democratization that society has been able to achieve.

From the study done I could find out the enormous impact of political culture and the decisions of political leaders towards democratization. The lower trust of people in their governmental institutions is a “red alarm” for the future of Albanian democracy. Although the research done over the last years of transitions, shows that there is a slow positive progress on the fields of judicial system, rule of law and governance effectiveness the lower level of citizens in the engagement and interest on politics could be a threat for democracy. The sovereignty belongs to the people, if the people do not have trust in their government and refuse to hold the government accountable then the democracy of Albania would be under threat. There exist a

strong causal correlation between political culture democratization process. From the creation of the state till today, the most influential political players in Albania have been more concerned with their own interests than with collective goals relating to the country's democracy.

Political culture and political actors are inextricably linked, and as long as political culture influences political actors' belief systems, attitudes, and behaviours, the effect of it would be unavoidable even directly or indirectly linked with outcome of regime.

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