

**The Philosophy and Rhetoric of Politics:
From Idea to Identity and Remaining Challenges.**

MASTERS' THESIS

ENI DAKA

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Science in Political Science and
International Relations

EPOKA University
Faculty of Law and Social Sciences
Department of Political Science

TIRANA, ALBANIA

JULY 2023

APPROVAL PAGE

Student Name: Eni Daka
Faculty: Faculty of Law and Social Sciences
Department: Political Science and International Relations
Thesis Title: The Philosophy and Rhetoric of Politics: From Idea to Identity and Remaining Challenges.
Date of Defense: 07 July 2023

I certify that I have read this study which is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a Master's Thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Political Science and International Relations.

Dr. Reina Zenelaj
Supervisor

I certify that this final work satisfies all the requirements as a Master's Thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Political Science and International Relations.

Dr. Reina Zenelaj
Head of Department

Examining Committee Members:

1. Dr. Reina Zenelaj
2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lisen Bashkurti
3. Prof. Dr. Avdi Smajljaj

The Philosophy and Rhetoric of Politics:

From Idea to Identity and Remaining Challenges.

ABSTRACT:

This thesis presents a comprehensive exploration of the intricate dynamics at the intersection of political philosophy, statehood, voting behavior, and global challenges in contemporary politics. The central question is whether logic or rhetoric dominated recent politics, setting the stage for an in-depth analysis of factors shaping decision-making throughout all its history so far. The research begins with an examination of the philosophy of politics, investigating the relation between logic and rhetoric in ancient, mediaeval, and modern times. It then delves into the evolution of the state as a philosophical concept throughout history, including its representation in modern times and the role of rationality in current political and voting behaviors. Two case studies will serve as center pieces for answering the research question: the Global-National response to the COVID-19 pandemic as the first case study, where we venture in post-modern politics and also examine the transformation beyond nation-state with the EU Model; And the Regional-National reconciliation efforts being put in the Western Balkans region as the second case study, investigating the relation between reconciliation and nationalism in the WB, encompassing theoretical considerations and practical steps taken so far from regional, and national efforts.

Key words: *Political Philosophy, Rhetoric and Logic, COVID-19, Western Balkans, Socrates.*

Filozofia dhe Retorika e Politikës:

Ideja, Identiteti, dhe Sfidat që Mbeten.

ABSTRAKT:

Kjo tezë paraqet një eksplorim gjithëpërfshirës të dinamikës në kryqëzimin e filozofisë politike, shtetësisë, sjelljes së votimit dhe sfidave globale në politikën bashkëkohore. Pyetja qendrore është nëse logjika apo retorika dominuan politikën e kohëve të fundit, duke hapur diskursin për një analizë të thellë të faktorëve që formësojnë vendimmarrjen gjatë gjithë historisë së saj deri më tani. Hulumtimi fillon me një shqyrtim të filozofisë së politikës, duke hetuar lidhjen midis logjikës dhe retorikës nga kohët antike, mesjetare, dhe moderne. Më pas teza thellohet në evolucionin e shtetit si një koncept filozofik përgjatë historisë, duke përfshirë përfaqësimin e tij në kohët moderne dhe rolin e racionalitetit në sjelljet aktuale politike dhe votuese. Dy raste studimore do të shërbejnë si pjesë qendrore për t'iu përgjigjur pyetjes së ngritur në këtë punim: përgjigja Globale-Kombëtare ndaj pandemisë COVID-19 si rasti i parë studimor, ku analizojmë politikën post-moderne dhe gjithashtu shqyrtojmë transformimin përtej shtetit-komb me Modelin e BE-së; Dhe përpjekjet e pajtimit Rajonal-Kombëtar të vendosura në rajonin e Ballkanit Perëndimor si rasti i dytë studimor, duke hetuar lidhjen midis pajtimit dhe nacionalizmit në rajon, duke përfshirë konsideratat teorike dhe hapat praktik të ndërmarrë deri më tani nga përpjekjet rajonale si dhe kombëtare.

Fjalët kyçe: *Filozofia Politike, Retorika dhe Logjika, COVID-19, Ballkani Perëndimor, Sokrati.*

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate all the efforts that have been poured onto this thesis and its research to Atjon Zhiti, my lifelong inspiration to continue pushing forward, especially when the future seems the most uncertain. You are dearly missed every moment and present in every thought, Atjon.

I would also like to dedicate this to the fallen victims of the Hoxha dictatorship that have left this world without knowing what justice feels like. May the soil that rests above you be lighter than the air you once breathed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my utmost gratitude to my Professor and Thesis Advisor Dr. Reina Zenelaj, also the Head of the Department of Political Sciences and Political Relations for the incredible support and help in advising me when I most needed it. The professionalism and expertise of Dr. Zenelaj is admirable and should be appreciated as such. Thank you a thousand times prof. Reina!

I would also like to thank Epoka University for helping me further develop my journey into academia, and for giving me the possibility to make my own contribution into the scholarly arena of publications.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Master's Thesis titled "The Philosophy and Rhetoric of Politics: From Idea to Identity and Remaining Challenges." is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this thesis has not been previously or concurrently submitted for the award of any degree, at Epoka University, or in any other University or Institution.

Eni Daka

July 07, 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Approval Page..... | ii |
| Abstract..... | iii |
| Abstrakt..... | iv |
| Dedication..... | v |
| Acknowledgments..... | vi |
| Student Declaration..... | vii |
| Table of Contents..... | viii |
| List of Abbreviations..... | ix |

CHAPTERS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Introduction..... | 11 |
| 2. Literature Review..... | 13 |
| 2.1. The Philosophy of Politics: Logic or Rhetoric?..... | 13 |
| 2.2. State as a Philosophical Concept Through Time..... | 22 |
| 2.3. Representative State in Modern Times: Party Identity and Citizens as Voters..... | 28 |
| 2.4. The Validity of “Rationality” in Political and Voting Behaviours of Modern Times..... | 31 |
| 2.5. Concepts of Economic Models of Voting..... | 31 |
| 2.6. Political Socialisation and How It Relates to Political Behaviour and Participation..... | 32 |
| 2.7. Protest Politics and the Media..... | 33 |
| 2.8. Ideologies and their Role in Albanian Voting Behaviour..... | 34 |
| 2.9. Politics in the Post-Modern Era: What is beyond the State?..... | 38 |
| 2.10. Transformation of Politics Beyond Nation-State: the EU Model..... | 40 |
| 2.11. EU Eligibility..... | 41 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 2.12. Procedure..... | 42 |
| 2.13. Next in Line..... | 44 |
| 3. Research Methodology..... | 46 |
| 4. Global Challenges and Return to National Politics: Case of COVID-19..... | 49 |
| 4.1. Regional Organisations’ Support to their Member States during Health Emergencies..... | 59 |
| 4.2. Areas for Regional Cooperation to Respond to the COVID-19 Crisis..... | 60 |
| 4.3. A Bridge between the Global and National Level..... | 61 |
| 4.4. Facilitating Cross-Border Mobilisation of Goods..... | 63 |
| 4.5. Pooling Resources for Mobilisation..... | 64 |
| 5. Can Old Gloves Fit Young Hands? Case of the Western Balkans..... | 66 |
| 5.1. Western Balkans’ Reconciliation: Theory & Praxis..... | 67 |
| 5.2. Reconciliation & Coop in WB: Steps Taken and Lessons Learned..... | 69 |
| 5.3. Power to Young People: Concept of Spill-Over as an Opportunity..... | 71 |
| 6. Concluding Remarks..... | 73 |
| 7. References..... | 77 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SP - Socialist Party
 DP - Democratic Party
 SMI - Socialist Movement for Integration
 EU - European Union
 EUR-Lex - European Legislation (website)
 EC - European Commission
 IPA - Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
 TAIEX - Technical Assistance and Information Exchange)
 WFH - Working from Home

H1N1 - Influenza subtype Swine Flu
UK - United Kingdom
US - United States
WB - Western Balkans
ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Mercosur - Southern Common Market
SADC- South African Development Community –).
UNASUR - Union of South American Nations
WHO - World Health Organisation
PAHO - Pan American Health Organization
SEARO - South-East Asia Region
AFRO - Regional Office for Africa
SAARC - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
C-TAP - Technology Access Pool
COVAX - Covid Vaccine
SADC - Southern Africa Development Community
TRIPS- Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
WTO - World Trade Organization
V4 - Visegrad 4
RYCO - Regional Youth Cooperation Office,
WBF - Western Balkan Fund

Chapter 1: Introduction

Politics is a dynamic arena where the struggle between logic and rhetoric has played a central role in shaping decision-making processes. Over the last few decades, this struggle has intensified, raising essential questions about the foundations of political ideologies and their influence on governance. This thesis aims to explore the complexities of this struggle and examine the interplay between logic and rhetoric in the realm of politics as seen from the minds of ancient, mediaeval, and modern philosophers like Socrates, Rousseau, Wittgenstein, Frege, and many others, and how they ultimately translate into a more contemporary setting that we find ourselves in.

What dominated politics in the last decades? Logic or Rhetoric? This fundamental inquiry sets the stage for an in-depth examination of the factors that have shaped political discourse and decision-making processes in recent times. The thesis incorporates two compelling case studies that illustrate the impact of the struggle for state dominance and the rise of regional and global issues on contemporary politics.

The first case study focuses on the global issue of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political response it elicited. The pandemic presented a unique challenge to governments worldwide, requiring decisions that balanced logic and rhetoric. By analyzing the political discourse and policy responses to the pandemic, this study aims to shed light on the interplay between these

two dominant forces. It investigates the strategies employed by different nations, considering both logical reasoning based on scientific evidence and the persuasive power of rhetoric in shaping public opinion and policy decisions.

The second case study delves into the need for reconciliation in the Western Balkans as a regional requirement to maintain active and dominant political involvement. The study examines the historical and geopolitical context of the region, focusing on past conflicts and efforts towards peacebuilding. By analyzing the ongoing political dynamics, this research aims to highlight the challenges faced in achieving reconciliation and the role of both logic and rhetoric in shaping political strategies and initiatives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-sided sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow “rationalism.” Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless. The exception were certain people (whom I loved and believed to be real) and nature herself. That is, nature as she appeared to the senses. I chewed endlessly on the problem: “How can it be so beautiful and also so cruel, wasteful and futile?”

... I was so far from wishful thinking that I hardly thought anything true unless it contradicted my wishes.”

C.S. Lewis

2.1. The Philosophy of Politics: Logic or Rhetoric?

During the nineteenth to 20th century, it was apparent that the theme was the increasing submission of philosophy in general and philosophy of language in particular, to the sovereignty of logic. The tradition of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, and gave the impetus to the view that language is basically and primarily logical and that all the fundamental, essential features of language can be determined on the basis of the requirements of logic. Logical fallacies used in modern political rhetoric - as well as in ancient and mediaeval polity - such as ad hominem

attacks and straw man arguments undermine rational political discourse. Wittgenstein's view on this was from his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "Our agreements in these judgments constitute the language of our politics. It is a language arrived at and continuously modified through no less than a history of discourse, a history in which we have thought about, as we became able to think in, that language". Russell is a great example of the ever-evolving nature of critical thinking. If we were to study him in depth we would have to categorise his stance and approach to politics and philosophy in at least 4 different stages of identification through a school of thought.

In this view, rhetoric can distort the essential or "true" features of language. In a sense, we can construe here that these aforementioned gentlemen in their efforts to have a philosophy based on logic and ontology, have also implicitly and explicitly advocated a devaluation of rhetoric in political contexts. However, Frege said that 'it is only in the context of a proposition that words have any meaning' and his response is the example of numbers, that "we cannot determine whether an expression denotes an object or not by considering the expression in isolation, which would lead us to confuse the idea it gives rise to in our mind with what it really denotes." Is the number 9 the object or a quality of 9 gathered concepts?

In order to establish a solid vantage point whereby we can resolve the subsidiary issues in the philosophy of language, it is always necessary to resolve first and foremost the all-important issue of the relative and logical basis of philosophy. Let's take a look at where it all started to unfold, Athens in the Century BC with what we now call pre-Socratic Philosophy. The Sophists, Protagoras, and Gorgias famously among them, were teachers in ancient Greece that in exchange for money, they would teach the kids of rich people the "Art of Persuasion" that would ensure

they always won through their well-thought - and more than often, manipulative - arguments. Some have also gone as far as calling the Sophists “intellectual prostitutes” that “immorally” sold a false truth while pretending to teach wisdom. Thanks to modern taxonomy we can now make the proposal that Sophists essentially were teaching Epistemological and Moral Relativism and Subjectivism. Protagoras’ view on knowledge was that “As for wisdom (Sophia) and the wise man (Sophos), I am very far from saying that they do not exist; but I also call the man clever who, by transforming things makes them appear to be good and be good for someone to whom they appeared to be bad and were bad.” So basically as long as you can find a loophole to helping someone, regardless of the nature of these loopholes, then you are wise and will probably succeed. Protagora’s relative rhetoric on truth also famously makes him one of the fathers of Scepticism. Gorgias on the other hand, -another Sophist given the title “father of” but for Nihilism- had his three tenants in direct contradiction to the principles of Logos. In these tenants he states that firstly “there is nothing”, his second tenant would then go on to say “even if there is something, or not, we will never know” because his third tenant ultimately states that “knowledge cannot be communicated” And so these tenants seem to derive that since there is nothing beyond our perception, then my knowledge cannot be communicated to you because you will not be able to understand my perspective from your own perception. Hence, Gorgias has insisted that perception is relative and probably also biased at that point. Socrates began to have an approach that was very much similar to the one of the Sophists but was unprecedentedly accompanied by the concepts of defining things clearly and proving controversial conclusions logically, thus introducing objectivity and realism as part of his thinking, hence the name philo-sophy (from Greek: one who loves wisdom). Unlike the Sophists that were charging money in exchange for “their” wisdom, Socrates used to have his talks in the marketplace

(Greek: agora) where he could exchange opinions with people from different contexts. Plato, most famously known for publishing his dialogues, specifically the ones Socrates had with various people, including here Sophists like Protagoras.⁹ Plato created a proper school that was known as -and still is- the Academy, teaching Socrates' ideas and developing his own philosophy. One of the most remarkable figures of philosophy up to this day also happened to be one of Socrates and Plato's students, Aristotle. Almost as if Socrates and Plato walked, so that Aristotle could run (away). Revolted by the sense of injustice when seeing how people were using arguments just for the sake of winning, Aristotle decided to open his own school, the Lyceum. He continued to develop his studies adjoining persuasive speech with logic. Soon enough, Aristotle began teaching his best way for a speaker to appeal to an audience is through using three key concepts: Ethos, Pathos, and special to his philosophy, Logos. This was a revolutionary moment as through his school and approach, the exact sciences that we know today began their seemingly endless journey of evolution.¹⁰

Considering Philosophy as the progeny of Sophistry. In *Ideas*, Husserl uses this pair of terms, "Noema" and "Noesis" to refer to correlated elements of the structure of any intentional act. In fact in *Ideas*, Husserl uses the term 'Noesis' to refer to intentional acts or "act-quality" and 'Noema' to refer to what, in the *Logical Investigations* had been referred to as "act-matter"¹⁰. However, the philosopher Jacques Derrida has famously argued through his critique of Husserl in his *Logic of Deconstruction*¹¹ against the entire tradition of attempting to have a philosophy based on logic rather than rhetoric. Should we prioritise a political philosophy based on logic, or a one that is based on rhetoric? In this thesis it is not the previous question I intend to seek an answer to, also because it would be nearly impossible to settle on one singular answer,

considering the metaphysical nature of “right and wrong” in philosophical settings. Though I shall try to convey all the differences and discrepancies of these seemingly sui generis philosophies. In a philosophy based on logic, contradictions such as the one following up are technically nonsensical. In the history of Western philosophy, it has been apparent that many philosophers adhere to this view. Unlike Protagoras, one of the most famous Sophists that with his saying “Omnium rerum homo mensura est” meaning “Man is the measure of all things” engages in two opposing theories at once: both relativism and absolutism. They’re not contradictory in the strictest sense, since they point to different categories of reality. But they are uncomfortably inconsistent. Relativism about ontological truth, absolutism about normative judgment. Protagoras states that “man is the measure of all things, of the things which are, that they are, and of the things which are not, that they are not”¹².

Leibniz talked about it via his principle of noncontradiction and on how we judge to be false anything that involves contradiction, and as true and good whatever is opposed or contradictory to what is false;¹³ However, we see a different view from a philosophy based on rhetoric. In here, contradictions are not that fatal and are not something that does not make sense. We cannot deny the fact that there are contradictory statements that are not meaningless. In a philosophy based on rhetoric, we are being taught that expressions that are prima facie absurd can be meaningful – only we know when it is “appropriate” and when it is not. This is certainly true of rhetoric: despite the common misnomer that rhetoric is limited to literature and public speech, rhetoric has included in its purview a discussion of the proper use of contradictory statements, including the logical absurdities that occur in metaphors.¹⁴ We can construe here that contradictions are not always a bad thing. If viewed in the right manner, contradiction is not always a sign of

intellectual incoherence, but rather of creativity and insight. I have the genuine - and naive - belief that rhetoric is not at all bad in a political context. I say naive because what I believe political rhetoric to be is just a very rich language you would use as a politician to explain certain matters to a diverse population, not manipulation schemes used to lie and hide the truth to the public. Logically it makes me think that for people to be different, so might their perceptions. And it is your duty as a politician to use a language that would best be understood by this populace. The use of rhetoric would be then an instrument in ensuring that their message is understood for example by making parallelisms that would otherwise help people understand the speaker's point of view and what they are trying to convey, not implying any sort of agreement here, rather just a better contextual understanding of what the situation at hand is. Making it only fair, if you haven't strayed too far from a sound logic to prove your point. I believe that it is very easy to mistake the general notion of rhetoric with the philosophy of Sophists. Although their contribution to the taxonomy of literary figures of speech, and the "invention" of the rhetorical question are truly remarkable steps for the sciences of communication, their philosophy was not characteristically known based on the principles of truth-seeking rather than on those of being right and winning the argument regardless if rightly or fairly¹⁵.

Far from conflict being *prima facie* undesirable, the true philosopher will see dialectical opposition in the right way. It is absolutely in these contradictions, in these dialectics, in these antinomies that we can see the progress of philosophical thought in general and the very beauty of philosophy itself. Let's take an example, the expression "I cannot live with you but I cannot live without you" cannot be simply said as something meaningless or nonsense. In a philosophy based on rhetoric, contradictions always mean something, though they might have an arcane meaning, it is the role of philosophy to deconstruct these contradictions.

Corollary to the first point regarding contradictions, another thing that makes the philosophies based on logic and rhetoric distinct from one another is the way they view the sense or meaning of expressions. In a philosophy based on logic, clarity is always a prerequisite in any utterance, otherwise, such expressions do not entirely make sense. We can perhaps pay attention to the background where this view is coming from. Problems in the philosophy based on logic are more often associated with the problem of mathematics from which clarity is first and foremost a requirement of equations. This is something not surprising since it is apparent in the traditions of the philosophers in the nineteenth to twentieth centuries who advocated this view. Think for instance of Russell from England, Frege from Germany, and Wittgenstein, In one way or another, the three of them gave the impetus to the view that language is basically and primarily logical and the essential features of language can be determined by the basis of the requirement of logic. It is not again very surprising since most of them are mathematicians and all of them are logicians. Each of these theorists postulates an intimate relationship between critical theory and accurate theoretical depiction of individual subjectivity, action, and social organisation¹⁶.

In this view, rhetoric can only distort the essential features of language. Such impetus does not only emphasise language as associated with logic but also strengthens the devaluation of rhetoric itself. But we see this thing turned upside down in a philosophy based on rhetoric. If a philosophy based on logic emphasises clarity and eradicates vagueness in the system, vagueness in a philosophy based on rhetoric is acceptable. It is exactly here that we find vagueness as

sometimes part of the message, followed by trying to decipher what that meant. We cannot deny the fact that it is an interesting linguistic phenomenon, - mathematical too - how we come to understand vagueness itself. We cannot even construe that vague expressions are meaningless or if they have any meaning unknown to us yet, such an understanding is not truly functional in a practical sense. Otherwise that might be a wrong interpretation of vague expressions, as what a philosophy based on rhetoric views. An old Chinese saying goes like: “Though the finger points at the moon, the moon is not in the finger. Words express the truth but the truth is not in the words.” A remark of Wittgenstein reasserted it, saying “Words have meaning only in the streams of life”¹⁷, and “words we choose create the world we live in”¹⁸. He was also a strong believer that there is a gap between thought-language-reality. This is a profound and very important insight even to this day into the way global, regional, and local politics shape the perception of the world we live in. We might not have a universal understanding regarding what happens directly in front of each one of us but perhaps, a philosophy based on rhetoric can make us understand more.

Another phenomenon so interesting here is that in a philosophy based on logic, linguistic expressions have to conform to the logical rules; they have to be “factual” whereby one can easily be deciphered as true or false - otherwise such expressions are meaningless. We see the same thinking going back as far as Hegel’s theory of historical development, which cannot be fully understood without some reference to logic.¹⁹ Hegel states that since the development of history is a development of thought, and the essential process of thought is logic, then we can logically assume that the development of history is essentially a logical process. In the same manner, an expression ipso facto has to be logical for that expression to be fully understood. In a sense, in a philosophy based on logic, we can construe that what makes sense is that which is in a logical structure, that which is always within the rules of logic. But the complete opposite can be

seen perhaps in a philosophy based on rhetoric. Linguistic expressions do not have to be necessarily logical in structure. Expressions that do not follow the rules of logic are accepted in a philosophy based on rhetoric. Think for instance the discussion of metaphors which as implied by Aristotle defy linguistic rules²⁰, not to mention that they also defy logical rules. These expressions are obviously not factual for they cannot be easily deciphered as truth-functional or that which involve falsity. Such expressions are rather “conditional” and thereby depend on the context in which a certain utterance is delivered.

This gives me a point of departure to my next point. If expressions in a philosophy based on logic must be factual, then it follows that such a philosophy is more inclined to facts which can be construed as something that exists ontologically, something that is out there, something that remains to be always objective. This somehow can be characterised as a philosophy that emphasises more on facts that are “to be true” and whereby the “validity” of linguistic expressions is the primary concern. But again, these are not the case in a philosophy based on rhetoric whereby expressions are not necessarily factual but are rather conditional, making the context of the utterance the basis of the value of linguistic expressions. Hence, even statements that involve contradictions are acceptable here. Ironically considered as “the greatest logician since Aristotle” by Albert Einstein²¹, Kurt Gödel had produced his famous “Incompleteness Theorems.” and his fundamental results showed that “in any consistent axiomatic mathematical system there are propositions that cannot be proved or disproved within the system and that the consistency of the axioms themselves cannot be proved.”²² Seems like the greatest logician also likes to put his rhetoric to good use. This kind of philosophy can be considered as a little more modest since a speaker here is aware that his utterances are “taken to be true” only to his point of view. It is modest, since explicit in this view is the openness to the possibility of the plurality of

the understanding of a certain thought. Think for instance of Plato's writings which are basically always dialogic; we certainly haven't seen any dialogue that has been resolved. It gives the impetus for the dialogues to become philosophical for they invite the reader from a third person perspective to resolve the philosophical problems which are often linguistic problems.²³ In the same way or another, the reader does not think that his view is necessarily true; it could thereby be wrong if and when there are evidences to the contrary. And so we can say here that an expression in a philosophy based on rhetoric focuses not on the "validity" but rather on the "appropriateness" of an utterance, which seemed to be something self-imposed.

After having now come to the end of my brief and incomplete exposé of the differences of a philosophy based on logic and a philosophy based on rhetoric, I think it is climactic to close this section by saying that it is by knowing these differences that which make the two distinct, that we can have a philosophically sound interpretation from which to resolve the subsidiary issues in our theories of meaning, metaphors, political rhetoric, private language and the like. albeit we might not have one singular agreement to the issue of the relative basis of political philosophy.

2.2. State as a Philosophical Concept Through Time

Social communities, be they less developed or with a higher degree of organisation, have existed since the advent of the first communal gatherings to establish common rules and primacy of those who wielded power over those who were deemed to be their subjects. The invention of agrarian societies which ensured stable sustenance for entire communities allowed those who held power to develop a more organised and efficient ruling system for their benefit and for the

benefit of those they ruled over, creating kingdoms, empires, and national states as time passed and human societies evolved. Throughout the course of history, the state or the embodiment of a modern state in the past has retained common aspects with the political communities established before and as such there are striking differences and striking similarities between both Ancient and Mediaeval concepts of the state, characters which have been passed on to the modern form of the state that we live in. In one of the volumes in the Cambridge Medieval History, reputed historian J.B. Bury mentioned that when considering a mediaeval state it is “...inevitable that many conflicting elements, forces, and tendencies should be found together at every stage of development”²⁴, an analysis can be applied also for the Ancient invention of the state, retaining characteristics passed down from generation to generation right until the first true states were created and the last vestiges of feudal organisation disappeared.

As Daniel Chirot has pointed out in his work “How Societies Change”²⁵, the advent of agriculture in the period of around 11.000 BC has had a significant impact on the way societies were organised, transcending from a simple forage based society where nomadic practices were a distinctive character to a more sedentary agricultural society where the communities were formed around areas where there were enough opportunities to ensure at least a subsistence living. An agrarian society is a type of a community that depends on agriculture as the primary means for its support and continued existence, and it was the advent of agrarian societies that helped create the first groundwork for a more established community, and as such political, called a state.

Statecraft was elusive in the first phases; only later on in the lands of Sumeria the first attempts at an organised state with a centralised power were made and according to Daniel Chirot “it is

not surprising that the earliest states consisted of cities made up of granaries, temples, and fortifications built around them for protection.”²⁶ Chirot's quote attributes the spread of statecraft to three vital components – food, religion, and protection. This was prevalent in the early stages of Ancient states built around granaries and temples but also in the later stages such as the Greek city-states that were focused around arable land, a grand temple or a pantheon dedicated to the gods and with strong fortifications erected around the city. This would turn out to be a common component of mediaeval societies; cities were built around fertile arable land with a large church or cathedral in its midst, whilst extensive walls or castles were constructed to protect those living within them. This ensured a gradual, albeit slow, development of states as a whole as populations expanded, protected by foreign devastators, enabling those who lived within the confines of the walls and within the territory of a strong kingdom to channel their energies on anything other than providing food by endlessly toiling the land.

Ancient states had an inherent problem with their internal organisation, which is a similarity with mediaeval kingdoms of the same nature. The ruling classes were powerful and wielded considerable power but at the same time they focused on ties based on residency rather than kinship which was prevalent in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Agrarian societies, unless highly developed, would have difficulties in establishing a chain of food supply for the entire population, which was exerted even more once conquests were made and the territory and population expanded to unsustainable levels. Agrarian technology developed over time but the potential for gains in productivity arose as there were more tools and techniques available for the farmers and the artisans who produced and supported the community. Mesopotamian Ancient states on the other hand contained strong, commercially developed cities, most of the times

fortified by walls to protect them from foreign invaders (Babylon) which encouraged a maximisation of production through full-time division of labour (which was markedly absent from mediaeval states, or the division of labour was as such a thin line of differentiation) for those that worked. It did however present a rather common inequality of wealth throughout the whole social spectrum. Nevertheless, the collapse of the Ancient state systems left in place elements, mainly agrarian, that defined the way of living for almost the whole continent of Europe until the mediaeval kingdoms developed enough to allow a significant boom in population.

The agrarian element is not the only simultaneous similarity and difference; the political system of both ancient and mediaeval states rests on common ideals and methods with regards to the organisation of communities and the power in the hands of the ruling class. Ancient monarchies were not too different from mediaeval monarchies as the power was vested in the hands of the king or emperor with absolute rule over the entire realm. Vassals or delegates controlled the territory and ensured the link between the common peasants and the king, but the difference is in the development of the system and its specific characteristics. Whilst absolute monarchies were contrasted by democracies in Ancient Greece or by tribal organisations, mediaeval states had the concept of feudalism embedded and deeply rooted within its core values. The word “feudalism” is little more than a rough generalisation or formula under which we try to include such conditions, economic, social and governmental, as are found to be common and uniform throughout the lands and peoples which were once parts of the Western Roman Empire. Yet, there were still numerous differences throughout the feudal systems, but nevertheless the base on

which the political system was formed stemmed from a rigid agrarian society that was very different from the simple system established on classes, or in some cases social castes.

Feudalism is long considered to be an “...obscure period of rapid change between the dismembering of the Carolingian Empire and the growth of national States.”²⁷ Whilst this rapid change was fostered and created on the base of a crumbling empire, which in turn established its base on an ancient empire, one may very well ask the question whether feudalism as an agrarian political system is not just a different organisation of an Ancient state under a different name and slightly different operational levers. City-states and the establishment of local centres of power with numerous fragmentation entities were absent throughout Europe with the exception of the Italian Peninsula where numerous fiefdoms and dukedoms coexisted in a somewhat harmonious manner similar to that of Ancient Greece. Feudalism was the system that prevented such organisation; agrarian societies needed extensive land areas and vassals to provide protection for the centralised powers, whilst Ancient Mesopotamian states, Greek city-states and Italian fiefdoms relied on commerce and interlinked relationships for their survival.

One profound difference that bridges a deep gap between ancient and mediaeval states is their religious form and observance; Ancient states were mainly polytheistic whilst mediaeval states were monotheistic, mainly following the denomination of the Catholic Church with its authority and blessing given by the Pope in Rome. Polytheistic gods, mainly the ones represented in Ancient Greece and then copied and converted in the Roman Empire did not provide the basis of the monarchical legitimacy as they did in the mediaeval ages. The monarch of the feudal kingdom always fell back on the divine right of kings to promote his legitimacy, and as such, the

imposed serfdom was “ordained by God.” The mediaeval state through its monotheistic approach consolidated a feeble organisation of the state by intertwining both politics and religious ideals. Maurice Keen further reinforces this aspect by mentioning that the “bonds of religious common belief and outlook were drawing them together, almost as strongly”²⁸ when social pressures or the shocks of foreign invasion took over. Polytheism divided the population, a stark difference from the unity that was promoted by the Catholic Church especially during the call of the Crusades.

Modern definitions of the state define it as an organised political community living under a government, whilst attributing to the state the status of “legal fiction” and the possibility that it may be sovereign. The Ancient invention of the state was created out of the needs of an agrarian community to organise itself more efficiently and to protect itself and its labour from foreign invaders, and as time passed the first complex societies were formed which in turn led to the creation of massive Ancient empires.

Despite the huge time gap between ancient and mediaeval states, characteristics of the oriental social and political organisation were passed down and formed the basis of the first organised mediaeval and feudal states. On one hand, the early mediaeval state was not a state compared to the modern counterpart or even the Ancient counterpart; it was a highly decentralised form of governing over a territory where fragmented local seats of power were attached to the supreme leadership of their king through a system of vassalage. Through analysis and comparison one can see that the inventions of the state in these times are both similar and different and that the formations of those ways of government are not mutually exclusive but rather interlinked with past social and political communities established by the populations who wished to govern their

lives more efficiently. The invention of the state in both cases was not an invention, it was a necessity brought by the hardships of the period the people lived in.

2.3. Representative State in Modern Times: Party Identity and Citizens as Voters

The modern state, with its complex governance structures and decision-making processes, has evolved significantly from the institutions of mediaeval times. Mediaeval decision-making institutions, such as feudal systems or absolute monarchies, exhibited limitations that rendered them unsuitable for the complexities of modern governance. With a world becoming increasingly more advanced, by default so will the amount of public matters.

The decision-making processes were quite inefficient. Mediaeval institutions often lacked formalised processes for making decisions, relying heavily on personal relationships, patronage networks, or tradition, which could impede effective and timely governance. As an Albanian, patronage networks are eerily familiar, especially when paired with the limited accountability that was also very prominent in mediaeval times. There was also a notable lack of representation. Mediaeval institutions often concentrated decision-making power in the hands of a few individuals, such as monarchs or nobles, without broader representation of diverse interests within society. The transition from mediaeval decision-making institutions to representative states marks a crucial development in political systems.

The signing of the Magna Carta¹⁹ in the 13th century and subsequent constitutional developments, played a role in establishing the principles of limited government and the rule of law, providing a foundation for representative governance. Essentially a group of fed-up barons

that wanted to protect their belongings, lands, and rights from their tyrannical king. Paleo-syndicates, if I may.

During the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance (14th-16th centuries), profound transformations unfolded in the realms of politics, society, and intellectual thought. The devastating impact of the Black Death in the 14th century led to significant demographic shifts and economic changes, which in turn weakened the established feudal structures.³⁰ Concurrently, the Renaissance marked a resurgence of interest in classical antiquity, humanistic ideals, and secular knowledge, ultimately challenging the traditional sources of authority and engendering novel perspectives on governance.

The subsequent Protestant Reformation, which unfolded in the 16th century under the leadership of influential figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, posed a direct challenge to the religious authority of the Catholic Church. The reformation began as an attempt to save their “own” Gospel from the Greek logic and Roman law of the Catholics.³¹ So while the Catholics and Protestants fragmented this “Christian unity”, this gave rise to the need for new political entities to handle public matters and reshaped the existing societal landscape.

The Enlightenment, spanning the 17th and 18th centuries, emerged as a momentous period of intellectual and philosophical transformation. Influential thinkers like John Locke, Montesquieu, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau propagated ideas centred on individual rights, social contract theory, and limited government. While the Protestant reformists were attempting to keep humans and sciences away from their God, the Enlightened were trying to keep God away from their

humans and sciences.³² The diffusion of these ideas and the questioning of monarchical authority laid the groundwork for more inclusive and participatory forms of governance.

Cathartically the late 18th century witnessed two watershed moments: the American Revolution (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799). These revolutions, profoundly influenced by Enlightenment ideals, symbolised a repudiation of monarchical rule and the establishment of representative forms of governance. Their significance reverberated globally and set important precedents for the development of modern democratic principles.

The advent of representative states brought about the rise of party politics, which introduced a new dynamic into governance. Party politics allowed for the expression and representation of diverse political ideologies, providing citizens with distinct choices and enabling the formation of competing policy platforms.

Identification is the notion of a political party being part of one's personal identity. Party identification is influenced by factors such as family influence and personal interests and can be manifested in the form of membership to a specific party. This notion derives from the Michigan model³³ and tries to deduce possible voting behaviour based on a voter's affiliation to a party, be it just preference or membership to a party. Through party identification, we can deduct the voter's tendencies regarding different policies, preferences or not, towards certain candidates and the benefits that they expect when casting a vote.

I believe party identification is significant, at least for the people that identify with a certain party because it may give politicians more information about what a specific group of people that

share the same party identity expect from them once they get elected. This would facilitate the incumbent's job (so to speak) when it comes to fulfilling the voter's needs. Also it does give some people a sense of belonging to a group which is always nice to have.

2.4. The concept of “rational” and its validity in political and voting behaviours in modern times.

According to A. Downs¹⁴ rationality is reaching out to achieve your goals in the most convenient way for you. Meaning that if you want something done this way, you go out and try to do it this way, and not in a way that would be contradictory to your initial needs or wants. An example would be voting for someone that has expressed to potentially fulfil your needs. When it comes to political behaviour, rational decisions in my opinion, if actually carried out by the individual, show that they are following their ideals towards making them real. Although this is not always the case. For example, even if I rationally believe I want to save the ecosystem and would need to vote for the green party for me to be rational, the green party leader might spark a lot of antipathy to me, so I go ahead and vote for another party. This would be considered irrational of me because my practice goes against my ideals.

2.5. Concepts of Economic Models of Voting

Four main concepts of voting, divided by pairs of two, would be the Sociotropic influenced voter versus the Pocketbook influenced voter. And the other two would be the Prospective voter versus the Retrospective voter. When it comes to the Prospective/Retrospective voters, what we mean is that these types of voters have the tendencies to either support or punish the government based on their past actions and how they influenced the economy (retrospect). Prospective voters, on

the other hand, have the tendency to be more hopeful and believe what the candidate is promising to do in the future to possibly benefit the economy. Now on another note, we need to distinguish between how voters see the economy itself, and that is the Sociotropic voters, who see the macroeconomic impact, or the economy of the state in general, and the Pocketbook voters who base their decisions on how they personally were doing economically under the rule of a past government or on what they could benefit from voting a certain candidate. When it comes to voting from an economic standpoint the reward-punishment hypothesis is prevalent. When people suffered personally or saw a general decline in the state economy they would punish the government by not voting for them, or if they saw a rise in welfare they would reward the government by voting for them again.³⁵

2.6. Political Socialisation and how is it related to Political Behaviour and Participation

Political socialisation is the process of internalising the possibility of changing what they think needs to be changed in the world through political tools, giving them a sort of identity on how they could do it themselves or with their social groups. Having these insights from different factors can shape one's mindset and ideology. Various factors can influence this process and those can be transmissioned through the family environment, or through contact from their social groups like their school or friends while on the other hand, they can differentiate what they see as righteous or not through media, or direct contact with political parties. Just like many factors lead to political socialisation, many others acquired during socialisation can determine how an individual will then behave politically. Let's take the example of ideology.

The ideology of an individual on how the world should be can influence how they behave politically. If they have a liberal stance on life then they will be prone to vote or participate in parties that have liberal tendencies as well. This can also influence party identification which could lead to party membership.³⁶ This individual would distance themselves from a party that does not have the same ideology as them, let's say a liberal would not go vote for a conservative party if this is the main factor that leads them to vote.

2.7. Protest Politics and the Media

Protests³⁷ are a way of expressing some kind of dissatisfaction towards the government or any other party that has been doing something notably wrong. We have different kinds of protests that vary from peaceful and symbolic like marches and parades to more serious protests and riots that escalate to violence and destruction of public and private property. When it comes to media coverage of these protests there can be a lot of grey areas. One would think that having so much variety of media outlets would mean more truth and more coverage but it has had the opposite effect leading to scepticism on what is actually true and what is not, especially in the era of the internet and social media, where deepfake videos of politicians have been circling for a while now.³⁸ Before the internet, media coverage used to be more centralised and less opinionated than now, it is common knowledge that nowadays media outlets would do anything (vulture style) to publish the latest scoop first, regardless if it is only clickbaiting. Lest we forget the outright political bias most media channels have as a result of direct or indirect sponsorship from political parties or their members. It is a shame that the truth can be contorted by the media in whatever way the biggest buyer thinks appropriate.

2.8. Ideologies and their Role in Albanian Voting Behaviour

Albanian political reality is one of the most complex topics there can be, and trying to understand the ideology and philosophy it derives from just adds to the complexity. This complexity arises from a variety of different factors like a lack of coverage in scholarly articles and materials that cover political frameworks of Eastern Europe, or former Yugoslavia, and when it is covered, it is almost always with the pretext that Albania is an isolated case and that it can not be put in the same bucket as its neighbouring countries, which it is true. So this literature review will be based on a limited number of studies and will be rich in personal opinions on the case since there really is limited material that relates to the topic. As we go through some analyses we will see that the Albanian political reality, especially after communism, seems to be just a collective veneration of any appointed individual that creates alliances and gains popularity to just then focus on personal gain and achieving their own personal goals. So basically, egocentric pragmatism, with just a dash of shifting ideologies, and personal principles radically considered as the absolute truth. Various cases of state failure, and blurred vision of where the party ends and the state begins only add up to the complexity of this topic. But let us see what this will develop to.

As we know from current events there is a main troika constantly shifting power among each other. Namely the Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, and the Socialist Movement for Integration. As we mentioned above, there is little ideology behind these parties but peculiarly a demographic-based division between northern Albanians (Ghegs) and southern Albanians (Tosks). As of 2023, the last elections showed that for whatever reason, and with only a 37% voting turnout, almost every city in Albania appointed SP representatives.³⁹ This division has

been notably democratic in the north and socialist in the south since the monarchy of King Zog. The latter being from the north, retaliation post-WWI came from emerging communist groups that were mainly from the south -particularly with the Albanian Labour Party leader Hoxha- and then consequently retaliation from communism in the early '90s arose from northerners, with the infamous Berisha being considered a deity from northern Albanians. Elections have consistently confirmed the division through the turnout of the regions, so the south of Albania was predominantly socialist and the north was predominantly democrat. That being true the first two mandates, as the unfolding third one was a staggering win for the SP, collecting 54% of the votes in the 2023 local elections.⁴⁰

There is very little else to draw from when it comes to defining the turnout except for age and a proportionally small percentage of nationalistic tendencies in the very south of Albania where there are Greek minorities. So religion is not at all considerable because, during communism, religion as a whole was abolished,⁴¹ and religious groups nowadays are not very vocal about their political identity, especially because we do not see these two factors interfering with one another considering the mellow religious identity in Albanians making religiosity almost uninfluential at all when it comes to politics. Dorian Jano suggests that there are three main schools of thought to understanding political behaviour and participation, namely; Political Sociology trying to justify political decisions based on social structures, Political Institutionalism focusing on the primacy of institutions in handling issues, and finally Political Competition mainly trying to explain the supply and demand between opposing parties in functional democracies, that would clearly not be the case of Albania.

What must be mentioned at all costs is the irrationality of political parties in Albania. There is a notable nonchalance about what they actually stand for, so that just plainly means that most of what they do is just purely for their personal interest and gains and has nothing to do with their ideology, or anybody else's. Frequent changes of coalition parties to reattach themselves to the winning parties is a common phenomenon. The Socialist Movement for Integration is very well known for this. Almost every election they shift "interest" and go from the Democratic Party to the Socialist Party, and then back again, and again, and again. This just adds up to the corrupt nature of Albanian polity, and how it is just a marathon for money, power, and status regardless of political identity. Their agendas are a clear manifestation of their irrationality regarding ideologies, with the Democrats lobbying populist policies and the Socialists implementing very liberal and free-market-oriented policies, followed by the SMI that generally just opposes whatever is against them and their coalition party. These very same agendas are also very much alike, they make the same promises of European integration and reducing corruption while miraculously creating jobs for everyone and lest we forget, the continuous promise of 24/7 supply of energy and water that is still missing in the majority of the capital.⁴² It is appalling how much Albanian polity resembles two children fighting for the bigger piece of cake, with a third step-sibling that really is just scrambling for some of the crumbs.

There is constant instability in Albanian polity because a change of government also means a change of the majority of civil servants working in public administration and state institutions. Because obviously, they need to create at least "some" jobs for the political militants who voted for them. And this ensues total chaos when it comes to actually getting work done within the public administration, at least around election period. Translating as if there is no fun in

maintaining and finishing your opponent's job and all the fun is building anew and cutting the inaugural ribbon so you get all the credit, if you actually get to finish something before the opposing party comes rushing in and fires everybody to employ their own. And as you can imagine this brings two outcomes, either strong party identity for possible personal gain, or political apathy because of not wanting to get involved in such complex almost gang-like groups. The recent local elections in Albania showed such small turnout, and by small we are talking about 37% turnout that it of course -like almost all other elections for one reason or another- sparked civil outrage⁴³

Still, after a considerable amount of time has passed since the communist era in Albania, you can clearly sense the authoritarian traits of the present leaders trying to eradicate anyone opposing them. Thinking about it sparks no surprise, being that individuals who were in high positions during communism, somehow still have seats in the parliament and occasionally even direct the parliament, specifically Gramoz Ruci, who used to be the Minister of Internal Affairs during communism and in 2017 was appointed as the Chairman of the Parliament of Albania. This is not just bad but it is also bone-chilling to think that there are people still in power who unequivocally either directly or not, were accomplices of the Hoxha dictatorship.

So what does this leave us with? We have a ping-pong marathon so thirsty for power that they will do anything to win the game. Defame anyone that comes your way and disagrees with you, be it the media, the average Albanian citizen, elites, working-class, anyone. Really makes me wonder what Protagoras or Gorgias would make of this. All the while with total disregard for the common good and principles they were elected for in the first place. Now there is not much else

to say that would not be considered pure speculation or just writer's rage about the system, especially nothing else that would make any party links to ideologies, which are if not inexistent, just tools to gain some more votes that can't be bought with money or favours.

2.9. Politics in the Post-Modern Era: What is beyond the State?

After having (partly) survived devastation, post-World War II Europe attempted to integrate their economies and prevent future conflicts by creating this international allegiance through the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.

Operating under a supranational governance model, the European Union (EU) exercises authority that extends beyond the boundaries of its constituent nation-states. This model challenges the conventional understanding of complete sovereignty held by nation-states, as the decisions and policies of the EU possess the capacity to supersede national legislation in specific areas. At the core of the EU lies the principle of shared decision-making, wherein member states combine their sovereign powers to collectively reach decisions through various institutions, such as the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the European Parliament. This approach disrupts the conventional model of centralised decision-making within individual nation-states. The evolution of the EU has been guided by a succession of treaties that delineate the union's scope, powers, and objectives. Treaties, including the Treaty of Rome (1957) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992), have progressively expanded the competencies of the EU and fostered deeper integration among member states, thereby challenging the primacy of the nation-state in certain policy domains.

The pursuit of economic integration by the EU has been instrumental in challenging the conventional nationalist state paradigm. The establishment of the European Single Market, the adoption of a common currency (the Euro), and the implementation of policies promoting the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people have engendered interdependence among member states and diminished the significance of national borders. The EU acknowledges that certain global issues, such as economic crises, climate change, terrorism, and migration, necessitate collective action beyond the capabilities of individual nation-states. By forging a federal allegiance among member states, the EU endeavours to present a united front in tackling these challenges and maximising the collective benefits derived from cooperation. Emphasising solidarity and cohesion among its member states, the EU employs various funding mechanisms, including the Cohesion Policy and the Solidarity Fund, to support the economic development of less prosperous regions and extend assistance during times of crisis. This fosters a sense of shared responsibility and mutual advantage among member states, reinforcing the cooperative framework of the union.

It is important to note that the process of building a federal allegiance within the EU is an ongoing and complex endeavor. While the EU has made progress in promoting unity and cooperation, it also faces challenges related to national interests, divergent political ideologies, and debates about the optimal balance between centralised decision-making and national sovereignty.

2.10. Transformation of Politics beyond nation-state: the EU Model.

With the European Union as we know it today offering a sense of belonging to the citizens and political security (among other things, like economic benefits from a single market) to its member states, the beginning of this multinational union comprised a modest number of “united nations”. What started as the European Economic Community from the Treaty of Rome in 1957 with only 6 member states, namely Italy, France, Luxembourg, West Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, faced the inevitable enlargement in the number of nations being part of the union. After all, the more the merrier (and better secured). The next enlargement wave followed to integrate Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 1973, with the next country to join being Greece in 1981. Five years later, briefly before the Single European Act of 1987, the Iberian Enlargement came along with Spain and Portugal joining the European Community. In 1995, the enlargement process went north and Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined, but things at this point were different due to the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 creating a three-pillar EU consisting of the European Community, Justice and Home Affairs, and Common Foreign and Security policy. In addition, the criteria for joining were adjusted in the 1993 European Council’s Declaration in Copenhagen to clarify that a prospective member state should not only “comply with EC standards and rules” in order to be eligible. A new set of criteria was introduced called the Copenhagen criteria, which will be elaborated in the next section.

With the new millennium starting, the ever-solidifying Union welcomed another wave of enlargement from the Eastern Bloc in 2004, making Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Slovenia, and Slovakia the newest Member States. Institution-wise the EU was starting to gain more power and consolidating its supranational presence over various policy areas as the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999 subsumed the Schengen

Agreement into EU law. The next round of enlargement went further on the east as Bulgaria and Romania joined the Union. In 2013 we have what is so far the last country to join the EU. The new addition is Croatia, which upon joining the Union found a stronger presence of the European Parliament whose responsibilities have risen over several important areas (alongside the Council) such as setting the EU budget, and justice and home affairs.

2.11. EU Eligibility

As we proceed to identify the actual eligibility criteria for joining the European Union, we state the obvious; First and foremost, the interested country must be in Europe. As we continue to less obvious criteria, the Treaty on European Union lays the legal basis that the prospective Member State must comply with, more specifically Article 49 which foresees the institutional protocol that will follow once the interested state unconditionally respects and endorses Article 2 of the TEU. What Article 2 envisions is the set of principles and values upon which the EU is built on, such as *“respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and respect for a pluralistic society and for non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men.”* (Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, 2012)⁴⁴.

The applicant states, after making sure that it complies with the aforementioned articles of the TEU, must also meet the Copenhagen criteria, which were instituted in the 1993 Copenhagen European Council, and further consolidated in the 1995 Madrid European Council (EUR-Lex)⁴⁵

EUR-Lex states the Copenhagen criteria to be met are as follows:

- Institutional stability guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities;
- A functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU;
- The ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including the aims of political, economic, and monetary union.

Also of great importance, is that the European Union itself must be in the condition of being able to accommodate prospective members when they meet the accession criteria.

2.12. Procedure

After the applicant country has met the criterion envisaged in Article 2 of TEU, a formal application to the Council of the European Union can be submitted, to start the journey towards becoming an EU Member State. After the application is submitted, the Council of Europe notifies the European Parliament, the EC, and the parliaments of the Member States regarding the membership application. After being informed, the European Commission releases an official statement containing the EC's opinion on said application from the interested country. Following the Commission's opinion on whether the applicant country can be qualified as a candidate country or not, the Council of Europe has to unanimously agree (or not) on granting the candidate status to the applicant. Depending on the outcome of the unanimous decision, the applicant country is either denied from proceeding further (possibly until the unmet criterion has been met), or they are granted to proceed to the negotiation phase.

Assuming that this hypothetical applicant country has been given the green light to proceed to the negotiation talks from the Council of Europe, this is where the hard work starts, or better, *has* to start. A series of conferences take place where governmental representatives from the EU Member States get to meet the representatives of the candidate state and present to them the EU legislation they have to adapt to and gradually transpose to their national legislation. This set of EU laws is known as the *acquis communautaire*, and it comprises 35 ‘chapters’ covering all necessary policy areas that will need to be integrated into the candidate country’s national legal and institutional framework. The policies covered by the 35 chapters of the *acquis* are diverse and they cover a wide spectrum of issues, varying from the free movement of capital, energy, public procurement, judiciary, and fundamental rights, to fisheries, education and culture, information society and media, everything to be on the same page as other Member States basically. Before the candidate country is actually working on transposing laws or adapting policies, the Commission provides them a ‘screening’ report where an in-depth analysis of the candidate’s current situation regarding individual chapters is presented. According to the candidate’s situation stated by the Commission, the Council decides if it is reasonable to start working on other chapters, depending on whether previous chapters’ *acquis* has been transposed fully. So, in other words, you have to complete or ‘close’ some chapters to then proceed or ‘open’ the remaining ones.

The progress made by the candidate country is monitored closely by the Commission through periodic meetings with the responsible representatives from the public sector and governmental institutions, but also through periodic reports with extensive data and progress updates that the candidate country has achieved in the process. The Commission then assists the candidate country with technical or financial resources in the form of IPAs or Instruments for

Pre-Accession Assistance to facilitate them in successfully conducting ongoing reforms or other processes meant for European integration. Other ways of assisting the candidate is through TAIEX or Technical Assistance and Information Exchange, where Experts from Member States are deployed for a short period of time to the candidate country to help them with their insights and expertise through workshops on overcoming any lagging in the integration process.

The Council of Europe and the European Parliament are kept up to date from the European Commission on the progress of the candidate country through annual enlargement policy communications and country reports on the progress that has been made in the implementation of the *acquis* chapters.

2.13. Next in line

Previously there was some historical context presented regarding the European Union's enlargement past, now it is time to see who the future Member States might be, and this EU enlargement policy foresees to deal with them. Having had a troubled past, the Western Balkans region is known to be partially fragmented within itself, with various disputes (...and full-blown wars) over territory, ethnicity, and religion among neighbouring countries, it comes as no surprise that the EU integration process of the region suffers from fatigue, if not total stagnation. If I may make a gross comparison, when two or more people are fighting one another you don't invite them to your gathering as is because they will ruin the mood for everyone. So, what do you do? You try to make them resolve their issues beforehand so that everyone at the gathering will feel more harmonious. This is a diminution of what the EU has been trying to achieve when it comes to integration of the Western Balkans through the Stabilisation and Association Process,

incentivizing the WB6 to make peace with each other so that their possible integration will not have any disruptive effects on the Union. Again, this is a weird analogy. The Stabilisation and Association Process was put in motion in 1999 and it uses instruments such as bilateral Stabilisation and Association Agreements, and economic aid to promote good neighbourly relations and then reward all these efforts by getting the WB6 closer to European integration. Currently, Albania, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey hold the candidate status, with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo as potential candidates. Iceland on the other hand, has put its candidacy on hold since 2013. Efforts are continuously being put in by the European Union in regard to the integration of the Western Balkans as we can see from the 2020 Enlargement Package (and An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans) where there is an emphasis on improving relations within the region and fueling economic prosperity.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The methodology employed in this master's thesis on Political Science and International Relations aimed to address the following research question: What dominated politics in the last decades? Logic or Rhetoric? The study focuses on the struggle for state dominance and the uncontrolled rise of regional and global issues. To investigate this complex and multifaceted topic, a qualitative research approach was adopted, complemented by two case studies: the Covid-19 pandemic as a global issue and Western Balkans reconciliation as a regional need to maintain political dominance, as well as plenty of (if not too much) ancient, mediaeval, enlightenment, and modern, philosophy literature.

Qualitative research is well-suited to explore and understand intricate social phenomena such as politics. It allows for an in-depth analysis and interpretation of data, capturing the complexity and nuances of the subject matter. Through qualitative research, the researcher can delve into the underlying motivations, perceptions, and dynamics that shape political processes and decision-making.

The use of case studies served two important purposes in this study. First, they provided concrete examples of the phenomenon under investigation, allowing for a deeper understanding of the dominant factors in current politics. The COVID-19 pandemic, as a

global issue, presented an opportunity to explore how logic and rhetoric influenced policy responses and decision-making on a global scale. The Western Balkans reconciliation case study, on the other hand, offered insights into the regional dynamics and the importance of maintaining a dominant -but peaceful- political presence in the context of state-building and stability.

The choice of case studies was driven by the need to examine both global as macro and regional along with local as micro aspects of politics. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its far-reaching implications and global impact, served as an illuminating example of the interplay between logic and rhetoric in addressing a pressing global issue. The Western Balkans reconciliation case study, on the other hand, provided a regional perspective, highlighting the significance of continued political engagement and dominance in shaping the trajectory of a post-conflict region.

The decision to adopt a qualitative research approach and utilize case studies was driven by several factors. Firstly, I lacked credible resources to directly prove my thesis on the Albanian Transitional Period, so after four painful semesters I decided to write something else, that might or might not serve as groundwork for the future when I decide to dedicate more efforts to researching the transitional period and its complexities. On the other hand, here the complexity of the subject matter, laden with metaphysical aspects, called for a methodological approach that could capture the essence of these phenomena. Analogies

and comparative analysis became valuable tools for highlighting similarities and differences in political dynamics.

Furthermore, the nature of the research question, which sought to understand the dominant forces in politics, required an examination of current examples and manifestations of logic and rhetoric in the political sphere. By observing and analyzing real-world instances of these phenomena through the ages, the research aimed to provide valuable insights and draw meaningful conclusions for future reference.

It is important to recognize the fundamental distinctions between rhetoric and logic in politics. Rhetoric involves the art of persuasion, focusing on the ability to influence and shape opinions through effective communication. Logic, on the other hand, centers around constructing valid and sound arguments that lead to justified conclusions. These two elements play pivotal roles in political discourse, as persuasive rhetoric aims to mobilize action while logic seeks to establish a rational foundation for decision-making. By examining current examples and analyzing the interplay between logic and rhetoric, this research aimed to shed light on the dynamics that have shaped politics in recent decades.

CHAPTER 4: Global Challenges and return to national politics: Case of Covid 19

The COVID-19 pandemic, as we are all unfortunately aware of, is the global outbreak of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, also known as SARS-CoV-2. It originated as a mysterious and unlabeled outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei province in the south of China, specifically in the area of a wildlife food market in early January 2020. The World Health Organization declared it a global pandemic on the 11th of March 2020, after more than 200 000 confirmed cases over 160 countries⁴⁶. With probably the same speed of sunlight rising from the east, the virus continued its way from Asia towards Europe where it had a devastating impact on Italy among others, where the region of Lombardy specifically had to face a horrendous and unexpected amount of deaths, more so affected were the elderly. It wasn't long until the virus went further to the west and continued with a tragic insurgence of cases that have devastated, and continue to devastate North America, specifically the USA with 23.7 million cases and over 350 000 deaths⁴⁷. As of early 2021, the pandemic was still ongoing, in some places more than others, and in some cases considerably low like the case of New Zealand which was then *virtually* virus-free, with only as much as 5 cases a day. When we look at the statistics about Albania, we can see a total of 69 238 cases of infection, where 25 978 cases were still undergoing treatment or were still testing positive for the virus, and an unfortunate number of 1291 deaths⁴⁸.

Considering the population of approximately 2.8 million people living in Albania and the known number of cases, we can deduce that 2.41% of the population has contracted the virus. I believe this is not a devastating number, even though if you ask around, I believe that everybody knows someone that has contracted the virus, if not themselves. I would personally attribute this low percentage of contamination to the very strict and abrupt lockdown measures that were adopted in Albania from the very start, and possibly to defective statistical data gathering. On the 9th of March we had the first confirmed cases in Albania and immediately imposed travel bans to and from various cities in Italy that were declared as red zones, and a mandatory 14-day isolation period for travellers coming from abroad. It was also communicated that there was going to be a 72-hour total lockdown for the weekend of 13-15th of March, and as such the measures began to increase. The following week, the government ordered all the schools to close, and most of the administration to work from home. Urban and interurban transport were also to be suspended alongside all the bars, restaurants, nightclubs, and recreational activities to shut down indefinitely. A curfew was instated, permitting citizens to leave the house only for one hour within the timeframe 05:00-13:00, and only for grocery or pharmacy shopping, although the curfew and mode of going outside were changed many times according to the infection rates, the more people are infected and the stricter the curfew becomes. The constitution of Albania states that for a state of emergency to be declared, the country has to be in a state of war from a direct enemy, so instead the Albanian government declared a state of natural disaster or *force majeure*, followed by the peculiar protagonism of prime minister Rama in a long series of televising himself through Facebook posts and live videos, all the while referring to the virus as “the invisible enemy” and the situation “the war against the invisible enemy”.⁴⁹ This was perceived to be an exaggerated behaviour, making himself the only source of information during the

lockdown and also ‘militarising’ an otherwise sanitary issue and labelling citizens who violated lockdown measures as “traitors of the war laws”⁵⁰ who would get fined in ridiculous amounts such as 5000 Euros. Accompanying the curfews was the constant presence of the police patrols and checkpoints, as well as soldiers and their ever-so-shiny tanks. The police also used drones to monitor the streets and remotely controlled them to follow citizens and ask them to stop and identify themselves. Luckily that dystopian tactic did not last very long.

Regardless, under this state of natural disaster, it was made impossible to go outside at all, until the government could figure out how to make the outside world accessible but also safe. Even taking your dog for a walk so they can do their “dirty business” was made illegal for a short while, and my friend for example, was fined an amount of 10,000 ALL (more or less 95 Euros) by the patrolling police while she took her dog downstairs to water some trees. A good amount of these fines were then later on pardoned by the government, as they were extremely pricey and received harsh criticism considering that a 10,000 ALL fine is one third of the minimum salary in Albania.⁵¹

The rhetoric that was mostly dominating the speeches of worldwide leaders, including here our prime minister, seemed to want to avoid taking any blame for themselves and instead declared war on this “invisible enemy” that would consequently also take the blame for all that goes wrong - including here of course all the direct decisions that were taken by these state executives themselves. In a study from 2011, Christopher Hood analyses political leaders’ rhetoric and arrives to the conclusion of his blame avoiding theory.⁵² Another study that is based on Hood’s 2011 blame avoiding theory makes the correlation between Hood’s findings - generally

concluding that politicians try to avoid taking any blame by delegating issues that fall under their responsibility to other more qualified experts - into a pandemic context. The political narrative during the pandemic was more often than not promoting the compliance to health experts' advice. Basically avoiding exposure to other people, staying home instead of going out, wearing a mask, and so on. So if you were really disappointed that you couldn't make it to your sister's birthday party you really should be blaming either the invisible enemy or your family's doctor, because surely politicians are just taking their professional advice.

The rhetoric took such a militaristic approach from speeches implying that we "are at war with the invisible enemy" and "our heroes are fighting in the frontline" - our heroes here being doctors and nurses - that eventually military generals were appointed to take charge of this purely sanitary and health issue.⁵³

A protocol was then established on how citizens could go outside of their homes for various reasons without being fined harshly. The National Agency for Information Society, being the responsible institution for information and communication technologies has done a colossal work of digitising more than 95% of public services in 2020⁵⁴. This strategy was ongoing before there would be such a destructive concept of life under a pandemic, and I truly believe that the timing could not have been more perfect. Citizens could request almost any service provided by public institutions from the commodity of their home and without any risk of further exposure to the virus. Thanks to this advancement in technology, the government established a protocol on how citizens could go outside of their homes for various reasons without being fined harshly. Through the governmental portal e-Albania, citizens could request a 'pass for going out' and they were

required to specify when within the curfew they needed to go out, and for what reason. Since the e-Albania portal has a government gateway connecting 53 institutional systems in real-time, you could simply create an account with your personal ID number, and the municipality would provide the portal with your personal certificate so that you would not need to manually fill in all your credentials.

This protocol was made available also to businesses that were required to proceed in providing their services in order to resemble a somewhat normal life considering the circumstances. One could apply for a work permit, that permits them to go and return from work with or without their vehicle, a permit to go grocery or pharmacy shopping, a permit for medical examinations, and also a permit for taking your dog on a short walk.

There were instances where even this protocol was not entirely coherent, for example in cases where you are registered in a municipality from another city possibly, and you lived elsewhere. When the police would check your permit, they would think you have come a long way to walk your dog. Or the fact that only one citizen per family could receive a permit to go outside, but not all families live under one roof. My parents live in their home, and I live in mine. So, if I would get a permit to do my grocery shopping, none of my parents could obtain a permit for that same day.

On a more positive note, the Financial Packet was approved and put in motion on the 21st of March, providing financial support to the most in need, to small businesses that had to suspend their activities, and to citizens that lost their jobs due to the pandemic. I myself lost my job in April as a result of the cuts in personnel most companies opted for, and was surprised to receive financial support shortly after, without having to make a declaration of any kind to the government. The Financial Packet was also able to provide a pardon of three months regarding

bank loan payments, latency fees for electricity bills, and two months of rent for students and people who lost their jobs due to the virus. While some industries, such as the entertainment industry and gastronomy were severely affected by the pandemic, we saw some surprising growth in other industries such as e-commerce and the technology industry. Many businesses that before the pandemic were conducting their business in the open world, turned to the online world to survive through deliveries. WFH, or working from home became the way to go for many other businesses and also for the most significant part of the public administration. Meetings became online meetings, seminars became webinars, and so did many conferences, summits, and high-level governmental activities that would otherwise have had a great risk of exposure to the virus.

Work is not strictly just a profession, studying is also work, so of course, academia had to adopt the same measures. Once contact was deemed to be unsafe that meant that auditoriums and *aulas* could no longer be filled with students, so everything evolved online. At Epoka we started to attend online classes as soon as it became clear to the university how to convert something we are so used to doing face-to-face, online.

In the beginning, it was a bit uncomfortable because we all had to adapt to something new both conceptually but also logistically. If you did not have a webcam, it was probably about time to get one so that you could attend the online classes, you would have to spend more time in front of a LED-powered canvas. If we had to attend the lecture in person and then go home and work on assignments, now everything was in front of the screen, sometimes making it difficult to adapt to such long hours sitting in front of a computer, especially if you also had to work remotely in front of the very same screen. It was hard to adapt at first, hard to concentrate when you are home and have so many distractions that you would not otherwise have in a classroom. It

felt like a much heavier obligation instead of what initially was a pursuit of knowledge. I personally thought I couldn't make it to finish my Masters' studies because I became so overwhelmed by having to spend the whole day in front of a screen, like it was my master, and I, its servant. 8 hours working remotely, 2 and a half hours lectures plus extra working and researching and writing. Life felt so hard and meaningless. Spending more than 12 hours each and every day in front of a robot and you cannot help asking yourself if all this is really worth it. I did have thoughts of dropping out from my classes, even expressed it to my professors and classmates during a lecture. Except for my emotional distress, that seemed to slightly fade after a weekend at the beach, I became very much used to this routine, and I actually enjoyed it now that I know I need to get up from my workstation every 45 minutes or so and try to be mindful about the bigger picture where we all contribute to saving ourselves from these trying times, even if it is just a short break or as I like to call it, decompression-session with closed eyes.

As it was a hard time for me and much harder for many others, the environment on the other hand seemed to enjoy a break from humans. 55

With almost all the world trying to stay at home and consequently not using their cars, and big corporations that would typically be the most significant pollutants and CO2 emitters temporarily halting their activity, we saw a drastic decline in air pollution, that contributed to a surprisingly good year for honey bee farmers in Albania, with harvests that had not been this prosperous in more than 50 years.

With the start of 2021, the long-awaited vaccine(s) were finally made available to countries, or at least the ones that could afford them. And with this solution came along another problem. The

cold slap of realism, and the self-interest of nations. Many rich countries that could afford any of the vaccines bought as many as they could, in some cases even more than they needed, leaving poorer countries to the mercy of fate. The World Health Organization warned about “vaccine nationalism” meaning that every country should secure vaccines for themselves. Now, as this would seem a rational way to go for politics, we are not dealing with a political crisis but with a sanitary one that affects people regardless of how rich the country they live in is. When the problem is global, one would expect the solution to be global too. Let us speculate a bit here; If say, France buys enough vaccines to secure its whole population because they can afford it and they go about their lives normally after nationwide vaccination, but a poor country like Bangladesh cannot afford to buy vaccines for its citizens, this means that Bangladesh would still have an ongoing epidemic, alas would not be able to provide the labour that most rich countries demand. It is not a surprise that rich and capitalist countries demand cheap labour that poor countries supply, so it must not be a surprise that when rich countries return to their normal life and normal consumption, the poor countries will not be able to accommodate these needs because they are still fighting a virus epidemic, alas, disrupting global supply chains.^{56, 57} Nation leaders must realise that this is not the way to go, when the situation calls for scientific solutions to save us from this virus, we need to have scientific solutions all the way to the end, and not allow politics to disrupt an ongoing process of salvation because of national interests or diplomatic greed.

While there have been discussions that as a result of COVID-19 countries will turn more inwardly, collaborate less with global institutions, and become more nationalistic, this is not a realistic option for many low- and middle-income countries. It is not a choice for many small and

medium-sized countries either. Unfortunately, we have seen evidence of this thinking with the re-emergence of ‘vaccine nationalism’.⁵⁸ This is a phenomenon that was first evident during the H1N1 epidemic and recently we have observed it in practice when high-income countries have brokered deals with major pharmaceutical companies to pre-order their still-in-development COVID-19 vaccines. Through these actions, countries prioritise their citizens’ self-interest in lieu of cooperating with other nations to find solutions. In the case of the USA, this has also resulted in the country’s refusal to join the COVAX facility that aims to ensure more equitable distribution of vaccines between countries regardless of their ability to pay. Indeed, evidence shows that over 80% of the supply of one of the most promising vaccines with an efficacy rate of over 90% developed by Pfizer, has already been claimed by the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), European Union (EU), Canada and Japan. Even if the vaccine were to be made available at a feasible rate to some low- and middle-income countries, they would also need to grapple with the high costs of maintaining, storing, and transporting the vaccine, as well as deploying it among their citizens.

Regional cooperation between neighbouring countries refers to a wide variety of forms of collaboration, ranging from informal cooperation, setting up joint projects (e.g. to build common infrastructure), coordinating policies and regulatory frameworks, to shaping joint policies and institutions. If the latter is the case, we refer to regional organisations. Regional organisations can be supranational organisations (like in the case of the EU) or inter-governmental organisations, where countries do not surrender power to the wider organisation, which is the most common form of cooperation (e.g. in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations -ASEAN-; Southern Common Market – Mercosur-, or the Southern African Development Community – SADC-).

These organisations emerged from recognizing that neighbouring countries share common characteristics, in many cases sharing similar histories and cultures; geographic features; and – especially - shared problems.⁵⁹ These shared problems may consist of governance challenges and/or geo-political and economic interests. However, as we will see later on, a particular regional institutional design or cooperation modality does not fully define the functions of an organisation.

While the past decades have been characterised by increased participation of regional organisations in the Global South on social issues, their effectiveness has been constrained by not only existing inequities in power and influence within its member states; but also inequities at the international level. As a result of this, other high-income nations or blocs (e.g. the EU) have been able to shape global health policy in more effective ways. In addition, regional organisations do not exist in a void and must contend with their commitments to other alliances (given that countries frequently belong to different groupings or blocs); prevailing tensions within countries between protecting national interests versus building shared goals for social issues, such as health; as well as the local politics of its members. Indeed, in the case of the now-defunct Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), its country support disintegrated as soon as there were political shifts in the region. Paradoxically before UNASUR experienced its decline, it was known for its relatively effective regional cooperation in health policy.⁶⁰ Furthermore, similar to other international institutions, inter-governmental regional organisations serve the member states and not vice versa, meaning these institutions have little to no power to hold member states accountable to their commitments and most policymaking occurs through consensus, severely hampering explicit actions on health.

Importantly, it would be simplistic to suggest that we can identify clear links between the level of institutionalisation of a regional organisation and the importance or effectiveness of regional health policies. For instance, in the case of the EU, which is a heavily institutionalised regional organisation, primary responsibilities regarding health policies still lie with the member states. This may in part explain the perceived lack of a united EU response to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, complementary European health policies have only gradually been introduced by integrating them in the context of the regulation of the internal market. In the case of the UNASUR, it has been argued that the relative success of their involvement in health was not so much the result of creating heavy institutions or producing regional health rules, but rather stemmed from creating light sector-specific mechanisms capable of reducing transaction costs, promoting information sharing and serving as catalysts for the diffusion of best practices and cross-country cooperation.⁶¹

Ultimately, the question is whether regional organisations, or regional arrangements more generally, can be effective when faced with cross-border policy challenges such as COVID-19.

4.1. Regional Organisations' Support to their Member States during Health Emergencies

We know that regional cooperation works in health emergencies. An outbreak of another novel virus in 2002, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), not only led to revised International Health Regulations, but also showed how regional cooperation in health can work in modern times to address emergency situations. Following an understanding that countries could not

control SARS on their own, ASEAN convened a meeting at the time to develop practical advice to support countries' responses as well as strict measures to contain the spread throughout the continent. ASEAN's response was lauded by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an example of effective international cooperation against a common enemy, contributing to the minimal spread of the disease around the world.⁶²

Despite the lack of research on the topic, what is clear is that in practice the current COVID-19 situation demonstrates the cost of non-cooperation. We have seen uncoordinated quarantine measures; lockdown measures and border closures (leading to congestion in certain border cities); unorganised repatriation of foreign nationals from several countries; and uncoordinated measures to control and facilitate the trade of medical supplies; among other issues. The lack of coordination in all these cases has led to either unnecessarily spreading the virus to neighbouring countries and/or sub-optimal use of medical supplies and infrastructure. We argue that regional cooperation, in general, and regional organisations, in particular, can support countries in the current crisis as well as help minimise the risks related to subsequent waves of COVID-19.

4.2. Areas for regional cooperation to respond to the COVID-19 crisis

As already discussed, it is not possible to put all regional organisations in one box; we know they vary in composition, institutionalisation, and approach to health. However, opportunities exist for collaboration either as formalised institutions or ad hoc ones created to address the pandemic. Below we describe some examples of areas where regional groupings can act to address COVID-19.

4.3. A Bridge between the Global and National Level

In our research we have found how regional organisations can serve dual roles while acting as intermediaries between the global and national levels. These bodies can help their member states in a vertical manner, for instance by translating agreements and guidelines from the global level (e.g. the Sustainable Development Goals) to national policies and targets appropriate to their specific settings and mobilising resources to reach these goals; as well as horizontally with the countries by providing data and support to address cross-border policy challenges and supporting evidence-based coordination of these goals. At the same time, regional organisations can coordinate their responses with the WHO regional offices (such as the Pan American Health Organization [PAHO], South-East Asia Region [SEARO], and Regional Office for Africa [AFRO]) following their technical guidance, as well as supporting epidemiological surveillance and case identification by encouraging data sharing across countries. For example, as we will discuss later, following a proposal by Costa Rica, PAHO worked with its member states to share knowledge and access to COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines through the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) initiative. Regional bodies have also historically collaborated with WHO regional offices, following their technical guidelines and developing action plans based on their input. However, the differences between both types of institutions are clear. Whereas WHO regional offices are usually agencies based on continental groupings (at least in the cases of PAHO and AFRO), regional organisations involved in health are guided by the unique needs of their member states with specific health concerns and are likely to take more normative positions for health. WHO regional offices are unable to do so given their composition and mandate. For instance, UNASUR clearly took the charge to advance the ideal of health as a human right in international discussions and forums, which is something that PAHO could not do

as forcefully. This means regional organisations can be more courageous in proposing systemic change on how health issues are addressed since they are not constrained by a mandate as technical agencies that are apolitical and as we know, as much as we try to avoid it, health policies and decision-making are innately political. Due to this, groupings of countries guided by regional organisations, for example, can take stronger stances to guide the work of WHO regional offices if they have enough convening power to do so, thus tipping the scales within an international organisation. We have seen increasing signs of this in the case of the WHO, which has traditionally been constrained by the budgetary support of high-income countries, with several African countries recently calling for a redistribution in how the WHO budget is allocated between the WHO headquarters' office and regional agencies.

Regional bodies can also advocate for their member states by developing joint positions in international forums such as the World Health Assembly to obtain support for their policy goals and negotiate with other nations or blocs on key issues that impact low- and middle-income countries. Given the importance of a vaccine to address COVID-19, the COVAX facility, a mechanism to pool the procurement and distribution of vaccines, has been a welcome partnership among several countries. However, this initiative has been criticised for issues such as lack of transparency on the vaccine strategy, price, and possible risks. Moreover, questions still remain on whether pharmaceutical companies can be held liable under this agreement over possible deaths or side effects. Ultimately, initiatives such as these should avoid reproducing past mistakes in inequitable decision-making that have persisted over time in global policy, by giving a voice to low- and middle-income countries participating in the scheme. Regional organisations

have the potential to bring out these concerns and negotiate on the basis of strength in numbers with powerful pharmaceutical companies.

4.4. Facilitating Cross-Border Mobilisation of Goods

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how ill-prepared countries were on many levels but perhaps most visible was the lack of supplies in clinical settings, in terms of ventilators but also swabs and testing kits, among other supplies. This was compounded in many cases by the closures of borders between countries, which left many citizens stranded in neighbouring countries and limited trade between areas. Apart from ‘constitutionalizing’ intra-regional free trade by means of free trade areas, customs unions, or common markets, regional organisations can play an important role in supporting the mobilisation of supply chains and facilitating the transportation of critical medical supplies by implementing inter-state agreements. For example, early on in the pandemic, SADC adopted guidelines to facilitate the movement of essential goods across borders while limiting the spread of the disease⁶³. Regional groupings should consider similar actions in future health emergencies, as well as working together to coordinate border closures and quarantine measures if necessary.

Even if it might not be realistic or even desirable to regionally centralise or pool strategic medical supplies, regional management mechanisms might make a lot of sense so that a temporary overcapacity in one member state can be matched with lower capacity in another member state. Likewise, even in conditions of lockdown, mutual and regulated cross-border access to hospital capacity in neighbouring border cities might save lives. This was illustrated by

Germany, Austria, and Luxembourg accepting COVID-19 patients from Italy, France, and The Netherlands during the first wave of COVID-19.⁶⁴

4.5. Pooling Resources for Mobilisation

Based on past experience, countries like India and Brazil have demonstrated the ability to produce therapeutics or vaccines for COVID-19; however, a large number of countries in the Global South do not have the technology, patents, or facilities to produce medications and supplies such as masks. India and South Africa submitted a joint proposal for the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Council to recommend the World Trade Organization grant a waiver from some obligations under the TRIPS agreement to avoid barriers to scaling up health technologies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for rapid access to affordable medical products, personal protective equipment as well as medicines and vaccines. Given their significance, these proposals were supported by several other WTO members from the Global South but opposed by some high-income countries. While this proposal has been supported by several intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, including the African Union (AU); regional organisations from the Global South still haven't fully exploited their convening power in these forums nor do they have the same experience and capacity to negotiate these agreements compared to the EU and other high-income countries. While significant efforts were made by institutions such as UNASUR and SADC to strengthen the training of their diplomats in health issues, this is an ongoing process that requires more investment and attention.

Several regional efforts have already emerged to respond to COVID-19. Following an initiative by Costa Rica, PAHO proposed a technology platform named (C-TAP) to facilitate the equitable sharing of knowledge, data and intellectual property on COVID-19, as well as access to effective vaccines, medicines and other health products.⁶⁵ In addition, several regional groupings such as Mercosur and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have also approved emergency funds to support their member states during the COVID-19 crisis.

CHAPTER 5: Can Old Gloves fit young hands? Reconciliation versus Nationalism

The Western Balkans have a long history of ethnic conflicts within the region as well as reconciliation attempts practised through means of regional cooperation. Many of these attempts have been futile, while others have produced enough to avoid further conflicts. So what is preventing such a conflict-rich area from becoming a region of neighbourly harmony? Throughout this section, the reader will be acquainted with reconciliation in theory and successful European cases of mending old wounds, while analysing the multidisciplinary steps taken so far by international, regional, and state actors including civil society, in reconciling the region of the Western Balkans. Furthermore, this section of the thesis scrutinises the wide range of possibilities arising from further involving and engaging younger generations of WB states in promoting regional harmony as a means of also bringing much-needed closure to older generations.

The question posed here “Can old gloves fit young hands?” leads to the debate on whether worn-out methods of regional cooperation and current stalemate reconciliation fit the needs of upcoming generations. To which I would directly answer no, we need new gloves that are tailored for the hands of the future. But this isn’t a matter of actual gloves, so throwing out the old and bringing in the new is furthest from easy, and not simply a two-step process. The intricacy of the relations between WB states impedes us from giving an exact solution to the region’s problems, nevertheless, analysing these problems and discussing possible solutions is

what sparks dialogue, which is essential for any improvement of any aspect of life -in this case, improving regional harmony and annihilating the possibility of relapsing to a state of conflict. Before we dig any deeper into the region's conflicts and tentatives for peace, we should acquaint ourselves with the theoretical concept of reconciliation, and how some European states have succeeded in reconciling with their neighbours.

5.1. Western Balkans' Reconciliation: Theory & Praxis

There is no one particular definition regarding the concept of reconciliation, but many interpretations that are in any way, valid. Exactly, Reconciliation is a term so clear, yet so hard to put into words that all can agree, being that it is a destination but also the journey itself. Mending an old friendship is reconciliation, it can happen anywhere, in a marriage, a community, and also, between states. Johan Galtung put it in a more straightforward way; Reconciliation = Closure + Healing.

On the other hand, Karl Marx viewed the term reconciliation (as coined by Hegel) to be very conservative, stating that it was a way to dissolve social conflicts to interest the state (Prussia at the time)⁶⁶ One could also say that reconciliation is inhumane, to just forget and forgive the wrong done to you, just for the sake of it.

From research, the following definition seems most appropriate for what we will be discussing; "Reconciliation is a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace."⁶⁷

Even though the Theory of Reconciliation coined by Camphausen dates all the way back to the mid-nineteenth century, socio-political circumstances -and the whole world for that matter- rapidly change, and as such, concepts continually evolve to give a valid understanding of the current perceptions on a certain issue.

It is very hard to try and narrow down such a broad concept that can be influenced by many factors such as jurisdictional ones, social, political, and cultural.

On the other hand, we have some actual examples we can look up to, respectively that of the Franco-German case in the post-WWII era, uniting former enemies in the pursuit of shared interests and engaging them in constructive and pragmatic cooperation, embedded in the Schuman Declaration in 1950, laid the basis of the European Coal and Steel Community.⁵⁸ Reconciliation became of utmost importance in Europe after the fall of communism in the Eastern and Central parts, mainly divided by the Iron Curtain. The success of reconciliation proved fruitful seeing the economic cooperation between Germany and Eastern Europe, with Germany supporting the further reconciliation of the Visegrad Group, then consequently joining the European Union. The Visegrad Group of Visegrad 4 (V4) is yet another success story of regional reconciliation through cooperation. Consisting of Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Poland, the V4 also experienced turmoil regarding good neighbourly relations in their region, though they managed reconciliation quite nicely by joining forces between the group towards EU integration, unlike the other part of South-Eastern Europe, namely Yugoslavia and other Soviet-ruled countries that were deep in a conflict that wouldn't seem to be over anytime soon. The V4 still continues to improve neighbourly relations within the group but also in regard

to third parties, such as the Western Balkans, which is assisted by V4-funded workshops and other reconciliatory activities.

5.2. Reconciliation & Coop in WB: Steps Taken and Lessons Learned

In the region, reconciliation attempts are abundant, though they are not as effective as thought, otherwise, the current state of affairs would be different and not as prone to re-collapse as now. Among many projects, summits and agreements, this case study will focus on two players of the reconciliation game in the Western Balkans, namely the Western Balkans Fund, and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, both deriving as a result of the Berlin Process.

When it comes to WBF, such a great initiative to promote regional cooperation through interdisciplinary fields of action between the states, there is so much to be told about; Need I sum it up in words I would have to say that there is so much room for improvement and further dedication. The WBF opens periodic calls for applications to benefit from financial aid in various sectors such as education, culture, and sustainable development. The beneficiaries of these calls are from every state of the WB, in order to obtain some sort of equality among the region. While looking at the winners of the last call so far, the WBF Third Call for Regional Project Proposals 2020, I cannot help but wonder about the actual impact of the winning applicants, in concretely prospering cooperation and reconciliation. The projects look great, let's not be misunderstood, but how will they actually contribute to minimising the everlasting struggle towards good neighbourly relations? To be honest now, whom I am referring to specifically are the winners of the projects in Albania, being that as a local I am more aware of the situation and circumstances, or even the nature of these awarded projects, and the selection of winning projects for Albania can't help but spark a sense of skepticism. Also, most winning

projects do not have the entire region involved in conducting or implementing their project goal, so how does that impact cooperation in the region without a certain level of inclusivity? Again to avoid possible misunderstandings, this was said taking into account that possible spill-over might eventually happen and get the whole region involved, but still it is not the same thing as willingly trying to involve the region in working together.⁶⁹

On the other hand, RYCO, focusing on projects that mainly benefit the cooperation of WB youngsters, and funnily enough resembles the WBF's little brother, is flawed in the very same aspects, with a few differences obviously. What you can clearly see from the lists of winning projects for RYCO's yearly calls, is a disbalance between who gets what, meaning that there are more winning projects for one country and less for the other. This might be of course because of an imbalance in applications that lead to an imbalance in award-winners, but still, it comes off as a little bit odd. On the other hand, RYCO's activities seem to have even less connection to regional cooperation and reconciliation as we have spoken about thus far, in comparison to the WBF. In 2008 for example, there was a youth exchange funded by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced from RYCO, intending to select about two individuals per WB countries, and send them to Japan where they would get to know more about the local culture, traditions, and customs for around two weeks.⁷⁰ Now that is very nice, I applied myself for this exchange trip even though I did not get accepted while at the time working for the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs myself, but on the other hand, how will learning about Japanese culture create a bond between the participants of this trip? How will Japanese culture ignite reconciliation and cooperation among the youth of the region? I am not excluding Japan from ever having been involved in conflict, but I personally believe there might be more to learn from resolved conflicts a little more relevant to the ones we are trying to solve.

So, all in all, yes there are many projects and activities being done in the name of reconciliation, but where are they taking us? Are they producing results, be it short-term or long-term? We are facing challenging times and it would be fit to the case that we grasp the importance of taking actions that *actually* prosper the upcoming WB generations and the ones already present and alive.

5.3. Power to Young People: Concept of Spill-Over as an Opportunity

The more time passes, the more wrong stereotypes are ingrained in oneself, meaning that the earlier one can prove these stereotypes wrong the better the perception of diversity and acceptance is digested by individuals. After all, this is just plain familiarity. If you are used to something from childhood onwards, it will be easier for you to accept this phenomenon as usual. The same would apply to educating youngsters of the region about diversity and acceptance in a community.

Imagine for a moment being educated since early youth about unity, forgiving mistakes, and most importantly tolerance. I don't mean being educated in one's family, which is an unpredictable variable, but being educated by the schools and other institutions to be more open towards inclusivity and acceptance. Would this have changed the course of events in the Western Balkans? Would there be more neighbourly compassion in the region? We do not know.

Though what we could definitely do is, try. Try to put more focus on how children are raised and how we can shape their perceptions and possibly stray away from negative behaviours of discriminating what isn't "us" or "ours".

It sounds very optimistic and tale-like but it is not impossible to at least take the first steps toward some common sense in the region. Like getting the story straight, harmonising the history books of fifth graders, and not having one country villainize the rest in order to create incoherence in what is taught to be the truth about the past. It never fails to make you ponder how, 50 years from now, new generations will be blooming and older ones won't be here anymore, and how we have to adapt to this shift and try to welcome the newcomers and teach them that this is their world, and it should be cherished in togetherness and not unreasonably destroyed over personal opinions of someone somewhen. So then, power to young people, and to younger people coming after them!

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, the research question that guided this study sought to determine what dominated politics in the last decades: logic or rhetoric. Through a qualitative research methodology, this thesis has examined the interplay between these two forces and their impact on political discourse and decision-making processes. Analyzing the philosophical foundations of state building, spanning ancient, medieval, and modern times, has provided valuable insights into the evolution of political thought and its influence on governance. The works of influential thinkers such as Protagoras, Socrates, Aristotle, Frege, Wittgenstein, and Husserl have shed light on the conceptual underpinnings of politics and its progression over time.

The adoption of case studies has further enriched this research. The first case study focused on the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring the intricate balance between logical reasoning based on scientific evidence and the persuasive power of rhetoric in shaping public opinion and policy decisions. The analysis of different nations' strategies and approaches has revealed the complexities inherent in managing a global issue and highlighted the tension between logical decision-making and rhetoric-driven persuasion where more actors are in play.

The second case study delved into the need for reconciliation in the Western Balkans, a region striving to maintain active and dominant political involvement. By examining historical conflicts and peacebuilding efforts alongside the rhetoric behind them, this research has underscored the challenges faced in achieving reconciliation. The interplay between logic and rhetoric in shaping

political strategies and initiatives in the region has been explored, highlighting the nuanced dynamics at play.

The research findings emphasize that logic and rhetoric are not mutually exclusive in politics. Instead, they exist as psychologically opposed forces, driven by distinct motivations. Ornamental rhetoric, inseparable from literature itself, seeks to captivate audiences through beauty and wit, influencing them statistically by eliciting admiration. On the other hand, persuasive rhetoric aims to mobilize action, manipulating emotions and guiding individuals towards specific courses of action.⁷⁴ Understanding the subtle distinctions between these two forms of rhetoric contributes to a deeper comprehension of their impact on political decision-making.

The EU enlargement policy has exemplified the benefits of political union and integration, demonstrating the positive outcomes in terms of economic prosperity, security, and the exchange of ideas and cultures. Though always with the rhetoric of “us” joining “them” as if we weren’t already part of the continent geographically. The Western Balkans region, in particular, has experienced significant progress, supported by the European Union and its institutions. However, lasting change must originate from within the region itself, as external assistance can only serve like a catalyst for transformation.

Regional organizations play a pivotal role in addressing health emergencies, particularly in coordinating mobility measures, ensuring the flow of essential supplies, and strategically managing resources. While regional cooperation is not a panacea for the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it presents a significant part of the solution, especially in the Global South

and especially by having the right tone to address problems the right way. Strengthening cooperation mechanisms requires managing short-term self-interests, fostering binding resolutions, and adapting solutions to specific regional contexts. The current crisis has underscored the consequences of non-cooperation and emphasizes the urgent need to leverage existing structures to control the pandemic and better prepare for future challenges, instead of making it a “survival of the richest” scenario.

Reconciliation in the Western Balkans remains an ongoing and complex process. Steps towards reconciliation have been taken, but much work still needs to be done. Multidisciplinary inter-state cooperation is crucial, necessitating thoughtful planning and effective implementation. The expression "e mira s'ka fund" resonates in this context, encapsulating the notion that improvement is an everlasting pursuit, and we have barely started to pursue it correctly. By continuing to strive for comprehensive reconciliation and addressing intergenerational problems, the region can move closer to lasting peace and stability.

This thesis has explored the struggle between logic and rhetoric as dominant forces in politics. By analyzing the evolution of political thought, examining case studies on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the pursuit of reconciliation in the Western Balkans, and delving into the distinctions between ornamental and persuasive rhetoric, a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between these forces has been achieved. This research contributes to the broader discourse on the philosophy and state of politics, shedding light on the challenges faced and the remaining obstacles to be overcome. It is through a nuanced understanding of logic, rhetoric, and their complex relationship that we can navigate the complexities of contemporary politics and

pave the way for a more informed and effective governance system. It seems clear that the presence of rhetoric has shaped the world of politics more than logic has in the last decades, and maybe it is exactly the repercussions of politicians taking this stance to fulfill their personal agendas that have given us a world so hard to live in for the majority of the global population.

When we have most of the globe suffering from poverty and starvation while only the few privileged upper echelon can indulge in incomprehensible luxury, I can only but ask myself where the logic is, because it is impossible to see.

7. REFERENCES

1. C.S. Lewis on Wishful Thinking. (n.d.). Afterall.net. Retrieved from <https://afterall.net/quotes/c-s-lewis-on-wishful-thinking/#:~:text=Lewis%20on%20Wishful%20Thinking>
2. Wittgenstein, L., Russell, B., & Ogden, C. (2010). Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus [EBook #5740] Language: German Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5740/5740-pdf.pdf>
3. Hartt, J., & Miller, J. W. (n.d.). Bertrand Russell's philosophy of politics. Escholarship.mcgill.ca. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.mcgill.ca/concern/theses/qv33s101m>
4. KIM, J. (2011). FREGE'S CONTEXT PRINCIPLE: AN INTERPRETATION. Pacific Philosophical Quarterly, 92(2), 193–213. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0114.2011.01391.x.
5. Plato. (2021). Gorgias: Gorgias: Exploring the Art of Persuasion and Rhetoric. In Google Books. Prabhat Prakashan. https://books.google.de/books/about/Gorgias.html?id=FmLrDwAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y
6. Socrates. (2022, March 5). 54. Protagoras - The First Sophist and Philosophical Revolutionary. The Socratic Journey of Faith and Reason. <https://socratesjourney.org/protagoras-the-sophist/>
7. Ferber, R. (2020). Who is the Measure of All Things in Plato?. In *Platonische Aufsätze* (pp. 167-176). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110637601-012>
8. Gauthier, G. (2022) Protagoras, Homo Mensura, and Self Refutation. Retrieved from <https://gmgauthier.com/post/protagoras-homo-mensura-and-self-refutation/>
9. Garver, E. (1986). Aristotle's "Rhetoric" as a Work of Philosophy. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 19(1), 1–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237460>
10. Shahabi, Z., & Rassi, F. (2015). Husserl's phenomenology and two terms of Noema and Noesis. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 53, 29-34.
11. Garver, N. (1994). Derrida & Wittgenstein. *Philpapers.org*. <https://philpapers.org/rec/GARDW>
12. Ferber, R. (2020). Who is the Measure of All Things in Plato?. In *Platonische Aufsätze* (pp. 167-176). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110637601-012>
13. GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ, *The Monadology*, trans. by George Montgomery, Open Court, La Salle, IL, 1902, §31.
14. Lincicome, D. V. C. (1974). THE PHILOSOPHER AS TEACHER: ARTICLES, COMMENTS, CORRESPONDENCE LOGIC AND RHETORIC. *Metaphilosophy*, 5(3), 266–275. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9973.1974.tb00359.x
15. Garver, E. (1986). Aristotle's "Rhetoric" as a Work of Philosophy. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 19(1), 1–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237460>

16. Pleasants, N. (1999) Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory: A Critique of Giddens, Habermas and Bhaskar. Routledge & CRC Press. Retrieved from <https://www.routledge.com/Wittgenstein-and-the-Idea-of-a-Critical-Social-Theory-A-Critique-of-Giddens/Pleasants/p/book/9780415757584>
17. L. WITTGENSTEIN, Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: Preliminary Studies for Part II of Philosophical Investigations, 2nd edition, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1982, 913.
18. Pleasants, N. (1999) Wittgenstein and the Idea of a Critical Social Theory: A Critique of Giddens, Habermas and Bhaskar. Routledge & CRC Press. Retrieved from <https://www.routledge.com/Wittgenstein-and-the-Idea-of-a-Critical-Social-Theory-A-Critique-of-Giddens/Pleasants/p/book/9780415757584>
19. J. B. Baillie. The Origin and Significance of Hegel's Logic 1901, Chapter IX: Origin and Nature of the Method of the Logic
20. Garver, E. (1986). Aristotle's "Rhetoric" as a Work of Philosophy. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 19(1), 1–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237460>
21. Balaguer, M. (2023, July 13). Kurt Gödel. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kurt-Godel>
22. Feferman, S. (n.d.). Kurt Gödel: Life, Work, and Legacy. Institute for Advanced Study.
23. Corlett, J. A. (1997). Interpreting Plato's Dialogues. *The Classical Quarterly*, 47(2), 423–437. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/639678>
24. *J.B. Bury* (The Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. IV: The Byzantine Empire, Part II: Government, Church and Civilization.)
25. Chirot, D. (2012). *How societies change*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE/Pine Forge Press.
26. Chirot, D. (2012). *How societies change*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE/Pine Forge Press.
27. S, A. (2018). Fall of the Carolingian Empire. Short History Website. <https://www.shorthistory.org/middle-ages/franks/the-fall-of-the-carolingian-empire/>
28. Differences and similarities between the Ancient and Medieval invention of the state. (n.d.). [Www.twcenter.net](http://www.twcenter.net). Retrieved from <https://www.twcenter.net/forums/showthread.php?521986-Differences-and-similarities-between-the-Ancient-and-Medieval-invention-of-the-state>
29. Editors, H. com. (2009, December 17). Magna Carta. HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/topics/european-history/magna-carta>
30. Heller, H. (2011). THE DECLINE OF FEUDALISM. In *The Birth of Capitalism: A 21st Century Perspective* (pp. 23–51). Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p671.5>

31. Holt, M. P. (2003). The Social History of the Reformation: Recent Trends and Future Agendas. *Journal of Social History*, 37(1), 133–144. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3790318>
32. Kreeft, P. (2023) Socrates vs. the Sophists on Ethics. Wwww.youtube.com. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPb1x3cHLNY&t=1119s&ab_channel=WordonFireInstitute
33. Chandler, M. (1988). Models of Voting Behavior in Survey Research. *Synthese*, 76(1), 25–48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20116545>
34. Sigelman, L., & Berry, W. D. (1982). Cost and the Calculus of Voting. *Political Behavior*, 4(4), 419–428. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/586361>
35. Palfrey, T. R., & Poole, K. T. (1987). The Relationship between Information, Ideology, and Voting Behavior. *American Journal of Political Science*, 31(3), 511–530. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111281>
36. Rosenblum, N. L. (2000). Political Parties as Membership Groups. *Columbia Law Review*, 100(3), 813–844. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1123503>
37. Sherkat, D. E., & Blocker, T. J. (1997). Explaining the Political and Personal Consequences of Protest. *Social Forces*, 75(3), 1049–1070. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2580530>
38. HELMUS, T. C. (2022). *Artificial Intelligence, Deepfakes, and Disinformation: A Primer*. RAND Corporation. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep42027>
39. Zgjedhjet vendore 2023. (n.d.). A2news.com. Retrieved from <https://a2news.com/live-news/zgjedhjet-vendore-2023-zgjedhjet-lokale-2023-zgjedhjet-e-14-majit-zgjedhjet-bashkia-tirane/?rezultate>
40. Zgjedhjet vendore 2023. (n.d.). A2news.com. Retrieved from <https://a2news.com/live-news/zgjedhjet-vendore-2023-zgjedhjet-lokale-2023-zgjedhjet-e-14-majit-zgjedhjet-bashkia-tirane/?rezultate>
41. Hiorth, Finngeir (1990) "Albania: An Atheistic State?," Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe: Vol. 10 : Iss. 5 , Article 3. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol10/iss5/3>
42. Hasanaliaj, I. (2020, May 10). Premtimi për ujë 24 orë që ende asnjë kryebashkiak s'po e përmbush. *Faktoje.al*. <https://faktoje.al/premtimi-per-ujë-24-ore-qe-ende-asnje-kryebashkiak-spo-e-permbush/>
43. Pas disfatës në zgjedhjet vendore, Berisha paralajmëron protesta: S'ka rrugë tjetër - Shqiptarja.com. (n.d.). Shqiptarja.com. Retrieved from <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/pas-disfates-ne-zgjedhje-berisha-paralajmeron-protesta-ska-rruge-tjeter>

44. Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union — Title VI — Final provisions — Article 49 (ex Article 49 TEU) (OJ C 202, 7.6.2016, p. 43)
45. Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union — Title I — Common provisions — Article 2 (OJ C 202, 7.6.2016, p. 17)
46. Spinelli, A., & Pellino, G. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic: perspectives on an unfolding crisis. *The British journal of surgery*, 107(7), 785–787.
47. COVID Tracking Project. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://covidtracking.com/>
48. Ministria e Shëndetësisë dhe Mbrojtjes Sociale. (n.d.). COVID-19 Statistika. Retrieved from <https://coronavirus.al/statistika/>
49. Llogari, A. (2023, May 15). Gjigandomania e kryeministrit Rama në luftën ndaj armikut të padukshëm [Giantomania of Prime Minister Rama in the fight against the invisible enemy]. Reporter.al.
50. Montiel, C. J., Uyheng, J., & Dela Paz, E. (2021). The Language of Pandemic Leaderships: Mapping Political Rhetoric During the COVID-19 Outbreak. *Political Psychology*. doi:10.1111/pops.12753
51. Njoftim për pagën minimale nga periudha Prill 2022. (2022). Wwww.tatime.gov.al. Retrieved from <https://www.tatime.gov.al/d/8/45/0/1707/njoftim-per-pagen-minimale-nga-periudha-prill-2022>
52. Hood, C. (2007). What happens when transparency meets blame-avoidance?. *Public Management Review*, 9(2), 191-210.
53. Gelmini, L., Minutiello, V., Tettamanzi, P., & Comoli, M. (2021). Rhetoric, Accounting and Accountability: COVID-19 and the Case of Italy. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4100. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084100>
54. Agjencia Kombëtare e Shoqërisë së Informacionit. (2020). Akshi.gov.al. Retrieved from <https://akshi.gov.al/>
55. Chatterjee, S. (2021) Anthropause: Animal Sightings and Citings under COVID Capitalism: Beyond Liberal Sentimentalism, *Kiran Asher Feminist Studies Volume 47*, Number 3, 2021 pp. 599-626 10.1353/fem.2021.0027 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/16/science/pandemic-nature-anthropause.html#commentsContainer>
56. Doucleff M. Why poorer countries aren't likely to get the Pfizer vaccine any time soon: National Public Radio; 2020.
57. Walker PGT, Whittaker C, Watson OJ, Baguelin M, Winskill P, Hamlet A, et al. The impact of COVID-19 and strategies for mitigation and suppression in low- and middle-income countries. *Science*. 2020.
58. Kupp, M., & Lawler, E. E. (2020, May). The Danger of Vaccine Nationalism. *Harvard Business Review*.
59. World Health Organization. WHO welcomes ASEAN unity against SARS: Media Center. World Health Organization; 2003.

60. Amaya AB, Kingah S, De Lombaerde P. The role of regional health diplomacy on data sharing: the SADC and UNASUR cases. *Regions Cohesion*. 2019;9:93–132.
61. Amaya AB, Rollet V, Kingah S. What's in a word? The framing of health at the regional level: ASEAN, EU, SADC and UNASUR. *Global Social Policy*. 2015;15:229–60.
62. MSF. African union says urgent need to address patents and technology barriers for access to future COVID-19 vaccines: Relief Web; 2020.
63. Amaya AB, Rollet V, Kingah S. What's in a word? The framing of health at the regional level: ASEAN, EU, SADC and UNASUR. *Global Social Policy*. 2015;15:229–60.
64. Kapsner, L. A., Kampf, M. O., Seuchter, S. A., Gruendner, J., Gulden, C., Mate, S., Mang, J. M., Schüttler, C., Deppenwiese, N., Krause, L., Zöller, D., Balig, J., Fuchs, T., Fischer, P., Haverkamp, C., Holderried, M., Mayer, G., Stenzhorn, H., Stolnicu, A., & Storck, M. (2021). Reduced Rate of Inpatient Hospital Admissions in 18 German University Hospitals During the COVID-19 Lockdown. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.594117>
65. Ramchandani, R., Kazatchkine, M., Liu, J., Sudan, P., Dybul, M., Matsoso, P., Nordström, A., Phelan, A., Legido-Quigley, H., Singh, S., & Mabuchi, S. (2021). Vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics for covid-19: redesigning systems to improve pandemic response. *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)*, 375, e067488. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj-2021-067488>
66. Hofmann, J. (n.d.). Theory of Reconciliation. Retrieved July 24, 2020, from <https://www.ohio.edu/chastain/rz/reconcil.htm>
67. Brounéus, Karen. (2003). Reconciliation: Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation.
68. Madhi, G., 2020. [online] Europeum.org. Available at: <<http://europeum.org/data/articles/policy-paper-3.pdf>> [Accessed 24 July 2020].
69. Nikolić-Ristanović, V. (2015). Communication about the past and reconciliation: lessons from the Western Balkan. *Restorative Justice*, 3(2), 188–211. doi:10.1080/20504721.2015.1069090
70. RYCO (2021, December 22). Participants Selected: Western Balkans Meet Japan – A Bridge Into Future. Regional Youth Cooperation Office. <https://www.rycowb.org/participants-selected-western-balkans-meet-japan-a-bridge-into-future/>
71. Turan, I. dri., & Akçay, E. Y. (2019). The Western Balkans Policy of the EU Within the Framework of Domino Theory. *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, 097492841986093. doi:10.1177/0974928419860932
72. Nikolić-Ristanović, V. (2015). Communication about the past and reconciliation: lessons from the Western Balkan. *Restorative Justice*, 3(2), 188–211. doi:10.1080/20504721.2015.1069090

73. Andrieu, K. (2009). "Sorry for the Genocide": How Public Apologies Can Help Promote National Reconciliation. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 38(1), 3–23. doi:10.1177/0305829809336257
74. Cousins, M. (1978). The Logic of Deconstruction. *Oxford Literary Review*, 3(2), 70–77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43973591>