

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCES AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE ROLE THAT THE 'IDEA OF EUROPE' HAS  
PLAYED IN ALBANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE  
POST-COMMUNIST ERA**

**ENEDI DOMI**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR  
PROF. ERIK IVAR RINGMAR**

**ISTANBUL, 2021**

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCES AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE ROLE THAT THE ‘IDEA OF EUROPE’ HAS  
PLAYED IN ALBANIA’S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE  
POST-COMMUNIST ERA**

**by**

**ENEDI DOMI**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Political Sciences and International Relations**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR  
PROF. ERIK IVAR RINGMAR**

**ISTANBUL, 2021**

## APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Sciences and International Relations.

### Thesis Jury Members

Title - Name Surname

Opinion

Signature

Prof. Dr. – Erik Ivar Ringmar

---

Assoc. Prof. – Talha Köse

---

Assoc. Prof. – Hüseyin Alptekin

---

This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University.

Date of Submission

Seal/Signature

## ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname: Enedi Domi

Signature:



## ÖZ

### KOMÜNİZM SONRASI DÖNEMDE ARNAVUTLUK'UN DIŞ POLİTİKASINDAKİ AVRUPA FİKRİNİN ROLÜ

Domi, Enedi

Siyaset Bilimleri ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Yüksek Lisans Programı

Öğrenci Numarası: 187039012

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORC-ID): 0000-0002-7061-4492

Ulusal Tez Merkezi Referans Numarası: 10405210

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Erik Ivar Ringmar

Ağustos 2021, 91 sayfa

Ted Hopf'un temsil ettiği "Komünizm sonrası dönemde Arnavutluk'un dış politikasında Avrupa Fikrinin oynadığı rolü", Arnavutluk'un dış politikası üzerine sosyal yapılandırmacı yaklaşıma dayalı bir tezdur. Bu tez sosyal bilişsel kimlik teorisini kullanarak bir devletin iç kimliklerini dış politikasına bağlar. Bu yaklaşıma göre, bir devletin kendisini başka bir devlete göre tanımlama şekli, birincisinin ikincisine göre çıkarlarını şekillendirmekte ve böylece dış politika seçimini etkilemektedir. Somut olarak, bu makale Arnavutluk'un Avrupa yanlısı yönelimini yerel kimlikleri, özellikle de Arnavutluk'un kendisini Avrupa ile ilgili tanımlama biçimi aracılığıyla açıklamaya çalışmaktadır. Hopf'un yöntemini kullanarak, Arnavutluk'un komünizm sonrası kamusal söylemi analiz edilerek, Arnavutluk'un Avrupa ile ilgili olarak yaptığı kimlik ortaya çıkarılacaktır. Bulgulara dayanarak, Avrupa fikrinin Arnavutluk'un kendisini Avrupa ile ilişkilendirme biçiminde oynadığı rolü ve bu sayede Arnavutluk'un dış politika tercihindeki etkisini anlamaya çalışacağız. Bu analiz aracılığıyla Arnavutluk'un dış politikasının anlaşılmasına ve tahmin edilmesine katkıda bulunmayı amaçlıyoruz.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Avrupa Fikri, Arnavutluk, Dış Politika, Devlet Kimliği, Kamusal Söylem

## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE THAT THE 'IDEA OF EUROPE' HAS PLAYED IN ALBANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-COMMUNIST ERA

Domi, Enedi

MA in Political Sciences and International Relations

Student ID: 187039012

Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID): 0000-0002-7061-4492

National Thesis Center Reference Number: 10405210

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Erik Ivar Ringmar

August 2021, 91 pages

“The role that the ‘Idea of Europe’ has played in Albania’s foreign policy in the post-communist era”, is a thesis on Albania’s foreign policy based on the social constructivist approach represented by Ted Hopf, which connects the domestic identities of a state with its foreign policy using the social cognitive theory of identity. According to this approach, the way a state identifies itself in relation to another state, shapes the interests of the former in relation to the latter, thus influencing its foreign policy choice. Concretely, this paper seeks to explain Albania’s pro-European orientation through its domestic identities, specifically the way Albania identifies itself in relation to Europe. Using Hopf’s method, the identification that Albania makes of itself in relation to Europe will be uncovered by analysing the Albanian post-communist public discourse. Based on the findings, we will try understand the role that the idea of Europe has played in the way Albania identifies itself in relation to Europe, and through this its impact in Albania’s foreign policy choice. Through this analysis we aim to make a modest contribution to the understanding and forecasting of Albania’s foreign policy.

**Keywords:** Idea of Europe, Albania, Foreign Policy, State Identity, Public Discourse

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Erik Ringmar for his help, advice and encouragement throughout the process of writing the thesis. In addition to professor Erik, I would like to thank and express my gratitude to the other professors of the department with whom I have exchanged views, Talha Köse, Ali Aslan, Recep Şentürk and Önder Küçükural. With the same consideration I express my gratitude to the professors of the University of Tirana, Arlind Qori, Enis Sulstarova and Klejd Kelliçi who did not hesitate at any moment to share ideas and materials with me. From the Albanian professors I also thank Adrian Brisku of Charles Univeristy of Prague, who also shared with me valuable ideas and materials. During my stay in Tirana, I exchanged thoughts and materials with many friends, including Klisman Kadiu, Albert Pepaj and Inxhi Brisku, whose contribution I greatly appreciate. To each of the above I have been and remain grateful.

ENEDI DOMI

İSTANBUL, 2021

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ÖZ</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1. General Introduction.....	1
1.2. State of Literature .....	4
1.3. Research Question .....	7
1.4. Methodology .....	8
1.5. Structure of Thesis.....	10
<b>CHAPTER II THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1. Constructivism vs Other Approaches .....	11
2.2. Ted Hopf’s Constructivism .....	13
2.3. Social Constructivism vs Other Constructivisms .....	17
2.4. Appendix: The Concept of the ‘Idea of Europe’ .....	17
<b>CHAPTER III ALBANIA’S POST-COMMUNIST FOREIGN POLICY</b> .....	<b>20</b>
3.1. Post-Communist Albania and the West.....	20
3.2. Albania-EU Relations.....	23
3.3. Albania-Greece Relations.....	28
3.4. Albania-Serbia Relations.....	32
3.5. Conclusions .....	37
<b>CHAPTER IV THE PRESENCE IN THE ALBANIAN PUBLIC DISCOURSE, OF IDEAS THAT SUPPORT THE EUROPEAN BELONGINGNESS OF THE ALBANIAN NATION</b> .....	<b>38</b>
4.1. Public Discourse of the Political Elites From 1991 to 2021 .....	39

4.1.1. The Period 1984–1992.....	39
4.1.2. The Period 1992-2006 .....	42
4.1.3. Political Orientalism .....	44
4.1.4. The Period 2006-2014 .....	47
4.1.5. Is Albania Islamic? .....	49
4.1.6. The Role of Skanderbeg .....	51
4.1.7. The Period 2014-2021 .....	52
4.2. Public Discourse of Intellectual Elites From 1991 to 2021.....	55
4.2.1. Ismail Kadare – The European Identity of Albanians .....	55
4.2.2. Aurel Plasari – Europe as Christianity.....	60
4.2.3. Piro Misha – In Search of European roots.....	63
4.2.4. Elena Kocaqi – Albanians, the First Europeans .....	64
4.2.5. Moikom Zeqo – The European Roots of Albanian Nation and Statehood.....	66
4.3. European Belongingness of the Albanian Nation in History Textbooks .....	67
4.3.1. History Textbooks’ Eurocentric Approach.....	68
4.3.2. Albanians and Europe Along the History .....	71
4.4. Conclusions .....	74
<b>CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>CURRICULUM VITAE.....</b>	<b>91</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AII	Adriatic and Ionian Initiative
AIIS	Albanian Institute for International Studies
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
DP	Democratic Party (of Albania)
EC	European Community
EIU	European Integration Units
EU	European Union
HLSG	High-Level Steering Group
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PHARE	Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Restructuring of the Economy
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SECI	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
SEE	South East Europe
SEECF	South-East European Cooperation Process
SMI	Socialist Movement for Integration
SP	Socialist Party (of Albania)
WB	Western Balkans

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. General Introduction

Communism lasted longer in Albania than in any other country of the Eastern Bloc, as Albania was the last to embrace political pluralism. This period, as we know from history, was accompanied by a harsh dictatorship which deprived Albanian citizens of many basic rights and freedoms. As in any other country in the Eastern Bloc, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the communist regime began. After a long period of waiting, the people were enthusiastic because they saw that their aspirations for freedom and democracy could be actualized. People's enthusiasm was spilled on to the squares in the form of mass demonstrations aimed at the eventual overthrow of the communist regime and its replacement by a liberal regime. The demonstrations were accompanied by various slogans and calls, but the most symbolic – and widely accepted as such – was the catchphrase “We want Albania to be like Europe”. For the still communist Albania, Europe had already turned into a national telos.

The end of the communist regime in Albania was marked by the first pluralist elections held in March 1991, although the first opposition party came to power only a year later in 1992. The collapse of communism was accompanied by the famous process of ‘transition’, which meant the transition from a totalitarian to a democratic system and from a centralized economy to a market economy. The transition was characterized by great challenges for the first governments due to the acute problems that Albania inherited from its communist past.

In addition to a host of institutions, laws and economic regulations, post-communist Albania – which had just emerged from isolation – had to invent also a foreign policy. Albania signalled its pro-Western tendency in the foreign policy even before the regime change. During the 1980s, Albania had significantly improved relations with Western countries, particularly with Italy, Germany and Greece. In May 1990, after approving several political and economic reforms, the communist government announced its intention to join the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

(Barbullushi, 2009: 19). The tendency of getting closer to the West continued after the change of the regime in 1991 with the establishment of diplomatic relations with Britain and the United States in May and with the European Community (later European Union) in July of that year. Albania's accession to the CSCE (later OSCE) in June 1991 would mark the first step towards Euro-Atlantic integration processes<sup>1</sup>.

European integration in specific, quickly became the main foreign policy objective of Albanian governments despite their ideological differences. The Nano government that emerged from the 1991 elections, declared in its political program that "The [European] Union and the positive European currents are and will remain an important strategic priority of the foreign policy of the Republic of Albania" (Nano, 1991). The Berisha government that emerged from the 1992 elections, in the fifth chapter of its political program which deals with foreign policy, included the following priorities: "integration to European and Euro Atlantic Institutions, Cooperation with the European Council, cooperation with the European Union, cooperation with NATO and internationalization of the Albanian Question" (Përmeti, 2015). In this spirit, on May 11, 1992, Albania and the European Union signed the Trade and Cooperation Agreement that allowed Albania receive funding from EU PHARE program, which was created by the EC to help Eastern European countries in their transition process. This agreement would officially mark the starting gun sound of Albania's long run towards European integration and would pave the way for dozens of other agreements that would bring Albania closer and closer to EU membership. Since that day, Albania has become part of the European Commission, has signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement and the visa-free travel agreement with EU, has been granted candidate status and has recently received the green light to initiate negotiations for the final accession to the Union.

Albania's journey on the path of integration has been accompanied from day one by a narrative which describes this journey as a 'return' to where Albania belongs, in the 'European family'. The word 'return' as a matter of course means that in the past there was a 'separation' or a 'break up', in our case between Albania and Europe. The whole narrative is built on the idea that Albania and the Albanian nation have historically

---

<sup>1</sup>*Anëtarësimi i Shqipërisë në OSBE në 1991 (Albania's accession in OSCE in 1991)*, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs website; last accessed April 28, 2021  
<<http://www.ambasadat.gov.al/osbe/sq/an%C3%ABtar%C3%ABsimi-i-shqip%C3%ABris%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-osbe-n%C3%AB-1991>>

been part of the European civilization (since its conception), but have been separated from it as a result of several historical accidents. This ‘separation’ – which continues to this day – supposedly ends with the accession of Albania to the European Union, which would symbolize the return of Albania to the European family to which it naturally belongs. The will to return to Europe has manifested itself in domestic politics as a continuous attempt for Europeanization, while in foreign policy as a continuous attempt to join the European Union. According to Fatos Lubonja, the narrative of “returning to Europe” has the features of a political myth that aids the post-communist transition to capitalism, liberal democracy and EU integration (Lubonja, 1999, as cited in Sulstarova, 2016: 57).

As we will see in the chapter on Albania’s foreign policy, since 1992 Albania has adopted a clear pro-Western foreign policy with European integration to have become the main objective of Albanian foreign policy to this day. This policy constantly remains the key concern of the whole political spectrum in Albania (Abazi, 2008). Many analyzes have been made to explain Albania’s strong motivation to join the EU and the majority emphasize the economic benefits that this membership provides for the country. There seem to be many reasons for us to think about this issue in rationalist terms. Albania, as one of the least developed countries in Europe, would have great advantages from EU membership. These advantages include economic support, access to the European Common Market, technical and institutional support, etc. However, according to Adrian Brisku, this argument has two limitations.

Firstly, the rationalist approach cannot explain the huge support with over 90% that the Albanian public of all social categories has for the European integration (Brisku, 2007). If the rationalist approach were to stand, then this would mean that over 90% of the Albanian public believe that they will have a personal material benefit from EU membership (ibid). This on the other hand means that over 90% of the Albanian public are well informed about the material benefits of EU membership. Studies show that a very small part of the public is really aware of the real economic benefits that the membership brings. Also knowing that economic benefits would be distributed unequally between social categories, the rate of support should also vary between categories, and this is not reflected in the studies conducted by Albanian Institute for International Studies. Secondly, if the rationalist approach were to stand, then the motivation to join the EU would be explained in materialistic terms. The truth is that

most of the discussions on Albania-EU relations explain European integration in essentialist terms, asserting Albania's natural right to be part of the EU.

Although the materialist approach has limitations, this does not mean that material factors do not play a role, on contrary we recognize the fact that material factors do play a big role. However, what these limitations show is that in order to fully explain Albania's strong orientation towards Europe, we must also look at other non-material factors. This is the aim of this paper, to offer an alternative explanation for the pro-European orientation of Albania based on non-material factors, precisely on identity.

In this thesis foreign policy will be explained through the constructivist approach. Specifically, this paper will adopt the approach of social constructivism represented by Ted Hopf and used by him in his book 'Social Construction of International Politics' (elaborated in more detail in the next chapter). According to Hopf the interests, preferences and behaviours of a state in the foreign policy are shaped by its domestic identities (Jung, 2016). By imagining identity as relational, Hopf claims that a state's identity can be understood only in relation to another (Hopf, 2002: 7). This means that the foreign policy of a state is influenced by how a state is identified in relation to other states. In our case, the cognitive relationship that will be investigated is not between Albania and another country but between Albania and Europe as a configuration of states that forms one political unit, i.e., EU. Using Hopf's model, this paper will explain how Albania's pro-European orientation is related to the fact that in relation to Europe, Albania identifies itself as a nation that belongs to it. It is worth noting that, since the goal is to explain the foreign policy choice of Albania, the paper will suffice only with the discovery of domestic identities without researching their origin. Based on the findings, we will try to understand the role that the idea of Europe has played in how Albania imagines itself.

## **1.2. State of Literature**

In the Albanian academic field, studies on post-communist foreign policy are not numerous. Existing studies are mainly of a descriptive nature, and are rarely based on theoretical explanations. In those few studies of a theoretical nature, materialist approaches dominate. According to Odeta Barbullushi, the two approaches that dominate studies of Albania's post-communist foreign policy, especially its relations

with Europe and the West, are neorealism and neoliberalism. According to her, neorealist body of literature often suggests that the Albanian state was incapable of following a more assertive policy in the Balkans because of its dependency on Western aid (Barbullushi, 2009: 6). Such an analysis can be found in the study published by the Albanian Institute for International Studies, authored by Blendi Kajsiu, Aldo Bumçi, Albert Rakipi, entitled “Albania - A Weak Democracy a Weak State” (2002). Another similar analysis can be found in the article published by The International Spectator entitled “Albanian foreign policy between geography and history” and authored by Remzi Lani and Fabian Schmidt (1998), which describes Albania’s relations with its neighbours on the brink of Kosovo war, and the inability of the Albanian state to defy West’s recommendations and to do something more to resolve the Kosovo issue.

On the other hand, the neoliberal literature on Albanian foreign policy pays more attention to domestic factors. The main assumption of this body of literature according to Barbullushi is that domestic actors use the resources of international organizations, especially those of the EU, in order to expand their political and economic power (Barbullushi, 2009: 7). An important work that addresses this approach is the book authored by Mirela Bogdani and John Loughlin entitled “Albania and the European Union” (2007), which explores the relationship between political parties in Albania and their opportunistic or stubborn behaviour for personal gain.

Both of the abovementioned approaches encounter some obstacles. The first problem that is noticed is related to the neorealist approach that explains Albania’s pro-European orientation in structural terms, through the country’s incapability to follow a more assertive foreign policy due to dependency on western aid. This approach cannot explain why Albania, even after coming out of the dependency on Western aid, continues to follow the pro-European course with the same devotion. Practice even shows that devotion to European integration has been increasing while dependency on Western aid has been decreasing. Also, if we go back only a few years before the fall of the communist regime, we see an Albanian foreign policy that neorealism cannot explain as well. Neorealism cannot explain the isolationism of Albania from 1978 until the fall of the Berlin Wall. During this period, despite being dependent on the aid from its communist allies such as USSR and China, Albania broke off relations with these countries for ideological reasons, to pursue a course of self-reliance and isolation. As a result, the country had major problems during 1980s in providing its citizens with

basic products including food and clothing. If the dependency on aid would have been the factor that would determine the behaviour of Albania in the international arena, then Albania supposedly would have not been isolated in the first place, and at least would have come out of isolation in order to improve its situation by accepting the aid offered from the west, mainly from Western European countries.

The second problem that is noticed is related to the neoliberal approach according to which Albania's pro-European orientation is related to the interests of the political elites to expand their political and economic power. This approach is not convincing because if it were to be true it would mean that either all the elites in thirty years have defended their interests in the same way, or that the interests of different elites along thirty years have been the same, moreover have remained unchanged during these thirty years. None of these deductions is convincing.

Going through the above difficulties through which both approaches pass, we come to the third problem which both neorealism and neoliberalism share. Both approaches treat the interests and identities of a state as two separate things. This paper refutes this view and defends the argument proposed by Hopf that interests derive from identities. According to him a state cannot have interests without first having an identity that makes threats and opportunities, enemies and allies, intelligible, thinkable, and possible (Hopf, 2002: 16). This means that in order to explain Albania's behaviour in the international arena, we must first understand how Albania identifies itself in relations to others.

Probably the only important work that explains Albania's foreign policy based on domestic identities is Odeta Barbullushi's doctoral dissertation entitled "The Politics of 'Euro-Atlantic Orientation': Political Identities, Interests and Albanian Foreign Policy 1992-2007". Starting from the premise that interests derive from identities, Barbullushi argues that Albania's security and foreign policy interests have reflected the ideological repertoires of the country's political elites. In short, it argues that the political elites through their ideological repertoires have constituted the state identity of the post-communist Albania.

Barbullushi's thesis is a solid work which can provide us with a very special overview of the political discourse as well as the foreign policy of the post-communist Albania. However, the problem we encounter in Barbullushi's work is the disregard it places

on the role that other social categories outside the political elites, play in reproducing domestic identities. A host of social categories that produce knowledge such as academics, scientists, philosophers, artists, writers and prominent journalists, participate with their identities and discursive activities in the reproduction of domestic identities. This fact is also recognized by Ted Hopf, who when discovering the domestic identities of Russia, analyzes the discourse not only of political elites, but also of other categories of intellectuals such as novelists, historians, poets, journalists, etc. In our paper we will try to tackle this issue by using the method of Hopf himself.

Considering that the field of Albanian foreign policy studies is dominated by materialist-based approaches such as neorealism and neoliberalism, which on their part show shortcomings, we see a need to contribute to the extension of the constructivist branch of these studies. Through this paper we will modestly try to make a contribution in this aspect.

### **1.3. Research Question**

Since the goal of the thesis is to explain foreign policy, it is clear that foreign policy will serve as the dependent variable. Concretely, the dependent and at the same time the known variable of the equation, is the pro-European orientation of Albania and its continuous efforts to join the EU. To explain foreign policy choice, we will use the social constructivist approach.

The basic premise of this approach is that foreign policy begins at home. According to social constructivism, it is domestic identities that give states an orientation map of how foreign policy should be done. This is elaborated by Ted Hopf who borrowing from the social cognitive theory of identity, explains how a state's own domestic identities constitute a social cognitive structure that makes threats and opportunities, enemies and allies, intelligible, thinkable, and possible (Hopf, 2002: 16). According to Hopf, since identities are relational and since every foreign policy decision maker is situated within the social cognitive structure, he is predisposed to read the external political environment through his understanding of his own state in relation to another state. This means that decision makers are inclined to make foreign policy choices influenced by their state's representations of itself in relation to another state. A similar

idea is supported by Ilya Prizel according to whom the foreign policy of any country, is heavily influenced by its society's notions of itself (Prizel, 1998).

Based on the above, in order to explain Albania's pro-European orientation, we must first understand how Albania identifies itself in relation to Europe. This identity of Albania in relation to Europe, also serves as the independent variable. That being so, the research question is as follows: How does Albania identify itself in relation to Europe?

#### **1.4. Methodology**

The equation of this thesis has two sides, on the one hand it is the way Albania identifies itself in relation to Europe, and on the other hand the way Albania acts in relation to Europe. What is already known is the second side of the equation: In relation to Europe, Albania's foreign policy is characterized by a constant effort to join the European Union.

To discover the unknown of the equation, we seek the help of a basic assumption (hypothesis) which would make the equation true. To bring about such an outcome, the basic assumption is formulated as follows: Albania identifies itself as a nation that belongs to Europe, and since the EU serves as the practical realization of Europe, Albania seeks to become part of the EU. In order for this assumption to be true, it must be empirically proven that Albania identifies itself as a nation that belongs to Europe. But since it is impossible for the variable 'identity' to be ascertained directly, the empirical testing of the basic assumption will be done indirectly by means of an implication (of the type: "if ....., then ....." ) deduced from it. Based on the argument defended by Hopf that identities are articulatory practices associated with the discursive practices of a society, and as such are to be explored in these discursive practices, the implication is formulated as follows: If Albania in relation to Europe, identifies itself as a nation that belongs to it, then it is expected that in the public discourse, we will find articulations that support Albania's European belongingness.

To test the implication, we need to define a number of indicators, which determine the type of information required for the empirical testing of the implication. Possible indicators for the implication will have to do with the presence in the main branches of the Albanian public discourse – i.e., the discourse of political elites and the

discourse of intellectual elites – of articulations of the type: “The Albanian nation has European roots”; “Albanians are a European people”; “Albania belongs to the European family”; or other similar articulations that support Albania’s Europeanness or that refute Albania’s non-Europeanness. The presence of the articulations in question will be explored in the main spaces where the public discourse unfolds, such as the television media, online media, newspapers, books, essays, novels, scholarly articles, government programs, party platforms etc. What will give us a hand in this research are also those books, articles and essays that address the Europeanist discourse and its presence in the Albanian public discourse. Besides the discourses of political and intellectual elites, another important space in which similar articulations will particularly be explored, are history textbooks. The reason for including history textbooks in the analysis is their role as agents of the official image of the state and the nation, what makes them a reliable source for exploring the images of Albania in relation to Europe. Given that history textbooks are not included in either the discourse of political elites or that of intellectual elites, they will be treated separately.

If from the analysis of the public discourse we come to the conclusion that in it, articulations that support Albania’s European belongingness prevail over articulations that support another belongingness or that oppose this belongingness, then we can assert that in relation to Europe Albania identifies itself as a nation that belongs to it, explaining thus Albania’s aspiration to become an EU member.

Since the work of this thesis will focus on exploring public discourse, it is seen as reasonable to adopt the methodology of discursive analysis. Discourse analysis is a common qualitative research method in many humanities and social science disciplines that helps us explore how meaning is created in certain social contexts<sup>2</sup>. To explore the presence of a certain set of ideas in a public discourse, it is appropriate to use the method of discursive analysis for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it allows us to penetrate the debates and narratives on state identity, exactly where they unfold, in books, newspapers, periodicals, textbooks, interviews, etc. The good thing about this is that it allows us to do inter-textual analysis based on different genres where these debates and narratives unfold. Secondly, it helps us to see the continuity over the years

---

<sup>2</sup> *What is discourse analysis*, 2019, accessed on May 6, 2021, <<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/discourse-analysis/#:~:text=Discourse%20analysis%20is%20a%20research,of%20different%20types%20of%20language>>

of the presence of particular ideas. This would enable us to make parallel comparisons between different discursive practices and Albania's foreign policy choice during the years. Thirdly, discourse analysis can lead us to discover other patterns that can give us directions for future research.

### **1.5. Structure of Thesis**

The first chapter is an introduction which makes a parenthesis of what the paper deals with including theoretical and methodological premises. The second chapter elaborates on the theoretical framework which summarizes the social constructivist approach and the reasons why it is preferred, as well as elaborates further the Hopfian model based on social cognitive theory of identity. In the second chapter an appendix will also be added explaining the concept of the idea of Europe. The third chapter is an overview of Albania's foreign policy in the post-communist period, focusing on Albania-EU relations. The fourth chapter explores the post-communist Albanian public discourse. The fourth is also the main chapter whose findings give the answer to our research question. This chapter is divided into three parts: 1) The discourse of political figures; 2) The discourse of intellectuals; 3) The discourse of history textbooks. Chapter five elaborates and interprets the conclusions. The structure is built in such a way as to give us the opportunity to step by step conduct the empirical testing of the hypothesis/basic assumption. It also helps us along the way to make comparisons between the theoretical framework, foreign policy choice and public discourse.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter we will discuss the theory that will be used to explain Albania's foreign policy. The main approach on which this paper is based is social constructivism, a branch of constructivism defended by Ted Hopf in his 2002 book "Social Construction of International Politics". This approach is based on a social cognitive account of identity that defends the idea that the identity of a state has socio-cognitive origins and thus is domestically constructed. Apart from the fact that from our point of view it is a convincing approach, another strong reason why constructivism was chosen is the fact that it is an approach very little used in the existing analyzes of Albania's post-communist foreign policy. The most common theories used to explain the foreign policy of post-communist Albania are neorealism and neoliberalism, which, as explained in the previous chapter, are not convincing enough and show shortcomings. Relying on constructivism, we can avoid the drawbacks (discussed in the previous chapter) that rationalist approaches such as neorealism and neoliberalism raise.

#### **2.1. Constructivism vs Other Approaches**

Constructivism is a social theory which since the end of the Cold War, has become one of the main approaches in the field of international relations. This approach arose primarily in response to the inability of other approaches to predict the sudden end of the Cold War. Constructivism generally opposes approaches that are based on a rationalist logic, and that consequently consider international relations as a sphere "shaped by the rational-choice behaviour/decisions of selfish actors [states] who pursue their interests by making utilitarian calculations to maximize their benefits and minimize their losses" (Behraves, 2011). On the contrary, according to constructivism "structures of human association [international relations] are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces" (Wendt, 1999: 1).

The traditionally rival approaches of constructivism are realism and liberalism. According to realism, the main factors that shape international relations are human

nature (egoism, rationality), systemic anarchy and the distribution of political-economic power. On the other hand, for liberalism, the main factor that shapes international relations is the presence of international institutions and international cooperation structures that has produced an interdependence between actors, who, in order to maximize economic benefits, must cooperate and avoid conflicts. Two common denominators of these approaches are that both consider states to be self-interested actors operating in a self-help anarchic system and whose interests are static and predetermined by external factors. The main point where these approaches part from each other, is in the way they predict the behaviour of self-interested actors in the anarchic system. According to realists, in anarchy states are enemies of each other, while according to liberals, in anarchy states are collaborators of each other.

Unlike its traditionally rival approaches, constructivism asserts that in international relations nothing is static and that two actors can act differently in similar situations, one can choose conflict while another can choose cooperation. According to constructivists, this happens because actors have different views on reality. Since the way actors perceive reality is what determines their behaviour in international relations, to explain the behaviour of actors we must explore the elements that influence this perception, i.e., their culture, history, values, language, etc. This idea is explicitly defended by the so-called father of constructivism Alexander Wendt, according to whom “whether a system is conflictual or peaceful is a function not of anarchy and power but of the shared culture/ideas created through discursive social practices” (Copeland, 2000). Such statement brings us to an important point of constructivism, according to which global politics is not a self-existent material-physical sphere but a social sphere constructed out of social interaction between actors, hence constructive.

According to constructivists, ideational structures (structures of shared culture/ideas) and not material ones are what determine the way actors perceive reality and consequently their interests, because such structures shape the very way actors define themselves – who they are, their goals, and the roles they believe they should play (ibid). These ideational structures are unquestionably constructive – namely created through discursive social practices of the actor – and not only constitute actors in terms of their interests and identities, but are also produced, reproduced, and altered by their discursive social practices (ibid). This constructivist viewpoint challenges the

determinacy of rationalist approaches such as realism and liberalism according to which the interests of the actors are predetermined and respond to the causal forces of power or international institutions.

The above discussion brings us to the most important theoretical tool with which constructivism equips us in the efforts to explain the foreign policy choice of the actors. This element is 'state identity' or the way actors/states imagine themselves. As explained above, the way actors identify themselves determines the way they read reality and consequently the way they behave in the international arena. This means that state identity is the main driver of foreign policy choice. In the next subchapter we will discuss social constructivism, one of the branches of constructivism that gives a central role to state identity in explaining the foreign policy of states.

## **2.2. Ted Hopf's Constructivism**

Among the various branches of constructivism, what we have seen as the most appropriate for explaining Albania's foreign policy is Social Constructivism represented by Ted Hopf. Social constructivism starts from the premise that the domestic identities of a state are the main determinants of that state's foreign policy choice. According to Hopf this happens because identities determine state's interests, preferences and behaviours (Hopf, 2002: 16). For him it is impossible to have interests and preferences without first having an identity. Both individuals and states need an identity to make sense of themselves and others and consequently their interests and preferences in relation to them (ibid: 4-5). Before a state decides to defend its interests, it must first have a certain view of what constitutes an opportunity or a threat, or which state is a friend and which is an enemy. To have such a view, it means to have an identity.

But before entering into detailed theoretical explanations, we must first define the terms, identity and state identity. Since we do not find these definitions in Hopf's readings, we have to borrow them from other authors. According to Roy Baumeister by identity we mean "the definitions that are created for and superimposed on the self" (Baumeister, 1997). So basically, identity is the way we imagine ourselves to be. But identity can only be relational, which means that we cannot imagine ourselves outside of the relationship with others. This aspect of identity is found in both Baumeister

(2011) and Hopf (2002) and is known in philosophy as the relationship between Self and the Other, where the latter as a constitutive Other, serves to define the Self. To complete the above definition, we can say that identity is the way we imagine ourselves in relation to others. State identity on the other side, can be defined as a set of broadly accepted representations of the state, in particular in its relation to other states (Alexandrov, 2003). In other words, state identity is the way in which the members of society within the state, imagine their state in relation to other states. The question that arises here is: How do these representations and imaginations influence foreign policy?

To answer the question Hopf uses the concept of 'social cognitive structure'. For him every society, functions as a social cognitive structure. The concept of social cognitive structure is similar to that of the ideational structure mentioned earlier, and denotes a structure of shared intersubjective meanings within which a set of discursive formations operate. According to Hopf, every individual in society has many identities and each identity has associated with it a collection of discursive practices, including a language with a vocabulary, written or verbal, and characteristic physical behaviours, such as gestures, dress, customs, and habits (Hopf, 2002: 1). It is precisely these discursive formations that are associated with the multiplicity of identities of a society, which give shape to the cognitive social structure which ultimately gives shape to the social practices and understandings of those situated in it (the individuals). So, the identities of individuals on the one hand contribute to the creation and re-creation of this structure, on the other hand are constrained, shaped, and empowered by this structure (ibid). But how exactly does the cognitive social structure constrain and shape individual's understandings and actions?

Hopf believes that the most important mechanism in the production and reproduction of identities is the practice and habits of everyday life. Differently said the logic of everyday life is the greatest force that shapes identities. At this point Hopf relies on Weber's concept of the 'custom'. According to Weber "adherence to what has become customary is such a strong component of all conduct and, consequently, of all social action" (Weber, as cited in Hopf, 2002: 14). Hopf quotes Weber as telling us that in fact the power of a habit is comparable to the power of the law, which means it exerts strong influence over our social actions. However, Hopf goes further in explaining how the power of everyday logic acts on our understandings and social action. According to him, the logic of everyday life carries in itself three elements that make

up three different logics: logic of intelligibility, logic of thinkability and logic of imaginability.

The first, the logic of intelligibility refers to an individual's desire to be understood by those to whom he is communicating (ibid: 13-15). This means that an individual is obliged to choose his language and actions from a set of articulations and actions, based on the need to be understood from other people with whom he seeks to communicate. According to Hopf the need to effectively communicate with others requires conformity with the social cognitive structure that governs the particular social context within which the agent is operating (ibid). The second, the logic of thinkability refers to the probability of a particular interpretation of another person or event, given an individual's identities and social context (ibid). This means that acting within a social cognitive structure implies a particular probability for the selection of various social practices such as the way we communicate, the way we dress, the way we cook, the way we spend our free time, etc. For an individual situated within a social cognitive structure, the set of social practices available is limited. Although it can happen that someone acts in unusual ways, according to Hopf, the chances that someone will choose a common social practice are very high, and we can say this with a fairly high level of confidence (ibid). In other words, it can be said that just like the communicating, acting within a social cognitive structure requires conformity with the structure too. The third, the logic of imaginability operates similarly as the logic of thinkability, except that imagination has a far broader range of conceivability and is not bound by the possible (ibid). Hopf lets us understand that even our imagination is bounded by the totality of ideas circulating in a social cognitive structure. According to Hopf these three elements of the logic of everyday, shape a large amount of an individual's interpretations and actions in the world (ibid). In conclusion it can be said that our understanding and actions are in large shaped by the effects of the social cognitive structure within which we are situated.

Based on the above, now we can establish the connection between the foreign policy choice and the representations of the state. The decision maker, like any individual, is situated within the social cognitive structure. When he tries to understand another state, his understandings are influenced by the discursive formations that compete within the structure, which means they are influenced by dominant representations and imaginations of the state. According to Hopf, when trying to understand other states

in word politics, the decision maker is most unlikely to be able to escape from the social cognitive structure. His understandings of these other states rely on his understandings of his own state, which in turn are constructed domestically out of the many identities that constitute the discursive formations that, in turn, make up the social cognitive structure of that society (ibid: 37).

The last question that arises in the context of the theoretical explanation is: How to discover these representations of the state, in order to explain the foreign policy choice of a state? The method that Hopf uses is public discourse textual analysis or shortly public discourse analysis. For Hopf, since identities are articulatory practices associated with the discursive practices of a society, they are to be discovered in the public discourse in the form of articulations. This means that the many representations of the state take the form of articulations (verbal or written) which eventually unfold in the public discourse. Therefore, the best way to discover the representations and imaginations that individuals of a society have about their state, is to explore the public discourse of that society.

The texts selected for analysis are referred to by Hopf as ‘textual sources of identities’, and include books, newspapers, scholarly articles, political archives of parties or institutions, school textbooks, novels, poems and other literary works, and even TV and radio broadcasts. Through the analysis of the texts, in his book Hopf tries to discover the representations that the Russians, especially the political and intellectual elites, has of Russia, in order to be able to explain Russian foreign policy choice.

The same method will be used in this paper to explain Albania’s foreign policy choice. As explained in the first chapter, in order to discover the representations of Albania, precisely those in relation to Europe, we have to explore the main spaces where public discourse unfolds. In addition to the existing works in which the Albanian public discourse is treated, included as sources for the public discourse will also be the television media, online media, newspapers, books, essays, novels, scholarly articles, government programs, party platforms etc.

In our case, since the goal is to explain the EU-oriented foreign policy of Albania, the interest falls on those public articulations which represent Albania in a certain way in relation to Europe. Of particular interest are those public articulations which represent

Albania as having a European belongingness, which would explain the country's motivation to be part of the European Union.

### **2.3. Social Constructivism vs Other Constructivisms**

According to Hopf, in addition to social constructivism, we have two other types of constructivism: normative and systemic. Normative constructivism focuses on the adherence of states to international norms, while systemic constructivism focuses on interstate identity structures (Hopf, 2002: 278).

The problem with these approaches, according to Hopf, is that they pay little attention to domestic contexts and the role that social cognitive structures play in any society. As far as normative constructivism is concerned, this approach ignores the logic of everyday and adopts a consequentialist logic according to which states adopt certain norms which in a way are imposed by the international system. Normative constructivism fails to explain why states prefer one norm over another, and why some norms are more ingrained than others in the cultures of some societies. According to social constructivism, international norms exert their role only through the domestic identities of which they have become a part. With regard to systemic constructivism, this approach advocates the idea that state identities are formed by the participation of states in interstate identity structures, or in other words in collective identities. According to social constructivism, participation in these collective identities is done only in function of domestic identities. The very fact that a state has a range of identity relationships with other states that are supposedly part of the same interstate identity structure, shows that we are dealing with an effect that has vector that goes from the inside out and not from the outside in. To avoid these drawbacks, the users of these sub-approaches need to pay more attention to domestic contexts, especially to the discursive contexts and their role in perceptions of the state.

### **2.4. Appendix: The Concept of the 'Idea of Europe'**

In this paper the notion 'idea of Europe' refers to the totality of meanings given to Europe, or in other words the way Europe is imagined, in our case by the Albanian people. To this day there is no universally accepted definition of what the concept of

Europe means. Europe is a broad concept that has evolved throughout history as Europe has meant different things in different times. The inability to definitively define Europe as a single concept, is a result of a large number of markers that are often associated with it, and that give Europe different meanings which often do not coincide with each other. These markers, which constitute concepts in themselves, are situated within the larger concept of Europe, and in their entirety form it.

Markers can be categorized into geographical, economic, political and historical-cultural. In the category of geographical markers, we find all the geographical spaces thought to be part of Europe, including single countries like France, Germany etc. or entire regions like Western Europe, Scandinavia etc. In the category of economic markers, we can include concepts such as market economy; capitalism; free trade; European common market; industrialization etc. As for political markers, we can mention concepts such as the EU; democracy; liberalism; constitutionalism; rule of law; functional state; human rights; secularism etc. In the category of historical-cultural markers, we can mention modernity; western civilization; Christianity; religious tolerance; multi culturalism; Greco-Roman heritage; Indo-European origins; Indo-European linguistics etc. Although a good part of the above concepts, are equivalent or overlap, it is appropriate to mention them in full in order to facilitate their use throughout the paper.

The closest to the concept of Europe is the concept of the West. This concept is both included in the concept of Europe and includes it in itself. However, in our paper, despite the fact that geographically and civilizationally Europe is part of the West, the concept of the West will be used in the version of the component of the concept of Europe. This choice was made due to the fact that in the Albanian public discourse the concept of the West is mostly discussed within the bigger discussion on Europe. Another reason for this choice is the fact that within the concept of Europe, the concept of the West is accommodated in its fully, while within the concept of the West, the concept of Europe is partially accommodated, only through the marker Western Europe. Having this said, it must be clarified that throughout the paper, the terms Europe and West, will be used interchangeably while referring to the same thing, Europe. Clarification is necessary to avoid confusion on the part of the reader.

As far as our paper is concerned, what interests us most, is to understand the role that the idea of Europe – in other words the way Europe is imagined – has played in the composition of the representations of the Albanian nation. It is worth mentioning that like in the case of the terms Europe and West, the terms Albanian Nation, Albania, Albanian People and Albianness, will be used interchangeably while referring to the same thing, the Albanian Nation. The reason why the term “Albanian Nation” was chosen as a representative of all these terms is because the nation as a notion includes in itself all the other concepts, a people, the history and culture of that people, as well as the state under which this people live. As we will see in the following chapters, the Albanian nation is often presented as a nation with European belongingness. The European belongingness is usually asserted with the help of markers found within the concept of Europe, such as the European geographical autochthony, Indo-European language, Christian tradition, Greco-Roman tradition, Latin literature tradition, etc. This leads us to think that the Idea of Europe has served as a foundation of Albania’s domestic identities.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **ALBANIA'S POST-COMMUNIST FOREIGN POLICY**

In this chapter, an overview of the main orientation of the Albania's foreign policy of the last thirty years will be presented. This part will help us confirm the great truth regarding the Albanian foreign policy, that its unwavering priority of the last three decades has been the European integration. A look will also be thrown at relations with countries often perceived as "traditional enemies" to see how they have been affected by Albania's commitment to integration processes. Specifically, we will see Albania's relations with Greece and Serbia as the two most problematic neighbours, to understand the extent to which the European factor has influenced these relations.

#### **3.1. Post-Communist Albania and the West**

Since the end of communism in 1991, the main goal of Albanian diplomacy has been the integration into western international organizations, namely the EU (EC until 1993), OSCE (CSCE until 1995) and NATO. Efforts to make friends with the West, however, began earlier than 1991, and were intensified after the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985. But despite a slight improvement in diplomatic relations with Western Europe, mainly with Italy, Greece and the Federal Republic of Germany, Albania's relations with the West during the second half of the 1980s remained generally frozen (Lani & Schmidt, 1998). Relations with Italy strengthened immediately after the fall of the communist regime, dictated by the need for coordination caused by the massive waves of Albanian refugees towards Italy. For the same reason, during 1991-1992 the relations with Greece were intensified as well. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, relations with Britain, the USA and the European Community were established during May and July 1991. From this moment on, Albanian foreign policy has kept its gaze only towards the West.

Albania of 1991 was a collapsed country, both institutionally and economically. Located so close to it, it was impossible for the Europe to escape the responsibility of restoring order in Albania. A number of multinational organizations and international

economic institutions, mainly Western or at least run by Western directives, were involved in the institutional and economic recovery of country by providing economic and technical-institutional support. Among the non-economic organizations, the most important were the EC (EU), CSCE (OSCE) and NATO, while of those of economic nature we can mention the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank. Despite the strong involvement of the US, it is widely accepted that the EU has been the international body that taken the brunt of dragging Albania into the arduous transition process.

The EU made its presence felt in Albania since the early days of transition. It all started in September 1991 with “Operation Pelikan”, a humanitarian aid mission planned and financed by the European Community but executed by Italy, that lasted just over two years. The aim of this mission was to restore civil order in country and to help the Albanian people to meet their urgent material needs in food, clothing, medications, etc (Bogdani & Loughlin, 2007: 210). In 1992, the first agreement between Albania and the European Community, known as the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, was signed. One of the benefits that this agreement offered to Albania was the eligibility for economic aid under the PHARE program. Launched by the European Community in 1989, the PHARE program was designed to help countries that aspired to join the EU, in particular Poland and Hungary, to strengthen their economic and institutional capacities in order to meet the challenges of integration processes (Kosho, 2015: 72). This was the first sign that indicated that just like Albania itself, the EU imagined the future of Albania as an EU member as well. During the period 1991-2000 the EU became the main provider of multilateral assistance to the country, representing 55% of total multilateral aid (Bogdani & Loughlin, 2007: 210). If we include in the account the last two decades, it turns out that the EU represents around 2/3 of the total multilateral aid provided to Albania since 1991.

As mentioned above, in addition to economic assistance, during the last thirty years the EU has provided Albania with technical-institutional assistance which has affected almost every institution and every public sector of the state. The purpose of this comprehensive assistance provided by the EU has been the institutional and democratic consolidation of Albania. Some of the areas in which this support has been extended are legislation, law enforcement, judiciary, customs, public infrastructure,

agriculture, etc. The exchange of technical assistance intensified especially after the events of 1997 (the Albanian Civil War), after which the EU drafted a plan of economic and political conditionality for the development of bilateral relations with Albania. Strict pursuit of EU proposals quickly became the very main duty of the governments to come. The conditionality plan was continued after 2001 in the framework of the negotiations for the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement which was signed in 2006. It can be said that every reform undertaken in Albania, at least since June 20, 2000, the day when the country was declared a potential candidate country for EU membership, has been in the function of bringing it closer to EU membership.

In addition to economic development and institutional and democratic consolidation, Albania has tried to find in the West, specifically in the US, its national security as well. In this respect, the primary goal of foreign policy has been the accession of Albania to NATO. The first steps in this direction were taken in May 1990, even before the last communist government was overthrown, when Albania announced its intention to join the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. This aspiration became a reality in July 1991, when Albania was admitted as a member of the CSCE after the then president Ramiz Alia signed the Helsinki Final Act (Lani & Schmidt, 1998). However, the issue of national security was considered far from resolved with the membership in the CSCE, because the latter was seen as an international body that protected the national security of its members institutionally rather than militarily. This prompted Albania to seek its national security in a genuine military alliance such as NATO. The positive spirit and enthusiasm that characterized the Albania-West relations at that time, allowed Albania to become the first Eastern European country to apply for NATO membership in June 1992 (ibid). This action marked the beginning of a long road of rapprochement between Albania and NATO which was crowned in April 2008 with the receipt of the invitation for membership, a membership that was formally finalized in April 2009<sup>3</sup>. Albania's relations with NATO have almost always been discussed in the context of the former's relations with the US, given that NATO is generally seen as a military instrument of the latter. This

---

<sup>3</sup> *Historiku i marrëdhënieve NATO-Shqipëri (History of NATO-Albania relations)*, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs website; last accessed May 20, 2021 <<https://www.mod.gov.al/index.php/politikate-sigurise/marredheniet-me/marredheniet-me-nato/31-historiku-i-marredhenieve-nato-shqiperi>>

has been the reason why in the last thirty years, the US has been widely considered as the main strategic ally of Albania.

However, as discussed previously, despite the great involvement of the US, the EU has borne the heaviest burden of putting Albania at the forefront of the difficult transition path. This by no means, means that the United States has not contributed to the development of the economy or the consolidation of democracy and institutions in Albania, but it is nevertheless widely accepted that the EU has been the main external actor to have helped the country on the path of transition. An important factor that has influenced this division has been the fact that the US-led international projects in which Albania has aspired to be part, have been mainly of a military nature. On the other hand, the comprehensive project of the European Union, as it is more closely related to the economy, institutions and legislation, affects many more areas compared to, for example, NATO, which is limited to the military dimension. Based on what was discussed in this part, it can be asserted that the foreign policy of Albania in the post-communist period has been fully oriented towards the West, especially the European Union. As we will see in the next subchapter, European Integration has been and remains the most important objective of Albanian foreign policy of the last thirty years.

### **3.2. Albania-EU Relations**

To understand what is the main orientation of Albania's foreign policy, we do not have to go further than the name given to the relevant ministry that deals with the country's foreign relations. This ministry is called the 'Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs'. Logically it should have been the 'Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Europe', but apparently the word 'Europe' is intentionally put first to hint that the exclusivity of Albanian foreign policy belongs to Europe. It seems that for Albania, the relations with Europe are important if not more, at least equally to all the relations with any other country in the world that is not in Europe together. If we dig a little further on the website of this ministry, in the section 'Mission', the first chapter is 'EU Integration'. At this chapter it is emphasized that Albania's integration into the EU is the main national objective<sup>4</sup>. Many claim that this has been the case ever since the country

---

<sup>4</sup> *Historiku, Marrëdhëniet Shqipëri-BE (Background, Albania-EU Relations)*, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs website; last accessed May 18, 2021, <<http://integrimi-ne-be.puneteshjshme.gov.al/anetaresimi-ne-be/historiku/>>

established relations with the European Community in 1991. Mirela Bogdani argues that since 1991, every Albanian government has placed European integration at the top of its political agenda (Bogdani & Loughlin, 2007: 116).

Relations between Albania and the then European Community started in July 1991, while in May 1992 a ‘Cooperation and Trade Agreement’ was signed between the newly-named European Union and Albania, which made the latter the first South-Eastern European country to conclude such an agreement (ibid: 116). As mentioned earlier, after the signing of this agreement, Albania began to receive funds from the PHARE financial aid program. Three years after the first agreement, Albania submitted a request for the opening of negotiations for an association agreement, an agreement that paves the way for a country towards integration and accession to the European Union (Vurmo, 2008: 20). After evaluating this request, the European Commission concluded that it was still too early to offer Albania such an agreement. However, to maintain the morale of Albanian politics high, the EU offered Albania membership in the European Commission. On July 13, 1995 Albania became the 35th member State of the Council of Europe<sup>5</sup>.

Given the worrisome situation in Yugoslavia and the turmoil of 1997 in Albania, the EU decided to pursue a different approach with the Western Balkan countries in order to offer them a clear perspective on the road to European integration. In 1997 the General Affairs Council of the European Union approved the regional approach for the countries of the Western Balkans, a strategy which had at its core the principle of conditionality by which the EU determined the political and economic conditions for the further development of bilateral relations with these countries (Kosho, 2015: 75). The fulfilment of these conditions by the countries of the region would determine the further steps in the development of relations between them and the EU. Two years later in 1999, the European Commission proposed a Stabilization Association Process for five Balkan countries, including Albania. This proposal was reinforced at the Santa Maria da Feira European Council in June 2000, during the proceedings of which, the EU’s intentions in relation to the Western Balkan countries – which were declared as potential candidate countries – were clearly stated (Bogdani & Loughlin, 2007: 116-

---

<sup>5</sup> *Albania // 47 States, one Europe*, Council of Europe website; last accessed May 21, 2021, <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/albania#:~:text=Albania%20became%20the%2035th,Europe%20on%2013%20July%201995>>

117). The Zagreb Summit held in November of the same year, officially approved the Stabilization and Association Process for Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (which consisted at the time of Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo). As part of the Stabilization and Association Process, in 2000, the PHARE financial assistance program was replaced by the CARDS program, which was specifically designed for the SAP countries.

To assist Albania in meeting the conditions for the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, following the Zagreb Summit the EU established a High-Level Steering Group whose objective was to evaluate and support the reforms undertaken by the country in the framework of SAP. Based on a report prepared by the HLSG, in June 2001 the European Commission proposed the opening of negotiations for the signing of the SAA with Albania. After many political vicissitudes of those years in Albania, the opening of negotiations was delayed. They were officially launched only on January 31, 2003 (ibid: 117). In June 2006, after more than three years of negotiation, Albania and EU signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (Kosho, 2015: 81). As the country still needed time to enable the 100% implementation of this agreement, the Interim Agreement on trade and trade related matters between Albania and the EU, was signed at the same time. This interim agreement was designed to facilitate the addressing of trade-related issues in the framework of SAA, and entered into force in December 2006 (ibid). On the other hand, the SAA entered into full force in April 2009.

The signing of the SAA marked an important point in the history of the country, because for the first time Albania could see itself as European not only subjectively by relying on elements such as history, language or cultural heritage, but also objectively now that its path to European integration was sealed. The impact that the signing of the SAA had on public opinion was great, with many public figures to have considered it to be the end of the transition process in Albania (Sulstarova, 2012: 307).

But if the road to transition was supposedly over, the road to Europe was still long. This road, – which for Albania had been and still was quite challenging – in its literal sense as a physical distance, began to be easier for Albanian citizens after 2006. In November 2006, just a few months after the signing of the SAA, the European

Commission announced the opening of negotiations with Albania to facilitate the visa regime for its citizens<sup>6</sup>. After several months of negotiations, in April 2007, a visa facilitation agreement was signed<sup>7</sup>. This agreement, which entered into force in January 2008, was the first step towards full visa liberalization for Albanian citizens. Negotiations for visa liberalization between the parties began only two months later in March 2008<sup>8</sup>. After two years of negotiations, on November 8, 2010, the European Council approved the European Commission's proposal made a few months ago for visa liberalization with Albania and the visa-free regime entered into force on December 15, 2010<sup>9</sup>. From that date Albanian citizens can travel within the Schengen area freely, using only the passport as a means of identification.

In parallel with the facilities for its citizens, the EU continued to work to facilitate the country's political path towards integration. In the framework of financial support for candidate and potential candidate countries, in January 2007 the EU replaced the CARDS financial aid program with another one called the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance or IPA. IPA which is still in force today, constitutes a single legislative framework that has replaced all previous instruments and programs of EU assistance provided to support the Western Balkans (Kosho, 2015: 83).

After the entry into force of the SAA, Albania wasted no time in taking the next step towards EU accession. In April 2009, just days after the entry into force of the SAA, the government made an official application to obtain the status of a country candidate to join the EU. In November 2009, after the European Commission submitted to Albania the questionnaire regarding the country's preparation for membership, negotiations for obtaining candidate status began<sup>10</sup>. Due to many domestic political developments, negotiations for the candidacy status took longer than originally expected. After five years of trying to meet the conditions set by the EU, on June 27, 2014, Albania was granted the status of candidate country.

---

<sup>6</sup> *Historiku, Marrëdhëniet Shqipëri-BE (Background, Albania-EU Relations)*, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs website; last accessed May 18, 2021, <<http://integrimi-ne-be.punetegashtme.gov.al/anetaresimi-ne-be/historiku/>>

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

<sup>10</sup> *Historiku, Marrëdhëniet Shqipëri-BE (Background, Albania-EU Relations)*, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs website; last accessed May 18, 2021, <<http://integrimi-ne-be.punetegashtme.gov.al/anetaresimi-ne-be/historiku/>>

The next step was the opening of accession negotiations. The progress that Albania had made during the period 2009-2016, prompted the European Commission in November 2016, to recommend for the first time to the Council of Europe the opening of accession negotiations with Albania<sup>11</sup>. However, again due to certain developments both within the European Union and the country's domestic politics, the opening of negotiations was postponed. Following a series of recommendations from the Commission, on March 25, 2020, the EU General Affairs Council decided to open accession negotiations with Albania. This decision was approved by the European Council the next day, which marked the final opening of accession negotiations between Albania and the EU. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, has paused the initiation of the negotiations for the moment. According to the most optimistic forecasts, Albania is not expected to join the European Union before 2030.

For its part, Albania has responded to all the trust given by the EU with the highest rigor and devotion. Since when the prospect of accession became a reality in 1999, a series of institutional structures have been created, to coordinate the integration processes and to help the country successfully carry out the tasks set by the EU as conditions for further progress in the path of integration. The importance and priority given to this process is reflected in the evolution of structures in charge of European integration, from a General Directorate of Euro-Atlantic integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Secretary of State for European Integration, and finally to the establishment in 2004 of a fully-fledged institution, the Ministry of European Integration (Bogdani & Loughlin, 2007: 118). Albania became the second country in the region to establish a ministry specifically for European integration issues after Croatia, which had such a ministry in the period 2000-2005<sup>12</sup>. However, in terms of longevity, the Ministry of European Integration of Albania was the longest living of its kind, operating for 13 years from 2004 to 2017 when it merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to the abovementioned structures, Albanian governments over the years have established within all state ministries, various specialized units called European Integration Units (EIU), which coordinate the work of ministries with the course of European integration, specifically in EU-related processes of assistance, reporting and monitoring (Vurmo, 2008: 11). Since the signing

---

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Croatia)*, Wikipedia; last accessed May 20, 2021, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry\\_of\\_Foreign\\_and\\_European\\_Affairs\\_\(Croatia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Foreign_and_European_Affairs_(Croatia))>

of the SAA, in the framework of the country's preparation to join the EU, Albania has rigorously followed the process of approximation of legislation with the EU. The term "approximation of legislation" refers to the process of adapting the legal systems of associated countries to the 'acquis communautaire' and their practical implementation (ibid: 41).

In conclusion it can be said that European integration remains to this day the major objective of Albanian foreign policy, as well as the strongest incentive for domestic reform and democratization. Albania is fully committed to the path towards integration, which is often considered natural and inalienable. EU integration is widely regarded as the only alternative for the country's future.

### **3.3. Albania-Greece Relations**

Due to a multitude of important factors such as geographical proximity, the fact that the Greek minority is the largest ethnic minority in Albania, the large number of Albanian migrants living in Greece and above all due to the fact that Albania aspires to join the EU while Greece is a member of the Union for several decades, relations with Greece have occupied one of the most important aspects of Albanian foreign policy since 1991. In fact, Albania-Greece relations are an old history where friendship and enmity have alternated continuously for at least the last 150 years, with the latter to have had the upper hand. The reasons for this advantage of enmity over friendship, have been the territorial claims of Greece against Albania, the genocide against the Cham Albanians, the fact that Albania and Greece were on opposite sides during the Cold War, the still active law on the state of war on the part of Greece against Albania and the dissatisfying treatment of respectively the Greek communities in Albania and the Albanian communities in Greece. However, it seems that the common European agendas pursued by the two countries have brought about a significant improvement in relations.

Despite the fact that Greece was one of the few countries in the Western bloc with which communist Albania had re-established diplomatic relations, apart from some sporadic political contacts and some modest trade exchanges, the two countries remained overall isolated from each other during the Cold War (Rakipi, 2019). Things began to change in 1984 when then-Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu

announced the renunciation of Greece's territorial claims to Albania. Three years later he publicly denounced the law on the state of war, taking another step in improving relations with Albania (Katsikas, 2004). In 1991, when Albania finally emerged from communism, diplomatic relations between the two countries were raised to high levels for the first time since the 1930s.

From that moment, the relations between the two countries have been characterized by great paradoxes. Despite the fact that in 1996 Albania and Greece signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation – the most comprehensive diplomatic tool for establishing peace and full cooperation between two countries – the law on the state of war, approved by the Greek parliament in 1940, continues to be in force in Greece (Rakipi, 2019). This law became even more paradoxical after 2009 when Albania became part of NATO with full rights. It is inconceivable that two countries sworn in in a military alliance to protect each other in the event of attacks by a third party are in a state of war between one another.

Despite the paradoxes, relations between Albania and Greece in the last thirty years have been generally satisfactory although occasionally accompanied by incidents. There has been intense interaction between the two countries since the first days of the Albanian transition, driven by the need to coordinate cooperation in tackling the problem of the unusual influx of Albanian migrants to Greece. The first confrontations took place precisely in the context of the migrant problem when Greece accused Albania of not taking measures to stop the flow while Albania accused Greece of mistreating Albanian migrants. Despite several years of cooperation between the two countries to tackle the issue, the flow of migrants was almost never hindered. It is estimated that since 1991, about 700 thousand Albanians have migrated to Greece (Rakipi, 2019). Due to the crisis of 2008, the number may have dropped to 500 thousand as it is estimated that 180 to 200 thousand of them have either returned to Albania or have migrated to Western Europe (Cela, et al. 2018: 40). This large number of migrants has given Greece a lever of diplomatic pressure against Albania, which the Greek side has used on several occasions to achieve its goals in relation to Albania. One of the issues that Greece has tried to resolve through this lever of diplomatic pressure has been the expansion of the rights of the Greek minority in Albania, specifically those related to property.

Despite the drawbacks, between 1991 and 1994 relations between the countries underwent relative progress. This progress took a heavy toll after the events of April 1994 when two Albanian soldiers were killed and three others wounded after an exchange of fire with Greek nationalist extremist forces in a military barracks on the Albanian-Greek border, near the village of Peshkëpi (Xhudo, 1996: 48). The Albanian side responded with the arrest and detention of five members of the Greek organization OMONIA, on charges of spying on the country's military bases and separatist activity designed to nurture Greece's territorial ambitions against Albania (Lani & Schmidt, 1998). Greece responded by expelling about 70,000 Albanian illegal migrants as part of Operation Broom and by voting against the 10-year financial aid package signed between Albania and the EU (ibid). After strong American pressure, the Albanian government released the prisoners while Greece stopped the deportation policy and also lifted the veto on EU aid to Albania. The incidents of 1994-1995 can be considered as the lowest point of modern diplomatic relations between Albania and Greece.

In 1996 the relations between Albania and Greece took a positive direction with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, Good Neighbourliness and Security. This treaty established the first legal basis for bilateral cooperation between the two countries and paved the way for the creation of mechanisms that would enable the resolution of old issues (Dervishi, 2019). With the change of government in Albania after the events of 1997 and the coming to power of the Socialists, relations between the two countries improved, also due to the fact that incidents with ethnic backgrounds became rare. Since 1997, Greece has become one of Albania's biggest supporters on its path to European integration. At the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, Albania participated as one of Greece's most important partners, also benefiting a full 50 million euros from the Hellenic Plan for Economic Reconstruction of the Balkans (ibid).

Even in Albania's efforts to join NATO, Greece has been one of its main supporters. Albania's accession to NATO in 2009 was followed by an agreement on the maritime border between the two countries which was signed only days after the formalization of the membership. This agreement, although received with great enthusiasm in Greece, was not finalized because it was overturned by the Constitutional Court of Albania in 2010 on the grounds that it was in violation of the constitution (Rakipi, 2019). This development brought another cooling of relations between the two

countries. However, the coming to power of the Socialists for the second time in 2013, refined relations once again. Good relations culminated in 2014 when during the Greek presidency of the EU, Albania was granted candidate status for EU accession (Cela, et al. 2018: 164).

Despite the fact that Greece has never raised obstacles for Albania on the latter's path towards European integration and has always been in the camp of supporters at key moments, the Albanian public opinion is dominated by the idea that in fact Greece is a hindering factor (Cela & Lleshaj, 2014: 36). According to a study conducted by AIIS in 2013, misconceptions go even further, as one in five Albanians see Greece as the biggest threat to their country's security. Statistics of the study show that Greece is seen as the biggest threat, leaving Serbia behind (ibid: 22). The difference between practice and perceptions is a result of the often-heated political rhetoric of both sides, and above all of the way Greece and its tendencies are presented in the Albanian media. It's also safe to say that unresolved issues such as the Cham issue, the law on the state of war and the lack of agreement on the maritime border, have played a role in building these perceptions.

In conclusion, it can be asserted that today the relations between Albania and Greece enjoy a good moment. Greece remains Albania's second most important trading partner<sup>13</sup>, with imports from Greece accounting for almost 1/5 of Albanian imports, and with around 1/7 of Albanian exports going to Greece. Greece for years has been the top foreign investor in Albania<sup>14</sup>. Political cooperation too has been at the highest levels in recent years. Albania is the immediate neighbour with which Greece has the best relations. As mentioned previously, Greece is one of the strongest supporters of Albania's European integration and Albania benefits to a large degree from this support. Albania's European integration is a desirable result for Greece as well. Greece's geopolitical and mainly economic interests in Albania would be better protected if the latter were a member of the EU, because a European future for Albania means a prosperous, secure and credible neighbour for Greece (Cela, et al. 2018: 14).

---

<sup>13</sup> *Shkëmbimet tregtare Shqipëri-Greqi (Albania-Greece trade exchanges)*, SCAN Television based on INSTAT data; last accessed May 29, 2020. <<http://www.scan-tv.com/shkembimet-tregtare-shqiperi-greqi-importet-e-ushqimeve-nxisin-deficitin/>>

<sup>14</sup> *Rritja e volumit të shkëmbimeve tregtare me Greqinë (The increase of the volume of trade exchanges with Greece)*, Albanian Telegraphic Agency website; last accessed May 29, 2020. <<http://ata.gov.al/2020/12/15/rritja-e-volumit-te-shkembimeve-tregtare-me-greqine-xhafaj-per-atsh-ne-kemi-negociuar-shtimin-e-kuotave-te-lejeve-te-transportit/>>

The case of Albania-Greece relations is one of the few post-Cold War examples when the European factor plays a decisive role in rebuilding relations between the two traditionally 'enemy' countries, with one coming out of the western bloc and the other from the eastern one. The rigorous adherence to the EU agendas has been a strong incentive for both countries to build healthy relations between them. For Albania, the improvement of relations with Greece has been a test of maturity to 'deserve' the European perspective. As for Greece, which after the end of the Cold War was given the mantle of the European leader of the Balkans from the West, the improvement of relations with Albania has also been a test of maturity to 'deserve' the role of the leader. Both countries were invited to prove that both had embraced the European values of good neighbourliness and regional cooperation, and the feeling is that both have succeeded in this task.

#### **3.4. Albania-Serbia Relations**

If history seems to be a surmounted obstacle in Albania-Greece relations, the same cannot be said of Albania-Serbia relations. Albania and Serbia even after being geographically neighbours for more than a century, are still far from being neighbours politically. Their relationship continues to be the missing piece of the regional foreign policy puzzle for both countries. What separates Serbia and Albania both historically and physically is Kosovo, the last Republic to break away from the trunk of the former Yugoslavia, administered for about 100 years as a region within Serbia but ethnically dominated by Albanians. The history of Kosovo, seen as a tragic story from the point of view of both countries, is the most insurmountable obstacle to the normalization of relations between Albania and Serbia. For Serbs, the loss of Kosovo, considered the cradle of the Serbian nation, is unforgivable, just like for Albanians unforgivable is the nearly century-long persecution of millions of Kosovo Albanians that culminated in ethnic cleansing in the late 1990s. Despite the bad feelings that exist between Albanians and Serbs, it seems that in the recent years Albania and Serbia both have tried to avoid the Kosovo issue in relation to each other in order to build for the first time since the 1940s, political-economic relations of the highest level. According to many analysts, nowadays relations between Serbia and Albania are at the highest level since the end of the Kosovo war.

To begin with, the Cold War left a legacy of bad relations between Albania and Serbia mainly due to old-grudges over the Kosovo issue (Balla, et al. 2017: 7). Relations deteriorated even more after the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia, a war which constantly threatened to spill not only in Kosovo but in Albania as well. Throughout the 1990s, the relationship was quite hostile and an armed conflict was possible at any moment. Despite the strong desire of the Albanian side to intervene in the protection of the interests of Kosovo Albanians, the internal developments that followed after 1991 and the pressure from the international factor, prevented the country from playing a decisive role in this issue.

The first high-level contact between Albania and Serbia took place in 1997 at the Crete Summit between the Prime Minister of Albania Fatos Nano and the President of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milošević, where the latter asked the Albanian side not to interfere in the Kosovo problem as the issue was considered domestic by the Serbian side (Rakipi, 2016). Relations became even more tense after war broke out in Kosovo and after Serbia accused Albania of supporting the Kosovo Liberation Army labelled as terrorist by the Milošević regime. The relationship hit rock bottom in 1999 when Albania supported the NATO bombing of Serb forces in Serbia and Kosovo (Balla, et al. 2017: 8). After the fall of the Milošević regime in January 2001, the first diplomatic notes were exchanged between Albania and Serbia and diplomatic correspondence was restored for the first time since 1948 (ibid).

One of the most important actors that has often brought Albania and Serbia to the same trench has been the EU, which has included both countries in different EU-supported structures and organizations, but above all on a long process of European integration, which is conditional on regional co-operation and good neighbourliness.

Both countries are since 1996 members of the South-East European Cooperation Process, a regional cooperation forum co-founded with EU assistance, that aims at strengthening good-neighbourly relations among all participants from South East Europe (SEE), and transforming this region into an area of peace, security, stability and cooperation, with the main goal of full integration of SEE into European and Euro-Atlantic structures<sup>15</sup>. Following the worrisome developments in Kosovo, at the

---

<sup>15</sup> *South-East European Cooperation Process – SEECP*, Regional Cooperation Council website; last accessed May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. < <https://www.rcc.int/pages/111/south-east-european-cooperation-process--seecp>>

initiative of the EU, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe was established in 1999. This pact would function as an official institution for SEECP where member states could organize conferences in order to address regional issues with the aim to coordinate the cooperation for their solution. SEECP was replaced in 2008 by the Regional Cooperation Council, after a reforming which delegated almost all competencies over the management of SEECP to the member countries. In addition to the abovementioned regional structures, Serbia and Albania are also part of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII), the South East Europe Cooperation Initiative (SECI), the Energy Community, etc (Balla, et al. 2017: 16).

In terms of economic cooperation, the two countries have been part of Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) since 2007 (Rakipi, 2016). CEFTA represents an international trade agreement between Southeastern European countries that are not yet part of the European Union. The purpose of this agreement is the integration of the economies of Southeast Europe in a common market regulated by the laws applied in the European Union, in order to prepare these economies for future integration in the European Common Market<sup>16</sup>. In the first year after the signing of the agreement, trade between Serbia and Albania doubled, from \$ 40 million in 2006 to \$ 90 million in 2007 (Balla, et al. 2017: 11). The trade volume in the last twenty years has increased from about 200 thousand USD in 2000, to about 200 million USD in 2019-2020 before the pandemic<sup>17</sup>.

As a result of the co-presence in the regional forums and the integration processes, during 2000-2008 the relations between Serbia and Albania underwent an improvement. In 2002, the first high-level visit of an Albanian official to Belgrade took place, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs and at the same time the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania, Ilir Meta, was received in a meeting by the President of Yugoslavia, Vojislav Koštunica. Meta's visit was followed by several other ministerial-level exchanges and visits and also by a series of agreements signed between two countries (Balla, et al. 2017: 8). However, Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 froze Albania-Serbia relations once again.

---

<sup>16</sup> *CEFTA Parties*, CEFTA website; last accessed June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. <<https://cefta.int/cefta-parties-2/>>

<sup>17</sup> *Marrëdhëniet dypalëshe (Bilateral Relations)*, Embassy of the Republic of Albania in Serbia website; last accessed June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. <<http://www.ambasadat.gov.al/serbia/sq/marr%C3%ABdheniet-dypal%C3%ABshe>>

The ice seemed to melt away in 2010 when again Ilir Meta, in his capacity as foreign minister and deputy prime minister, visited two Albanian-majority municipalities in Serbia, Preševo and Bujanovac, and was later received by Serbian President Boris Tadić in Belgrade. This visit was accompanied by an upgrade to the level of Serbia's representation in Albania, replacing the Serbian charge d'affaires with an appointed ambassador of the Republic of Serbia in Albania (ibid: 9). In this positive spirit, in 2011 both countries abolished the visa regime between them for their citizens. These positive developments were followed by a diplomatic visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia Ivan Mrkić in Albania in October 2012 and by the opening of direct flights Tirana-Belgrade in September 2014.

But just when it seemed that relations were at their highest ever, an incident with an ethnic background that occurred during the Serbia-Albania UEFA Euro 2016 qualifying match held in October 2014 in Belgrade, revived once again the diplomatic clashes between the two countries. The incident was followed by protest notes against each other by the two respective governments as well as the summoning of respective ambassadors. The situation escalated even more after senior officials from both countries became involved in an exchange of heated statements and accusations (Rakipi, 2016).

The ice was once again broken by a visit to Belgrade by the Albanian side which was represented this time by the Prime Minister himself. Edi Rama's visit only a month after the football incident, was the first visit of an Albanian Prime Minister to Belgrade in almost 70 years (Rakipi, 2020). The last to pay such a visit was the communist leader Enver Hoxha in 1946. The meeting caused a delight in the Western media which regarded it as a historic development that symbolized two traditional enemies leaving behind a conflictual past. After the 2014 visit, the Prime Ministers of Albania and Serbia have continued to exchange diplomatic visits in order to promote a new climate in the relations between two countries. Since then, several agreements have been signed, such as those on free movement of citizens, mutual recognition of driving licences, customs, aspects of cultural co-operation, trans-national transportation and tourism (ibid).

The final episode in the relations between Albania and Serbia is the project of the Balkan Schengen, an ambitious plan based on the model of the EU's Schengen that

aims to raise the relations between the two countries to the highest possible levels, at least in the economic aspect. This project foresees the free movement of people, goods, services and capital within the six countries of the Western Balkans, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The President of Serbia and the Prime Minister of Albania have tried to promote the Mini-Schengen project through several diplomatic meetings held in Novi Sad, Ohrid and Tirana (ibid). Both leaders have been careful to articulate that such an initiative is not an alternative to European integration, rather it is a step that brings their countries closer to EU integration and as such has the support of both the EU and the United States of America. It must be said that the leaders of Bosnia, Montenegro and Kosovo have not been very enthusiastic about this project. In fact, the idea of Mini-Schengen has been met with scepticism and great criticism from public opinion in both Albania and Kosovo. Scepticism is related to the fact that such a project leaves Kosovo out of the picture, which, by not being diplomatically recognized by Serbia and Bosnia, cannot be an equal party in this initiative. As if criticism and scepticism were not enough, the Covid-19 pandemic thwarted Albania's and Serbia's plans to advance their idea of a Balkan Schengen. On July 29, 2021, in a meeting held in Skopje, Prime Minister Rama would announce that the initiative was renamed "Open Balkan".

In conclusion, it can be asserted that despite the significant improvement, relations between Albania and Serbia are still far from being pleasant, at least if we compare them to each other's relations with the region's other neighbours. The issue of Kosovo is still hot and continues to produce negative sentiments on both sides, which at the end translate into scepticism and reluctance in diplomatic relations. Negative perceptions have influenced and will continue to influence the way the two countries approach each other, but nevertheless there is no denying to the fact that great progress has been made in the last two decades. An important factor that has greatly contributed to this progress is the European Union, which with its regional integration agendas has inspired good relations between the "enemies" in the Balkans, including Albania and Serbia. The common aspiration for EU accession is also the biggest guarantee that the progress in the Albania-Serbia relations will continue.

### **3.5. Conclusions**

The Albanian foreign policy of the last thirty years has been characterized by a clear orientation towards the west, especially the European Union, the accession to which remains the major objective of this policy. Albania's commitment to European integration processes is maximal and its pro-European course enjoys full domestic support and is never questioned. This commitment is widely reflected in the Albanian domestic policy in the form of comprehensive reforms aimed at meeting the conditions that determine the progress in the ladder of integration. Devotion on the road to integration, in addition to domestic politics, is also reflected Albania's foreign policy choice. The cases of Albania's relations with its two traditional 'enemies', Greece and Serbia, are a concrete example of how the strong desire for European integration has motivated Albania to improve relations with its problematic neighbours. These two cases, demonstrate the potential that the European integration processes have, not only to transform the countries internally, but also to reconstruct the relations between the two countries that share a history of enmity. Since the end of the Yugoslav wars, Albania has continuously expressed its loyalty to the European ideals of good neighbourliness and regional cooperation as well as its commitment to contribute to the European future of the Western Balkans which is also seen as the best medicine for solving problems inherited from the past. Adherence to European values is increasingly subjugating the negative sentiments that Albania has towards some countries with which it shares a bitter history.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE PRESENCE IN THE ALBANIAN PUBLIC DISCOURSE, OF IDEAS THAT SUPPORT THE EUROPEAN BELONGINGNESS OF THE ALBANIAN NATION**

This chapter unfolds the research done on the Albanian public discourse of the post-communist period, to uncover the representations and imaginations of Albania by the Albanian society, specifically those in relation to Europe. These representations will be in the form of verbal or written articulations. What interests us are articulations that assert the Europeanness of the Albanian nation, which includes Albania as a state, Albanians as a people and Albanianness as an entirety of Albanian culture and history. The two main branches that will function as representatives of the Albanian public discourse will be the discourse of political elites and the discourse of intellectual elites. From the political elites are selected mainly figures of important political posts such as prime ministers or presidents. Here are also included other political figures of lower positions, but who are known for their loudness in supporting the European belongingness of the Albanian nation. From the intellectual elites are selected only those intellectual figures who enjoy wide recognition in society. Also, since in the field of intellectuals, the number of those who argue in favour of the European belongingness of the Albanian nation is considerable, we had to limit ourselves to the most vocal intellectual figures in this respect.

Another space in which similar articulations will be explored are the history textbooks as they present the official narrative on the state and the nation. These textbooks serve as one of the first spaces where the members of a society encounter certain representations on their state. Considering that the authors of these textbooks are part of the same epistemic communities in which they share the same official perspectives on the state, and above all are readers of other texts which form their perspective on their state, it can be said without any doubt that history textbooks reflect the dominant representations that a society has for its state. This makes history textbooks a very

reliable source for exploring the images that Albanians have of Albania in relation to Europe.

#### **4.1. Public Discourse of the Political Elites From 1991 to 2021**

The period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the first pluralist elections of March 1991, marks the end of communism and the beginning of liberalism in Albania, therefore the exploration of the discourse of political elites begins with those years. The years 1989-1992 are the years during which Albania suffers a great identity fracture and makes the transition from an isolated country that imagined itself surrounded by enemies, especially the western imperialists, to an open country that imagined itself as the West's most loyal ally. Especially after 1991, the year in which Albania re-established relations with Europe and the United States, articulations that associated Albania with Europe or the West began to dominate the political discourse. It should be said that such articulations are also noticed in the political discourse of the political elites of communism, but they were limited and did not dominate the political discourse of the time. However, to facilitate our chronological transition from communism to liberalism, in the following subchapter, some Europhile articulations of communist elites are briefly mentioned.

##### **4.1.1. The Period 1984–1992**

During the last years of the communist regime, articulations that assert the European belongingness of Albania can be found in the speeches of Ramiz Alia, the politician who succeeded Enver Hoxha as the First Secretary of the Labour Party after the latter's death. In a speech delivered in 1984, Alia would declare: "Albania is a European country and as such, it is vitally interested in what is occurring on this continent," (Alia, 1984, as cited in Brisku, 2013: 123). Despite the ideological clash that Albania had with Europe for decades, Alia did not hesitate to label his country as European in his speech. He would repeat almost the same words in a 1986 speech. It seems that Alia followed the rhetoric of Enver Hoxha who was still alive at the time. Hoxha in a speech delivered in 1982, in which he called for the preservation of peace, prosperity and traditions of the European civilization, referred to Europe as "our old continent"

(ibid: 122). The possessive pronoun 'our' serves as an indicator and innkeeper of the symbolism of the European belongingness of the Albanian people.

Undoubtedly, after the fall of the communist regime and full openness towards Europe and the West, the articulations expressing the European belongingness of Albania became more frequent in the discourse of the political elites. As explained in previous chapters, from the moment Albania established relations with the European Community, integration in this organization became the primary national objective. Ever since the first pluralist elections of 1991 when the symbols of the European Community were used for the first time, the European symbolic has been present in every electoral campaign and government program. After the victory in the 1991 elections, the leader of the Socialist Party and at the same time the Prime Minister of the country, Fatos Nano, when asked by a foreign journalist if he was a communist, would answer by saying: "I am not a Stalinist, I am not a Maoist, I am not a Polpotist. I am a real Albanian, interested in the integration of Albania in Europe (Nano, 1991, as cited in Sulstarova, 2012: 306). His statement lets us know that a true Albanian is inevitably interested in Albania's integration into Europe. The metaphor of 'true Albanian' indicates that there are other non-true Albanians who are not interested in integrating Albania into Europe. Understandably opposed to them are those who carry the essence that makes them real Albanians and that encourages them to integrate Albania in Europe. So indirectly there is a kind of link between the Albanian essence and the need to integrate Albania in Europe. This need is expressed in the form of a natural necessity and a repercussion of being a real Albanian.

But if the Socialists, as heirs of the Party of Labour, were more restrained in expressing the supposed historical connection between Albania and Europe or West, the Democrats, as representatives of the right wing, had no ideological barrier to make them hesitant in this regard. The leader of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha, in the 1991 electoral campaign, just one month after the formation of the party, invited the citizens to vote for Europe by voting for the DP. In January 1991, he expressed himself in these words:

You [the electorate] will vote for the DP because you want to vote for Europe; you are convinced that only its program brings you out of deep isolation and unites you with dignity with the civilized Europe; I say with dignity, because our virtues of the oath for the given word, virility, honesty, which are our millennial heritage, are highly valued by the civilized world [European/western civilization] (Berisha, 1991, as cited in Qori, 2015: 126).

Unlike Nano's rhetoric, Berisha's rhetoric has a more pronounced anthropological sense. According to him, Albania's exit from isolation has a defined trajectory that ends with the unification with Europe. The explanation for this trajectory can be found in the anthropologization that Berisha makes of the identity of Albanians and that of Europe. According to him, the millennial virtues of Albanians are recognized and valued by the civilized world, a term by which he refers to the Western/European civilization. Considering that virtues are desired and valued, it is understood that they are virtues that the Western/European civilization itself has had for thousands of years and therefore values them. Given that for thousands of years Albanians and Europe have shared the same virtues, we are left to understand that there is an historic linkage between the Albanian nation and the European civilization that has its roots thousands of years old. A year later in 1992, Albania became part of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (later Organization of Islamic Cooperation). After this decision the Albanian government faced fierce criticism mainly of the type that questioned the Euro-Atlantic orientation of Albania. Sali Berisha himself took care to clarify things and in a parliamentary speech, where while speaking in the capacity of the President of the Republic at that time, he would stress:

We are a profoundly European country and Albania will soon become part of the political and military organizations of Europe. However, in Albania, in a European country, the Muslim percentage of the population is very important. It [Albania] must put this reality into the service of its people and of its region. (...) If there are people who find the word 'Islamic' shocking, I would do no more than to remind them that this is incompatible with our country's great tradition of religious tolerance (Berisha, 1992, as cited in Barbullushi, 2009: 132).

In his speech, Berisha labels Albania as a "profoundly European" country, which means that its Europeanness is very deep and vast. Confirming to critics that Albania remains a European country, he tries to rehabilitate criticism of deviating from the Euro-Atlantic orientation by justifying the decision to join the OIC as a tactic that serves the Albanian citizens and those of the region, understandably by bringing the necessary interfaith and interethnic peace to the Balkans, especially at a time when war was raging in Yugoslavia. By inviting 'Islamophobes' to recall the tradition of religious tolerance that Albania has carried for centuries, he tries to fight them precisely by giving Albania another supposedly European quality such as religious tolerance.

#### 4.1.2. The Period 1992-2006

Similar ideas expressing Albania's European belongingness have been repeatedly articulated by Berisha and other Democratic Party figures during 1992-1997 when they were in power. In an interview given to the German newspaper *Die Presse* in 1996 Berisha would state: "Albania is the most Western country in the region. We are already paying our obligations to our roots," (Berisha, 1996, *ibid*: 135). The President finds the opportunity to confirm in front of a European audience such as the German press, the Western (European) roots of the Albanians. Albanians as a European and Western people have obligations to their roots and are respecting these obligations.

Albania, in exchange for respecting its obligations, expects reward and appreciation from Europe. Such an impression is given by Berisha's statements after Albania's accession to the Council of Europe in 1995, when he would declare that "the Democratic Party had kept its word and had respected the contract with the Albanian electorate, democracy, Albania and Europe," (Berisha, 1995, as cited in Qori, 2015: 135). In the last two speeches Europe emerges not only as a rewarder, but also as an interpellating authority that constantly calls Albania to the responsibility of Europeanization, a responsibility which Albania cannot avoid as an inherently European country.

Given the context in which Berisha speaks, if we make a more detailed analysis, we can infer as follows: for Europe to function as an interpellating authority, it must first enjoy the right of authority. Europe's authority can only arise if Europe is seen as a "teacher" or as a "parent" who wants the best for his student or child and helps the latter to become like him. In fact, the rhetoric of "Europe as a parent" – or as the Mother Continent (Kadare, 2006) – that takes care of Albania, has been present in public discourses since the first days of the transition when the humanitarian mission "Pelican" began to operate in Albania. Many political and intellectual figures have described Albania's relationship with Europe as the relationship of a child who finds his biological parent after many vicissitudes and historical accidents. Others have gone even further by describing Europe as an authoritarian parent who gives advices and tasks, congratulates or rebukes the child on the basis of performance, while describing Albania as a child who obeys the parent. Such rhetoric was reinforced even more after the events of 1997, which marked the lowest point of the post-communist Albanian

state. In the same year, the newly elected Prime Minister, Fatos Nano, would go far, proposing that Albania be turned into an Italian protectorate, which would make integration into the European Union easier (Barbullushi, 2009: 163). For the sake of integration, Albania of 1997 was ready to accept the status of a protectorate and this is a strong indicator of the imagined parent-child relationship between Albania and Europe. As a matter of fact, the European military humanitarian missions Pelican 1991 and Alba 1997 have often been described as evidence of Europe's care for Albania and as a sign that Europe considers Albania and the Albanians as part of it. Even NATO missions in Kosovo were often described with the same rhetoric.

As in the political discourse of the Democrats, so in that of the Socialists, the European belongingness of the Albanians has been one of the most frequent topics. In the 1997 electoral campaign, Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano, attacking his political rival Berisha, reminded Albanians of their European roots and the primary national goal that is the European integration, by saying:

We are all Albanians we are all brothers. Our dignity, trampled on in relations with our neighbours and beyond by Berisha's policy, will necessarily be restored to its rightful place. Genetically, historically, spiritually and intellectually, Albanians are Europeans and will be integrated very soon in the course of the developed democratic world (Nano, 1997, as cited in Qori, 2015: 196).

Nano's speech does not lack anthropological and essentialist remarks that defend the genetic, historical and spiritual connection between the Albanian nation and Europe. Understandably when talking about integration Nano is talking about NATO accession and above all the EU accession, episodes which are seen as part of the still unwritten but inevitable history of Albania.

Even the conflict in Kosovo could not escape the coverage with the rhetoric of the European belongingness of the Albanians. Referring to the developments in Kosovo, where the war had just broken out, in a speech held in 1998, Berisha called the confrontation between Albanians and Serbs "a confrontation between Albanianism as the doctrine of our Western civilization on one side and the various new and old atrocities and barbarities of the region on the other," (Berisha, 1998, as cited in Barbullushi, 2009: 97-98). In his speech, Albanianism or in other words the unfolding of the entirety of the features of the Albanian nation, is described as the doctrine of Western civilization, which implies the co-belonging of the European/Western civilization and the Albanian nation.

Political programs as well could not escape the penetration of ideas that assert the European identity of Albania. In the program of the Socialist government that emerged from the 2001 elections headed by Ilir Meta, the primary goal of the government is clearly stated with the words:

I believe that beyond the many things that divide us today, there is a purpose that is common. This goal is and will remain Europe. Europe today is our identity, our ally and our path of growth. Europe is a new way of thinking and working. Europe is a new way of life (Meta, 2001).

The Prime Minister does not hesitate to call Europe an identity, thus creating a direct relationship between the Albanian national identity and Europe as its nodal point. In fact, Meta is known as the political figure who articulates the word Europe with all its derivatives, most frequently and most fervently. Europe is so central to Meta's political worldview that in 2004 he named the party he created the "Socialist Movement for Integration" (SMI) and the party newspaper simply "The Integration" (Sulstarova, 2013: 227). Basically, he created a whole party whose reason for existing was the European Integration.

#### **4.1.3. Political Orientalism**

In the narrative and discussions that defend the European belongingness of the Albanian nation, there is often a dose of Orientalism which usually takes the form of articulations that amplify the 'European' elements and belittle the 'non-European' elements, especially the Ottoman heritage, oriental cultural trends and above all Islam. This tendency aims at purging Albanianess from the elements that supposedly reduce its Europeaness, and at sublimating those who add to its Europeaness. One element that makes a big difference on the scales of Europeaness is religion, with Christianity adding to Europeaness and Islam reducing it. As we will see in the next subchapter, Albanian Orientalism revolves mainly around the issue of religion.

The most exemplary case of religious Orientalism in Albanian political discourse is that of President Alfred Moisiu. President Moisiu in a speech entitled "Interfaith tolerance in the tradition of the Albanian people", held in the framework of a conference organized by the Oxford Forum in London in 2005, would claim that calling Albanians a Muslim people is a superficial understanding of the reality. Moisiu would explain the religious reality in Albania as follows:

The most realistic view of the religious situation in Albania is the diachronic one, that in every Albanian – even among those who converted to Islam at the end of the Middle Ages – there are fifteen centuries of Christianity because Christianity in Albania has been apostolic and has been spread directly by Christian apostles as early as the first century. (...) Those Albanians who did not convert have in their tradition not just fifteen centuries of Christianity but two thousand years of Christianity. The other synchronic plane of Albanian faith is Islam. The diachronic point of view explains the essence of religious tolerance among Albanians (Moisiu, 2005, as cited in Brisku, 2006).

The President would go further in minimizing the importance of Islam in Albanian society calling the Albanian Islam as shallow. Proposing a more accurate reading of the religious reality in Albania, Moisiu would state:

Albanians are often called a Muslim people, but this is a superficial reading of the Albanian reality. Firstly, because Islam in Albania is not a source religion, nor a religion spread at the time of origin, nor a residential faith, but a phenomenon that came and was inherited in the liturgy of the [ottoman] factor that brought it. Islamism in Albania is an Islam with a European face. As a rule, it is a shallow Islam. If you dig a little into every Albanian, you will discover his Christian essence... This means that within the Albanian man, regardless of how he defines himself today, there is a homogenizing factor, and this homogenizing factor is exactly the period of fifteen centuries Christianity that each of them has in the tradition of his descendants (Moisiu, 2005, as cited in Sulstarova, 2013: 269).

In the same speech, Moisiu would call the Albanian emigrants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who left the Albanian lands after the Ottoman occupation to settle in the West (in Italy) as the sons of the “Champion of Christianity” George Kastrioti (Skanderbeg). Based on the presumed premise that European civilization is essentially Christian, in order to support the historic linkage between this civilization and the Albanian nation, Moisiu presents the Albanian man as if it has a Christian core, which by all means makes him a bearer of the European core as well. He lets the audience that follows him, especially the European one in London, understand that despite the fact that Albania is seemingly a Muslim country, in fact it is not because it remains essentially Christian. The Albanian, like his fellow Europeans, carries the European essence of Christianity from the very beginning when the faith took root in Europe and beyond. Since he carries the Christian essence, for the Albanian it is impossible not to be European. Even when he is a Muslim, precisely because of his Christian essence, he is tolerant of Christians. After this essentialist explanation, and after ascribing European qualities to Albanians, the President goes further by ascribing Albanian qualities to Islam, thus Europeanizing it. Since Islam has not been able to penetrate the essence of Albanians, it remains shallow, and as such becomes flexible to Albanian traditions. Subjecting to the essence and traditions of Albanians, Islam goes through the metamorphosis of Europeanization, with the final product being a European Islam,

which understandably is endemic to Albanians. A rhetoric similar to that of Moisiu is also noticed in the speech that the Albanian ambassador to the Vatican Vili Kamsi delivered at the conference on “Albanian Catholic clergy and the principles of Western democracy” held in 2004. According to Kamsi, Albania is an integral part of Europe mainly because of its Christian tradition from the beginning of the spread of this religion in the Albanian territories by Paul the Apostle (Kamsi, 2004, as cited in Sulstarova 2012: 349).

A similar analysis, substantially orientalist, which defends the Europeanness and Westernness of Albanians through Christian roots among others, is that of Spartak Ngjela. Ngjela, a famous lawyer and a former Minister of Justice, would write during his time as Secretary of Public Relations of the Democratic Party, the book “Albanian Reform” where, among other things, would emphasize the reasons why the Albanian nation is part of the European/Western civilization. According to Ngjela, this civilization has its roots in the Greco-Roman tradition and in Christianity. Albanians, on the other hand, have been conceived as a nation in the midst of Greco-Roman antiquity and have been part of the Christian world since the early days of Christianity, and for this reason they carry the same essence that Westerners carry today (Ngjela, 2006: 14-15). Understandably these features make Albanians as western as others. Ngjela goes even further in ascertaining the Westernness of the Albanians who according to him have the tradition of individualism and family life, two western elements (ibid: 47).

In another book of his, Ngjela gives similar arguments to President Moisiu regarding the influences that Eastern cultures have had on the Albanian nation. Like Moisiu, Ngjela believes that the cultures that came from the east – here he means Islam – did not touch the Albanian essence but instead adapted to it. According to Ngjela, “Albanian Islamism has always had a European face, cleansed of the ingredients of Arab culture,” (Ngjela, 2011, as cited in Sulstarova, 2013: 285). Ngjela lets us understand that an Islam cleansed of Arab elements but filled with Albanian elements equals a European Islam.

In the orientalist political discourse, Eastern influences are clearly presented as undesirable for Albanian culture and their cultural weight is belittled. Their arrival in the Albanian sphere is described as accidental. Moreover, not only the influences in

particular, but also the periods with which these influences are associated, are described as historical accidents. Tritan Shehu, one of the longest-serving members of the Albanian parliament under the banner of the Democratic Party (1991-2013), also a former Deputy Prime Minister and former Foreign Minister, in a 2006 article would stress:

Despite some temporary accidents imposed in history, we have always been in the West and there we want to be fully integrated. Thus, we are neither a bridge, nor a connecting point, nor a transition between East and West (Shehu, 2006, as cited in Sulstarova, 2016: 46-47).

Orientalism in the Saidian definition – as a contemptuous description of the East – is a common feature of the narratives and discussions on what Europe, and consequently Albania, represents. This is related to the fact that the very idea of Europe is forged in contradiction with the idea of the Orient. Since the image Europe has historically been constituted in relation to the Orient and the New World, Orientalist discourse has served as one of the main foundations on which representations of Europe are built.

#### **4.1.4. The Period 2006-2014**

As mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, Albania's path to European integration is often described as a 'return' to Europe, where Albanians supposedly belong. This narrative is related to the idea that Albania, once an integral part of the European world, was kept away from the mother continent as a result of historical accidents such as the Ottoman invasion and communism. The journey of return to Europe is considered as a natural path for Albania, dictated by its European belongingness.

This journey however, has been accompanied by ups and downs, which accordingly bring Albania closer or further from Europe. Considered as steps forward are the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, the NATO accession, the visa liberalization with European Union countries, the obtaining of the candidate status, etc. After each development, the usual rhetoric that defends the European belongingness of the Albania or its return to Europe, becomes more frequent.

The signing of the SAA by the then Prime Minister Sali Berisha would be considered as a blessed day in the history of the Albanian nation. During the signing ceremony of the SAA between Albania and the EU in Luxembourg, he would address the European chancelleries with the words:

You are signing the SAA with a nation, which is registered in the archives of European history and civilization as one of its most ancient inhabitants, which for centuries and millennia, as a cradle and shelter has had Europe, and that besides it, it cannot have another future (Berisha, 2006).

Even in his speech at the Bucharest Summit, where Albania was admitted to NATO, Berisha expresses himself with almost the same rhetoric:

(...) with your noble decision to invite Albania, you decided the return of Albanians, among the oldest inhabitants of the continent, to the family, among the Euro-Atlantic nations, with which we share the centuries-old values of our civilization (Berisha, 2008, as cited in Qori 2015: 142).

Consistent with the ideas he expressed during the 90s, Berisha of the 2000s continues to imagine his nation as a naturally European nation that belongs to the European civilization and with which it shares common civilizational values. This commonality, according to him, irrevocably seals the European future of Albania.

Certainly, this kind of rhetoric is not found only in the political discourse of the Democrats but also in that of the Socialists. One of the government programs published on the official website of the Socialist Party after the latter won the 2013 parliamentary elections, would be entitled “REUNIFICATION WITH EUROPE: Return to the European family to which we belong”<sup>18</sup>. The program sets out all the necessary reforms that the government is to undertake to enable “reunification with Europe”.

The above articulations show us a broader picture, that of the relationship between foreign policy and the way Albania imagines itself in relation to Europe and the West. Almost always, Albania’s foreign policy choice to integrate into the EU and NATO is justified through the historical linkage between the Albanian nation and European/Western civilization. As we have seen in almost all the articulations we have touched on so far, for both Democrats and Socialists, the Euro-Atlantic integration is imagined as a natural path for Albania, which is dictated by the European belongingness of the latter.

President Bujar Nishani, in 2012, on the occasion of an interview in the framework of the 100th anniversary of Albania’s independence would refer to the issue of Albania’s integration into the EU as “an irreversible and unhindered process, and Albania’s only destination,” (Nishani, 2012). In the same interview, referring to the Albanian nation as one of the oldest in Europe, Nishani lets us know that Albania’s path to integration

---

<sup>18</sup> RIBASHKIM ME EUROPËN (*REUNIFICATION WITH EUROPE*), 2013, Socialist Party website; last accessed June 17, 2021, <<https://www.ps.al/programi/ribashkim-me-europen>>

is natural. Former Foreign Minister Tritan Shehu, goes even further by claiming that Albanians should be proud of their choices (in the foreign policy), because these choices respect the millennial identity and belongingness of the Albanian nation. He adds that driven by this identity, Albania and Albanians see their future in the EU (Shehu, 2012, as cited in Sulstarova, 2013: 231-232). In a 2014 article of his he would stress that “the almost unanimous will of Albanians to be part of Europe is not an accidental feeling, but it comes from the fact that our trunk rests on our ancient European roots,” (Shehu, 2014). Certainly, these words take on even more weight when we consider the fact that they come from the mouth of a former foreign minister.

#### **4.1.5. Is Albania Islamic?**

After the signing of the SAA, NATO accession and visa liberalization with European Union countries, the next step for Albania was obtaining candidate status. During the period of negotiations (2009-2014), there were a series of refusals from the EU to grant Albania such a status. These refusals came at a time when a number of Albanian citizens began to join the fighting in Syria mainly through recruitment into the Islamic State (ISIS). At a time when the whole of Europe was buzzing from Islamophobia, concerns were raised in Albania whether these developments would give Albania the image of an Islamic country in the eyes of Europe. After a series of refusals by the EU to grant Albania candidate status, doubts began to arise as to whether Europe was prejudging Albania for being a Muslim-majority country. Many public figures were involved in these discussions, refuting the idea that Albania was a Muslim country. The loudest call was made by Prime Minister Edi Rama, who in an interview given to the French television “France24” in the summer of 2014 stated that “Albania was not a Muslim country, but a European country where Muslims and Christians lived together in full harmony,” (Rama, 2014). According to Rama, this religiously tolerant Albania was a treasure for Europe, and it would be a big mistake to label it as a Muslim country (ibid). Unwittingly, the Prime Minister falls into orientalist discourse, as he implies that a Muslim country is not European.

But if Rama is more restrained in rejecting the label of a Muslim country and relies on the multi-religiosity and religious tolerance of Albania in doing so, former Foreign Minister Tritan Shehu among many others, in his arguments regarding the topic, does

not hesitate to recall once again the Christian roots of the Albanian nation and the organic connection between it and Europe vis-a-vis the Christian tradition. While criticizing those who related the EU's refusal to grant candidate status to Albania to the fact that Albania was a Muslim country, he would stress:

First, Albania is not a Muslim country. Albanians are a mixed people in terms of religion, so much so that they are increasingly resembling the very physiognomy of some of the European metropolises. Our state is a secular state. (...) Second, the European family has no religious barriers or other prejudices of this kind in its entirety, not just for us but for anyone (Shehu, 2014).

According to Shehu, criticism towards Europe for being prejudicial against Islam and Albania is invalid not only because Europe is multi-religious and free from religious prejudices, but also because Albania is not a Muslim country and Europe knows this. According to him Albania is multi-religious and religiously tolerant just like Europe. In this first part, Europeanness is asserted through the values of multi-religiosity and religious tolerance, values which Albania enjoys. But the arguments of multi-religiosity and religious tolerance run out of steam shortly after in the second part of the article, where the denial comes, that in fact Albania is as it is because it has Christian roots:

On the other hand, let us not forget that Illyria [proto-Albania] was one of the first spaces that immediately after Christ left paganism and embraced the Christian religion even by making it official. In this way it [Christianity] became the first real religion in these lands. And so, in full Christianity, we continued for 15 to 16 centuries. Further, a part of us gradually converted to Islam during the Ottoman invasion, but never detached from European values, already rooted in the Albanian gene. (...) Likewise, our greatest figure in our modern age is Mother Teresa. This is the truth that we know, but that the West also knows (ibid).

In this part the usual Orientalist rhetoric which devalues the role and importance of Oriental elements such as Islam is clearly noticed. These elements are presented as powerless and unable to constitute values in themselves, unlike Christianity which is described as a European value in which the European essence is sheltered. According to Shehu, the European essence through the Christian tradition, is so ingrained in the composition of the Albanian nation that despite the fact that some converted to Islam, the European essence was preserved. He also does not hesitate to mention the most representative figure of the Albanian nation in the modern period, the Catholic missionary and at the same time the saint of the Catholic Church, Mother Teresa, to demonstrate the strong connection between the Albanian nation and Europe, vis-a-vis Christianity.

The importance given to the figure of Mother Teresa is in fact the exemplary case of the efforts to dissociate the image of Albania from Islam and associate it with Christianity. After the fall of communism, due to her worldwide recognition and reputation but also due to the Christian image she carries, Mother Teresa has become a national symbol. Its Sanctification Day, September 5, has been declared an official holiday in Albania and her name and image have been attached to public squares, schools, hospitals and even to the national airport which until a few months ago was the only airport in the country. According to Rezart Beka, “Mother Teresa’s portrait and statue has become the semi-official image of Albania,” (Beka in Bayraklı, 2019: 49). Norwegian author Cecilie Endersen gives the following description of this process which she calls “motherteresification”:

The semi-official and official cult of Mother Teresa as ‘the mother of the nation’ [...] reflects the historical tendency of many Albanian nation-builders to dissociate the nation symbolically and rhetorically from its Islamic legacy, outwardly seeking to reverse the historical Islamization process, and emphasizing the nation’s ‘Christians roots’ – all with the aim of legitimating Albanians as belonging to ‘Europe’ (Endersen, 2015, as cited by Beka in Bayraklı, 2019: 49).

The inclusion in discourse of various figures of Albanian origin that contain supposedly European elements, is a common way to give a European image to Albania and the Albanian nation. The figure that best plays this role is that of the national hero George Kastrioti Skanderbeg.

#### **4.1.6. The Role of Skanderbeg**

An important element with a big historical significance, often used to establish the link between Europe and the Albanian nation is George Kastrioti Scanderbeg. As we have seen already, President Moisiu had used Skanderbeg’s name to build a link between the Albanian nation and Christianity, calling him “Champion of Christ”, a title given to Skanderbeg by Pope Pius II. But as we will see in the next sub-chapter on the public discourse of intellectuals, Skanderbeg’s role in the relationship between the Albanian nation and the European civilization revolves mainly around his *antemurale* role as the defender of the latter from the Ottoman invaders. In 1999, it was the then President Rexhep Meidani who in a commemorative event for the League of Lezha would emphasize that “Albanians were honoured to be the first to defend the values of European citizenship,” (Meidani, 1999, as cited in Sulstarova, 2016: 46). Understandably he is talking about the 25-year Albanian resistance lead by the national

hero George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. A similar rhetoric would be used by the current President Ilir Meta in 2013, then in the capacity of Speaker of the Assembly. During the inauguration of a statue of Skanderbeg in the city of Fermo in Italy, Meta recalled once again the role of Skanderbeg in defending the European civilization and Christianity as well as his role as the father of the Albanian nation in designating the Albanian national identity, by stressing:

Skanderbeg is the greatest figure of our nation, he is the figure who has left the strongest mark in defining our national identity, but also our European identity. (...) Because Skanderbeg was not only a warrior defending his people and his freedom but he also turned into a knight of the European civilization, of Christianity, he turned into a shield of the West against an oppressive and barbaric empire [the Ottoman Empire] of that time (Meta, 2013, *ibid*:).

During his speech, Meta would also link Albania's aspiration to be part of the EU with Skanderbeg's role as defender of Europe, adding:

Because we deserve to be part of a united Europe, we deserve our flag to be the same as all the flags of European Union countries, just as we earned this right on merit as a NATO member (*ibid*).

According to Meta, Albania deserves to be part of a united Europe just as it once was when Europe was united against the Ottoman invaders, and the Albanian flag deserves to be part of the European flags just as it once was when flown by Skanderbeg in the fight to defend Europe. The figure of Skanderbeg is often found in the Europeanist political discourse, not only because he is considered as the father of the Albanian nation, but also because he is a figure with a 'European' content. This is so, firstly due to the fact that Skanderbeg, as a figure who is respected and recognized throughout Europe, presents Albania as European in the eyes of European countries. Secondly, because he, as a figure who is considered protector of the European civilization, places the Albanian nation – his offspring – on the European side of the fence. And thirdly, because his memory creates nostalgia for a time when Albanians were fully integrated into European political and cultural life, when they were Christians and when they had not yet adopted oriental elements. Without hesitation, it can be said that Skanderbeg is the most European figure of the Albanian nation.

#### **4.1.7. The Period 2014-2021**

After obtaining the status of candidate country in June 2014, the next objective for Albania on the road to European integration was the opening of accession negotiations.

Just like the struggle to obtain the candidate status, the struggle to open the accession negotiations was accompanied by subsequent rejections from the EU and consequently by appeals from the Albanian side which tried to convince Europe that they actually deserved this reward. The appeals, in addition to asking Europe to keep its promises, and demonstrating to it that Albania was doing its homework, it also reminded Europe that Albania was a European country that loved Europe. At a time when Brexit and the failure of the whole EU project were being discussed in Europe, Prime Minister Edi Rama, in an article written by him in 2016 and published by many domestic and foreign media, reminded Europe that for Albania there was no alternative except for EU. According to Rama, “Albanians are a European people in the middle of Europe, which does not yet have its European state, but which they can only build by continuing on the path of European integration,” (Rama, 2016). Only two years later in an interview given to the Austrian newspaper “Kurier”, when asked if Albania has an alternative to the EU, he would answer:

People in Europe have not experienced war. They believe that war is a black and white film on screen. But we have experienced it. We have taken 500,000 refugees [Kosovo Albanians], in a country of 2.5 million people. We know what war is, that’s why Europe is important to us. Europe is our religion. Even during the Ottoman times, we [Albanians] had an expression: Our sun rises in the West (Rama, 2018).

After declaring ‘Europe’ as the religion of the Albanians, Rama does not forget to rebuild the historical connection between the Albanian nation and Europe, as he reminds the latter that Albanians have always had their eyes and minds in Europe even when they were politically ruled by the East (the Ottoman Empire). In a way, Rama seems to be confessing to Europe that Albanians have been waiting for the European integration since the time of the Ottomans.

European newspapers have been the Prime Minister’s favourite space for expressing his ideas regarding the historical Albania-Europe relation. He has never kept himself from describing Europe as the religion or the identity of the Albanians, or as the destiny of Albania. In May 2021, just a few days after winning the parliamentary elections, he will address the Italian public through the newspaper La Stampa with the words:

We see Italy as the Albania of tomorrow. For us, Europe is a religion and there is no other area of influence in our European destiny, which we have been waiting for centuries. Before 1990 we could not dream of it. Now, we can choose it. Our people feel European (Rama, 2021, a).

This speech restores the idea that Albanians have been waiting for Europe – their destiny – for centuries. But this time Rama gives a reason why Albanians have sought

and continue to seek Europe for centuries. According to him, Albanians want to join Europe because they feel European, because they feel they belong to it.

One of the most frequent events during which Albanian politicians find the opportunity to express their European belongingness are the activities in the framework of Europe Day every 9<sup>th</sup> of May. This last time it was the Parliament's Speaker Gramoz Ruçi's turn to express himself with the words:

Today, on Europe Day, we Albanians have many reasons to rejoice. Not only for our European roots, but also for our European aspirations. (...) With our contribution, sacrifices and achievements and those of other peoples of the Western Balkans, we are expanding the European project and bringing Europe's political boundaries closer to its cultural boundaries. (...) The day will not be far when the borders of political Europe and cultural Europe will be one and will approach its natural borders (Ruçi, 2021).

Ruçi's main concern is the expansion of the current borders of the EU, which according to him still do not coincide with the cultural borders of Europe, or in other words with the borders of the European roots, within which Albania is definitely located.

It is also worth mentioning that Europhile ideas are not always articulated in moments of optimism, but also often in moments of disappointment. However, despite the changes in mood, the essence of these articulations remains the same. The concrete case is the statements of Rama at a conference held in Skopje in June 2021. After another postponement by the EU in starting the accession negotiations process with Albania and North Macedonia, Prime Minister Edi Rama would express his disappointment with the following words:

The EU can set tasks for integration, deadlines for them, dates, but it cannot set our location in the middle of Europe, nor our European culture and identity, nor our future as European peoples, in a European country, with European standards. Albania has made its choice in the time of Skanderbeg, for Albanians the sun rises where it sets [in the west], our future is where God has appointed us to have our land, in the heart of Europe (Rama, 2021, b).

Disappointment does not prevent the Prime Minister from repeating the same ideas regarding the nation's belongingness. This speech of his, can serve as an epitome of the Europeanist political discourse because it contains almost all the common elements used to depict the European belongingness of Albania, namely, its geographical position, its identity and European culture, its inevitable destiny to return to Europe, Skanderbeg and lastly God, who with his quality of omnibenevolence has blessed Albania to be Europe.

## **4.2. Public Discourse of Intellectual Elites From 1991 to 2021**

The next public discourse branch in which the presence of articulations that support the European belongingness of the Albanian nation will be researched, is the public discourse of intellectual figures, in specific those who do not belong to the political class. This category may include historians, scholars, writers, etc. As explained in the introduction to the chapter, given that the scope of literature which directly or indirectly deals with ideas that defend the Europeanness of the Albanian nation is quite broad, it is seen reasonable to focus only on those authors who have explicitly dealt with this topic. Will be taken into analysis mainly authors who are also proposed by other Albanian researchers who have contributed in our field of study. The five main figures that will be taken into analysis are the historian and writer Moikom Zeqo, the scholar and director of the Albanian National Library Piro Misha, the scholar and historian Aurel Plasari, the historian Elena Kocaqi, as well as the biggest name in Albanian literature, the writer Ismail Kadare.

### **4.2.1. Ismail Kadare – The European Identity of Albanians**

Ismail Kadare is widely known as the greatest Albanian novelist ever. Awarded with dozens of international awards, and nominated fifteen times for the Nobel Prize in Literature, he is one of the few writers from the Balkans to enjoy international recognition and readership. Kadare is also the most ardent defender of the European belongingness of the Albanian nation in the Albanian intellectual sphere. The first glimpses of his ideas on this topic can be seen in his literary work during the years of the communist regime. During that time, although Kadare rigorously maintained the ethics of socialist realism, his ideas on the Europeanness of the Albanian nation often used to come to the fore. But after 1991, when his creativity was freed from the censorship of the regime, Kadare did not hesitate to fervently promote theses that supported the Europeanness of the Albanianness.

Although he had been privileged by the regime for many years, the last years of the dictatorship found Kadare impatient for change and rapprochement with Europe. In 1987 he would write the short novel “Farewell to Evil”, which would be published in the book “Deceptive Dream” of 1991. There Kadare would artistically accuse the

communist regime of Eastern/Asian mentality with a tendency to hate Europe the mother continent of Albanians. It tells the story of a sultan's envoy who in a visit to Albania in the early twentieth century, talks to an Albanian governor about a concern he had regarding Albania. The envoy feared that Asia (the Ottoman Empire) was losing Albania to Europe, which was seeking back what belonged to it: "Christian Europe is trying to take Albania back. It is mine, – she says – give it back!" (Kadare, 1991: 111). Here, the idea that Albania belongs to Europe or the West and not Asia or the East, is clear.

What is also noticed is the labelling of Europe as Christian. This is an idea that is often encountered in Kadare's discourse. In a conversation with President Ramiz Alia in 1990, Kadare would tell the President that he expected that with the sanctioning of religious freedom in Albania, Albanians would be inclined to convert to Christianity because Christianity was linked to the national culture and pre-Ottoman nostalgia. Through conversion to Christianity, according to Kadare, the Albanian nation would make a major historical correction that would accelerate its unification with the mother continent, Europe (Kadare, 1990, as cited in Sulstarova, 2012: 350). Kadare, like many others, while imagining Europe as Christian, tends to think that a Christian Albania would mean a European Albania.

To return to the novel, there Kadare ascribes the Asian guest an oriental garment filled with hatred for Europe as the latter says: "I am a hardcore Asian, I have hated Europe and Europeans since I was young," (ibid: 109). In the book, the orientalist rhetoric stands out clearly as Europe is equated with women's beauty, modernity, free thought, eagerness for knowledge, democracy and human rights, while Asia on the other side is associated with despotism, slavery, drowsiness and ignorance. Through the words of the Asian guest Kadare tells us that Albania, despite being separated from Europe for a long period, has not forgotten Europe: "After four centuries, Albanians still do not love us [the Ottomans]," (ibid: 112). Understandably Albanians love Europe with which they have an indelible historical connection. The solution that the sultan's Asian envoy has to prevent Albania from leaving Asia and joining Europe is to appoint an imam as a leader:

An imam instead of a prince - this is what this country needs! ... When Aisa shrinks, becomes like a nucleus, it will take refuge all in his being. Let all our laws, slavery and minarets be destroyed, it's enough for them to be in that man's brain (ibid: 113).

In the eyes of the sultan's envoy, the future leader of Albania would be the one who, through his East/Asian and Islamic mentality, would make possible Albania's stay in Asia and its hatred for Europe. The guest leaves the Albanian governor the task of finding this leader while in the cradle. According to Enis Sulstarova, since the story takes place at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is not difficult to guess that it is about Enver Hoxha who was born in 1908, and who according to Kadare separated Albania for the second time from the mother continent.

Orientalist tones are easily discernible in Kadare's novel. For him, Asia is undesirable, it brings backwardness and misery, while Europe is the mother continent and returning to it is the return to the true roots. In another book of his he would describe the relationship between Albania and the East as follows:

With the East, Albania is full to its throat ... The East for Albania is worse than for the Poles, worse than for the Czechs, the Hungarians, because the East for the Albanians is always Soviet, Chinese and Ottoman ... in other words, the East is a misfortune, a disaster (Kadare, 1999, as cited in Sulstarova, 2013: 225).

The appeal he makes to the Albanian reader is the need to break away from the East, be it Islamic, Soviet or Chinese, and to return to the true roots, that is, to Europe. According to Kadare, for Albanians returning to Europe is a return to normalcy and to oneself. He expresses this idea in a 2006 essay where he stresses: "By returning to Europe, the Albanian people leave behind their unnatural state, to return to the normal state, complete, indivisible," (Kadare, 2006, as cited in Sulstarova, 2012: 329).

The majority of Kadare's novels and essays written in the post-communist period are fraught with Orientalist and Europhile rhetoric, full of arguments that depreciate the role of supposedly Eastern elements, especially Islam, and that support the European belongingness of the Albanian nation. However, he would not hesitate to summarize all his ideas on the issue of national identity in a single essay entitled "The European Identity of Albanians" published in 2006. Kadare would write this essay in the eve of the signing of the SAA, at a time when, according to him, ideas were circulating in the Albanian public sphere suggesting that Albanians do not have a fully European identity. With this essay, Kadare sought to particularly respond to another essay entitled "National Identity and Religious Awareness" written by another great Albanian academic from Kosovo, Rexhep Qosja, where it was argued that the Albanian nation was half European, half Eastern. This would be the starting point of a wide-ranging debate involving a large number of academics and political figures. The

debate had no winner, although it must be said that public opinion mostly sided with Kadare. Our interest will be focused on Kadare's first essay where he unfolds all his arguments on the question of identity.

For Kadare there is no place for doubts as Albania's papers are clear, Albanians have a pure European identity:

The Albanian people do not have a partial identity, pretended or hidden behind deceptive flattery. (...) Albanians are among the oldest peoples of the European continent, a founding people, just as the Albanian language is considered by all great linguists as one of the 10 or 12 founding languages of the continent (Kadare, 2006: 20).

According to Kadare, not only Albanians are in and belong to Europe, but they as a people are among the founding peoples of the European civilization along with their Indo-European language which is one of the oldest in Europe. European autochthony, or the quality of being the founding people of European civilization, adds to the Albanian nation a great dose of Europeanness, more than any other quality that produces Europeanness. In addition to autochthony and language, Kadare also asserts many other characteristics that according to him prove the European belongingness of the Albanian nation. He starts with geography:

Geography, the most stubborn thing in the world, is the first evidence of Albanian Europeanness. (...) The Albanian population, like the rest of the European continent, is white. Like the language, it [the population] is called, in the most favourable case, the descendants of the Illyrians, in the most unfavourable, of the Thracian-Illyrians (ibid: 20-21).

According to Kadare, Albania geographically is not even at the edge of Europe but almost in the middle of it, because between it and Asia there are at least three other countries, Greece, Macedonia and Bulgaria, not to mention European Turkey. Also, apart from the Indo-European origin of the population, Illyrian or Thracian-Illyrian, another characteristic that he ascribes Albanians is the Caucasian race, which as the historically dominant race on the continent supposedly contributes to Albania's Europeanness. Interesting is the reference to the case of the Illyrian-Thracian origin, which Kadare considers the most unfavourable in contrast to the pure Illyrian one that he considers the most favourable. This can be explained by the fact that the Illyrians, as the people who inhabited lands closer to the west, precisely the Western Balkans, are imagined as more European than the Thracians who were extended further east, in the Eastern Balkans in the modern-day Bulgaria. Another characteristic that the author mentions, is the political and economic life of medieval Albanian cities:

The history of Albania, like the whole peninsula [including ancient Greece], until the Ottoman occupation, is part of the European Mediterranean chronicle. At least three of its [Albania's] main cities, Durres, Shkodra and Berat, are about the same age as Rome. Economic and military ties, regulatory laws, city statutes, roads and seaports are of the same nature as those of the continent (ibid: 21).

According to Kadare, the economic and political life of the main Albanian cities, until the Ottoman occupation, were almost the same as that of the cities of the continent. This characteristic places pre-medieval and medieval Albania in the common European history as part of the chronicles of the Balkan Peninsula. Kadare also points out the Greco-Illyrian-Roman archaeological traces, theatres and amphitheatres that are found everywhere in Albania (ibid: 22). This feature is very important to establish a link between Albania and Europe since modern Europe considers the Greco-Roman heritage as one of its foundations. Like many other authors, in Kadare's rhetoric as well, is impossible not to find the national hero and at the same time the father of the Albanian nation, Skanderbeg:

George Kastrioti Skanderbeg, the Albanian national hero, whose mentioning was banned in Albania for five centuries due to Ottoman rule, first became a European myth (over a thousand historical and artistic works written about him), before Europe gives it back to Albania in the twentieth century (ibid).

Skanderbeg is often portrayed in the author's writings as a European hero fighting for the protection of the European Christian civilization from Ottoman invaders. But in addition to being presented in its most common form, as an *antemurale* of Europe, Skanderbeg in the above passage gets Europeanized even more, by being portrayed as a European figure who has belonged to Europe longer than it has to Albania, to which he returned only in the twentieth century. Understandably a nation with Skanderbeg as its father cannot be other than European. Additionally, the author would point out that the customary code along with the early Albanian literature, belong to the European culture:

The Albanian customary code, together with the epic oral poetry, especially the Epic of Kreshniks, is naturally part of the European epic realm. (...) Early Albanian literature, a bilingual literature, Albanian and Latin as in most European countries, developed at the same level [with the European one] for three centuries (ibid: 22-23).

In addition to customary code and literature, two other characteristics that according to the author are indicators of Albania's Europeanness, are the choice of the Latin alphabet and the flag inherited from Skanderbeg with the double-headed eagle in the middle, a Byzantine symbol that later became part of European flags, but was recognized by Europe in the twentieth century as a marker of the Albanian nation.

Throughout the essay, Kadare also touches on the issue of the Muslim majority of Albanian society. For him, this cannot be an obstacle to unification with Europe because the Albanian Muslim is a European Muslim who recognizes the historical values that the Albanian nation shares with the European civilization. Regarding the effects of Islam on the de-Europeanization of Albanians, Kadare claims that nations are not changed by conversions. According to Kadare, conversions to Islam have occurred in other peoples of Europe as well, such as the South Slavs, the Greeks or the Spaniards, and yet they remain European because Europe remained the first plinth of their immutable identities (ibid: 51-52). According to Kadare, losing and finding the mother continent does not make you less European than the others, but on the contrary more (ibid: 59).

The essay “European Identity of Albanians” would be only the most comprehensive summary of Kadare’s thoughts on the topic of European belongingness, because he has never hesitated to repeat or expand his arguments. In fact, Europhile and Orientalist rhetoric has accompanied Kadare’s writings to this day. It is also worth mentioning that his arguments find very wide support in the Albanian public, including prominent intellectual circles. Safe to say is that Ismail Kadare is widely known as one of the most ardent defenders of the European identity of Albanians.

#### **4.2.2. Aurel Plasari – Europe as Christianity**

Another well-known scholar and historian who has never hesitated to support the European belongingness of the Albanian nation, is Aurel Plasari. In the role of a historian, the method he uses to assert the linkage Albanian Nation–European Civilization, is by pointing out the elements that establish the European civilization in the first place, and then proving that the Albanian nation enjoys these elements as well.

In a 1995 essay entitled “Europe from the roots”, he quotes a series of foreign authors, concluding that European civilization was conceived from the synthesis of Roman institutionalism, Hellenic education and Christianity (Plasari, 2005). But if these three elements only laid the foundations of European civilization in the socio-political sense, the common European identity was born in opposition to the constitutive “Other” of Christian Europe, namely Islam (ibid: 13). We can summarize all of the above as follows: European civilization is socio-politically founded on Christianity and Greco-

Roman heritage, while European identity has Islam as its constitutive “Other”. The question that arises rightfully at this point is: “Does the Albanian nation enjoy all the above characteristics?” The answer according to Plasari is “yes”.

From the reading of Plasari’s essays it is clear that, first of all, the Albanians are the descendants of the Illyrians, who themselves are the descendants of the Pelasgians, and thus are among the oldest peoples in Europe. According to a research done by the author, despite the fact that throughout history the word Europe has referred to different geographical areas, the territories where Albanians are autochthonous (the western part of the Balkan Peninsula), are almost always included in the geographic marker ‘Europe’. The author stresses that, the concept of ‘Europe’, just like the Albanian people, originates in the Balkan Peninsula because initially has served as a reference for ancient continental Greece (ibid: 80). Secondly, Albanians as citizens of the Roman Empire, officially from 212 AD by decree of Emperor Caracalla, were among the first European inhabitants because every European is a *civis Romanus* [roman citizen] (Ernst Curtius, as cited in Plasari, 2005: 23). Just as it spread its authority, the Roman Empire also spread its cultural influence (Roman law and Hellenic education) in Illyria (proto-Albania). On this topic Plasari relies on the Albanian scholar Eqrem Çabej according to whom Albania has been oriented more towards the West than towards its eastern neighbours. The author goes on to quote the scholar as he claims that “Romania, Dalmatia, Albania and the Ionian Islands have been the most influenced areas by Western [Roman] culture,” (ibid: 30-31).

But as we said, in addition to the Roman and Hellenic factor, there are two other “European” elements that the Albanian nation must inherit in order to be crowned as a nation with European belongingness. The third element in the historical chronology, but supposedly most important in the European identification of the Albanian nation, is the Christian heritage. At this point for the author there is no doubt that the Albanians are among the first peoples to embrace the official religion of the Roman Empire, Christianity. Understandably, being among the first inhabitants to be converted, Albanians can also be considered as a fundamental people of spiritual Europe, a sphere in which they have been a part since the first days.

The last element is the constitutive ‘Other’. As previously stated, European identity is forged in confrontation with Islam, specifically in the fifteenth century when Islam

through the conquests of the Ottoman Empire was approaching the heart of Europe which was Rome. It is exactly during this century when the Albanian nation is supposedly conceived, under the political and military activity of the most prominent Albanian in history and at the same time the father of the nation, George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. The author reminds us that during the second half of the fifteenth century, Pope Pius II, also known as the first to refer to the Christians of the continent by the adjective “European”, would call on the Christian princes of Europe to unite against the Turko-Islamic threat (ibid: 15). According to Plasari, it was exactly during the tenure of Pope Pius II when the figure of Skanderbeg reached its culmination point within the history of Europe (ibid: 16). Plasari cites many chroniclers and political figures of the time, including Pius II himself, who refer to Skanderbeg as a European prince, the athlete of Christ, the defender of Christianity and Europe. Based on historical sources, he argues that Skanderbeg was chosen by the Pope to lead the crusade against the Ottomans, with Albania to be the launching point (ibid: 17-18). Through the words of Pius II, Plasari tells us that Albania and Albanians were considered part of Europe, with the latter also considered its first defenders. In another of his books, Plasari tells us that not only did Europe see Albanians as part of it, but Albanians themselves felt European: “Until two centuries after [the wars], they [Albanians] felt utterly European through their resistance and anti-Turkish wars,” (Plasari, 2014, as cited in Sulstarova, 2016: 117-118).

Skanderbeg meanwhile, is described as an Albanian prince who united the Albanian princes to defend Christianity against the threat of Islam. Since the union of the Albanian lands and princes that Skanderbeg achieved under the ideal of Christianity, supposedly serves as the founding act of the Albanian nation, if we follow the logic of Plasari, it is inferred that the Albanian identity just as the European one is born in confrontation with Islam. Both identities are born at the same time in opposition to the same constitutive ‘Other’, which means they are co-founded. Therefore, it can be said that the Albanian nation enjoys all the four characteristics that serve as the foundation of the Europe, thus proving its belongingness to it.

Despite the fact that the Albanian nation carries all the founding elements of Europe, according to Plasari, unfortunate historical episodes such as the Ottoman invasion or communism, have kept it away from its true roots. For Plasari, the end of the twentieth century provides Albania with the last opportunity to join Europe, the family where it

belongs, and this, according to him, should be done by avoiding the image of an Islamic country. Orientalist rhetoric accompanies the author's discourse in almost all his essays and books, which reconfirms once again the close connection between the ideas that support the European belongingness of the Albanian nation and Orientalism.

#### **4.2.3. Piro Misha – In Search of European roots**

Piro Misha, an honoured scholar, historian and at the same time director of the National Library of Albania, is another intellectual who has always been vocal regarding the issue of the European belongingness of the Albanian nation. Unlike Kadare and Plasari, Misha defends the Europeanness of the Albanian nation through a pessimistic rhetoric. In his 1997 book, "Looking for the roots ... or the return of Albanians in history", he argues that history reserved great catastrophes for the Albanians, namely the Ottoman invasion and communism, which have separated them from the mother continent Europe and caused deep fractures in their identity (Misha, 1997, as cited in Sulstarova, 2013: 254-256). According to him Albanians had to ensure their survival by adapting to another civilization, the Islamic one that came from the East. Misha reminds the reader that pre-Ottoman Albania did not differ much from the western part of Europe and was developing the same characteristics as Europe until the fifteenth century. The Ottoman invasion on the other hand, interrupted the normal 'European' development of Albania and put the latter in "a frightening tunnel of time lasting about a century and a half" from which the Albanians came out disfigured, Islamized and oriental (ibid: 256). From his words we are left to understand that the real face of Albanians is Catholic and European, while Islam and oriental characteristics are elements that disfigure them.

Orientalism is easily noticed in Misha's rhetoric, as he describes East, Islam and oriental elements as a disaster, while the supposed European characteristics as something normal for the Albanian nation. His Orientalism becomes even clearer in some other essays written after the events of 9/11. Responding to concerns raised by many analysts and intellectuals about whether the Islamic image is detrimental to Albania, Misha says:

Of course, this is a concern that has no reason to be hidden. A country like Albania has no interest in being perceived as an Islamic country. All the more so considering today's world context (Misha, 2003).

According to him, if Albania really wants to find its roots by joining Europe, then it must be cleansed of the Islamic image, not only because such an image complicates its path to Europe, but also because it is a distortion of reality:

Albania is not a Muslim country, but a country with three faiths and with no official state religion; (...) Albania today is a country that is taken as an example of religious coexistence; (...) Albanian Islam has nothing to do with cases of fanaticism that occur in some countries, because it is a European Islam and is an integral part of European civilization (ibid).

For Misha, there is no doubt that the Albanian nation belongs to the European civilization, and even has very deep tradition in this civilization. So strong is this European tradition of the Albanian nation that even Islam, submits and changes form under the effects of this tradition. The imported Islam, since it gets mixed with a nation rooted in the European civilization, is transformed into a European Islam and becomes an integral part of the European civilization. For Misha, the farther away from the image of an Islamic country, the closer Albania is to its true European roots.

#### **4.2.4. Elena Kocaqi – Albanians, the First Europeans**

Elena Kocaqi is one of the most prominent historians in Albania. Perhaps she is the historian who gets the most television time among all Albanian historians, during which she often defends with historical and anthropological arguments the Europeanness of the Albanian nation. Kocaqi is known for its theses that support the autochthony of the Albanian people in the Balkan Peninsula but also the fact that Albanian people and the Albanian language are the closest heirs to the oldest people and the oldest language in Europe, namely the Pelasgians and the Pelasgian language. In her 2007 book, “The Pelasgian-Illyrian Role in the Creation of European Nations and Languages”, commencing from data supposedly widely accepted by historians, that Albanians are descendants of the Illyrians and that the latter are descendants of the oldest population in Europe, the Pelasgians, Kocaqi defends two main theses:

1- The Pelasgian-Illyrian substrate is the origin of all the indigenous peoples in Europe, including the ancient peoples (Hellenes, Latins, Celts, etc.) and consequently the modern European peoples.

2- Albanian language is the most preserved descendant of the Pelasgian-Illyrian language, and consequently it is the mother language of all Indo-European languages spoken in Europe (Kocaqi, 2007: 2).

The basic premise of the book is that Albanians are the closest descendants of the Pelasgian-Illyrian people. She derives her arguments from researching the ancient writings of ancient historians and chroniclers, as well as from linguistic analyzes of ancient languages. According to her, the Pelasgian-Illyrian culture was the basic culture in Bronze Age Europe:

Archaeological evidence has shown that the Bronze Age culture in Europe was uniform. Tumulus burial mounds, double-edged axes and many archaeological materials are found everywhere in Europe. According to all historical, archaeological, linguistic and anthropological data, the population that created this bronze culture was of Pelasgian-Illyrian ethnicity (ibid).

The reason for this, according to the historian, is explained by the fact that the Pelasgian people (the ancestors of the Illyrians and Albanians) were the first people in Europe and their culture spread first (ibid: 3). Kocaqi accompanies this argument with a passage from the Bible where accordingly is spoken of “a people who sail all the seas of the world and who are related to a population of European race that founded the oldest European culture”, and which according to the historian refers the Pelasgian-Illyrian population. According to Kocaqi, “it would be more correct if the Greco-Roman civilization was called as one of the stages of development of the Pelasgian-Illyrian civilization, because it [Greco-Roman civilization] is nothing but the end of this millennial civilization,” (ibid: 2). This is a very important detail that the historian deliberately points out, and that helps her to establish the linkage Albanian Nation–European civilization, given that the modern European civilization is often considered a continuation of the ancient Greco-Roman civilization.

Regarding language, since all the indigenous peoples of Bronze Europe have their origin in the Pelasgian-Illyrian substratum, then the language spoken in Europe in the Bronze Age is the Pelasgian-Illyrian language with its dialects (ibid). According to Kocaqi, the language that most closely resembles the Pelasgian-Illyrian language is Albanian, which avoided assimilation from the invasive Eastern peoples such as Slavs or Huns, by hiding in the mountains where it was able to preserve its authentic form. The historian makes comparisons of some ancient languages and modern Albanian

trying to demonstrate that Albanian is in fact the mother of these languages. She claims that “the fact that Albanian is found in all European languages and in all languages called by scholars as Indo-European, shows that it is their mother tongue,” (ibid). In short, Kocaqi claims that not only are Albanians the first Europeans, but Albanian is also the first European language. According to her, evidence that Albanians are the most ‘European’ among the European peoples, is embedded in the history of the continent.

The historian over the years has shown that she is also politically minded, often making statements on political issues. In a 2014 article she would remind Europe that for it, Albania’s accession to the EU would be greatly beneficial, because Albania was a country with great economic and cultural potential. She would also not hesitate to remind Europe of the European belongingness of Albanians by stressing at the limits of the absurd the following:

Albanians are the oldest people in Europe and as such they are more European than any other people in Europe. According to mythology, Europe was the aunt of the Illyrians, the grandparents of the Albanians (Kocaqi, 2014).

Unlike the previous authors who endeavoured to find the Europeanness of the Albanian nation in supposedly shared European elements, such as Christianity, medieval Latin literature, the common struggle for the protection of Europe or even the Caucasian race, Kocaqi asserts this Europeanness with the fact that the Albanian people and language are the cornerstone of Europe. Her logic is simple, if the ancestors of the Albanians founded the European civilization, then by all means the Albanian nation is European, maybe the most European among all. In Kocaqi’s discourse, the Europeanness of the Albanian nation reaches its highest point.

#### **4.2.5. Moikom Zeqo – The European Roots of Albanian Nation and Statehood**

Moikom Zeqo is one of the most prominent Albanian scholars ever, authoring more than one hundred literary and scientific works. He is known as a writer, historian but also as a former member of Parliament. His 2015 article entitled “The Roots of Albanian Nation and Statehood”, provides historical background of the roots of the Albanian nation and state. He establishes the linkage Albanian Nation–European Civilization, by demonstrating the centuries-old involvement of Albania in European political and cultural dynamics.

For Zeqo, the Albanian nation originates with the Illyrians, whom Zeqo, relying on the studies of the German scholar Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, describes as the descendants of today's Albanians (Zeqo, 2015). The second element in which Zeqo dwells is the important role of medieval Albania as a terrain where the Hellenic, Latin and Illyrian traditions were intertwined and preserved. Understandably this adds to Albania's Europeanness since Greco-Latin tradition is often considered as the cradle of ancient European Mediterranean culture. The next element he touches upon are the traces of a cultural revolution that took place in medieval Albania in the XII-XIII centuries, which coincides with the cultural developments that took place in Europe in the same period and that triggered the European Renaissance a century later. This detail is mentioned to indicate that pre-Ottoman Albania was fully integrated in the European cultural sphere of the time. Even the fifteenth century Albanian state of George Kastrioti Skanderbeg, Zeqo calls it "a genuine state of the late Middle Ages and European Renaissance", as to show that pre-Ottoman Albania alongside cultural integration, was also fully integrated in the European political sphere (ibid). But unlike the political relations with Europe that were severed after the Ottoman invasion, the cultural ones were preserved and developed especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the Albanian culture "was elevated with European substance" (ibid). The nineteenth century was no exception in the inclusion of Albania in the European dynamics, as Albania was engulfed by a romantic nationalist movement like the whole Europe, which ended with the formation of the modern Albanian state.

Unlike other scholars before him, Zeqo does not prefer to equate Europe with Christianity at any time, excluding religion as an element that unites the Albanian nation and Europe. This may be due to the fact in the usual national narrative, the role of religion in the founding of the modern Albanian nation-state is almost completely ruled out. From what is understood from reading Zeqo's article is that the best way to assert the European roots of the Albanian nation is to compare the historical development dynamics of Europe and Albania over the centuries. The fact that throughout history, the same developmental tendencies that we find in Europe are also found in Albania around the same time, shows that Europe and Albania have always been interconnected and that the latter has always been part of the former.

### **4.3. European Belongingness of the Albanian Nation in History Textbooks**

This subchapter will address the presence in history textbooks of articulations that support the European belongingness of the Albanian nation. As stated in the introduction to Chapter Four, history textbooks have been selected for this analysis considering their role as ‘agents’ of the official image of the nation and its past. Also given the context they are written in, history textbooks make a very reliable source for exploring the dominant representations that a society has for its state.

In this research, we will focus on history textbooks used after 2015, the year in which the pre-university education reform drafted during 2013-2014 enters into implementation. In order to enable comprehensive comparison, not only between different school grades but also between publishing houses, books from several different publishing houses such as Filara, Albas, Ideart and Irisoft have been selected. Since all publishing houses follow similar curriculums in compiling books for each grade, the transition from one publishing house to another does not lose our research coherence, since different books of the same grade always treat the same thematic and period. To conduct our research, in addition to the direct analysis of some textbooks of recent years, we will also rely on existing books and articles that explore the presence of the idea of Europe in history textbooks over the years.

#### **4.3.1. History Textbooks’ Eurocentric Approach**

Albanian students start studying history in the fourth grade and then continue studying it in every school year until the twelfth grade. The thematic of history textbooks, although changing from year to year, can be categorized into two main groups: world history and national history. In the textbooks where world history is treated, the main periods that are discussed are prehistory, antiquity, the Middle Ages, early modernity and the contemporary period of the twentieth century. The first thing that is noticed in all the books that deal with world history is their Eurocentric approach. In almost all textbooks used after 1991 in which world history is treated, the focus is on the historical developments of Europe while the history of other regions of the world is touched upon very little or not at all. This approach is also noticed in the books that deal with the national history, where the history of Albanians is treated in the context

of the history of European peoples. Usually, the main argument that builds the linkage between Europe and Albanians is their Illyrian origin. The Illyrian–Albanian linkage serves as a bridge between the Albanians of today and the European civilization, with the latter that is supposedly conceived in the Mediterranean antiquity integral part of which were also the Illyrians.

The first book to be reviewed is the history textbook for the fifth grade of Filara publishing house that deals with world history. After discussing the main concepts in the discipline of history in the first chapter, and briefly touching on the prehistoric period in the second chapter, the third and the last chapter that treats antiquity is entitled “Ancient civilizations and the foundation of European society” (Xhemalaj, 2019: 45). The title of the chapter, apart from being Eurocentric, also creates the impression that all ancient civilizations culminated in the creation of the European civilization. In this chapter, after a very brief mentioning of the ancient civilizations in Central America, Asia and the Oriental Mediterranean, the focus is put on the European Mediterranean civilizations, namely the Greek, Roman and Illyrian civilizations. Even when talking about the achievements of antiquity, the book mainly mentions those of European peoples, especially the Greeks.

In the history textbook for the sixth grade of Albas publishing house, in addition to antiquity, the medieval period is discussed as well. Even in this book, antiquity is dominated by topics about Greeks, Romans, Macedonians and Illyrians, while out of fifteen topics divided into two chapters, only four of them are dedicated to ‘non-European’ civilizations, namely the Fertile Crescent ancient civilizations. As for the medieval period which is divided into three chapters with twenty topics in total, only two topics are dedicated to the ‘non-European’ world, namely the Arab civilization and the Ottoman Empire, while the rest is dedicated to medieval Europe in the framework of which medieval Albania is discussed as well.

The history textbook for the seventh grade published by Irisoft, deals with the period from the European Renaissance to the beginning of the twentieth century. In this book the Eurocentric approach is even more pronounced, as in over sixty topics only one deals with the activity of a ‘non-European’ state, namely the Ottoman Empire, which is also treated in relation to Europe on the topic “The Ottoman Empire and Europe” (Gani, et. al: 2016: 32). The rest of the topics deal with developments taking place in

Europe – including Albania – and in America which is seen as an extension of the European civilization. The Ottoman Empire is revisited in five other topics where its disintegration is discussed, but only in the context of the creation of independent states in the Balkans, namely Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Even though the process of disintegration of the Empire was extended to its territories outside Europe such as North Africa or the Middle East, these developments are not discussed. Like the Ottoman Empire, other regions outside Europe appear in the narrative only in relation to Europe, mainly in the context of geographical discoveries and colonization.

The history textbook for the eighth grade published by Filara, begins with the First World War and ends with the developments of the early twenty first century. In this book, European hegemony is complete, as there is no topic that deals with developments outside Europe. The novelty of this book is that it has a whole chapter that deals with the history of the European Union.

The latest in the series of the books that deal with world history, is the history textbook for the tenth grade, in our case from Ideart publishing house. The period treated in the book begins with antiquity and ends with the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Interestingly, unlike other books that included in antiquity also ‘non-European’ civilizations such as Mesopotamia and Egypt, this book begins and closes antiquity with the Greco-Roman civilization divided into seven topics. Meanwhile, the tendency to ‘exclude’ from history regions outside Europe is retained in this book as well. The Americas, Asia, Africa and Australia are again discussed here as part of the colonization processes. Again, the only non-European state that manages to secure a place in the European developments is the Ottoman Empire which, just like in the book for the seventh grade, is treated in relation to Europe and is described as “the model for the dissolution of a multinational empire” (Filo & Thanati, 2020: 86).

According to research conducted by Enis Sulstarova, the Eurocentric approach is present in almost every variant of history textbook used in the post-communist period. One of the authors of these texts, asked exactly on this issue, would justify this approach by arguing that Albania is part of Europe, saying: “The history of the Albanian people has been closely linked to the history of the peoples of Europe,

therefore the main place in the history textbooks is reserved for the European states and USA,” (Mezini, 1999, as cited in Sulstarova, 2016: 99).

Eurocentrism in history textbooks shows that the compilers of these textbooks are no exception in imagining Albania and the Albanian nation as part of the European civilization. As we will see in the next subchapter where textbooks with national history as the main topic will be explored, ideas that support the European belongingness of the Albanian nation are quite common.

#### **4.3.2. Albanians and Europe Along the History**

The usual narrative on the Albanian nation in history textbooks, follows the same chronology as that of world history. It usually begins with a brief presentation of the prehistory of Albanian territories based on archaeological findings, then continues with antiquity, the Middle Ages, the national Renaissance of the nineteenth century and the history of the modern Albanian state of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Throughout this chronological chain, the Albanian people are described as descendants of the Illyrians and therefore as an ancient indigenous people, autochthonous to the territories they inhabit today. Based on this indigeneity on European soil, the history of the Albanian nation is presented as part of the history of Europe. Here is how the textbook for the fourth grade summarizes the history of the Albanians:

We the Albanians of today are the descendants of the people who lived since the Stone Age in the lands where we live today. We call these people Illyrians, because that is how they were called in ancient times. (...) This means that we Albanians are among the oldest populations in Europe. Work tools, art, housing, traditions, etc. prove that they [Albanians] have been developed just like other inhabitants of Europe (Dautaj & Dollia, 2007, as cited in Sulstarova, 2016: 112).

Two history textbooks will be analysed below, the first is the textbook for the ninth grade of the Albas publishing house, the second is the textbook for the eleventh grade of the Filara publishing house. In the history textbook for the ninth grade, the first chapter is entitled “The ancestors of the Albanians in antiquity”, and one of the two topics in this chapter is entitled “Illyrian Civilization” (Dërguti, et al. 2019: 7-11). The selection of the title is not accidental, but it has the function of establishing the Illyrian–Albanian connection immediately. Chapter two is entirely dedicated to Illyrian civilization. The introduction to the book for the eleventh grade is almost identical, with the only difference being that two small chapters are replaced by a single one,

also entitled “The ancestors of the Albanians in antiquity” (Nathanaili, et. al. 2020: 3). In both books the Illyrian civilization is described as being at the same level of development as the Greek and Roman civilizations. As facts for this are used the historical data that show that “the Illyrians built contemporary cities with architecture of the time,” (Dërguti, et al. 2019: 12).

Regarding the origin of the Illyrians, two theories are mentioned, the first that of autochthony which is the most acceptable, the second that of the northern or central European origin. In another version for the eleventh grade published by Ideart, it is said that the Illyrians may have originated in the Alps of Europe because their culture showed similarities with the culture of Hallstatt (Filo, et. al, 2019). In both cases the Europeanness of the Illyrians is not discussed, they are either autochthonous in the Balkans or has arrived in the Balkans from regions such as Northern or Central Europe, regions widely accepted as the cradle of various European indigenous cultures.

As arguments used for proving the continuation from the Illyrians to the medieval Albanians are the reconstruction of Illyrian settlements by the medieval Albanians, similar handicraft elements including clothing, ornaments and tools, the use of the same toponyms and the written sources from the neighbouring peoples, Greeks, Romans and Slavs, who make no distinction when referring to the Illyrians in the early Middle Ages and the Albanians in the High Middle Ages. According to the books, the medieval period from the fall of the Roman Empire to the arrival of the Ottomans, finds the already Christianized Albanians as an integral part of the Byzantine Empire. The Albanian cultural, political and economic life of this period is described as being “like everywhere in Europe”.

The following period in the historical chronology is the Ottoman invasion and the Albanian resistance which includes the most famous episode in Albanian national history, the uprising led by Skanderbeg and the political and military unification of the Albanians. According to Enis Sulstarova, throughout the history of the Albanians, the historical period to which the ‘European’ meaning is most attributed, is precisely that of the uprising led by Skanderbeg in the fifteenth century (Sulstarova, 2016: 113). To this period, in the textbook for the ninth grade, two topics are dedicated, while in the textbook for the eleventh grade, three. In one of the topics, there is always room for a sub-topic which treats Skanderbeg’s diplomatic relations. Diplomatic relations are

discussed exclusively in relation to Europe. There are even cases such as the textbook for the eleventh grade of the publishing house Ideart, in which this sub-topic is entitled “Skanderbeg’s relations with Europe” and is accompanied by a map of Europe in the centre of which is the city of Kruja – the centre of Skanderbeg’s state – connected to various European cities by a thread that originates in Kruja and ends in the European city (Filo, et. al, 2019). In Filara’s textbook, in this sub-topic is stated that “Skanderbeg intensified as never before the political-military, economic, religious and cultural ties [of Albania] with Europe,” (Nathanaili, et al. 2020: 63). This display is intended to reinforce the idea that there are old stable ties between Albanians and Europe and that Albanians in the time of Skanderbeg were a European people very important for the fate of Europe.

In addition to the sub-topic that discusses the diplomatic relations, in the textbooks for the eleventh grade, there is space for another sub-topic that talks about the importance of the Skanderbeg era. This sub-topic unfolds the usual idea of the role of Skanderbeg as Europe’s *antemurale*. It says that Skanderbeg and the Albanians not only became a symbol of European resistance to the Ottoman invasion, but also made a great contribution to the protection and advancement of European civilization.

After the period of Skanderbeg comes the period of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the period of the Roman Empire or the Byzantine Empire, the period of the Ottoman rule in Albania is generally presented as a difficult period, during which the Albanian cultural life suffered a regression due to the prohibition of the normal development of Albanian education and culture by the Ottoman administration. The textbook for the ninth grade, states that “the establishment of Ottoman rule was accompanied by the mass departure of Albanians [towards Europe], who did not accept the new reality” (Dërguti, etc., 2019: 64). This gives the impression that ‘European’ Albanians did not accept a non-European (Islamic) reality and chose to continue their life where they felt more like themselves, in Europe. Also, the effects caused by this rule, apart from the Islamization of the population, are hardly mentioned at all. It is different, for example, with the effects brought by Roman rule in Illyria, to which a whole topic is dedicated in Filara’s textbook for the eleventh grade. There, among the effects of Roman rule are the development of infrastructure, the development of culture and architecture with Roman motifs as well as the spread of the Christianity, which is associated with the construction of religious buildings with “high architectural values”. Even when

discussing the Albanian literature of the post-invasion period, what is mainly mentioned is the work of the Catholic clergy and clerical authors such as Gjon Buzuku, Marin Barleti, Frang Bardhi, Lekë Matrënga, etc.

The Ottoman period, although more documented than the previous periods, is quickly passed in the history books precisely because it is considered a dark period. This period is mainly presented through the prism of resistance, starting from the uprising of Skanderbeg, continuing with the secessionist efforts of the Ioannina and Shkodra pashaliks, and ending with the national movement that culminates with the declaration of independence. In our judgement, this way of presenting history, although it adheres to scientific rules, displays a flavour of Orientalism.

Another period which in history textbooks is accompanied by interpretations of the Albanian nation's ties with Europe is the post-communist period. The Albanian transition is described as a path towards European integration that ends with Albania's admission to the "European family". In a textbook of 2010, Euro-Atlantic integration is described as follows:

The aspiration of Albanians for Euro-Atlantic integration is primeval. From the first moments of the Albanian National Renaissance the motto of the Renaissance was to build a nation with a western spirit and characteristics. The orientation of the Albanian political elites and administration during the twentieth century has been towards the West. The only exception is the period of communism when Enver Hoxha, for his narrow political interests, allied himself with the communist bloc of the East. This period was perceived in the consciousness of the Albanian people as a historic accident. Therefore, immediately after the collapse of communist regime, political forces tried to orient it [Albania] towards the West (Meta, Degzhiu & Lleshi, 2010, as cited in Sulstarova, 2016: 121).

In the above passage we are left to understand that the orientation of Albania towards Europe is natural, someone else can say even innate. The periods that separate Albania from Europe are considered as accidents even by the people themselves, who appear to have a pure pro-European conscience. This passage, together with many others discussed above, show us that the official narrative on the Albanian nation is fraught with elements of the idea of Europe.

#### **4.4. Conclusions**

After exploring the Albanian public discourse in three main branches, namely the discourse of political elites and the discourse of intellectual elites, plus the discourse

of history textbooks, we can confidently infer the following: In regards to Albania's representations in relation to Europe, the Albanian public discourse is dominated by articulations – i.e., the form in which representations unfold – that assert the European belongingness of Albania. The most common representations are those that portray Albanians as a European people, the Albanian nation as having European roots and Albania as rightfully belonging to the European family.

The European belongingness of the Albanian nation is mainly asserted through an essentialist perspective, which with the exception of the official narrative of history textbooks, dominates any other type of narrative and discussion on the European belongingness of the nation, both in the sphere of political and intellectual elites. According to this perspective, what determines the European belongingness of the Albanian nation, is its immutable European essence, an essence which understandably the Albanian nation shares with Europe. This essence is European because it contains elements that are supposedly 'European', and is immutable because these elements are inalienable since they are ingrained in the composition of the Albanian nation. Some of the most common elements mentioned as part of this essence are the autochthony – through Pelasgian-Illyrian descent – of Albanians in European soil, the Indo-European origin of the Albanian language, the Greco-Roman heritage, the Christian heritage, Skanderbeg's contribution in defence of the European civilization by Asian Turks etc.

However, despite the European essence it carries, Albania today finds itself outside of the modern European 'family'. According to the dominant narrative, the Albanian nation is one of the founding nations of the European civilization and has been part of this civilization for centuries until it was tragically separated from it. The causes for this separation, have been the disasters of the past, namely the Ottoman invasion and communism. If it was not for these misfortunes, it is imagined that today's Albania would be at the same level of development as modern Europe, therefore it would have long been part of the family.

From such a perspective, the post-communist period is seen as a period of great corrections, during which Albanians will return to their roots. This is why Albania's post-communist foreign policy has been accompanied by the rhetoric of "returning to Europe", according to which the European integration is something natural, to which

the country is entitled on the basis of its belongingness. Europe thus becomes a destination foreordained by Albania's belongingness (Sulstarova, 2012: 426).

Another feature that is noticed in the Albanian public discourse, both in the sphere of political and intellectual elites, is the presence of Orientalism. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Orientalism in the Albanian public discourse takes the form of articulations that amplify the 'European' elements and belittle the 'non-European' elements, especially the Ottoman heritage, oriental cultural trends and Islam. These elements are presented as undesirable and threatening to the Europeanness of the Albanian nation. The period of the Ottoman invasion is described as a period of darkness, calamities and captivity, which caused backwardness and misery in Albania. Meanwhile, the Islamic religion, together with the oriental cultural trends, are described as distorters of the European image of Albania. In the prism of Orientalism, Albanians are imagined as fleeing from the East (ibid: 428).

As for history textbooks, there Europhile and Orientalist tendencies appear in subtle forms. The first thing that is noticed in these books is a Eurocentric approach, which focuses the study of world history on the study of the history of the European civilization, which on its part is presented as the cradle of modern world civilization. Other civilizations become part of the narrative only in relation to European civilization, after coming into contact with the latter mainly in the context of colonisation processes.

On the other hand, the history of the Albanian nation is treated in the context of the history of Europe. Albanians, through their Illyrian descent, are described as an indigenous people in the European soil, who until the Ottoman invasion, were part of European political and cultural life on an equal footing with other western peoples. As in the discourse of political and intellectual elites, so in history textbooks, the period of the Ottoman Empire is described as a dark period, during which Albanians could not live according to their culture and inclinations, which prompted many of them to migrate en masse to Europe where they felt more like themselves. At this point Orientalism is discerned in the unequal treatment of the Ottoman period in relation to other Roman or Byzantine periods, which are generally associated with development, unlike the Ottoman one which is associated with backwardness. Even the modern period of the 20th-21st centuries does not escape Europhile interpretations, as the

communist period is described as an accident while the post-communist period – which is associated with the processes of European integration – as a return to normalcy.

As a conclusion we can say that the wide presence of the articulations in question in the three explored branches of the public discourse and their steadfastness and constancy over time, it convinces us of the fact that during the post-communist period, Albania has identified itself as a nation that belongs to Europe/European civilization.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the introductory chapter, the main motive for preparing this paper is the need to expand the constructivist branch in the field of Albanian foreign policy analysis, specifically in the aspect of Albania-Europe relations, considering that this field is dominated by essentially materialist approaches such as neorealism and neoliberalism, which on their part show shortcomings and inability to fully explain Albania's foreign policy. Given that materialist approaches show shortcomings, it was seen as reasonable to explain Albania's foreign policy choice in relation to Europe – i.e., its efforts to join the EU – using an identity-based approach, namely social constructivism.

In order to apply the approach of social constructivism – according to which a foreign policy choice is determined by the way a state identifies itself in relation to other states – in explaining this choice, we needed to answer the question: How does Albania identify itself in relation to Europe? To answer this question, we had to formulate a basic assumption<sup>19</sup>, which was empirically tested through an auxiliary implication<sup>20</sup> deduced from it, which in turn was empirically tested by exploring the main branches of post-communist Albanian public discourse, to discover the dominant representations – in the form of articulations – of Albania in relation to Europe. This exploration was conducted in the main spaces where the public discourse unfolds, such as the television media, online media, newspapers, books, essays, novels, scholarly articles, government programs, party platforms etc.

After exploring the public discourse, we ascertained that, as far as Albania's representation in relation to Europe is concerned, the articulations that assert the European belongingness of Albania and the Albanian nation, are by far dominant over the articulations that assert another kind of belongingness or that simply oppose this belongingness. The most frequent articulations – and accordingly the most dominant

---

<sup>19</sup> see chapter one, subchapter 'Methodology'

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

representations – in this regard, were those that described the Albanian nation as part of the European civilization, Albanians as a people with European roots and Albania as a country with a natural right to be part of the European family or the EU.

Since the above articulations together with other similar articulations, served as indicators for the empirical testing of the implication deduced from the basic assumption, then we can affirm that after the empirical testing, the implication was proven correct. Since the empirical testing of the implication was only in function of the empirical testing of the basic assumption, its correct proving automatically means that the basic assumption has stood the empirical test as well and therefore it holds true. The verification of the basic assumption, or in other words the hypothesis, answers the main question and solves the equation of this paper. Accordingly, we ascertain that in relation to Europe, Albania identifies itself as a nation that belongs to it, and as a matter of course it seeks to become part of the EU considering that the latter functions as the practical realization of Europe. Europe and the European Union on the other hand are imagined respectively as the mother continent and as the family of Albania.

From the analysis of the Albanian public discourse, we ascertained that the idea of Europe – i.e., the meanings attributed to it – has served as a basis on which the imaginations and representations of Albania are built. This is predictable if we rely on the premise that domestically Albania is imagined as Europe or European, which in turn would mean that its representations as such, are influenced by the way Europe is imagined in the first place. In other words, we can say that the representations of Albania as Europe are shaped by the meanings that are given to Europe. For example, when Europe is ascribed with a Christian image, then the representations are built in a way that describe Albania as having Christian roots. When Europe is imagined through its the contradiction with the East, then the representations are built in a way that describe Albania through the figure of Skanderbeg. The same happens with other elements of the idea of Europe that find a place in the imaginations of Albania, such as the Indo-European origin of the people, the Indo-European origin of the language, the Greco-Roman heritage, etc. Understandably, those European elements that cannot be associated with the Albanian nation, do not become part of its representations.

In conclusion we can say that the idea of Europe has shaped Albania's modern representations of itself. This idea has served as a foundation on which post-communist Albania's domestic identities are built. Given its role in the construction of the country's domestic identities, we can infer that the idea of Europe has heavily influenced Albania's post-communist foreign policy choice.



## REFERENCES

- Abazi, Enika. 'Albania in Europe: Perspectives and Challenges'. *Avrasya Dosyası*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2008, pp. 229–52.
- Abrahams, Fred. *Modern Albania: From Dictatorship to Democracy in Europe*. New York University Press, 2015.
- Alexandrov, Maxym. 'The Concept of State Identity in International Relations: A Theoretical Analysis'. *Journal of International Development and Cooperation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2003, pp. 33–46.
- Anëtarësimi i Shqipërisë në OSBE në 1991 (Albania's accession in OSCE in 1991)*, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs website; <<http://www.ambasadat.gov.al/osbe/sq/an%C3%ABtar%C3%ABsimi-i-shqip%C3%ABris%C3%AB-n%C3%AB-osbe-n%C3%AB-1991>>
- Albania // 47 States, one Europe*, Council of Europe website; <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/albania#:~:text=Albania%20became%20the%2035th,Europe%20on%2013%20July%201995>>
- Balla, Andi, et al. *Albania and Serbia: Perceptions and Reality*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2017.
- Barbullushi, Odeta. *The Politics of 'Euro-Atlantic Orientation': Political Identities, Interests and Albanian Foreign Policy 1992-2007*. University of Birmingham, 2009.
- Baumeister, Roy F. 'Identity, Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem'. *Handbook of Personality Psychology*, Elsevier, 1997, pp. 681–710. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012134645-4/50027-5>.
- . 'Self and Identity: A Brief Overview of What They Are, What They Do, and How They Work: Self and Identity'. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol. 1234, no. 1, Oct. 2011, pp. 48–55. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-6632.2011.06224.x>.
- Bechev, Dimitar. *Constructing South East Europe: The Politics of Regional Identity in The Balkans*. European Studies Center, University of Oxford, 2006.
- Behravesht, Maysam. 'Constructivism: An Introduction'. *E-International Relations*, 3 Feb. 2011, <https://www.e-ir.info/2011/02/03/constructivism-an-introduction/>.

- . 'The Relevance of Constructivism to Foreign Policy Analysis'. *E-International Relations*, 17 July 2011, <https://www.e-ir.info/2011/07/17/the-relevance-of-constructivism-to-foreign-policy-analysis/>.
- Beka, Rezart. 'Islamophobia in Contemporary Albanian Public Discourse'. *Islamophobia in Muslim Majority Societies*, 1 [edition], Routledge, 2019, pp. 45–59.
- Berisha, Sali. 'Nënshkruhet në Luksemburg Marrëveshja e Stabilizim-Asociimit midis Shqipërisë dhe BE (Stabilization and Association Agreement between Albania and the EU Signed in Luxembourg)'. *Atdheu ynë është Shqipëria*, 13 June 2006, <http://gjuhashqipe.blogspot.com/2006/06/nnshkruhet-n-luksemburg-marrveshja-e.html>.
- . 'Programi i Qeverisë Sali Berisha, 2005 – 2009 (Sali Berisha Government Program, 2005 - 2009)'. *ShtetiWeb*, 2005, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/13/programi-qeverise-sali-berisha-2005-2009/>.
- . 'Programi i Qeverisë Sali Berisha, 2009 – 2013 (Sali Berisha Government Program, 2009 - 2013)'. *ShtetiWeb*, 2009, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/13/programi-qeverise-berisha-2005-2009/>.
- Beshku, Klodiana. *The European Integration and The Albanian Foreign Policy in a Twofold Dimension*. Tirana University, 2016.
- Beshku, Klodiana, and Dhurata Milori. *Shtetformimi, Demokratizimi dhe Europianizimi i Ballkanit Perëndimor (State Formation, Democratization and Europeanization of the Western Balkans)*. Edlora, 2018.
- Biberaj, Elez. *Albania in Transition: The Rocky Road to Democracy*. Westview Press, 1998.
- Bideleux, Robert, and Ian Jeffries. *The Balkans: A Post-Communist History*. Routledge, 2007.
- Bogdani, Mirela, and John Loughlin. *Albania and the European Union: The Tumultuous Journey towards Integration and Accession*. Tauris, 2007.
- Bon, Nataša G. 'Neither the Balkans nor Europe: The "Where" and "When" in Present-Day Albania'. *Bulletin of the Slovene Ethnological Society*, vol. 55, no. 1/2, pp. 201–10.
- Börzel, Tanja A., and Thomas Risse. 'When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and Domestic Change'. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2002. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.302768>.
- Brisku, Adrian. *Bittersweet Europe: Albanian and Georgian Discourses on Europe, 1878-2008*. Berghahn Books, 2013.

- . 'Contradictory Inclinations, The Role of "Europe" in Albanian Nationalist Discourse'. *Theorising Social Change in Post-Soviet Countries*, Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 87–109.
- . 'Internalizing Europe'. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, vol. 1, no. 2, Sept. 2009, pp. 97–124. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2009.010205>.
- . 'Islamization Reconsidered: Islam and Muslim Albanians in Albanian History Texts (1973-2006)'. *Narrating Islam: Interpretation of the Muslim World in European Texts*, Tauris Publisher, 2010, pp. 168–93.
- . 'Occidentalizing the Past and Orientalizing the Present: Ismail Kadare's and President Moisiu's "European" Albanian Identity'. *Albanian Journal of Politics*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2006, pp. 82–103.
- . 'Renegotiating the Empire, Forging the Nation-State: The Albanian Case through the Political Economic Thought of Ismail Qemali, Fan Noli, and Luigj Gurakuqi, c. 1890–1920s'. *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 48, no. 1, Jan. 2020, pp. 158–74. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.52>.
- Bushati, Ditmir. 'Reflections on the Past and the Present in Albanian Foreign Policy'. *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 3, Jan. 2014, pp. 91–94. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2014.11446606>.
- Cela, Alba, et al. *Albania and Greece: Understanding and Explaining*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2018.
- . *Albania-Serbia Relations in the Eyes of the Albanian Public 2015*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2015.
- Cela, Alba, and Sashenka Lleshaj. *Marrëdhëniet Shqipëri-Greqi në sytë e publikut shqiptar – Perceptime 2013 (Albania-Greece Relations in the Eyes of the Albanian Public - Perceptions 2013)*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2014.
- CEFTA Parties*, CEFTA website; <<https://cefta.int/cefta-parties-2/>>
- Checkel, Jeffrey T. 'Constructivist Approaches to European Integration'. *ARENA Centre for European Studies*, Feb. 2006, [https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2006/wp06\\_06.pdf](https://www.sv.uio.no/arena/english/research/publications/arena-working-papers/2001-2010/2006/wp06_06.pdf).
- . 'International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework'. *International Organization*, vol. 59, no. 04, Oct. 2005. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050289>.
- . 'Social Constructivisms in Global and European Politics: A Review Essay'. *Review of International Studies*, edited by Ted Hopf et al., vol. 30, no. 2, 2004, pp. 229–44.

- . 'The Constructive Turn in International Relations Theory'. *World Politics*, vol. 50, no. 2, Jan. 1998, pp. 324–48. *DOI.org* (*Crossref*), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100008133>.
- Çipuri, Ramadan, and Albi Koçibelli. 'Albanian Attitudes toward European Integration'. *European Studies Journal*, vol. 1, May 2010, pp. 39–52.
- Copeland, Dale C. 'The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism: A Review Essay'. *International Security*, vol. 25, no. 2, Oct. 2000, pp. 187–212. *DOI.org* (*Crossref*), <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228800560499>.
- Delanty, Gerard. *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*. St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Dërguti, Menduh, et al. *Histori 9 (History 9)*. Albas, 2019.
- Dërguti, Menduh, and Tomi Treska. *Histori 6 (History 6)*. Albas, 2020.
- . *Histori 8 (History 8)*. Albas, 2018.
- Dervishi, Glevin. 'Greek-Albanian Relations, the Past, the Present and the Future'. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 3, May 2019, pp. 24–35. *DOI.org* (*Crossref*), <https://doi.org/10.2478/mjss-2019-0038>.
- Džihčić, Vedran, et al. *Overcoming the Democratisation Deficit in the Western Balkans: A Road to (No)Where?* Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Belgrade, 2018.
- Filo, Llambro, et al. *Historia 11 (History 11)*. Ideart, 2019.
- Filo, Llambro, and Mamica Thanati. *Historia 10 (History 10)*. Ideart, 2020.
- Frasheri, Ermal. *Of Knights and Squires: European Union and the Modernization of Albania*. Center for International Development, at Harvard University, Mar. 2016.
- Gani, Agron, et al. *Historia 7 (History 7)*. Irisoft, 2016.
- Historiku i marrëdhënieve NATO-Shqipëri (History of NATO-Albania relations)*, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs website; <<https://www.mod.gov.al/index.php/politikat-e-sigurise/marredheniet-me/marredheniet-me-nato/31-historiku-i-marredhenieve-nato-shqiperi>>
- Historiku, Marrëdhëniet Shqipëri-BE (Background, Albania-EU Relations)*, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs website; <<http://integrimi-ne-be.puneteshqiptare.gov.al/anetaresimi-ne-be/historiku/>>
- Hopf, Ted. 'Constructivism All the Way Down'. *International Politics*, vol. 37, no. 3, Sept. 2000, pp. 369–78. *DOI.org* (*Crossref*), <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ip.8890520>.
- . *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999*. Cornell University Press, 2002.

- Ichijo, Atsuko. *Scottish Nationalism and the Idea of Europe*. Frank Cass, 2004. *Open WorldCat*, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203337806>.
- Jung, Hoyoon. 'The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present'. *SAGE Open*, vol. 9, no. 1, Jan. 2019, p. 215824401983270. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019832703>.
- Kadare, Ismail. *Ëndërr Mashtruese (Deceptive Dream)*. Naim Frashëri, 1991.
- . *Identiteti European i Shqiptarëve (Albanian's European Identity)*. Onufri, 2006.
- Kajsiu, Blendi, et al. *Albania and European Union: Perceptions and Realities*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2003.
- Katsikas, Stefanos. 'An Overview of Albania's Foreign Policy-Making in the 1980s'. *Slovo*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2004, pp. 91–106.
- Katzenstein, Peter J. and Social Science Research Council (U.S.), editors. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. Columbia Univ. Press, 1996.
- Kocaqi, Elena. 'Çfarë mund të përfitojë Europa nga Shqipëria? (What Can Europe Gain from Albania?)'. *BalkanWeb*, 19 Dec. 2014, <https://www.balkanweb.com/cfare-mund-te-perfitoje-europa-nga-shqiperia/>.
- . *Roli Pellazgo-Ilir në krijimin e kombeve dhe gjuhëve evropiane (The Pelasgian-Illyrian Role in the Creation of European Nations and Languages)*. Dajti 2000, 2007.
- Kosho, Joana. *Zgjerimi i Bashkimit Evropian dhe sfidat e Shqipërisë në kuadër të anëtarësimit (Enlargement of The European Union and the Challenges of Albania in the Framework of Membership)*. Tirana University, 2015.
- Koslowski, Rey, and Friedrich V. Kratochwil. 'Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System'. *International Organization*, vol. 48, no. 2, 1994, pp. 215–47. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028174>.
- Lani, Remzi, and Fabian Schmidt. 'Albanian Foreign Policy between Geography and History'. *The International Spectator*, vol. 33, no. 2, Apr. 1998, pp. 79–103. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729808456809>.
- Meksi, Aleksandër. 'Programi i Qeverisë Aleksandër Meksi 2, 11 Korrik 1996 – 10 Mars 1997 (Alexander Meksi 2nd Government Program, 11 July 1996 - 10 March 1997)'. *ShtetiWeb*, 1996, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/14/programi-qeverise-aleksander-meksi-2-11-korrik-1996-10-mars-1997/>.
- . 'Programi i Qeverisë Aleksandër Meksi 1992-1996 (Alexander Meksi Government Program 1992-1996)'. *ShtetiWeb*, 1992, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/13/programi-qeverise-aleksander-meksi-1992-1996/>.

*Marrëdhëniet dypalëshe (Bilateral Relations)*, Embassy of the Republic of Albania in Serbia website;  
<<http://www.ambasadat.gov.al/serbia/sq/marr%C3%ABdheniet-dypal%C3%ABshe>>

Mengshu, Zhan. 'A Brief Overview of Alexander Wendt's Constructivism'. *E-International Relations*, 19 May 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/05/19/a-brief-overview-of-alexander-wendts-constructivism/>.

Meta, Ilir. 'Programi i Qeverisë Ilir Meta 2, 6 Shtator 2001- 29 Janar 2002 (Ilir Meta 2nd Government Program, 6 September 2001- 29 January 2002)'. *ShtetiWeb*, 2001, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/14/programi-qeverise-ilir-meta-2-6-shtator-2001-29-janar-2002/>.

---. 'Programi i Qeverisë Ilir Meta, 28 Tetor 1999 – 6 Shtator 2001 (Ilir Meta Government Program, 28 October 1999 - 6 September 2001)'. *ShtetiWeb*, 1999, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/14/programi-qeverise-ilir-meta-28-tetor-1999-6-shtator-2001/>.

*Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Croatia)*, Wikipedia;  
<[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry\\_of\\_Foreign\\_and\\_European\\_Affairs\\_\(Croatia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Foreign_and_European_Affairs_(Croatia))>

Misha, Piro. 'Tolerancë fetare apo papërgjegjshmëri? (Religious Tolerance or Irresponsibility?)'. *Zemra Shqiptare*, 2003, <http://www.zemrashqiptare.net/news/2363/pirro-misha-tolerance-fetare-apo-papergjegjshmeri.html>.

Nano, Fatos. *Programi i Qeverisë Fatos Nano 2, 25 Korrik 1997 – 28 Shtator 1998 (Fatos Nano 2nd Government Program 2 July 25, 1997 - September 28, 1998)*. 1997, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/14/programi-qeverise-fatos-nano-2-25-korrik-1997-28-shtator-1998/>.

---. 'Programi i Qeverisë Së Fatos Nano, 11 Maj – 4 Qershor 1991 (Fatos Nano Government Program, May 11 - June 4, 1991)'. *ShtetiWeb*, 1991, <https://shtetiweb.org/2015/09/13/programi-qeverise-se-fatos-nano-11-maj-4-qershor-1991/>.

Nathanaili, Petrit, et al. *Historia 11 (History 11)*. Filara, 2020.

Nathanaili, Petrit, and Xhemalaj Fatmiroshe. *Historia 8 (History 8)*. Filara, 2017.

Nelaj, Alban, et al. *National Survey on Perceptions & Expectations towards a Potential EU Membership of Albania*. Open Society Foundation for Albania, 2014.

Ngjela, Spartak. *Reformë shqiptare: Shmangia e karakterit tiranik të politikës (Albanian Reform: Avoiding the Tyrannical Character of Politics)*. MNS, 2006.

- Nishani, Bujar. 'Intervistë e Presidentit Nishani në emisionin "Log" të Televizionit Publik Shqiptar (Interview of President Nishani on the Show "Log" of the Albanian Public Television)'. *Institucioni i Presidentit të Republikës së Shqipërisë*, 23 Nov. 2012, <https://president.al/old/interviste-e-presidentit-nishani-ne-emisionin-log-te-televizionit-publik-shqiptar/>.
- Përmeti, Alban. 'Foreign Policy Strategy of the Republic of Albania 1992 – 1997'. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Mar. 2015. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n2s1p498>.
- Petrović, Tanja, editor. *Mirroring Europe: Ideas of Europe and Europeanization in Balkan Societies*. Brill, 2014.
- Pettifer, James, and Miranda Vickers. *The Albanian Question: Reshaping the Balkans*. I. B. Tauris, 2007.
- Pizzorno, Alessandro. 'Some Other Kinds of Otherness: A Critique of "Rational Choice" Theories'. *Development, Democracy, and the Art of Trespassing: Essays in Honor of Albert O. Hirschman*, 1986.
- Plasari, Aurel. *Rrëmbimi i Evropës (Europe's Abduction)*. Shtëpia Botuese 55, 2005.
- Prizel, Ilya. *National Identity and Foreign Policy: Nationalism and Leadership in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Progonati, Erjada. 'Albanian foreign policy in the post-communist era'. *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, vol. 26, 2011, pp. 257–80. [revistas.ucm.es, https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_UNIS.2011.v26.37824](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_UNIS.2011.v26.37824).
- Programi i Qeverisë 2013 - 2017 (Government Program 2013-2017)*. Agjencia kombëtare e Shoqërisë së Informacionit, 2013, [https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Programi\\_Qeverise.pdf](https://akshi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Programi_Qeverise.pdf).
- Programi Qeverisës 2017-2021 (Governing Program 2017-2021)*). Prime Minister's Office, 2017, <https://kryeministria.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PROGRAMI.pdf>.
- Qori, Arlind. *Ideja e Evropës dhe Ideologjia Shqiptare: Studim i rolit të Idesë së Evropës në ideologjizimin e ligjërit politik shqiptar të pasvitit 1991 (The Idea of Europe and the Albanian Ideology: A Study of the Idea of Europe's Role in the Ideologization of the Albanian Political Discourse since 1991)*. University of Tirana, 2015.
- Rakipi, Albert, et al. *Albania and European Union: Rethinking EU Integration*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2008.
- Rakipi, Albert, Blendi Kajsio, et al. *Albania - A Weak Democracy a Weak State*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2002.

Rakipi, Albert. 'Albania-Serbia Relations: From Enthusiasm to Status Quo, from Status Quo to the False Promise of a Strategic Agenda'. *Tirana Observatory*, AIIS, 31 Jan. 2020, <https://tiranaobservatory.com/2020/01/31/albania-serbia-relations-from-enthusiasm-to-status-quo-from-status-quo-to-the-false-promise-of-a-strategic-agenda/>.

---. 'Marrëdhëniet e reja Shqipëri-Serbi, cilat janë implikimet për Kosovën? (New Albania-Serbia Relations, What Are the Implications for Kosovo?)'. *EUROPA*, 21 Dec. 2016, <http://europa.com.al/index.php/2016/12/21/marredheniet-e-reja-shqiperi-serbi-cilat-jane-implikimet-per-kosoven/>.

Rakipi, Albert, Alba Cela, Elena Shomos, et al. *The European Perspective of Albania: Perceptions and Realities 2012*. Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2012.

Rakipi, Albert, Alba Cela, and Krisafi Ledion. *The European Perspective of Albania Perceptions and Realities 2020*. Botimet Kumi, June 2020.

Rakipi, Albert. 'Understanding Albanian-Greek Relations: Deconstructing Paradoxes and Myths'. *Tirana Observatory*, AIIS, 19 Sept. 2019, <https://tiranaobservatory.com/2019/09/19/understanding-albanian-greek-relations-deconstructing-paradoxes-and-myths/>.

Rama, Edi. 'Britania, Bashkimi Europian, Shqipëria (Britain, European Union, Albania)'. *Klan TV*, 24 June 2016, <https://tvklan.al/nga-edi-rama-britania-bashkimi-europian-shqiperia/>.

---. 'Edi Rama: Ne nuk jemi një vend mysliman, por jemi një vend evropian (Edi Rama: We Are Not a Muslim Country, but We Are a European Country)'. *Tema*, 14 June 2014, <https://www.gazetatema.net/2014/06/14/intervista-edi-rama-ne-nuk-jemi-nje-vend-mysliman-por-jemi-nje-vend-europian/>.

---. "'Europa fati i Shqipërisë!'" ("Europe Is the Fate of Albania!"). *Top Channel*, 7 May 2021 (a), <https://top-channel.tv/2021/05/07/europa-fati-i-shqiperise-rama-per-la-stampa-me-e-thjeshte-te-parashikosh-qe-sassuolo-do-shpallet-kampione-e-italise-sesa-te-vesh-nje-bast-per0/>.

---. 'Rama për gazetën austriake: Europa është feja jonë (Rama for the Austrian Newspaper: Europe Is Our Religion)'. *Klan TV*, 19 May 2018, <https://tvklan.al/rama-per-gazeten-austriake-europa-eshte-feja-jone/>.

---. "'Zoti na ka caktuar vendndodhjen në mes të Evropës'" ("God Has given Us a Place in the Middle of Europe"). *Top Channel*, 23 June 2021 (b), <https://top-channel.tv/2021/06/23/zoti-na-caktuar-vendndodhjen-ne-mes-te-evropes-ramabe-deshtoi-te-mbaje-premtimin-per-ne-dielli-lind-atje-ku-perendon1/>.

Ramet, Sabrina P., editor. *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- Ringmar, Erik. 'Re-Imagining Sweden: The Rhetorical Battle Over EU Membership'. *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 23, no. 1–2, June 1998, pp. 45–63. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468759850116016>.
- . 'The Recognition Game: Soviet Russia Against the West'. *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 37, no. 2, June 2002, pp. 115–36. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836702037002973>.
- Rritja e volumit të shkëmbimeve tregtare me Greqinë (The increase of the volume of trade exchanges with Greece)*, Albanian Telegraphic Agency website; <<http://ata.gov.al/2020/12/15/rritja-e-volumit-te-shkembimeve-tregtare-me-greqine-xhafaj-per-atsh-ne-kemi-negociuar-shtimin-e-kuotave-te-lejeve-te-transportit/>>
- Ruçi, Gramoz. '9 Maji "Dita e Europës" (May 9 "Europe Day")'. *Top Channel*, 9 May 2021, <https://top-channel.tv/2021/05/09/9-maji-dita-e-europes-ruci-se-shpejti-kufijte-e-europes-politike-afrohen-me-ata-te-europes-kulturore/>.
- Shehu, Tritan. 'Europa, Shqipëria Dhe Feja (Europe, Albania and Religion)'. *Panorama*, 7 Jan. 2014, <http://www.panorama.com.al/europa-shqiperia-dhe-feja/>.
- Shkëmbimet tregtare Shqipëri-Greqi (Albania-Greece trade exchanges)*, SCAN Television based on INSTAT data; <<http://www.scan-tv.com/shkembimet-tregtare-shqiperi-greqi-importet-e-ushqimeve-nxisin-deficitin/>>
- Sina, Darjel, et al. 'Albania's Integration in EU'. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, July 2013. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2013.v4n6p305>.
- Socialist Party of Albania. *Ribashkim me Europen: Rikthim në Familjen Europiane të cilës i përkasim (Reunification with Europe: Return to the European Family to Which We Belong)*. <https://www.ps.al/programi/ribashkim-me-europen>.
- South-East European Cooperation Process – SEECP*, Regional Cooperation Council website; < <https://www.rcc.int/pages/111/south-east-european-cooperation-process--seecp>>
- Sulstarova, Enis. *Arratisje nga Lindja: Orientalizmi shqiptar nga Naimi te Kadareja (Escape from the East: Albanian Orientalism from Naimi to Kadare)*. 3rd ed., Pika pa Sipërfaqe, 2013.
- . *Islamizëm do të thotë Lindje: Rrëfimi i kombit, Evropës dhe Islamit në ligjërimin publik dhe librat shkollorë të historisë (Islamism means East: The narrative of the nation, Europe and Islam in public discourse and history textbooks)*. Pika pa Sipërfaqe, 2016.

- . *Jam Evropë! Intelektualet dhe ideja e Evropës në vitet 1918-1939 dhe 1989-2006 (I am Europe! Intellectuals and the idea of Europe in the years 1918-1939 and 1989-2006)*. Logos-A, 2012.
- . *Ligjërimi nacionalist në Shqipëri dhe studime të tjera (Nationalist Discourse in Albania and Other Studies)*. Pika pa Sipërfaqe, 2015.
- Urrestarazu, Ursula. 'Identity in International Relations and Foreign Policy Theory'. *Theorizing Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Vurmo, Gjergji. *Relations of Albania with EU*. Centre for EU Enlargement Studies, June 2008.
- Wæver, Ole. 'Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory'. *European Integration and National Identity the Challenge of the Nordic States*, Routledge, 2002.
- Wendt, Alexander. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Xhemalaj, Fatmiroshe. *Historia 5 (History 5)*. Filara, 2019.
- Xhudo, Gazmen. 'Albania's Policy Approach'. *Diplomacy and Crisis Management in the Balkans, A US Foreign Policy Perspective*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1996, pp. 32–63. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24947-3>.
- Zeqo, Moikom. 'The Roots of Albanian Nation and Statehood'. *New Eastern Europe*, 21 Dec. 2015, <https://neweasterneurope.eu/2015/12/21/the-roots-of-albanian-nation-and-statehood/>.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information:

Name - Surname: Enedi Domi

### Education:

2014-2017 BA in Political Sciences, Tirana University, Albania

2019-2021 MA in Political Sciences and International Relations, Ibn Haldun University, Turkey

