The logo of the University of New York Tirana is a large, stylized blue letter 'U' that contains a white silhouette of the map of Albania. The letters 'N', 'Y', and 'T' are positioned to the right of the 'U', also in a large, blue, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a white background with a thin blue border.

**Challenges of the Democratization Process in Albania**  
**From a Political Culture Perspective:**  
**A Comparative case study of Albania and Estonia**

Ramiola Kalemi

A dissertation submitted to the Department of Social Sciences  
of the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences of the University of New York Tirana  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctoral degree in  
Humanities and Social Sciences with concentration in  
Political Sciences / International Relations

Advisor  
Dr. Ilir Kalemaj

Tiranë, October 2019

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Tiranë  
2019

Approved by:

Prof. Dr. Fatos Tarifa

Prof. Dr. Kseanela Sotirofski

Prof. Dr. Tonin Gjuraj

Prof. Assoc. Dr. Eva Hyskaj

Dr. Ilir Kalemaj

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## **ABSTRACT**

Ramiola Kalemi: Challenges of the Democratization Process in Albania from a Political Culture Perspective: A Comparative Case Study of Albania and Estonia

Under the direction of Dr. Ilir Kalemaj

The primary research question of the dissertation is: How does political culture influence the democratic trajectory in former communist countries? This is a general research question. The empirical question that will be analyzed in detail in the study is as follows: “Considering that both countries have emerged from a communist regime, why has Albania not successfully become democratized while Estonia has?”

The dissertation seeks to determine what impacts internal factors (e.g., political culture and leaders’ democratic orientations) have had on the democratization process in both cases in an attempt to identify whether Albania has an undemocratic political culture, and, if so, how this has specifically affected the democratization process.

The study assumes that a supportive political culture and a leader’s democratic orientation are crucial factors that can contribute to democratization. As such, this thesis seeks to bring to light the evidence that a traditionally inherited supportive political framework combined with a leader’s democratic orientation can foster democratization (as in the case of Estonia) and that their absence can cause democratization to fail (as in the case of Albania). The dissertation builds on the argument that the more democratic political culture a society reflects, the bigger the probability that this society will produce leaders who are oriented toward democratic values.

To describe the process by analyzing these instruments in both cases, the study is followed by a qualitative research design, a small N-study using longitudinal correlations, in observing the same variables of democracy during three different periods of time (pre - communism, communism and post- communism) and at the same time, is implemented the method of process tracing analysis by studying the same variables that facilitate democratization in specific historical moments.

This dissertation makes a modest contribution that will serve to create a better understanding of the specifics of the political cultures of Albania and Estonia. This study will provide an empirical analysis and will attempt to explain how political culture could promote democracy development. Its importance is related to the empirical innovation and its contributions to theory.

To my mentor and family, I couldn't have done this without you.  
Thank you for all of your support along the way.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANT	Actor Network Theory
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index
CEC	Central Elections Commission
CEE	Central and Easter Europe
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COE	Council of Europe
EU	European Union
FH	Freedom House
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LSI	Socialist Movement for Integration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PD	Democratic Party
PHARE	Poland and Hungary Assistance for Restructuring of the Economy
PM	Prime Minister
PS	Socialist Party
RTVSH	Albanian Radio Television
SAA	Stabilization Association Agreement

SU	Soviet Union
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WVS	World Value Survey



## CHAPTER 1

### THE RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH, THEORETICAL APPROACH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

#### 1.1 Introduction

Democratization is becoming an issue of immense importance in the field of comparative politics. In this context, it is significant to highlight what Bevir (2007, 213) notes: “democratization is not just a story of political change in ‘the West’; rather, it has become a key reference point in understanding political change throughout the world”. The same author continues his argument by stressing that:

In essence, democratization contains at its core two distinct but closely related aspects: a process by which political life changes, and a normative view of political life making statements about how political communities should behave. (Bevir, 2007, 213)

As stated by Huntington (1991, 12) “the current era of democratic transitions constitutes the third wave of democratization in the history of the modern world”. As for Albania, he underlines that democratization is very fragile, stating that “in 1990 Albania appeared to opening up, but the impact of snowballing on democratization was clearly evident” (Huntington, 1991, 21). The third wave of democratization also spread to the former Yugoslavia, but it was not very successful in many other former communist countries. Many countries entered a transition interlude after the ‘90s and. According to the Freedom House (2016) report, Albania is a hybrid regime. Many scholars of political science have tried to determine what causes the process of democratization to be successful. In fact, democratization is linked inevitably to the development of one country in terms of its institutional, economic, political, and social aspects.

The failure of the communist system in 1990 and the establishment of political pluralism recorded the starting point of a new era for Eastern Europe and for Albania. These events started the democratization agenda, involving state rebuilding processes intended to restore the boundaries among governmental issues and financial matters, government from the civil society, and to separate the system from the state (Mema, 2010). The end of 1990s denoted the start of a progress period from communism to democracy. Notwithstanding providing economic and

political reforms, Albania started to build up political and financial relations with Western nations and international foundations and associations. Albania was the last nation in Eastern Europe to put a closure to its communist regime. In the aftermath of accomplishing this and with no preceding democratic experience Albania looked for collaborations with international associations to request the vital support to establish the transition to democracy.

Reaching membership in international organizations, comprising the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union (EU) was a longstanding ambition of Albania's new political leadership (Mema, 2010). Even though Albania was given financial and technical support by international organizations, such as OSCE, NATO, and the EU, to undertake significant democratic reforms and meet membership criteria, the country is yet considered a hybrid democracy (Freedom House, 2016).

The countries in the region that had experienced the communist regime followed dissimilar paths after the '90s. Unlike Albania, which is not currently listed as a democratized country, other countries were successful in this aspect. For example, today, Estonia is considered a fully democratized country.

One of the main purposes of this thesis is to understand why Albania did not democratize and is still in the transition phase. While investigating the factors that have hindered this process, it is important to emphasize that the significance of exploring results lies in the fact that Albania can never become fully democratic unless the factors that hinder the democratization process are clearly identified. A review of the literature on the democratization of post-communist countries reveals that some countries – particularly those which, like Albania, have had analogous political developments in the past – have been completely democratized. An example of such a country is Estonia, which had one of the most rapid democratization processes. In this context, questions are inevitably raised about what causes successful democratization (as in the case of Estonia) and what causes unsuccessful democratization (as in the case of Albania).

Following this line of argument, the proxy question of the dissertation was formulated as follows: "Considering that both countries have emerged from a communist regime, why has Albania not successfully become democratized while Estonia has?" This empirical question seeks to unravel another research question: "How does political culture influence the democratic trajectory of former communist countries?" The research question main at correlating

democratization with the impact that internal factors (e.g., political culture and leaders' democratic orientations) have had on the democratization process in both cases.

Therefore I develop the argument that an inherited and persistent political culture in Estonia has affected the cognition and behavior of citizens to make them more participative and engaged in the public life in the Estonian case and that the opposite has happened in that of the Albanian citizens. Citizens raised in this environment become more aware of their responsibilities and democratic values. Thus, they naturally become part of society. Under these circumstances, citizens, whether they are in different political positions or leading position, are willing to make democratic decisions rather than subjective decisions in order to maintain their power and to experience its benefits.

The two independent variables or causal factors of democratization established in the study are the political culture and the leadership's normative preference for democracy. This way, to carry out a proper analysis of the factors that sped up or hindered the process of democratization in these countries, Mill's inductive methods of difference will be implemented (Hancke, 2009). This method will help shed light on the fact that two countries sharing similar political pasts have different outcomes. Eager to identify the present causal factor that induced democratization in the Estonian case, and trying to investigate and correlate while this causal factor was missing in the Albanian case, the study will be extended in into three separated different periods: 1918-1941 (pre-communism), 1941-1989 (communist era), and after 1990 (post-communism).

The methodology used in the dissertation is qualitative and provides a comparative presentation of a wide array of information for both countries. Precisely, this is a comparative case-based research project, small N-study, focusing on two similar cases and the association between a single dependent variable (i.e., democratization), which occurred in Estonia but in Albania did not, and its relation with the components of the independent variable, such as the political culture, attitudes, and behaviors that are identified in the scholarly literature as well as the leaders' normative preferences for democracy.

The analyzation of both independent variables (political culture and leadership's democratic normative preference for democracy) will be carried out by applying a combination of longitudinal correlations, in observing the same variables of democracy during three different

periods of time, both with process tracing analysis. These methods are described as appropriate to describe casual processes. As Erin Jenne presumes;

Longitudinal Case Analysis (LCA) is a research tradition that combines techniques from historiography and longitudinal data analysis with those of John Stuart Mill's comparative method and process - tracing to test social science theories that contain causal processes that are both long and/or slow - moving but that also involve micro-level causal mechanism that play out during periods of rapid transition or change (Jenne, 2019)

These methods will examine the democratization process occurring in both countries after the regime change from communism to democracy. The instruments that will be used in measuring the components of political culture for both Albania and Estonia, in this study will be the parameters of the third wave of World Values Survey. On the other hand, to establish the correlations between the variables the indexes and reports of Freedom House will be examined as an intermediate instrument which includes in it composition features of political culture and leadership's normative preference for democracy and democratization.

To understand the position of Albania in this process, a comparative case study will be conducted with Estonia. On many levels, Estonia is comparable to Albania. It came from a communist system but differs from Albania in terms of its outcome. Thus, its democratization has progressed, and it is ranked as one of the most developed post-communist countries. Besides, it is fundamental to investigate democratization for countries like Albania since the country has experienced the explicit effects of the communist regime and the political outcomes that this kind of system has both on citizens and the whole society. The effects of such a system are so long-term that even today, after 29 years; it is difficult to enforce a democratic order. So, why is it important to study this process? We can answer this question throughout the citation of one definition about democratization, which can serve our purpose in this dissertation. Thusly, a feature that democratization is a procedure that prompts an increasingly open, increasingly participatory, and less authoritarian society since democracy system is an arrangement of government which typifies, in an assortment of institutions and instruments and in the perfect of political sovereignty that depends on the determination of the individuals (Boutros-Ghali, 1996, 1).

Consequently, to measure democracy and to investigate its progress in Albania, a comparative case study will be conducted for two countries: Albania and Estonia. Throughout this case study, the progress of the process will be determined by figuring out at what stage of

democratization Albania is stuck and why it is not making progress. In this way, the present analysis will aid our understanding of all the hidden and visible reasons standing behind it.

For both countries, the Democracy Score introduced by Freedom House in 2004 will be used. Freedom House provided this measurement index for the purpose of conducting “comparative and interpretive evaluations of the progress and setbacks in the countries under study” (Freedom House, 2017). Democracy Scores will be used to investigate the scale of democracy in both countries as well as the attitudes of citizens toward democratic standards. This comparison will be made to evaluate and connect important variables that influence democratization (e.g., political culture).

The term ‘political culture’ is very complex and different authors provide different definitions. Some of them, like Almond and Verba (1963), opine that political culture has a few core components: people’s beliefs, values, and attitudes. Almond and Verba struggled to find how individuals determine a political system and vice versa. Clearly they specify that “political culture of a nation is the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation” (Almond & Verba, 1989, 13). These features were also mentioned in the definition given by Ian McLean and Alex McMillan, who state that political culture includes “the attitudes, beliefs, and values which underpin the operation of a particular political system” (McLean & Alex, 2009).

Analyzing and comparing the democratization of Albania and Estonia will aid our understanding of the level of democracy in both countries. The Democracy Score index will make evident the natural attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the citizens of these countries. This correlation shows that democratization and political culture are inevitably linked. They will be studied in this thesis separately, one as an independent variable (political culture) and the other as the dependent variable (democratization).

As stated above, the democratization process will be analyzed from the perspective of political culture as an independent variable and from the perspective of the leader’s democratic orientation. Leaders’ democratic orientations represent the Agent-Oriented Approach, which links the process of political change to an individual or group of individuals who hold key leadership positions.

These two independent variables are derived from different approaches, but this dissertation merges them into one approach: the Actor Networking Theory (ANT). The ANT is

“also known as enrollment theory or the sociology of translation, emerged during the mid-1980s, principally through the work of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law”. When describing the ANT, Ritzer clarifies that the “ANT is a conceptual frame for exploring collective sociotechnical processes, whose spokespersons have paid particular attention to science and technologic activity” (Ritzer, 2005). The author kept depicting this theory as a detour among agency and structure by referencing this was as a focus interference in all the disciplines, yet chiefly in Sociology.

Other authors, like Whittle and Spicer (2008) have underlined the importance of this theory in social studies. Its importance lies in the fact that human and non-human structures interact with each other and explain various social phenomena. The authors emphasize that “one of ATN’s founding principles was to propose a radical equity of human and non-human actors” (Whittle & Spicer, 2008, 620).

The ANT theory can demonstrate that both humans (specified as the leader’s democratic normative orientation variable in this thesis) and non-human actors (indicated as the political culture variable) can be elaborated within a network where their identities are determined through their interactions with each other. In this thesis, both variables will be examined symmetrically in a different period of time for both Albania and Estonia. This will be done in order to find their direct impacts on democratization. As two idiosyncratic post-communist countries, Estonia and Albania have some resemblances but also have some distinguishing features. These distinguishing features have caused their respective democratic development processes to vary considerably from one another. These countries have experienced “political and economic transitions toward democracy and free-market capitalism” (Vanhanen, 1997).

With the breakdown of communist systems in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980 and mid-1990s, the two countries selected as case studies in this thesis are diverse, yet they share a similar set of historical experiences. They are each a product of the system that dominated Central and Eastern Europe politics for slightly less than 100 years. They are relative latecomers to state- and nation-building – and, for that matter, to democracy. They each have a common heritage of communist rule; after the collapse of communism in 1989-1990, they each embarked on a process of democratization (Berglund, Sten., Ekman, Joakin., Dregan-Krause, Kevin., Knutsen, Terje., 2013).

In order to carry out a proper analysis of the factors that accelerated or hindered the process of democratization in these countries, Mill's inductive methods of difference will be implemented. According to Hancké (2009), this method sheds light on why two countries that were at a similar starting point (in 1990 in the cases under investigation) ended up being very different by 2018. The study will be separated into three different periods: 1918-1941 (pre-communism), 1941-1989 (communist era), and after 1990 (post-communism). Furthermore, by trying to understand precisely when the two countries took different roots and identify what the cause was, we can develop an argument about why Albania did not successfully democratize.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The process of democratization is very important for a country because it makes a society more developed, active, and participative. A democratized country guarantees rights and shares obligations in a symbiotic relationship between state and citizens. The more this process develops, the less authoritative a society tends to be. If we want to distinguish the level of development of a specific society, we need to focus on the level of democratization that this society has been able to develop.

Many theories have attempted to explain this process by trying to identify the causes of a successful or unsuccessful democratization process. Different democratization theories have failed to provide a precise definition of the prerequisites that a country must meet to become democratized. Many theories of democratization have determined the factors that accelerate this process. However, they do not provide a reasonable explanation as to why two countries like Albania and Estonia with similar physical characteristics (size of geographic area, number of inhabitants) and a common history trajectory (both countries with a past communist regime) have experienced different outcomes from implementing a democratization process. Albania is classified as a hybrid democracy, whereas Estonia is considered a fully democratized society with an aggregate score of freedom of 94/ 100 (Freedom House, 2017).

Albania can never become fully democratic unless the real reasons and factors that hinder the democratization process are identified. One variable that underlines democratization theories is *the international influence*. For many post-communist countries, including Albania, the international influence (especially of the EU) has emphatically affected the democratization procedure by offering technical assistance.

Even though international organizations have tried to facilitate the process in Albania, not enough has been done to democratize the country. In this context, it is necessary to underline that significant progress toward democratization was made in the first years of pluralism. The authors state that “Albania was the first country in Eastern Europe to sign a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU” (Tepshi & Qato, 2015, 364). Meanwhile, “in 1996, Albania was close to signing a new contractual agreement with the EU, but the contested parliamentary elections of May 1996, together with the deep financial and social crisis that followed in early 1997, halted this process (Tepshi & Qato, 2015, 364). In this context, by excluding the international influence on this process, in the thesis, I argue that investigating internal causes, such as political culture, political determination, and type of decisions made by leaders and their democratic normative orientation, may help explain why Albania did not democratize.

Following this line of argument, based on the works many scholars who have written about democratization, one of the foremost theories is focused on economic development. Researchers like Daniel Lerner (1968) and Samuel M. Lipset (1959-1960) support the theory and the paradigm of development. According to this perspective, democratization and economic growth are associated with each other as causal factors. From this perspective, Albania has been through a lot of challenges after the fall of communism. Many of these challenges were overcome, including the liberalization of the market, economic development. Despite these successes, Albania did not fully democratize. Various studies have tried to explain why Albania is still attempting to democratize. However, not a single reasonable explanation has been given as to why many other countries, like Estonia, even though they started this process from the same position (or perhaps even a worse position), have been able to democratize successfully while Albania has not.

Meanwhile, some theories underline the role of society and its characteristics in decision-making. Lipset posits that there is a relationship between development and democracy. He further argues that if citizens are participative and tolerant and these attitudes become widespread among the mass, the interest to have a state in government increments and draws to a transition (Lipset, 1959).

A very important factor that may facilitate this process is political culture. Many authors have emphasized its fundamental role in the democratization process. For example, Putnam (1994) established a strong correlation between the predominant political culture and the nature

and quality of a political regime (Inglehart, 1997; Newton, 1999). In this regard it is important to emphasize that "the level of mutual trust among the people, which is quantifiable according to Putnam, and participation within different social associations, which is also quantifiable, increase the level of social capital within a society" (Tzanakis, 2013). Inglehart (1997) has also highlighted that the culture of trust and tolerance has increased the levels of contact and information flow among people.

From the theories of different scholars about the preconditions needed for successful democratization, it can be asserted that each country has its own circumstances that may have pushed it towards democratization. Although political culture is crucial and is central to one of the main theories of democratization, its presence or absence among citizens cannot alone determine whether democratization will be successful. In order to improve the theoretical framework, a detailed analysis of the leaders' democratic orientations will be examined as another independent variable in the present study.

Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013) argue that "democracy survives when political leaders seek moderate policies and have a normative preference for democracy". In the dissertation, a detailed analysis of the decisions and democratic orientation of the most important political leaders in the political life for both Albania and Estonia will be carried out. Moreover, according to Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, obstacles to the process of democratization may present themselves if the political elite support and adopt extreme anti-democratic positions. When political leaders demonstrate political preferences that are radically opposed to the preferences of other actors who are active in politics and show no commitment to the democratic rhetoric, the country's political system is more accepting of democratic processes. Based on this assumption, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán reinforce an argument that contributes to the debate of political culture theory.

There are, however, several common factors shared among countries that have made it through the transition phase. A supportive political culture and a leader's democratic orientation are crucial factors that can contribute to democratization. As such, this dissertation seeks to bring to light the evidence that a traditionally inherited supportive political framework combined with a leader's democratic orientation can foster democratization (as in the case of Estonia) and that their absence can cause democratization to fail (as in the case of Albania).

A better explanation is needed for the approach of the democratization process in Albania so that this process can be evaluated and the role of political culture and the democratic orientation of a country's leaders can be assessed. Therefore, the thesis aims to;

- analyze and identify various factors that might influence the democratization process in the cases under investigation, focusing on finding similarities and differences.;
- identify and analyze components of the political culture in Albania and Estonia during three different periods of time (pre-communism, communism, and post-communism). The division is considered being carried in this manner in order to find evidence for the presence or absence of the elements of a democratic political culture in both cases and how they are directly related to the successful democratization in Estonia and vice versa, an unsuccessful one in Albania.
- test and compare leaders' democratic orientations for each country to determine whether the political decisions of democratic leaders have impacted the democratization process in Estonia while also testing whether the absence of a democratic orientation among Albanian leaders has hindered the process.
- outline a conceptual framework of how the successful combination of two variables (i.e., the existence of a political culture and a democratic leadership orientation) has bolstered the democratization process in Estonia and how their unsuccessful combination has hindered democratization in Albania.

The primary goal of this thesis is to identify and analyze all visible and invisible factors that have prevented Albania from democratizing. The study will provide a comprehensive review of the literature to outline a conceptual framework that will be used to analyze the political culture and the leaders' democratic orientations in Albania as two independent variables of democratization. To ensure that the analysis of the democratization process is sufficiently thorough, it will be carried out in a comparative fashion with Estonia, which has a similar past but different outcome than Albania has.

The overall objective of this thesis will be achieved by fulfilling its specific goals, which are as follows:

*Chronological analysis of the political flows of Estonia and Albania.* This will be accomplished by evaluating and analyzing particular factors that have defined the

democratization process in Estonia and Albania. A comprehensive assessment will also be completed regarding the aspects of the political culture of each country during their pre-communism, communism, and post-communism periods.

Many theories related to democratization have failed to explain why democratization has failed to succeed in some countries, like Albania, while it has flourished in others, like Estonia. Thus, the result of this study will be valuable because, despite the growing interest among different authors, little work has been done in empirical basis in CEE countries in post – communist period on the political culture and its impact on the process of democratization.

This is to be done by analyzing specific cases and determining how the political culture in itself represents an obstacle or how it helps a country toward a successful path toward democratization. On the one hand, this study seeks to analyze the peculiarities of political culture. On the other hand, it seeks to measure the tendencies of the leader’s normative preference for democracy after the 1990s, whether they were oriented toward democratic norms or not. This thesis provides a full overview of the theoretical background of political culture by employing a bottom-up approach. The bottom-up approach to understanding political culture entails that the masses influence and force the elite to make certain decisions to change the regime to a democratic one.

This dissertation aims to evaluate two variables from different theoretical families by merge two theoretical approaches of democratization into one. Respectively, the structural approach, through the variable of political culture and on the other hand the agent-oriented approach by studying the leader’s orientation. This research seeks to combine both approaches into what is recognized as the ANT. So far, most studies on democratization have been based on a single, detached theoretical viewpoint, structural approach, or agent-oriented approach. However, since none of these studies explains the simultaneous success of democratic transition in Estonia and its decline in Albania, I combine two well-known theoretical approaches to serve as the basis of the theoretical framework of this study.

### **1.3 Methodology**

This dissertation analyzes the democratization process in Albania to identify the factors that have hindered the success of this process after the fall of the communist regime. So that a deeper analysis can be performed for the case of Albania, another country with a similar past

(i.e., Estonia) has been examined. Estonia has been chosen due to its completely opposite outcome of the democratization process when compared with Albania's. Despite having a similar exposure and emergence from a communist regime as Albania, Estonia was able to fully democratize and is now listed as one of the member countries of the European Union, an outcome attributed to its success in this process.

Naturally, one might ask why Albania has remained in transition and found it difficult to make progress toward democratization even though the chances and expectations were quite high in the early years of the transition to a democratic system. The likelihood was significant since Albania was off to a good start, as indicated by its good international relations. In the early '90s, the country made considerable progress in strengthening its democratic institutions, resulting in Albania's OSCE membership in 1992. At the outset, Albania had all the chances of taking another course along the path to democracy also due to the homogenous population and the lack of identity problems that many other post-communist countries encountered. According to Kalemaj (2016),

Albania, because of its idiosyncratic characteristics, it escaped unscathed the (former) Yugoslav wars and has not faced identity and nation-building challenges like its Western Balkan neighbors. Its characteristics include inter alia the ethnic homogeneity and mass migration after the isolation of Communism. However, Albania has been part of the same web, with the same transition difficulties as its immediate Balkan neighbors and in some areas, like severe political antagonism, has demonstrated even a worse record that has prevented its rapid democratization and successful integration into the European Union (Kalemaj, 2016, 281).

While Albania had these supposed "advantages" that would facilitate its shift towards democratization, Estonia entered this process as a multi-ethnic country, yet it still managed to successfully democratize. According to the last census in 1989, people of over 100 different ethnicities were living in Estonia (ECMI, 1999). A report by the European Center for Minority Issues asserted that Estonia had a multi-ethnic composition after the Soviet invasion. It was noted that "the non-Estonians (504,843 persons or 34.8 percent of the total population) mostly came to Estonia under the Soviet regime and communicate in Russian, which is why they are often grouped together under the common term 'Russian-speaking population'" (ECMI, 1999).

To address the research question in the study here I will focus on the exploration of two variables pertaining to two different theoretical approaches in democratization studies. The variable of political culture belongs to the structural approach, and leaders' normative preferences for democracy represents the agent-oriented approach. The analysis of the political

culture and the leaders' normative preferences in each country is intended to show that the existence of elements of a democratic political culture in Estonia before the transition enabled the emergence of leaders who made democratic decisions, thus facilitating Estonia's success.

Meanwhile, the opposite has happened in Albania. A complete lack of a political culture has led to political leaders having no normative preference for democracy, as reflected in their political decisions. This argument is used in the formulation of the main hypothesis of the dissertation that is; *Political culture and leadership's normative preference for democracy shape democratization outcome.*

The lack of democratic traditions in the Albanian political culture has negatively impacted the emergence of democratic leaders, thus resulting in a lack of the consideration of democratic values during political decision-making processes carried out after the 1990s and, in turn, obstructing the road to democratization. The political cultures in Estonia and Albania have followed different trajectories as a result of various socio-cultural circumstances influenced by their political traditions. Consequently, their respective outcomes have been different: Albania is still in political transition while Estonia is a democratic country.

This dissertation employs a qualitative methodology that ensures a comparative presentation of a wide array of information for both countries. Specifically, this is a comparative-case-based research project, a small-N study that focuses on two similar cases. This project examines the relationship between a single dependent variable (i.e., democratization) and its relationship with the components of the independent variables that are identified in the literature (e.g., political culture, attitudes, and behaviors), as well as the leaders' normative preferences for democracy. Thus, this dissertation offers descriptive information and closely examines causal processes (Steinberg, 2007).

The study uses Mill's method of difference to examine two similar cases along with two independent variables (political culture and leaders' normative preferences for democracy) which have two different outcomes: (i) a successful case of democratization (Estonia) and (ii) a failed case of democratization (Albania). The Method of Difference is also known as the "(MSDO) most similar system with the different outcome" (Rihoux & Ragin, 2009, 22). Robert Hancké elaborated this method by making a comparison between two "two cases that are similar in every relevant characteristic except for two, the first being the outcome that you are trying to explain

(the ‘dependent variable’... and the second what you think explains this outcome (the ‘independent variable’)” (Hancke, 2009, 73).

The motive I choose to apply this method is because Albania and Estonia are similar cases with different outcomes. Albania is ranked as a hybrid democracy with a Democracy Score of 4.14, while Estonia as a consolidated a democracy with a Democracy Score of 1.93 (Freedom House, 2016). Looking at Mill’s inductive method that I will attempt to accomplish, it is intended to identify the additional element that may have influenced by causing successful democratization in the case of Estonia and went missing in the case of Albania. The methodology employed in the present study is mainly inductive due to the connection drawn between reality (considering both Albania and Estonia) and theory (structural and agent-oriented approaches) in order to explore the existing theories in the field of democratization. The inductive method can be used to apply systematic conclusions, by which separate facts lead to a general understanding, and the observation of isolated cases produces general conclusions. A content analysis using process-tracing at different time periods was utilized to examine why Albania failed to successfully democratize. The purpose of the study is to test hypotheses from longitudinal correlations, which can help to discover specifically when these two countries began to differ in this process, as well as to find what commonalities and differences they have had since 1918.

As stated above, the topic of this thesis is to explore and compare the process of democratization in Albania and Estonia. The theoretical link between democratization and the presence or absence of a political culture has been highlighted by most researchers who have studied theories of democratization. Causes of democratization and its continuity have been a primary focus area for students and intellectuals of political sciences, most likely from the time of Aristotle (Coppedge, 2012).

Democratization is considered an important process that is related to the development of a country. Various authors have emphasized the correlation between democracy and development. Menocal (2007, 17) seeks to underline the correlation between democracy and development and “highlights the importance of democracy as a process and development as an outcome”. The last wave of the democratization process included many Southeast European countries that emerged in the early 1990s due to the communist regime. This wave spread in Albania as well. For many countries, the transition process from one regime to another – namely,

from the communist regime to a democratic one – was successfully implemented, and these countries became fully democratized. Meanwhile, many other countries are still lagging due to their hybrid regimes. Such countries include Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Ukraine (Freedom House, 2017). Much academic attention has been devoted to the internal and external factors that might have influenced the process of democratization by helping these countries encounter democracy earlier than others. This fact inevitably raises some questions that remain widely unexplored of why some countries were democratized relatively early, while others have remained hybrid regimes.

This dissertation explores various theories of democratization and discusses in depth the conditions that have promoted the transition of some countries to democracy. It also investigates the idiosyncrasies of Albania and Estonia during three different periods: the pre-communist era (1918-1941), the communist era (1941-1989), and the post-communist period (after 1990). In addition, the thesis will examine two different case studies and will review different theories of democratization of political culture to observe exactly how political culture influences the transition process and precisely how it has influenced democratization.

Albania and Estonia have had unique circumstances that have influenced their progress toward democracy. Throughout this dissertation, I identify the similarities and differences these two countries have faced along their journeys to democracy. I try to uncover important aspects of political developments which have impacted this process in both cases. My interpretation explores the main purpose of the dissertation, which is to find out whether there is any causal correlation between two primary domestic factors (the existence of a political culture and the existence of democratic institutions). Following this line of argument, this thesis aims to test whether this correlation explains why democratization was successful in Estonia while it failed in Albania. To understand the progress of this process and its importance in the development of a country, several review processes are carried out, including an examination of various documents and textbooks regarding political culture and democratization issues. Also, the research of influential authors who have contributed to these theories (e.g., Putnam, Vanhanen, Almond, Verba) is examined. Moreover, data and reports of Freedom House for both countries since 2003 will be investigated and interpreted. Furthermore, indicators retrieved from WVS and other international institutions, such as the World Bank, will be compared.

Previous political developments in Albania and Estonia are reviewed, as these two countries' histories of politics resemble one another. The two countries had similar regimes for 50 years, and both countries entered into the same democratic process in the 1990s. Comparing the political history of the democratization process is important because, as noted by Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010, 13), "ambiguities will likely persist unless we make use of substantive historical knowledge (both original research and 'off the shelf' knowledge) of how democratic institutions actually emerged". According to them, "to study the emergence of democratic institutions in light of this 'historical turn' means that the analyst must 'go back' to analyze systematically the historical episodes in which democratic institutions were created or substantially reshaped" (Capoccia & Ziblatt, 2010, 22).

Among most factors that have influenced the process of democratization, many scholars emphasize the role of political culture. One of these researchers, Larry Diamond (1994), investigated the relationship between political culture and democracy. His essential supposition proposes that democracy requires a particular series of political means and directions from its citizens like "moderation, tolerance, civility, efficacy, knowledge, and participation" (Vanhanen, 2002, 20). He assumes that the importance of the indicated values is related to the mutual relationship between political culture and democracy. He further presumes that "democratization takes place under conditions in which resources have become so widely distributed that groups can no longer suppress their competitors or maintain its hegemony" (Vanhanen, 2002, 24). Some aspects of political culture manifest among citizens through their behavior, the way they approach power, how they exercise their political rights, and how they wish for these rights to be realized. Citizens of any given country exert pressure on the elite and influence their decisions. The more a democratic political culture is dispersed among citizens, the more these citizens will exert pressure on leaders to develop political attitudes that will foster the democratization process.

Another purpose of this thesis is to explore if and how the pressure of mass political enduring democratic culture among citizens to affect the democratic orientation of a nation's leaders by reflecting it on their decision-making by simplifying the process of democratization rather than the contrary.

The relationship between culture and leadership style has been expressed in many studies. For example, Van de Vliert (2006, 43) pointed out that "with regard to leadership,

national culture is usually conceptualized and investigated as a set of independent variables and as having a pervasive influence on the leadership construals and leader behavior of its members”. The term *construal* is used by Van De Vliert to demonstrate how the culture influences on leaders. The concept is presented by psychology and refers to the Construal Level Theory. When describing this theory, authors have stated that “construal level theory offers a rich and rigorous conceptual model of how the context shapes mental representations and subsequent outcomes” (Wiesenfeld, Reyt, Brockner, & Trope, 2017, 367).

In Albania, due to the absence of a democratic political culture, we see a tendency for autocratic leadership to prosper rather than a democratic one. This is also mentioned in reports that measure democracy in the Balkans. An important indicator of democratization in such reports is the relationship a country has with the EU. As is largely noted that countries that are already democratizing are part of the EU, while those that aren't yet part of the EU are stuck in the transition period.

Furthermore, a report recently published by the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group has expressed that Albania has not progressed toward democracy because it tends to produce an autocratic leadership style. As stated, as foreseen in the presumption of “Agent-Oriented Approach” in Albania is currently showing its anti-democratic results in the form of regional leaders who increasingly behave as autocrats (Kmezić & Bieber, 2017).

### **1.3.1 Operationalization of Terms**

To conceptualize the term democratization and to operationalize it throughout this dissertation, I adopted the Pridham definition of the concept that considers democratization “as an umbrella term for the whole process of a regime's change from an authoritarian or totalitarian rule to the rooting of a new liberal democracy” (Pridham, 2001, 16). Numerous authors have attempted to operationalize democratization. Robert A. Dahl (1971) tried to differentiate two theoretical dimensions of democratization: the right to participate and public contestation. Later, Michael Coppedge and Wolfgang, in an attempt to operationalize Dahl's concept of democratization, built a polyarchy scale consisting of 5 variables and 18 categories. Raymond D. Gastil had great success in generating assessment instruments for democracy. Starting in the 1970s, he used a categorization system for assessing the political rights and freedoms of different countries. This system later became the Freedom House Comparative Survey of Freedom.

The dependent variable of this study is the level of democratization in terms of its consolidation and sustainability. To this conclusion, the level of democratization is measured by accessing the dataset. This methodology is intended to assemble, review, and supplement data for a wide range of democracy indicators. Many indicators are used to gather information about the level and the causes of democratization in both countries by identifying the instruments that facilitated or inhibited the process over the years. The data will be collected from the country reports of Freedom House, World Bank, etc. Some common instruments that are used to measure democracy that can be found in all the above-mentioned reports (but mostly in Freedom House reports) which are under investigation are:

- Political Rights
- Electoral Process
- Political Pluralism and Participation:
- Functioning of Government
- Civil Liberties
- Freedom of Expression and Belief
- Associational and Organizational Rights
- Rule of Law
- Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

To describe the process by analyzing these instruments in both cases, I follow a qualitative research design, an observational study using longitudinal correlations, in observing the same variables of democracy during three different periods of time. Democracy Score is the index used to describe the democratization process. Freedom House presented the Democracy Score starting in 2004 as an assessment mechanism for all countries reviewed by Nations in Transit. Freedom House has used this index to compare and interpret the changes in the countries under investigation. Previously, Freedom House has used two instruments to investigate the progress of reforms in the 27 countries identified as transit countries. One is democratization (average election process, civil society, independent media, and governance), and the other is the rule of law (the average of corruption and the constitutional, legislative, and judicial frameworks).

Based on the Democracy Score classification on a scale of 1 to 7 (with 1 representing the highest and 7 representing the lowest level of democratic progress), Freedom House distinguishes various types of regimes. The classification based on the scores started from a consolidated democracy with the countries ranging from a democracy score of 1.00-2.99 to the consolidated authoritarian regime with countries receiving a Democracy Score of 6.00-7.00. The Democracy Score shows the level of democracy of the different countries that Freedom House studies (Freedom House, 2016).

The third task of the methodology session identifies and examines the independent variable, which is the presence or absence of political culture. Political culture refers to the behavior and attitudes among citizens that has facilitated the whole process of democratization in Estonia and has hindered its process in Albania. In the third task, the democratic political culture is examined by analyzing and comparing the following features:

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

The democratization of Albania and Estonia are examined in a comparative, symmetrical fashion using the above-mentioned instruments from Freedom House so that the degree of democracy and characteristics for each country under investigation can be identified. The operationalization of the other variables in the study (political culture and the leaders' normative orientations) will be used to guide this study.

Consequently, to define and use the term political culture in the dissertation, a concept will be borrowed from Almond and Verba. They hypothesized that political culture plays a crucial role in the processes related to the democratization of a country. Thus, they defined political culture "as the set of values, norms, knowledge, attitudes and feelings that determine the political behavior in a political system" (Almond & Verba, 1963, 18). In this way, the authors point to the individual behavior of the members of a society as an inevitable and natural determining factor of a particular political system. The theoretical argument of this dissertation highlights the demand for a democratic political culture that influences the democratization of a country. Although the definition of the term political culture is complex, "it's obvious

characteristic is that it sets ethical norms and standards of behaviour for governments, organisations and individuals” (Gumede, 2010).

This task in the methodology session will be fulfilled by analyzing and tracking the existing components of political culture to provide an analytical perspective for the subjects under research since 1918. In this kind of approach, different elements of political life for both countries can be overviewed using a narrative technique. In accomplishing this part of the study, one prerequisite of political culture will be considered, which sustains that links the meaning of the concept with the political orientation of a group whose members share a political and historical experience (Whitefield 2005).

In this study, the identification of different components of political culture, as well as the comparison of various aspects of political culture’s evolution, are considered so that it can be assessed whether democratic political culture existed in both Albania and Estonia before the 1990s. From the preliminarily investigated literature from various studies, in Estonia it is noticed a greater civic engagement on political issues from the beginning of the state-building period in 1918. In the pursuit of measuring the components of political culture for both Albania and Estonia, this study makes use of the World Value Survey as an instrument. This study includes five waves from this survey, starting in 1981. As cited in their official website, “the WVS seeks to help scientists and policymakers understand changes in the beliefs, values and motivations of people throughout the world” (WVS, 2018). Estonia started registering data in the World Value Survey database in 1996, which corresponds with its third wave (1995-1998). Although Albania didn’t start until 1998, it still became part of the third wave.

The other variable to be examined in this session is the leaders’ democratic orientations. The two authors that have explored leaders’ normative preferences about democracy were Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán. According to them, “democracies are more likely to survive when political actors have a strong normative preference for democracy and when they avoid radical policy positions” (Mainwaring. S & Pérez-Liñán. A, 2013). They also state that “a normative preference for democracy means that an actor values democracy intrinsically, that is, above any policy outcome” (Mainwaring. S & Pérez-Liñán. A, 2013, 80). In reference to this approach, the authors sustain that ‘preference’ is based mainly on the choice to follow democratic values when one is not obligated to do so. Explicitly they argue that where leaders recognize the loss of their power as opposed to challenging and controlling procedural standards to force their will

dependent on inclinations, at that point their commitment to law-based and democratic procedures can be distinguished (Mainwaring. S & Pérez-Liñán. A, 2013). This means that normative preferences play a considerable part in the processes that contribute to a regime change. Further, the authors consider an extensive variety of interests that drive political actors to accept either democracy or authoritarianism.

In studying this variable, the current research borrows Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán's hypothesis that "democracy survives when political leaders seek moderate policies and have a normative preference for democracy". This part of the analysis identifies the most influential political actors after the fall of communism in both Albania and Estonia. This part of the analysis also includes a comprehensive essay basing on the following coding rule.

As classified in Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán's study, political actors are identified as radical if they have either:

1) Expressed an uncompromising desire to achieve leftist or rightist policy positions in the short run or to preserve those positions when they were already in place; or

2) Expressed a willingness to subvert the law in order to achieve certain political goals.

Political actors are identified as lacking a preference for democracy if they did at least one of the following:

1) Expressed ambivalence or questioned "bourgeois," "liberal," or "formal" democracy;

2) Expressed hostility toward democratic institutions (such as parties, legislatures, courts, or electoral bodies) rather than simply challenging their decisions;

3) Questioned the validity of democratic procedures when these produced unfavorable results;

4) Claimed to be the sole representative of the people;

5) Questioned the legitimacy of any opposition outside an encompassing national movement; or

6) Frequently dismissed peaceful opponents as enemies of the people or the country (Mainwaring. S & Pérez-Liñán.A, 2013).

While, in their study, a gradation is made based on the criteria mentioned above, I suggest classifying pre-1990 and post-1990 opposition leaders for both countries under study based on the above-mentioned criteria, but narratively, from examining documents and reports.

The study will be extended to three different periods of time for both cases. The first period is 1918-1941. Estonia was proclaimed an independent state on February 24, 1918, and Albania was proclaimed an independent state on November 28, 1912. As such, 1918 is the first year when both countries were considered independent. The second period examined is the communist era (1941-1989). The third time period is the post-communist period (after 1990). Estonia became an EU member on May 1, 2004, while Albania has not yet been able to join the EU due to its failure to meet many democratic criteria.

#### **1.4 The Puzzle of This Thesis**

The primary research question of the thesis is as follows: “How does political culture influence the democratic trajectory in former communist countries?” This is a general research question. The empirical question that will be analyzed in the dissertation is as follows: “Considering that both countries have emerged from a communist regime, why has Albania not successfully become democratized while Estonia has”?

This study explores the impacts that internal factors (e.g., political culture and leaders’ democratic orientations) have had on the democratization process in Estonia and Albania. An attempt is also made to find out if the undemocratic political culture in Albania has specifically affected the democratization process.

The study compares the state and conditions of democracy in both Albania and Estonia. The analysis includes the use of historical data and variables, starting from 1918 (a period of time consistent with the formation of new states both in Albania and Estonia) until the present. The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the condition of how the variable of political culture indirectly has affected this process. By adopting the term indirectly, I hope to sustain my central hypothesis that political culture and leadership's normative preference for democracy shape democratization outcome. This assumption is associated with the preposition that mass political culture inevitably affects the manifestation of certain types of leadership within a society. The more democratic a political culture a society reflects, the bigger the probability that this society will produce leaders who are oriented toward democratic values.

Leaders’ democratic orientations are applied as an independent variable of democratization in specific studies. This variable pertains to the agent-oriented approach. The variable of political culture is also used as an independent variable in this study. While studying

leaders' democratic orientations as an independent variable, the attitudes of the most important leaders of in-power and opposition parties are analyzed; their attitudes and how their decisions have influenced the democratic paths after the '90s in both Albania and Estonia. Starting with this generalization and using this empirical puzzle, I develop the argument that an inherited and persistent political culture in Estonia has affected the cognition and behavior of citizens to make them more participative and engaged in public life than Albanian citizens. Citizens raised in this environment become more aware of their responsibilities and democratic values. Thus, they naturally become part of society. Under these circumstances, citizens, whether they are in different political positions or leading position, are willing to make democratic decisions rather than subjective decisions in order to maintain their power and to experience its benefits.

### **1.5 Case Selection**

This study will explore the components leading to the success of democratization in terms of its consolidation and sustainability in one post-communist country, such as in the case of Estonia and the factors which indeed have halted the democratization process in another post-communist country such as Albania. As two typical post-communist countries, Estonia and Albania have some similarities while being different from each other in some respects. While both countries have experienced political and economic transitions towards democracy and free-market capitalism, their democratic development has varied considerably.

With the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the late '80s and early '90s, the two countries selected as case studies in this thesis are diverse but share a similar set of historical experiences. They are byproducts of the system that dominated Europe's politics less than 100 years ago. They are relative latecomers to state- and nation-building and, for that matter, to democracy. They have a common heritage of communist rule. After the collapse of communism in 1989-90; they both embarked on processes of democratization (Berglund, Sten., Ekman, Joakin., Dregan-Krause, Kevin., Knutsen, Terje., 2013, 11). They have some commonalities. They share a historical past communist regime that lasted about 40 years, and they were both within the sphere of influence of the European Union. However, Estonia is a member of the UE, while Albania still hopes for closer cooperation with the EU.

My central thesis statement maintains that democratization is expected to take place when specific preliminary parameters (i.e., political culture and political attitudes) exist among citizens and that while they exercise these rights and obligations, the spread of autocracy becomes difficult and helps build up the democracy.

The thesis statement is outlined in detail below.

The lack of democratic traditions in the Albanian political culture has had a negative impact on the formation of democratic leaders. This, in turn, has resulted in a lack of inclusion of democratic values during the political decision-making process after the '90s, thus obstructing the road to democratization in the country.

I assert that democratic political culture, political attitudes, and behavior did exist in Estonia, and this is one of the promoters that helped democracy. Meanwhile, Albania does not have a political culture heritage, and this is one of the reasons for the unsuccessful democratization process in this country. More precisely, the premise states that the existence or absence of a political culture has affected the leaders' democratic orientations in both countries. The absence of a democratic political culture has left behind democratically oriented leaders in post-90's Albania, and their decisions have not supported the progressive development of this process. Meanwhile, in Estonia, the existence of a democratic political culture has influenced the formation of democratic leaders, and their decisions after the 1990s have made it possible to overcome this process successfully and today to rank as a fully democratized country.

To test the hypothesis, the research pursues a case-based approach that concentrates on the orderly gathering and correlation of evidence in two cases to answer the research question and investigate theories. As other authors have specified, "case-based research allows you to look at the complexities of specific cases and can yield interesting findings that contribute important knowledge in the field of international relations" (Roselle & Spray, 2008, 32). To restate, as two typical post-communist countries, Estonia and Albania share commonalities and at the same time are distinguished from each other. Their democratic development processes – defined in terms of institutionalized democracy – have been widely different. Estonia has established a stable democratic political system, while Albania has faced a far more troubled and uneven democratization process.

## 1.6 Preliminary Literature Review

This preliminary literature review demonstrates that many causes (e.g., legacy) have affected the process of democratization in the post-communist period. According to this historical approach, every country determines its political future trajectory. Some authors have observed certain elements of the legacy that might facilitate democratization and them accurately in one of their preposition state that “democratic experience in post-communist democracies varies with regime legacies and institutions” (Kithchelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, & Toka, 1999, 383). The *institutional* choice is another approach that has been used often in the post-communist democratization literature. This perspective is a scholarly response to the somewhat cynical way in which reliance determinism has utilized numerous legacy factors, the vast majority of which have negative outcomes on post-communist democratization (Ackerman, 1992). Another theoretical viewpoint related to post-communist democratization focuses on the role of internal factors such as political actors and their decision-making processes. McFaul (2002) sustains his theoretical viewpoint in this manner on the role of political leadership, attesting that the political belief systems of political leaders made the greatest difference in terms of the diversity of post-communist political directions (Mitropolitski, 2012).

As previously noted in different theories, the democratization process is an extremely complex subject. The complexity derives from the many-sided quality that gets not just from the definition of the word democracy, banter still on, yet, in addition, on the hypothesis about the causes, the deciding factors and the actors that trigger the transition from an authoritarian regime to a more democratic one. From a logical perspective, an examination of the features that impact both the beginning of a democratic process and the likelihood that it will have a positive outcome comprehended at any rate in the success of some fundamental civil and political rights. These rights, although not in themselves adequate to declare inevitable democratization, represent concrete spaces which encourage further movements of democratic expansion.

Among the factors that trigger or hinder this process, many scholars would list the following:

*Socio-economic development.* Seymour Lipset emphasized the importance of the level of socio-economic development as a general condition for democratization. According to authors

like Przeworski and Limongi Lipset made the correlation between democracy and economic development. They state that “Lipset’s observation that democracy is related to economic development, which first advanced in 1959, has generated the largest body of research in any topic in comparative politics” (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000, 78-79).

*Form of government:* From recent studies, it is doubtless that a parliamentary system associated with a proportional electoral system is the best option for promoting a democratic transition regime, for increasing the likelihood of guaranteeing representation and wide alliances, and for improving the chance to resolve profound conflicts. Authors such as “Linz (1994) and Lijphart (1994) have argued that democracy is stronger when elites opt for a parliamentary rather than a presidential system” (Grugel & Bishop, 2013, 117).

*Parties and political systems:* The institutionalization of parties helps with the democratic transition, as these parties are an instrument through which the pro-democracy elite can neutralize the most antagonistic social hierarchies, struggling alliances with forces, and groups initially opposed to democracy, or representing categories subalterns and ethnic minorities, facilitating a democratic solution to the political conflict. According to Grugel (2002), parties have traditionally been regarded as the classic intermediary organization of liberal democracy that link citizens with the state and party system. For many years, they were thought of as the main vehicle for political participation.

From this point of view, the following factors facilitate democratization.

*Middle class:* The middle class can encourage democracy. However, it can likewise be an obstructive factor if the state controls the primary financial assets that determine the achievement or failure of monetary activities, thus being detached or even unfriendly to the majority of democracy. One of the scholars who supports the notion that middle-class influences democratization is Moore (1966), who associates democracy with the rise of the middle class.

*Civil society:* Civil society is that capacity determined by the state of free association among citizens based on preferences, different ideologies that stand as a bulwark for government power, in whatever regime it is implemented. It contributes to the consolidation of the democratic regime. According to Grugel (2002, 93) the term civil society is as of now broadly utilized and infers the involvement of citizens and civil society organizations in solid activities that help support and promote democracy and democratization.

*Religion:* Democracy has long been identified directly with Western countries and, consequently, with the Christian religion, while it has been hindered in societies with different religious and cultural traditions. Regarding the correlation between religion and democracy, various authors have contradictory opinions. Some embrace the concept that some religions foster democracy and vice versa, while other authors claim that religion does not have an impact on democracy. Regarding this argument, what is clear from the existing studies is the fact that they have overlooked the effect that individuals or institutions have on the development of democracy (Hoffman, 2012, 4).

*Political culture:* Political culture helps to strengthen both the advent and the consolidation of the democratic regime. At the point when it is united with the persistence of the rule of law and financial prosperity, it provides the legitimacy necessary for democracy to avoid the authoritarian backlash. The fundamental components of a political culture that leads towards democracy are a social premise of solidarity and common trust and the ability to separate the regime from the elected government. According to many authors, political culture determines the process of democratization. Putnam (1994) “established a strong correlation between the predominant political culture and the nature and quality of the political regime”. The author emphasized that the higher the social capital, the more functional democratic institutions will be. Although political culture has been studied and identified as an approach for explaining the factors of democratization, we find an absence of case studies that analyze the determination of this factor and its straightforward correlation with democratization.

*International factors:* The effect of international factors is very important to the democratization of a country. This is both because it stimulates the start of the democratization process in other countries and because these countries have always been models to imitate, as of the European Union countries for those belonging to the Eastern European communist bloc. The European Union has played a very important role both through its actions that have supported democratization and its widespread monitoring of the progress of these countries.

From a larger perspective, we can group all the factors that lead to the democratization of a country into a set of major approaches that, in this dissertation, will be classified into ‘the structural approach’ and ‘the agent-oriented approach.’ Also, according to Grugle (2002, 46), most explanations of democratization “draw upon elements of three distinct approaches: modernization theory; historical sociology (sometimes called structuralism); and transition

theory (also known as agency theory).” As he also stated, “sometimes a distinction is made simply between structuralist theories (modernization and historical sociology) and agency approaches (transition theory) because of their very different positions regarding structure and agency” Grugel (2002, 46). The author has also described the modernization theory and the historical sociology into the structural approach by identifying their peculiarities.

Historical sociology is a kind of “‘macrohistory’ in which history is ‘the instrument by which structures are discovered invisible to the unaided eye’” (Collins, 1991, 1). Because of this emphasis on structures, the approach is sometimes termed ‘structuralism’ (Grugel, 2002). According to Grugel (2002), “historical sociology and ‘structuralism’ are often used interchangeably in democratization studies.” Furthermore, he emphasizes that “unlike the wave approach of modernization theory, historical sociology identifies factors that are distinctive to particular cases” (Grugel, 2002, 52).

On the other hand, the theory of modernization attributes an almost causal relationship to the phenomenon. When supported by solid statistical data, it sustains that intermediate levels of development are fundamental both for the establishment of a democracy and for democratic consolidation. Many scholars of this paradigm agree that economic characteristics influence the capacity of one country to become and stay democratic. Some of the economic conditions that favor democracy are economic equality, a high standard of living, and capitalism. The first author who made a theoretical connection between the level of development and the possibility that a country could be democratic was Lipset (1959). Lipset hypothesized that the more developed a country is, the higher the probability that the democratization process will be successful. He states that “the more well to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy” (Lipset, 1959, 75). Lipset highlights that for a democratic order to endure, it must possess adequate legitimacy as perceived by its citizens. This is achieved by strong economic development.

At the same time, based on the theoretical aspects of Marx, Lipset highlighted the crucial role of a strong middle class in the society. This feature is important both to the economic aspect the socio-political aspect of a country. In this sense, for Lipset, modernization is determined by changing social conditions in such a manner that they support the development of a democratic culture. Thus, workers in developed countries have more developed human capital and are more open to democratic values of tolerance than workers in developing countries.

From this perspective, Lipset's modernization theory focuses not only on economic development in terms of GDP but also on the development of human capital. In essence, aspects of economic development such as urbanization, well-being, and education, in Lipset's thesis, serve as intermediary variables that are part of a wider spectrum of favorable conditions for democratization.

As per Lipset's explanation of the conditions of democracy, economic development is a variable that has drawn the attention of many researchers. The development theory was enriched by other scholars, such as Rostow (1960), who had theorized the transformation from economic modernization to democracy as direct and essential. According to Rostow, the processes of economic development and modernization occur through five stages of development. The first stage is the so-called traditional society, a society in which the overwhelming majority of the population operates in the primary sector in a livelihood and self-consumption economy based on reciprocal and redistributive relations. The fifth stage is identified as the age of consumerism and mass production. During this stage, new services are available to people's needs. These services provide added value to existing activities while ensuring a high level of well-being.

Recalling that political culture is part of the structural approach, Lipset's work was also contemporaneous with theory-building efforts by a number of scholars around the relationship between political culture and democratization (Pye and Verba 1965; Almond and Verba 1963). Several scholars have explained modernization as also being a cause of a direct correlation between democracy and a political culture that ensures the participation of the masses in an organized manner, thus influencing the way in which the elite govern. Although noticeably distant from Lipset's theoretical point of view, the theoretical argument of the political culture school points out the difficulties that societies overcome to become modern. Starting from this circumstance, Lipset's thesis was accepted by the authors of the political culture school because it combined material progress and democracy with modernity.

Political culture studies constitute the perceptions and political actions of a society. In this sense, the political culture of a country influences the way in which it is governed and defines the form of government. The notion of 'political culture' was adopted by Gabriel Almond in 1960 and was subsequently elaborated by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963. The study of Almond and Verba struggled to determine how individuals influence the political system and vice versa. More precisely, "political culture refers specifically to the pattern of

individual attitudes and orientation towards politics among members of the political system” (Gabriel Almond & Sydney Verba, 1963). Almond and Verba classify the dimensions of political orientation into three categories: cognitive, affective, and evaluative. They emphasize that political culture also shapes individuals’ political behavior and that this can shape the effects that this individual has on the political system.

As Almond and Verba (1963) have stated, a sustainable democratic system can be developed into a society where a country’s political culture is congruent with its democratic institutions. The opposite happens in cases where political culture and democratic institutions do not correspond with one another. In these cases, the consolidation of democracy in that country becomes more complex.

Political culture is important and has a direct correlation with democratic values, which “are basic to the legitimation of democratic regimes” (Klingermann, Fuchs, & Zielonka, 2006, 4). As the authors notice for democracy to endure and to develop, it is normally insufficient to appreciate ideal domestic and foreign structural conditions. Nor is it enough to set up institutions. So, with an expanding assortment of empirical knowledge, it has turned out to be clear that it is hard to comprehend the paths of democracy without considering political culture

Structuralism and all the theories about structuralism allow the detection of necessary universal structures that somehow condition and outline the situation in which democratization occurs. Structuralism aims at bringing out the significance of economic condition and social forces in this process (Grugel & Bishop, 2013). Even though structuralism represents one of the two major approaches in democratization studies, some scholars have contested it. It has been expressed that structuralism does not adequately explain democratization: “the major shortcoming of structural approach is clearly its non-diachronic character which describes the conditions of a democracy’s stability, but not the way to achieve those conditions. It does explain democracy after its establishment, not the time of its coming about” (Šimral, 2007. 10).

In an attempt to explain democratization, another approach was studied in the field. This alternative perspective emphasizes the importance of diverse agents that, through their beliefs and choices, affect the democratization process. This is called the transition or agency approach. Grugel has emphasized that the difference between structuralism and agency approach lies because in the second one, the devoted actors play a crucial role in establishing democracy. Having said this, once again it is estimated the role and the impact of the political actors on the

democratization process. This manner, this approach highlights the link between agency and “interaction of the elite” (Grugel, 2002, 59).

No culture can totally confront a democratic system. Actually, some societies are virtually impervious to the democratic virus. However, at last, all nations can end up becoming democratic if they choose to become democratic and if the leadership has the will to implement democratic decisions. This is noteworthy because it is one message that appears both in transitology and in the agent-oriented approach.

The political leadership is a driving force of democratization. Schumpeter has emphasized the influence of leaders in this process. According to Schumpeter’s point of view, individual political motivation and determination isn’t considered and can’t be viewed as independent as long as it is impacted by the proceeding with political propaganda of the leaders and political parties. Therefore, the implements of this political framework have had the impact of prompting a separation of voters with the political consequences of their actions (Mackie, 2001, 128). Many authors who support the hypothesis that democratic leadership can trigger democratization. Such authors like Diamond, Lijphart and Linz have declared that “elites could bring democracy into being and hold it together as long as they are tolerant, moderate, ready to compromise, pacific, successful at finding solutions to pressing problems, and, above all, convinced that democracy is a better form of government than any other” (Coppedge, 2012, 82). From the opinion of the above-mentioned authors, the importance of the leader’s orientation toward democratic norms and values can be noted as a prerequisite for establishing democratic order in a country. Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán extend Schumpeter’s argument about the importance of decisions made by leaders, but they focus most on their normative and value orientation. The authors argue that normative preferences for democracy or autocracy may drive actors to support a certain regime typology, although this would endanger the profitability and interest of personal tires. (López, 2015). Even though this approach is essential to democratization studies, it has limitations. Generally, actor-oriented theories tend to focus the whole process on the competences of a single political actor. The democratization process is very complex, and it cannot be justified by the presence or the lack of a single cause. Both approaches are equally important in the studies on democratization, although both of them have limitations. Thus, they are unable to explain why the democratization process gets stuck in some cases and why it is successful in others.

Considering their limitations, the two approaches, either structural approaches or actor-oriented approaches on their own cannot be used to explain the democratization process. Both types of approaches must be synthesized for the democratization process to be analyzed appropriately in a case study. Such a duality would bring benefits to a study carrying out a complete analysis and comparison, which would essentially emphasize the causes of the process in a given case and would not be affected by the limitations of the approach.

In order to fill in the theoretical and empirical gap that the structuralism and the actor-oriented approach have created in the democratization studies, I intend to theoretically support the study by using the ANT approach.

The influence of this approach is because it permits the agency/structure division to be avoided while giving clarifications to the procedure of democratization. Furthermore, this approach tries to incorporate the structure -agency polarity in the social sciences, giving expression in this way to the “relationship between human and non-human as “circulatory”” (Ajagbe, 2016). In this synthesis of approaches, one of the theories that I propose to introduce is Leader’s democratic normative orientation, as presented by Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán. In order to understand regime change and survival, they hypothesized their perspective, which mostly focuses on the impact that political leaders have on the outcome of political development. In this study, I focus on this variable (leaders’ democratic normative orientations) because, this approach “is situated between structural and contingent actions or agency approaches to studying political regimes” (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 29). As such, these theoretical explanations are the basis of my dissertation, which focuses on structural factors, such as political culture influencing, and agent-oriented approach factors, such as political leaders’ orientations. Even though they disagree regarding the direct connection that culture has with leaderships’ normative orientations, they cannot exclude their influence since they state that “structure and culture influence actors’ choices of political regime, and, in some contexts, they exert a powerful influence” (Mainwaring. S & Pérez-Liñán.A, 2013, 30). This line of argument appears in my hypothesis that political culture directly or indirectly influences leaders’ abilities to make democratic decisions that directly affect political outcomes. On the other hand, political attitudes, because they belong to a structural approach, do not happen to change from one moment to another. Instead, it takes time and happens gradually.

The authors, when referring to leaders and their normative orientation, mainly focused on the parties, as they include both leaders and followers. Also, as stated, “under democracy, the largest parties are important actors because they connect leaders and activists, party identifiers, and other supporters” (Mainwaring & Perez - Linan, 2013, 31). Following this, in this thesis, I choose to particularly identify the leaders of Albania and Estonia who came into power during the 1990s. An examination of their decisions and democratic orientations can be used to find the correlation between these variable and democratization.

### **1.7 Anticipated Contributions of the Present Research**

This thesis makes a modest contribution which will serve to create a better understanding of the specifics of the political cultures of Albania and Estonia. This study will provide an empirical analysis and will attempt to explain how political culture could promote democracy development. Its importance is related to empirical innovation and its contributions to theory. My study follows a line of documents and reports compiled by international organizations, such as Freedom House, World Bank, and the EU, which evidence either the existence or the absence of democratic institutions and analyzes the approach of societal beliefs in political institutions in two ex-communist countries (Estonia and Albania) by making a comparison between them.

This Ph.D. research aims to contribute to the field of studies on democratization in general and, specifically, theoretical aspects of political culture and its importance in the process of democratization. A contribution will be provided by focusing specifically on an analysis of the situation in Albania and Estonia, which are both different and similar regarding their historical pasts. A topic much studied by various researchers is on focus as a very important instrument to be studied in the field of democracy. Also, analyzing the situation in Albania by comparing it to a country that has already democratized could help us to determine the problems and truly provide explanations for some phenomena that characterize certain problems in Albania.

This Ph.D. thesis makes an important contribution to our understanding of the specifics of the political culture of CEE countries in their post-communist trajectories. A satisfactory theoretical explanation for democracy as well as for its failure would be useful because it could help formulate conscious strategies of democratization and because it would provide a theoretical basis on which to make predictions of democracy in the Albanian case. In addition to the

empirical contribution to democratization and the analysis of the political culture in a long-term period for Albania and Estonia, this thesis makes theoretical contributions.

In the broad theoretical debate among many researchers around the process of democratization, many logical artifacts have been put into the function of motives behind this process, affecting its success or failure. The project presents a very interesting comparative case and brings added value to the literature about the democratization of the political culture, mainly as a project that tends to combine two major theoretical approaches that explain democratization. The approaches that cover the theoretical aspects are the structural approach (which is reflected in the political culture variable) and the agent-oriented approach (which is represented by leaders' democratic orientations). Since these two approaches are not often combined in studies on democratization, it can be concluded that this thesis provides added theoretical value to democratization studies.

In order to make comparisons between the two countries with common features but with different results, the framework of democratization studies is narrowed, leaving as a political cause only a political influence that has a far-reaching impact on the orientations of the leaders, and the latter has a direct impact on this process through their decision-making. Therefore, this project first seeks to solve the dilemma of why Albania is not already democratized seeing the cause in another dimension from what has been mostly dealt with in the existing Albanian Democratization literature, which has been mostly associated with the development paradigm.

The present thesis develops another notion, analyzing democratization through the lens of political culture. This analysis is carried out by exercising an observation of the identification of the elements of the political culture found in both states during the period of state formation.

Although the study focuses on two concrete cases, it may generate generalizations regarding how political culture directly or indirectly affects this process. In addition, the findings presented here could be applied in other comparative study cases.

## **1.8 Limitations of the Research**

Like any other study, the study at hand has various inevitable limitations. One of the major limitations of this study is the difficulty of finding information about the political culture of both countries under research, especially during the communist period. This limitation occurred because there is a lack of information about the attitudes, beliefs, or political culture for

both countries examined in the current study before the 1990s. Political behavior records seem to have started during the third wave of World Value Survey.

The study will benefit from peer-reviewed publications and reports obtained as secondary sources. Studies on political culture and the correlation it has with the democratization in Albanian society are numerous. However, not all studies on democratization in Albania are related to political culture and the study of leaders' normative preferences for democracy.

From a theoretical point of view, in order to answer the question of why Albania has not yet been able to democratize – and in an attempt to find and analyze the causes of the current failure of this process – the structural approach (political culture variable) and the agent-oriented approach (leaders' normative preferences for democracy) will be combined with the ANT approach. Empirical studies on the latter are lesser-known in democratization studies in Albania. This may be another limitation of the present study.

Another limitation of this thesis is related to the measurement of the behavior and decision-making of Albanian leaders. It was difficult to collect information on leaders' behavior and analyze their decisions both when they were in power and in the opposition. Considering the small number of studies conducted in Albania on leaders' behavior and the measurement of the normative preference for democracy, the analyses of different authors regarding various behaviors are considered. Regarding the examination of leaders' behavior, the risk of subjectivity in the collected analyses may compromise the findings of the present study.

Despite these limitations, this study can be used to further explore the context of countries which still have fragile democracies and which have failed to democratize partly due to an inability to find the reasons for this failure. The analysis of this process through the lens of political culture would be useful for comparing and performing a comprehensive analysis of civil involvement, democratization, and its development.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theories of Democratization (Various Theories that Explain Democratization)**

This chapter provides an understanding and definitions of the most important existing debates in the field of democratization. It outlines the process of democratization by identifying the various factors affecting it. By regrouping these factors, I dwell on two main perspectives: Structuralism Approach and Agent-based Approach.

In the first phase, the analysis of these two approaches and the arguments that support their explanations of the process of democratization are identified and described. Also, a third approach (i.e., the ANT) is introduced. This theory integrates the Structuralism approach and Agent-based approach into one theory, thus demanding a reiteration of the argument that neither of the above approaches, on its own, can explain the democratization process of the two countries under investigation. The theoretical discussion related to the present study involves the issues of identifying the components of theoretical families and focusing on the explanations that these theoretical bases provide regarding the process of democratization in Albania and Estonia.

In the second part of this chapter, the analysis concentrates on the comprehensive interpretation of the two major approaches on which the theoretical framework of my thesis is based and, subsequently, to the political culture that reinforces the argument that political culture does not belong to an agent that can promote the democratization process but that it belongs to a group of individuals who constantly promote this culture and inherit it throughout generations. In this part, the other family theory appurtenant to the Agent-oriented approach is further analyzed. This analysis emphasizes the role of leaders as an essential agent in the transition toward democracy. It is argued that when leaders make democratic political choices, they accelerate this process, like in Estonia, and otherwise slow down the process, as demonstrated in Albania.

In the third part, I focus on both the interpretation of the family of political culture theories and the explanation of the leadership theories. I also examine how each has affected the process of democratization in Albania and Estonia. This phase of the analysis is carried out through the exploration of political culture components and through the analysis of leaders' normative preferences and their impact on the democratization process in Albania and Estonia.

## **2.2 Literature Review: How Different Theories Explain Democratization The Evolution of Democratization Theories**

Much research on political approaches has struggled to interpret the issues associated with the democratization process from diverse aspects, while many opinions have surfaced related to the causes and factors that encourage the process of democratization. Researchers like Daniel Lerner (1968) and Samuel M. Lipset (1959-1960) are supporters of the theory and the paradigm of development. According to this perspective, democratization and economic growth are associated with each other as causal factors.

This approach has been one of the foremost that has influenced most of the democratization premises and has been supported by many researchers in this field. Many authors agree that several prerequisites are required for an inherent situation to arise that favors the evolution of democratic processes in particular countries. Vanhanen assumes what also another author (Sanction, 1987) observed that conditions favoring democracy provide a high level of the economic development, a powerful middle class, such virtues like respect and tolerance, the existence of independent groups and institutions, a market-oriented economy and of course, the elites ready to release tire power anytime (Vanhanen, 1997, 11).

Many other authors and researchers contest this approach in some respects and present other causes as prerequisites for the development of democracy. For example, Dahl (1971), and Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1989) consider among others, such components important, like historical factors, political culture, and political leadership. Also, Gulliermo O. Donell and Philippe C. Schmitter (1991) observe the fundamental role of political leadership especially in the concluding stages of the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy.

From different perspectives, there are different approaches to explaining the causes of democratization. In Lipset's (1959) approach, he confirms that there is a connection between a sustainable democracy and other factors, such as welfare, industrialization, and urbanization. According to him, the level of economic development of a country influences the establishment of a democracy. However, Lipset did not associate his theory of democratization only with economic development. He also included other factors such as political culture and relevant institutions as necessary prerequisites of democracy (Lipset, 1994).

Meanwhile, other authors (e.g., Larry Diamond and Gary Marks, 1992), emphasize the importance of economic development and refer to evidence that shows with precision and firmness a stable contributory association between economic development and democracy. Diamond is one of Lipset's theory's supporters regarding the direct association between economic growth and the democratization of a country. According to him, the relationship between these two variables became even stronger after the presentation by the United Nations Development Program (1991), which presented the development indicator, the Human Development Index (HDI). According to Diamond, a country's HDI level can accurately predict the GDP, which correlates with the level of development and, as a consequence, provides a clear classification of a democratic country.

Another researcher, Robert A. Dahl (1971), suggests that democratization cannot be interpreted by whichever particular causal factor and that several distinct conditions require to be examined. He mentioned seven distinct groups of factors that affect this process; if these conditions are present in that form, a polyarchy could be established. The possibility for a country to settle and maintain a permanent polyarchy is considerable.

Dahl expanded his studies in 1989 by introducing a direct correlation between polyarchy and democracy under defined circumstantial conditions but not in any single dominant explanatory factor. He underlined that the first condition is that violent coercion is dissolved or neutralized. The second condition is related to the structure of the society. Dahl specifies that in a pluralistic society, wealth, education, income, and status represent a suitable environment for the development of democracy. As a consequence, these types of societies distribute power, thus preventing the creation of monopolies. The third condition of homogeneity accelerates polyarchy and the contrary, subcultures disfavor its creation. The fourth cause is related to the attitudes of political actors. A country can develop polyarchic institutions if it develops a political culture, especially among political activists. The fifth condition is international influence, which can help to establish polyarchic institutions. Dahl's theory of polyarchal democracy has been evaluated as the most powerful, persuasive and advising theories in democratization studies (Krouse, 1982).

Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (1988-90) have attempted to explain what conditions influence the strengthening of democracy in different cultural and historical contexts. They support the theory that many factors could affect the development or obstruction of democratic institutions. They referred to 10 theoretical dimensions that are related

to democracy: "political culture; regime legitimacy and effectiveness; historical development (in particular, the colonial experience); class structure and the degree of inequality; national structure (ethnic, racial, regional, and religious cleavage); state structure, centralization, and strength (including the state's role in the economy, the roles of autonomous voluntary associations and the press, federalism, and the role of the armed forces); political and constitutional structure (parties, electoral systems, the judiciary); political leadership; development performance; and international factors" (Vanhanen, 1997).

Samuel P. Huntington (1984) has argued that certain socio-economic conditions affect the development of democracy, but he in addition underlines the significance of the political process of democratization. In terms of prerequisites, he underscores that the development of democracy is reinforced by the strongest standards of economic well-being, an absence of severe disparities in prosperity and profit, stronger social fusion, a market-oriented economy, influences from democratic countries, and the existence of a culture that is less monistic and more tolerant toward democratic values, such as diversity and compromise.

Huntington (1991) tried to determine the stages of democratization by showing the reasons for this process for each phase. He defended his thesis that the causes of democratization fluctuate from one country to another and from one period to another. Despite all the research conducted in different countries, he could not find a common independent variable that could make clear democratization in all countries. This is what makes this process so fascinating for most scholars studying democratization nowadays. The following propositions summarize Huntington's arguments:

No single factor is sufficient to explain the development of democracy in all countries or in a single country; No single factor is necessary for the development of democracy in all countries; Democratization in each country is the result of a combination of causes; The combination of causes producing democracy varies from country to country; The combination of causes generally responsible for one wave of democratization differs from that responsible for other waves; The causes responsible for the initial regime changes in a democratization wave are likely to differ from those responsible for later regime changes in that wave (Huntington, 1991, 2002).

Raymond Duncan Gastil, opposing Huntington, suggests that socio-economic prerequisites are less important factors in the development of democracy. Instead, he proposes that the future of democracy will remain within the framework of a war that is essentially driven by ideas (Vanhanen, 1997, 17). Gastil (1985), while trying to conceptualize democracy, created

the Comparative Survey of Freedom, which sought to help determine and measure democracy. According to the author “judging the state of democracy in the past or present is not a study of ideas but of behaviours” (Gastil, 1985, 161). In Freedom House’s Freedom Comparative Survey Gastil suggested that democracy in certain countries could be measured by the effectiveness of spreading the concepts that promote democracy. In addition to casting a new proposal for the measurement of democratization, he refuted some of the ideas of several previous researchers of the political sciences who, for years had emphasized the role of political culture or other random factors in their efforts to institutionalize the concept of democracy (Vanhanen, 1997).

Throughout the following years, and along the various routes of the democratization process in different countries, whether under the influence of different factors that scholars specified above, it has been observed that many countries have been democratized. Meanwhile, others have not, and such countries risk turning into autocratic regimes. In this thesis, the debate on why the democratization process was not successful in Albania is concentrated mainly on political culture.

Various studies on democratization in Albania assert that citizens are not aware that exercising their political rights could contribute to the democratization process. As stated in a study conducted by Freedom House, a score of 4 out of 7 was given to Albania in terms of its democratic performance from one year before its experienced regime change until 1994 (Horowitz, 2006). This demonstrates that Albania has made significant progress in the first phase of its transition. Still, its transition remains insufficient.

The analysis of the process then shifts to an examination of internal factors, such as political culture because the political system changed, thus complementing some prerogatives of democracy both in economic terms through market liberalization and free competition, as well as in the political one, through party pluralism and free and fair elections, but Albania still remains classified as a hybrid regime. As specified by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010), free and fair elections are necessary conditions for democracy. However, such elections would never be consolidated unless there is sufficient political participation, a supportive democratic political culture, and an efficiently working government.

The debate on democratization is not a novelty in political studies. This debate has been ongoing for the last two decades, which has determined major democratic developments, both theoretically and empirically. In this thesis, the viewpoints of various authors described above

are grouped into two main theoretical approaches (i.e., the Structural Approach and the Agent-oriented Approach).

The structural approach involves the process of democratization under the prospects of modernization. According to this approach, democratic change comes because of economic and social developments. The structural theory explains a result by referring to existing factors or conditions that are resistant to change. As such, it does not refer to an actor that, as a result of their actions, contributes to immediate changes that have a specific outcome or an effect on the democratization process. According to structuralism, the likelihood of democratic transformation is ingrained in the construction of a social structure. According to this approach, structural changes in society are particularly important in explaining the causes of democratization. The structuralist approach considers the establishment of democracy as the product of the combination of a supportive framework of cultural social and economic circumstances. Consequently, Almond and Verba, in particular, contend that the standard of financial growth and progress of the society isn't the main real determinant of democratic success; particular social attitudes are likewise noteworthy for democratic transformation (Almond, 1963).

The cultural requirement was further reflected by many authors, including Edvardsen (1987, 113), who argues that the culture of a nation can justify the choice for a particular mode of transition. Another author, David Laitin (1986) stresses the position of the political culture in setting top priorities in the policy-making process from an anthropological point of view (Ajagbe, 2016). In addition, the author elucidates on the specifics of the theories on social systems by defining the association between cultural interpretations and political and economic performance. Laitin further contends that values, implications, inclinations, and standards are inserted in emblematic structures or generally as he calls "culture" through which people are directed to adjust their influence and prosperity. However, to determine that this somehow governs political preferences is to rely on the structuralist theory that determines that culture is so deeply rooted and potent that it conditions and regulates political and economic performance. (Laitin, 1986, 11).

From what it is presented above, it can be gathered that political culture is part of the structural approach and that through the disclosure of its viewpoints, it manages to explain the causes of democratization. By analyzing political culture in Albania and Estonia, the causal

relationship between the independent variable (political culture) and the dependent variable (democratization) can be found.

However, this perspective and this approach will not analyze the extensive picture of this process in both these countries. So, I will also analyze the Agent-oriented approach, which is represented by the independent variable of leaders' normative preference after 1990. The investigation will be conducted to determine how the democratic preferences of leaders are oriented toward a democratic political framework and how both independent variables can influence the process. In the related cases examined in the thesis, the successful combination of these variables has contributed to a successful case of democratization in Estonia, while the opposite has led to the failure of the process in Albania.

In the previous paragraph, some viewpoints related to structural approaches were listed. Contrary to the structural approach, the agent-oriented approach links political developments to the choices, behaviors, and strategies of key political actors. Agent-oriented approaches do not correspond with structural approaches, as they focus on the actions of political actors. These actors try to operate within the boundaries of established conditions and take advantage of the opportunities offered. Stepan puts emphasis on the importance of the actors in the unavoidable decisions they make without neglecting the role of the structural approach. He asserts that despite the fact that structural components can be identified as generally being instrumental to regime change, the pressure put on a regime by them must "be brought to a crisis point by actors" (Stepan, 1978, 120).

Agent-oriented approaches differ from structural approaches in terms of how they understand the association between structures and actors. Contrary to the structuralist approach, the Agent-oriented approach considers non-generating structural factors as being conditional on the actors themselves and their actions. According to Mahoney-Snyder, "structural factors are treated as barriers external to actors which may or may not stand between them and achievement of their pre-existing goals and interests" (Mahoney-Snyder, 2000, 217). In this context, Bratton and van de Walle (1997) underscores that transition is driven by deliberate critical decisions of exceptional political actions and not by organized institutional structures that are the very product of individual's attitudes.

In this thesis, the Agent-Oriented Approach supports the study of the leaders of the most significant political parties, who through their constituents, whether democratic or not, have sped

up or slowed down the process of democratization. In referring to the democratic preferences of a leader, I define a leader as democratic in the entirety of his thoughts, actions, and choices.

Democratic political leadership can be considered as being characterized by the presence of a social process in which the actors engage in specific situations or issues in order to reconstruct their way of thinking and to act in such a way that these problems that result in collective actions are transformed to benefit the citizens while consistently respecting norms and a regular decision-making process (Choi, 2007). In addition, the same author states that people of influence in nondemocratic societies are given places of power without an unmistakable warrant. Meanwhile, in democratic systems, political positions are available to whoever is by all accounts the best individual to lead.

However, although these two approaches contradict each other in principle, they do not diminish the importance they have in the theoretical explanation of the process of democratization. This is because the impact of structures varies in time and influences the individual's ability to maximize his achievements. As mentioned above, both approaches have contributed to the theoretical analysis, and none of them can explain the factors that hinder the process of democratization in Albania on their own. This because no single theory can assess why two places with similar historical pasts have followed different trajectories on the path toward democratic development.

This thesis merges these two approaches by linking an element of the Political Culture Family Theory, the political culture of the mass as a structural approach, and leaders' normative preference, which represents the Agent-Oriented Approach. This thesis, in its theoretical approach, seeks to fill in the gap that exists in previous democratization theories and to unite two important factors that help in the process of democratization. A structural factor, such as a political culture, and an attitude of an important agent, such as the leadership of a political party or the leader of the party that has formed the government, and analyze whether he has had a democratic orientation during the exercise of its function as a leader in the choices he has made, or vice versa. This comparison will be made for both Estonia and Albania to validate the hypothesis of this work, which establishes a direct correlation between two independent variables (the political culture of the masses and leaders' democratic orientations). Both of these variables contribute to the process of democratization. It is clear how the structure and the

agency produce it, as a reflection of a reality where political activities operate within a particular context.

Both approaches have been reinforced and opposed by different authors who have supported their arguments despite the existence of many theoretical contradictions and debates. However, these two approaches remain the main approaches that try to explain the process of democratization. As implied by Riker (1980), social scientists have consistently had differing assumptions about the extent to which institutions and personal opinions and values affect social decisions. Therefore, the author summarizes the fact that, from one point of view, some individuals extremely influence these decisions, and from another point of view, indicates how the power of institutions over the decision-making process could not be overlooked. As for the author, the most generally cultivated perspectives to compromise with the investigation of democratization can be arranged inside the two principle perspectives of the sociologies. Those that feature organizations (structures) and those that underscore choices, values, and so forth (agencies). He further indicates that “interpersonal rules, that is, institutions, must affect social outcomes outcome just as much as personal virtues” (Riker, 1980, 432).

These approaches are adopted to describe the factors relevant to interpreting the process of democratization, but it can be noted that the trajectory of democratization is simultaneously subjected to structural factors such as political culture in the same manner as it is influenced by a specific agent, such as a leader with a democratic orientation who is capable of making democratic choices in order to produce a democratic regime. Neither the agent-oriented approach nor the structural approach can be used alone to understand the process of democratization and, consequently, to understand the factors that influence the outcome of this process. From an interaction perspective, therefore, both approaches are considered necessary to understand the processes of democratization.

Given the interaction of the two approaches mentioned above and the meaning they give to this process, another perspective will be considered in this thesis. This third approach merges these two theoretical approaches into one (the ANT). The ANT unites the influential factors that affect the process of democratization, political culture, and leaders’ normative preferences towards democratic choices. Giddens, a pioneer of the ANT introduced the notion of a system connecting structuralism and agency to defeat their ‘dualism’. Concepts such as agency and structure have particular relevance to the practice research. He repeatedly through his concepts of

agency reconfirms that the behaviors of individuals are relevant as long as they determine different outcomes. But, to a better test of a particular outcome, "we must attend to institutional embeddedness" (Whittington, 2015, 145).

Engaging in this debate, of the relationship as well as on the impact that this macro-micro perspective has on democratization, many authors, like James Mahoney, Richard Snyder, Ruth Berins Coller, etc, highlight the importance of integration of both structure and human agency in the explanation of the democratization process (Mahdavi, 2008). Although they introduced two of the factors that can support the embedding explanation of democratization, none of these theories is adequately conclusive as they are both relevant as the reason for democratization. The correlation between political culture and leaders' normative preferences in the context of democratization is preeminently explained through ANT's theory of connection between two components of diverse approaches. This translation of democratization prompts inquire about that undertakes to coordinate the structure and agency division in the social science studies. This debate banter in the social sciences rests on the micro and macro perspectives that are generally adopted to fathom the structure of social and political life and their association by social researchers (Riker, 1980). In this theoretical context, other authors, such as Durkheim, highlight the influence of structure as important for coordinating and conducting human action.

### **2.3 The Structural Approach in Democratization Studies**

It is necessary to address the structural approach's influence in this thesis since the political culture of Albania and Estonia, in a cohort time, from the time of nation- and state-building until the period of democratic transition will be analyzed and compared. The concept of the structural approach related to the thesis will be "...conceive structures as generative forces that define actors' interests and directly determine their behavior... [and] treat actors' identities and interests as defined by positions within the social structure and view choices and action as following from these positions" (Mahoney-Snyder, 2000, 184).

When contrasting the structural approach and agent-oriented approach, it is speculated that de facto structures exist before and determine and motivate the actors' decisions. The structural orientation of the actors is inevitable, and this orientation is usually directed by the structures set up in a society during previous generations. In practice, the structural approach could be implemented to the theory of democratization because of its natural usage in the theory

of modernization as pointed out in the academic works of Lipset (1959). This paradigm outlined the preconditions of economic development that are needed for democratic stability.

Although many authors support Lipset's thesis, they have concluded that such a narrow focus cannot be extended to explain the long-term effects on the process of democratization. The authors who strongly support this approach are Lipset, Almond, and Moore, among others. This approach assumes that economic development, class conflicts, social structure, political culture, and other social conditions rely on the root causes of the transition that has contributed to the democratization of Estonia or that could have been an obstacle by retarding the process of democratization in Albania. This approach concentrates on the macro-level of social or cultural conditions by searching for a cause-and-effect link between democratic developments and a correlation between economic development and democratization.

While Lipset concentrates on the subsequent relationship between economic well-being, industrialization, urbanization, as well as on education and the effects they have on democracy, various authors highlight the role of political culture. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) underscore that social orders whose citizens display a civic culture are bound to encounter a democratic transition and achieve stability. This proposition predicts that a system change is associated with social qualities. Social orders are bound to accomplish a continuous democracy if the citizens comprise a civic culture. Putnam (1994) supposes that citizens can take part in collective action and hold authorities responsible when they have social capital.

Putnam (1994) supposes that citizens can take part in collective action and hold authorities responsible when they have social capital. Putnam has asserted that the transition of the regime is related to the engagement of citizens in politics and civil society. If citizens take part in the collective action and in civil organizations, they develop social capital, and this enables them to make smart decisions while choosing public officials responsibly. Other researchers presume that civic education is an essential prerequisite for democracy. Civic culture can be instructed. Thus, members in city training projects are bound to take part in local government (Finkel, Horowitz, & Rojo-Mendoza, 2012). They suggest that enrolling in specific civic education programs will instill fundamental democratic values in citizens. Thus, they affirm that political culture can be developed or influenced by these aspects.

Political culture is an important factor that contributes to democratization. As part of a social heritage, it belongs in the structural approach and should be examined as a significant

component associated with democratization and development. Part of the hypothesis of this thesis refers to political culture as an essential part of this theoretical approach and as an independent variable that influences democratization. This component of the hypothesis sustains that democratization can occur only when specific preliminary parameters (e.g., political culture and political attitudes) are in place. Having specified this, I affirm that political culture, political attitudes, and behavior from a cultural perspective have been present and that democratic political attitudes were established before 1918. I propose that this is one advantage that Estonia has had over Albania.

Due to this argument, the structural approach sustains the theoretical basis at the macro level, as this perspective underlines that a structural theory clarifies a result by alluding to previous factors or conditions that are impervious to change, at least in the short term. A structural factor can shape a result in one of two ways. First, it can oblige or settle infeasible decisions and, thus, make certain results improbable. Second, it can rouse citizens, making certain decisions – and, consequently, certain results – more probable than others (Lust & Waldner, 2015).

In Estonia, there has been a tendency to shape political attitudes and promote civic engagement since the beginning of the state's independent history in 1918. Kulbok-Lattik (2015, 79) refers to the author Raun (2009) while mentioning that the modernization process in Estonia occurred at the commencement of the twentieth century. How the society would be described was prosperous in all its spheres. It was characterized by the rise of a new generation of Politicians, rapid development of urbanization and also an increase in the overall cultural and educational level. So in the prospectus, the society reflected progress in living standards.

As can be seen, in Estonia, since the period of state-building, there has been a tendency to create elements of political culture, with more youth studying abroad, urbanization tendencies, and more youth engaged in political culture. Meanwhile, during the same period in Albania, there was a chaotic situation, a lack of development, and total political confusion. Zickel and Iwaskiw described Albania's first political parties which emerged particularly after World War I like a group of outstanding individuals who tried continuously to create alliances to attain their personal ambitions. He further describes the situation in Albania as follows: "Albania's political confusion continued in the wake of World War I.... poor and remote, Albania remained decades

behind other Balkan countries in educational and social development” (Zickel & Iwaskiw, 1994, 24 - 26).

### **2.3.1 Political Culture Family Theory as a Structural Approach in the Explanation of the Democratization Process**

Theories of political culture explain the political products as a result of attitudes, beliefs, norms, practices, and rituals that are part of a society and serve as a border between adequate and inadequate behaviors, also sanctioned by the established rules in this society. Culture can produce political outcomes in a straight line by forming preferences regarding the forms of political practice or in a roundabout way by influencing the formation of such behaviors, such as the tendency to collaborate with others, which makes some forms of political practice much more productive than others.

Theories of political culture represent structural approaches for three important reasons. For one, societies incorporate expansive gatherings of individuals, or impressive subgroups inside a public, because when we allude to the term ‘culture,’ we don’t allude to a solitary person. Besides, culture is gained from the past as individuals take in social standards and qualities from their parents, educators, and constant connection with different individuals in public. Another important reason is that people can try to change social components throughout the years since, with everything considered, culture isn’t static. However, social changes are a moderate procedure, and they are not controlled or coordinated by the choices of specific leaders. Thus, based on the agent-oriented approach, culture is seen as having a given format in a society where agents stand in front of predefined values, norms, beliefs, and behaviors. In this context, if we refer to the political leader as a change agent, it is no doubt very important that especially in such changing processes as the democratization process. On the other hand, a leader with no supportive political culture can do little to initiate and maintain the success of this process.

Political-cultural theories include two broad types of causal interventions. Both are long-term and systematic: for the cultural factors that can change, it is unlikely that such a change happens quickly. We can forecast the efforts to directly change the culture of political leaders or the culture of citizens so that their actions can have an impact on political leaders. Political culture is closely related to the culture of a country, and these two factors have common features. Therefore, to analyze the definition of political culture, the term ‘culture’ must be encapsulated.

Culture is an old term appearing in many anthropological, social, and political studies. Based on this, it can be determined that Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) have collected about 160 definitions of culture (Boesch, 1991). This concept was first used in anthropology as a theme of social science. According to Edward. B. Taylor, “Culture is a complex wholeness which includes knowledge, behavior, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Stocking, 1962). In this context, according to Taylor’s definition, it is clear that culture is unavoidably linked to society and that the individuals of a particular society adopt specific behaviors because they are part of a society. In this way, the behaviors they adopt are referred to as that society’s culture.

Different anthropologists have given different definitions about the notion of culture. Fraus Boas has said that culture includes manifestations of all social behaviours of the community. Somehow, the behaviours of a certain group and the consequences of their actions because of these behaviours determine the way people act (Schoenmakers, 2012). Culture has many definitions and includes the behavior, thoughts, values, and beliefs of the members of a society. The diversity of definitions arises from the fact that culture “cannot be observed directly but can be inferred from its manifestations” (Schwartz, 2013). It is important to determine that culture can be transferred from one generation to another, making this way people living in a specific society obeying certain norms, accepting and valuing certain ideas more than others, just because they were born in that society. Clifford Geertz also conceptualize culture as “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz, 1993, 89). Culture does not consist of attitudes and opinions but of standards and principles by which political systems are perceived and judged (David & Simeon, 1979).

Although there are many very different definitions of ‘culture,’ most scholars agree that culture is a collective phenomenon that cannot be reduced to an individual one. All the definitions of culture agree in one crucial aspect: culture has a major influence on the actions of individuals. Therefore, based on this logic, beliefs, group values, ideas, and behavioral models should be the focus of scientific research on political culture. So, if we consider the interpretations that culture is shared among individuals of the same community, we can agree that culture is transmitted through socialization from one generation to another in a continuous

process. If we are to determine an association between culture and political culture, it is indisputable that political culture is an integral part of the general culture of a country.

The term 'political culture' refers to the beliefs, feelings, and values generally based on the nature of political systems. Political culture can provide an association between citizens and the government. Various countries have particular political-cultural attitudes that can help us realize how and why governments are structured according to different models that can sustain or prevent democracy. The analysis of the components of the political cultures in Albania and Estonia, which extended over different periods of time, help 'shed light' on the effect that political culture has on democratization.

The concept of political culture was first used by Gabriel Almond (1956). In 1963, Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba highlighted that there are three essential types of political cultures that can be applied to demonstrate why citizens engage in political processes. Based on their considerations, as well as on the peculiarities of the political culture of the countries they studied, they managed to divide political culture into several categories: "parochial political culture, subject political culture, and participant political culture" (Formisano, 2001).

In a parochial political culture, citizens are mainly uninformed and unconscious of their government, nor are they interested in political processes. In a subject political culture, citizens are informed and responsive to the diverse actions of their government and, in most cases, are involved in political processes. In a participatory political culture, citizens are informed and actively participate in political processes. This differentiation is significant in distinguishing different categories of political cultures and how they are related to civic engagement and awareness of the efficiency of a political framework.

Different speculations of political culture address how political culture flourishes and is moved between the generations through the process of socialization. This is best reflected in Seymour Martin Lipset's theory of formative events, which specifies the continuing implements produced by major developments occurring in a particular country since the time of nation-building (Seligman, Olson, & Zanna, 1996).

Political culture is an integrative part of the general culture of a specific society, as it is directly related to resource allocation. Different authors have given different definitions of the term 'political culture.' According to Almond and Verba (1989), "political culture refer[s] to the political orientations attitudes towards the political system and its various parts and attitudes

towards the role of self into a system” (Markovik, 2010). Almond and Verba also relate to the political system, which is interspersed and confined to feelings, cognition, and behavior, when defining political culture. According to these authors, the expectations of the behavior of citizens who are democratically oriented are to be active, involved in politics and behave with responsibility instead of making decisions oriented by their emotions.

It is expected of the citizens to be informed and make clear decisions based on the knowledge they have about their political system. As indicated by Almond and Verba, a country’s political culture is an overwhelming appropriation of examples toward political items. This orientation includes cognitive, effective, evaluative orientation and judgment and opinion about political objects (Pavone, 2014, 1). The idea of exploring the phenomenon of political culture, according to Almond and Verba, comes from the fact that individuals living in a particular political and social system share common ideas, attitudes, values, and other attributes.

Political culture is a significant instrument to use when analyzing the success and failure of a political system. Political culture is an important condition for the development of a democratic political system. Most political science researchers agree that democratic regimes require a generalized form of mass support and a broad acceptance of democratic values in order to survive. Therefore, a supportive political culture is crucial for the survival of democracy.

Following this argument, this thesis argues that democracies, like Estonia’s, have had a supportive political culture that helped the process of democratization since the formation of the nation period (Rahvamaja). Estonia’s community houses or what were called as Rahvamaja in their organizational agenda performed entertaining and cultural activities for the people. They were positioned in cities as well as in the countryside during the second half of the 19th century. These houses turned into institutional cultural hearths and supported Estonia’s development. Their activity was mostly focused on certain topics related to the matters of nation-building and other matters of public importance. Somehow, because of their activity, these centers marked the foundation of the civil society in Estonia (Kulbok Lattik, 2016).

As noted above, in the Estonian culture the interest and engagement of youth in public and political life came about early (i.e., during the nation-building period. Meanwhile, a supportive culture for democracy was missing in Albania. Thus, the Albanian people failed to build sustaining democratic regimes. In other words, due to heterogeneous impacts of political culture in different countries, probabilities of democratic survival hence vary across states.

Based on the above discussion, political culture is considered to be an independent variable that affects democracy. As O'Donnell and Schmitter (1991) assert, liberalization (civil liberties) and democratization (competitive elections) have been closely linked in the history of transitions of political regimes. The association between democratization and the right to participate (competitive elections) has also been proposed by Dahl (1971), who defined democratization on account of two factors, *open contestation* and *right to participate in the elections and offices*. He considered them in his hypothesis as the "two theoretical dimensions". In this context, Rueschemeyer, Huber, Stepes, and Stephens (1992, 43) has outlined the components which make up a democracy: "(i) free and fair elections of representatives with universal suffrage; (ii) responsibility of state apparatus to the elected parliament; and (iii) freedom of expression and association, as well as the protection of individual rights" (O'Donnell, 2010, 16). Thus, it can be said that political culture impacts the democracies of different countries. Researchers believe that a democracy-supporting culture usually means the acceptance of citizens and political elites of the fundamental principles of civic freedoms and competitive elections.

Dahl also emphasizes that political culture structure the political actions of political actors, which eventually determines the regime type. Dahl explains that factors determining beliefs guide to political attitudes and those beliefs define political movements, which eventually determine the regime type (Dahl, 1971, 124). A culture of support for democracy is essential to its survival. Dahl believes that cognitive perceptions influence actions not only because they affect the objectives and purposes of individuals but also because beliefs precede people's actions. Knowledge of the rules of a game of people has both normative and cognitive effects on political actions, thus governing collective actions and, in turn, the structure and functioning of institutions, like democracies (Dahl, 1971, 125).

As mentioned above, political actions and systems are reflections of political convictions. Democracies affirm the values of competitive elections and civil liberties beyond policy support. Democratic regimes seek a wider range of trust amongst masses than non-democratic regimes. Similarly, political consciousness, democratic practices, and the mobilization of organizations must be developed among the mass society for the sake of democratic survival (Diamond, 1995). Consequently, the growth of democratic values rooted in national history and cultural traditions in the populace gives rise to democratic fruits in developing countries (Diamond, 1995, 19-20).

The foundation of a prevalent democratic culture greatly enables democratic regimes with strong bases of support. In this case, citizens refuse anti-democratic regimes that can lead to the dissolution of politics. The importance of political culture for the survival of democracy cannot be objected to, as the existence of democratic values and norms in the society produces democratic regimes.

Inglehart and Welzel (2005) state that there is an association between the existence of a large group of citizens who value the definition of “self-expression,” which means that they feel economically secure and are not easily influenced by the political elite who dominate them. This then affects the making of independent decisions and the possibility that a country will develop a democratic regime that respects its citizens’ rights (Inglehart & Welzel 2005, 47).

What was underlined even from the term political culture is that a cultural theory of democratization must link the attitudes and behaviors of a certain group of individuals belonging to the same culture. Also, a theory must identify some citizens who can have a significant influence on the regime. An adequate theory must consider the actors whose subculture really matters and conditions their decisions. However, which group of actors has an influence depends on the institutional context. Actors such as political leaders are important for the survival or destruction of democracy. A culture that supports democracy must be integrated among elites so that democracy can be prosperous. As Dahl writes, democracies would struggle to survive if political leaders strongly believed that a hegemonic regime is more desirable than any single alternative (Dahl, 1971, 126). Hence, “inefficient, weak, and often militant and uncompromising political leadership has contributed to democratic breakdowns” in various countries (Diamond et al., 1999, 16).

In this study, political culture represents the structuralist approach. Structuralism provides a considerable advantage for studying regime change. Using comparable comparison methods can be effective not only for explaining the events of a democratic transition but also for developing arguments and causal predictions. Sometimes, processes of a long-term nature, which rooted in the lives of previous generations, prove to be crucial in giving answers to the question of when a democratic transition will start and when it would be successful.

Rueschemeyer and Stephens (1992) explain that the main shortcoming of the structural approach is its non-diachronic character in depicting the conditions of a stable democracy and its failure to explain how to achieve these conditions. Actions of actors and interactions between

actors that sustain or potentially transform regimes are excluded, and the model “denies the possibility that actors may have margins of maneuverability during periods of regime change” (Mahoney-Snyder, 2000, 185).

This thesis applies a structural approach to identify macro-structural components, such as the political culture, that have affected the democratization processes in Albania and Estonia. This thesis also looks for variables that function at the international and domestic levels, such as political leadership orientations toward democratic values. The socio-historical analysis provides relevant characteristics of both countries. The features of the actors’ attitudes and behaviors that are shaped by the long-term evolution of political culture will also be examined by both structural and actor-orientated approaches.

#### **2.4 Using the Agent-Oriented Approach to Explain the Democratization Process**

Agency-focused researches emphasize that structure is not decisive and that agents can promote and shape concrete political outcomes. (Pavone, 2014). As such, a particular agent can influence the political flow of a country. In an actor/strategist approach, the elite’s and leaders’ activity is responsible for the transition that may occur from an undemocratic regime to a democratic regime. As per Michael Bratton, Nicolas van de Walle (1997), system changes are formed by the obstinate key decisions of head political actors and not by some standardized structures which are themselves the result of human activities.

Diamond (1993) stresses that in all democratic transitions, behaviors, practices, and techniques of a modest number of leaders in the regime and the opposition – including the understandings they reach – are essential in deciding if, how, and at what pace a democratic transition will happen.

Rustow (1970) has explored the way in which the agency and the environment lead to considerable political developments that occur within a limited time in a specific place. He underscores that he isn’t against a probabilistic comprehension of causation, rather, he tries to expand an increasingly adjusted incredulous view that associates individual actions to a blend of law and change by exploring “the margins of human choice and ... clarifying the consequences of the choices in that margin” (Rustow, 1970, 343). Rustow (1970) has explored the way in which the agency and the context contribute to significant political changes that occur within a short time in a specific place. He underscores that he isn’t against a probabilistic comprehension

of causation, rather, he tries to expand an increasingly adjusted and incredulous view that associates human actions to a combination of law and change by exploring “the margins of human choice and ... clarifying the consequences of the choices in that margin” (Rustow, 1970, 343). Rustow proceeds by clarifying that democratization is then set off by protracted and uncertain political battles, developing because of a new political elite emerging. Thereafter, political leaders must consider deciding to agree with the opponent and to recognize and to accept the diversity. This must be done only by institutionalizing some “preliminary democratic reforms” (Rustow, 1970, 335). He argues that human beings and their behavior are unpredictable because they are not mechanical and this frames the making of democracy a product of the combination of various motives among human actors.

Rustow’s work was followed up on by other authors who defend the thesis that certain agents are the ones who can influence the process of democratization through their actions. Authors like Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter followed this argument. O’Donnell (1989) specifies that some types of social actors are essential to foster a democratic transition. These actors consist of members of the ruling coalition, members of the opposition, and members of civil society (O’Donnell, 1989, 67).

Samuel Huntington (1991) compares his approach to O’Donnell’s. He focuses on the role of various social actors who act in accordance with their interests, including ruling coalition members who favor democratization, those who hinder it, as well as members of the opposition. The Agent-Oriented Approach attempts to explain the political dynamics of the transition of a regime within a compressed space in time. Also, as specified above, it links the process of political change to an individual or group of individuals holding key leadership positions, be they the position of power or opposition. Another component of this approach is that actors’ characteristics are demonstrated more in terms of each other’s activities than in terms of structural incentives.

#### **2.4.1 Theory Family of Political Leadership as Representative of the Agent-oriented Approach.**

To support this approach, a hypothesis of an USAID study is borrowed by Ellen Lust and David Walner, who, among other things, describe the thesis of Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013), who specify that “democracy survives when political leaders seek moderate policies and

have a normative preference for democracy” (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñan, 2013). According to them, obstacles to the process of democratization may arise if the political elites support and adopt extreme, anti-democratic positions. When political leaders demonstrate political preferences that are radically opposed to the preferences of other actors who are active in politics and show no commitment to the democratic rhetoric, the country’s political system would be more vulnerable to democratic processes. They emphasize that political actors, not economic or cultural structures, are the key to democratic survival. In their work, Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán underline two elements of political actors that are essential to this type of analysis: the degree of the radicalism of their political preferences and their normative commitment to democracy. Actors with normative preferences for democracy will not sacrifice democracy to achieve their political goals.

In this part of the study, the main political leaders in Estonia and Albania are analyzed during 1945-1990 and after the 1990s so that it can be seen whether their orientation towards democratic norms has helped with the development of democratic processes.

## **2.5 The Structuralist Approach’s and Agent-Oriented Approach’s Limitations in Explaining Democratic Processes.**

Based on what has been treated so far in the theoretic framework, it is clear that the two greatest and most influencing approaches in the studies on democratization are positioned between the two utmost perspectives in the social studies. They are contrasted with each other on the basic theoretic concepts over which is built a tradition that on one side emphasizes that the institutions play a decisive role on the development of democratization (structure) and on the other side, the other tradition emphasizes the role of attitudes, values which determine the progress of the democratic path (Riker, 1980). Nevertheless, besides the importance that each approach has in the explanation and analysis of the democratization process, this process remains a matter of the elites or of the political actors as much as of the institutions or the structures. Based on this finding, an all-inclusive perspective is what is needed because none of these approaches can explain this process alone, as long as both components are necessary.

These two schools and their theoretical approaches, in which the two variables include the political culture and the democratic orientation of the leader behind leading the successful development of democratic processes or not, are not sufficient on their own to explain why democratization is either successful or unsuccessful.

The hypothesis of this study clearly states that the link between inherited political culture and leaders' democratic normative preferences are important conditions that speed up democratization. Many researchers have established this correlation and have determined that political culture may influence the behavior of certain leaders. Political culture and political leadership have an unconditional influence on each other, and the relationship between them, as one aspect of the structure-agency problem, is one of the most important issues to be studied in political theory.

In this sense, a group of different authors that have examined this issue. For example, Minier, Bell, Ogbonna, and Harris supported this idea by explaining that a certain cultural or political context can lead to an ideological direction and orientate certain behaviors and activities of leaders. Afterward, political, financial, and social settings cause leaders and supporters to require democracy (Minier, 2001). The established culture of the organization applies an effect on the leaders and shapes their activities (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000).

Referring to this logical argument, the theoretical framework of this research (i.e., the ANT) integrates both the structural and the agent-oriented approach to better explain democratization in Albania and Estonia. The ANT distinguishes itself from other socio-technological approaches because it considers agent- and structure-related elements of the same impact as being equal. The ANT is used in many fields, such as geography, sociology, and economy. Moreover, it was widely used in the social sciences during the mid-1990s. This approach creates a network that includes the structural components and actors that interact continuously with each other (Ajagbe, 2016).

While undertaking to depict this approach, the author emphasizes that the ANT began with an investigation into the science of history and sociology, attempted first to give a social clarification of logical realities, neglected to do as such, and after that, from this disappointment, it reached the determination that it was the venture of a social clarification of everything that was itself needing.

In this context, the actor-network theory (ANT) is seen as “a theory that maps the social relations between people, objects, and ideas, treating all as agentic entities that form a broad network” (Cerulo, 2009, 533). From this viewpoint, the ANT is a social and methodological perspective that can be used as a social hypothesis in which everything in the social context (and in the universe) exists in ever-changing systems of connections. It proposes that nothing exists outside of those connections.

‘Actant’ is a “term used in ANT to refer to any independent entity ... that can acquire the ability to make things happen” (Cerulo, 2009, 534). That is, an actant can be any source that somehow ensures change. As such, actants play vital roles in explaining the ANT. Following this line of argument, and based on the notion specified by Cerulo, “an actant can be text and other symbols, or mental concepts (i.e., memories, projections, ideas)” (Cerulo, 2009, 535). Therefore, as defined by Latour and quoted above by Cerulo, for the purposes of the present study, political culture serves as an actant as long as it comprises a set of people’s beliefs, values, attitudes, mental concepts, and ideas that somehow project the behaviors of different actors or individuals in a society.

Political culture is necessarily linked to and is an indivisible component of the general culture of a country. From this background and from the viewpoint of the actor-network theory, “culture evolves the advent of cognitive causal chains, which spans individuals and their environment, and which distributes mental representations and public goods in this population and its habitats” (Hansson, 2009). The author also argues that Latour’s concept of culture rests on the argument that culture serves as a network of people and objects that behave in a certain way, thus enabling the creation of a specific culture. With this in mind, the ANT suggests that “culture is a process in which objects and ideas interact on the same level and with the same ability to create change” (Hansson, 2009).

The main hypothesis of this dissertation is that political culture, along with the normative actors’ preference for democracy, shapes the democratization process; as such, it is understood that both variables are significant in the process and that this outcome is presumed to occur when both cooperate inseparable from each other, as they have a reciprocal effect on each other. Accordingly, this theory reinforces the argument that radical disputes between one variable and another do not help to explain the complexities of the democratization process in the countries under investigation.

The ANT has contributed to the elimination of well-defined boundaries between one approach and another and the union to explain many complex phenomena in the social sciences. Law (1999, 3) describes the ANT theory as “Truth and falsehood. Large and small. Agency and structure. Human and non-human. Before and after. Knowledge and power. Context and content. Materiality and sociality. Activity and passivity ... all of these divisions have been rubbished in work undertaken in the name of actor-network theory” (Cressman, 2009, 1). The ANT theory tries to build a network where the relations between the structure and the agency help explains the complexity of every situation.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter introduced two main approaches to the study of democratization: structuralism and the agent-oriented approach. During the literature review, it was emphasized that neither of these two approaches could cover such a process, or at least be a theoretical basis to explain the way how this process fails or results successfully.

The theoretical structure throughout this chapter has been relaunched so that it distinguishes all theories and causes that help democratization. In this framework, my purpose was to establish a reasonable hypothetical ground that would then lead me to contemplate independent variables with the dependent one. Thus, given that the independent variables included in the study belong to two different approaches that explain the democratization process, the chapter focused on explaining the structural approach and the agent-oriented approach and exporting and explaining an integrated approach that includes both of the above-mentioned theories. In the following chapters, the analysis will concentrate on explaining theories and concepts of the political culture and the leadership’s normative preference for democracy.

## CHAPTER 3

### CRITICAL JUNCTURES OF ALBANIA AND ESTONIA IN THE PRE – COMMUNISM, COMMUNISM, AND THEIR IMPACT ON POLITICAL CULTURE

#### Introduction

This chapter summarizes the most critical moments of the political developments of the two countries, Estonia, and Albania. The analysis has been extended to involve the period from Albania's proclamation of independence in 1912 and to Estonia's sovereignty act of 1918, following subsequently with the communist period. This analysis is envisaged in this pattern so it can interpret how the critical junctures of the countries, which correspond approximately in the same stages for both of them in a corresponding way, are reflected in the political culture and vice versa.

Also, the study and analysis of the political culture in all this time trajectory, test the hypothesis that I have assumed in this dissertation, which is that the political culture and the leader's normative preference for democracy shape democratization outcome. Therefore the presence of a democratic political culture tradition merged with the leadership's normative preference for democracy has permitted successful democratization in Estonia. The contrary has happened in Albania's case where this democratic culture has been missing. This chapter provides an analysis of the most critical political events since the period of state formation. Through this analysis, I intend to investigate the following proxy question: Considering that both countries have emerged from a communist regime, why has Albania not successfully become democratized while Estonia has? I intend to explore the factors that prevented Albania from completing the process of democratization. I also investigate the impact that internal factors (e.g., political culture and leaders' democratic orientations) in Albania and Estonia have had on the democratization processes in both cases.

To accomplish this objective, the chapter is divided segmentally with the analysis of the most important political events of the pre-communist and communist period, to further proceed with the interpretation and highlighting of the political culture components for both countries, correspondingly. The historical part of the political developments, justifies the chosen Mill's

Method of Differences (Hancke, 2009), which attempts to demonstrate that even though Albania and Estonia have been through analogous experiences and do have many similarities, they produced different outcomes in the process of democratization. Thus, through this parenthesis, we undertake to interpret the factors that have inhibited or have strengthened the process of democratization in both countries.

Trying to identify the factors, the chapter commences with the interpretation of the conception of the political culture in a hasty manner, by explaining the reason why in the dissertation the theory of political culture stands as a variable related to the democratization as an outcome.

### **3.1 On the Choices of Cases (Albania and Estonia)**

Albania and Estonia have been selected as case study in this dissertation, as similar cases in their political development trajectory, but which have had different outcomes after the change of systems. The similarity starts with the difficulties they have faced in the process of achieving independence, and continues with the communist past as well as the struggle to restore the democratic rule after the 1990s.

The similarities are not only found in the aspect of the political developments, but also in the physical characteristics of both countries. As far as physical characteristics are concerned, both countries have a small population and are small in size despite being located in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe respectively. However, both countries went through the process of democratization facing the many challenges this process presents.

Albania as a compelling case was introduced to the system of democratic pluralism after the 1990s. Through the reforms undertaken, the first steps started to be taken in the road towards democratization, however in the last report from Freedom House (2018), Albania still appears in the list of the countries classified as hybrid regimes and it seems from the interpretation of this report that the country still continues to pose severe challenges regarding democracy and has remained in the midst of the long road of democratization. Estonia, on the other hand, despite experiencing the communist system, and finding its self in the chaos created due to the challenges posed by changing political regimes, managed to succeed in the process of democratization as long as it is classified as a free country with consolidated democratic institutions. (Freedom House, 2018). The clear road towards democratization was shown in a

determinate way by Estonia since the beginning of the 1990s, as it is also referred by the BTI report (2018) the access to NATO and the EU was achieved as a result of the consensus between the elites and the will to meet with precision the membership criteria.

### **3.1.1 Brief Portraits of Two Countries**

The brief portraits of the two countries help to understand the similarities as well as the differences between Albania and Estonia in the political development trajectory. Estonia and Albania have some similarities both in terms of physical and governmental aspects. Thus, the size of the population is comparable. Despite the greater total surface area, Estonia's smaller community results from non-inhabited terrain because of the unfavorable physical characteristics. Both countries are bordered by states that have attempted conquest and have brought considerable unrest in the arena of political developments at the national level. As for the ethnic composition, Albania appears to be more homogeneous due to Albanians constituting 82, 6 per cent of the population along with the presence of a relatively small minority group. Estonia presents a different picture with a relatively large minority group, namely Russians with 24.8 per cent followed by Ukrainians with 1.7 per cent.

Referring to the government system, it is observed that both countries are Parliamentary Republics, formerly Socialist Republics, named respectively as the People's Socialist Republic of Albania and the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. Both countries are currently named as the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Estonia. It is also observed that both countries have a similar number of regions, Albania has 12 and Estonia has 15.

The economy is another point of comparison. Despite Albania's efforts to move from a centralized economy to an open market economy, it has shown an unstable economic growth accompanied by an ongoing financial crisis throughout the years following the 90s. Meanwhile, Estonia has shown more excellent stability in terms of economic development. The economic reforms taken in the framework of efforts to enter the EU along with the reforms were undertaken after they became a member of the EU in 2004. Thus, this had a considerable impact on this process. (CIA, 2018).

### 3.2 The Political Culture's Shaping of the Democratic Orientation

In the successive section will be traced the most important political developments. The political developments will be extended over a long period of time, starting with the historical moment of the state formation for the two states taken into consideration in this study, in 1912 for Albania and 1918 for Estonia. This does not mean that the dissertation attempts to borrow research competencies from the field of history. The political culture seems to have become a matter of great importance to be studied in the spectrum of social sciences, widely studied after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the dynamics of the process ought to be analysed as the evolution or precondition of the process of democratization.

This evaluation is done in accordance with Schartau, (2011), who states that the primary purpose of looking at the historical developments extended over a relatively long stretch of time is to determine possible relations between the pre-existence of elements of the political culture. These help to accelerate democratic transformations in the post-communist years. According to Schartau (2011), after the fall of the communist system, researchers in the social sciences have tried to study a possible correlation between the “pre-existing analytical concepts and the newly observed empirical reality” by focusing on the study of political and social changes in Central and Eastern Europe. From this perspective, this analysis was oriented according to two specific purposes which aim to verify the hypothesis set forward in this study.

*The first* assumes that only in the wide dimension of time of the political developments will it be possible to see similarities as well as differences between the factors that probably have had an impact on the process of the democratization of the countries. As preliminary literature review has confirmed that many resemblances were recognized in the struggle to establish security within their borders and to build a democratic state in the interwar period. There have been noticed similarities further in the chronology of the course of the following events with the coming of the communist system and later in the first years of the political transition. *The second* is to further explore the research question regarding the existence of a political culture in Estonia in the interwar period. This period is thought to have influenced the development of political attitudes and behaviors among the citizens, which have facilitated the process of democratization after the fall of the communist regime. Meanwhile, the antithesis has occurred in Albania. In

contrast to Estonia, in Albania, the absence of democratic attitudes has prevented this country from building a democratic state.

From the examination of the course of the political events, it can be predicted that alternative theories of democracy cannot reasonably vindicate the case of the democratic outcome in Estonia and the preservation of the hybrid regime in Albania. Indeed though it is relevant to highlight that “socio-economic modernization and the emergence of mass democracy movements are not necessarily contradictory explanations of democratization” (Welzel, 2008, 84). Under these circumstances, by excluding some of the theories that, in my opinion, have not impacted the process of democratization in the cases for this study, I have managed to identify the most acceptable approach that leads to the appropriate grounds to provide answers to the dilemmas of the process for both cases.

### **3.2.1 Alternative Theories to Explain Democratization in Albania and Estonia**

#### **3.2.1.1 The Modernism Theory**

According to the modernism theory, which stipulates the direct correlation between the level of the development of the society with democracy, what was explicitly noticed during the study of the most critical issues of political development was that in both the cases of Albania and Estonia, economic growth had not initiated the undertaking democratic reforms. As it will be observable from the most important political developments in Estonia, the reforms that were undertaken created *inter alia*, an immediate economic development that was called “the Estonian economic miracle.” More than economic development, it was distinguished as the ubiquitous determination of the leader and of the political class formed after the communism years to undertake specific economic and monetary reforms in order to promote a democratic outcome.

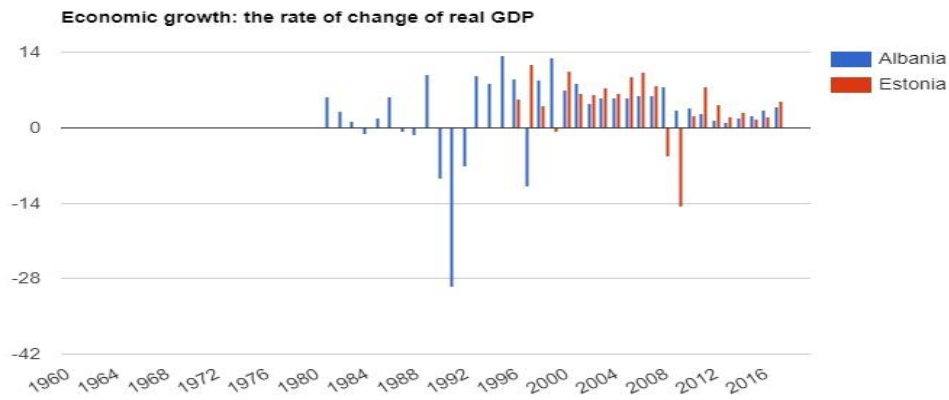
Consequently, some of the most prominent reforms were the substitution of the Russian currency with what later became the national currency of Estonia (the Kroon), the land reforms, and other reforms that accompanied the economic ones which gave a significant push to the country’s development. Estonia was a unique case of the success of these reforms because – as markedly considers the former prime minister of Estonia, Laar (2009), as soon as they were undertaken, all the international leaders contradicted the implementation of these economic reforms which were mostly inspired by economist Milton Friedman. Thus, from this point of

view, it seems that the will to undertake and implement monetary reforms (and other reforms, such as land reforms, those in the judiciary system, and those related to the establishment of law) were successful.

On the contrary, in the case of Albania, with all the attempts made to implement similar reforms in the economic aspect after the 1990s as a form of “shock therapy,” reforms in the judiciary system, etc., there was no economic development. This probably happened because the political history of these years was mostly associated with other governmental scandals, such as corruption, instability in the internal politics of the political class, and continuous antagonism among the political elite. Additionally, what is expressed above is illustrated by the graphic below. It can be noticed that economic growth has continued in Albania since 1981. The data record starts with 5.75 per cent, while, in 1991, the evidence shows a level of -59.59 per cent. Moreover, a fluctuation is noticed in 1997, where a drop of -10.92 per cent is seen. After this development, which coincides with the political and civil crisis of 1997, it can be noticed that there have not been any similar crises.

On the other hand, it is noticed that, in the meantime, Estonia had a crisis in its economic growth in the year 2008, with a drop of -5.48 per cent, followed by a drop of -14.72 per cent the next year. In the following years, due to the implementation of adequate economic and monetary reforms, the country’s economy has experienced growth.

Given these points, no significant difference was seen regarding the economic growth of the two countries. We can also state that during the years of the financial crisis of Estonia, Albania has continued to have economic growth. However, it has not impeded either Estonia to be a country with a democratic regime, nor is Albania seen as a country with a hybrid government. Thus, when exploring the issue of democracy in this dissertation, other causes and theories will be analyzed that rely on political culture schools as well as on elitist theories.



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 1 - Economic growth: the rate of change of real GDR, Albania and Estonia

### 3.2.1.2 Democratization, International Conflicts, Regime Alliances

Another outstanding theory of democratization associated with international conflicts, regime alliances, and democratization clarifies that democratization is a process which cannot be considered isolated from the influence of other countries. As specified by Welzel (2008, 81), “whether, and when, countries democratize has often been decided by the outcome of international confrontations between the enduring alliance of Western democracies and shifting counter-alliances of antidemocratic empires”.

Following this line of argument, it is important to realize that Albania has had several prerequisites to being democratized earlier. *Firstly*, there has not been a clash among the antidemocratic empires as long as there have not been cases of conquest and violent imposition “from outside” of the anti-democratic norms and values because the communist legacy was established and endured by the Albanians themselves. In contrast to this case, the probability of not successfully democratizing was higher in Estonia as long as the imposition from the former Soviet Union was violently carried out and with lower international influence than in Albania.

*Secondly*, after the 1990s, the openness towards the West for Estonia was not considered a matter of primary importance for the West for two reasons. The first is that it was a possible risk to enter so early and abruptly in areas which until those years had been under the influence of Russia. As such, this would cause another political blockage in the international arena. The

second reason is that Estonia was not regarded as a strategic zone to be invested in since the first moments that the system changed. This fact is also related to the situation of Estonia, which had nothing to offer, especially in the arena of international commerce (Laar, 2009).

What was mentioned above is also reflected in a statement made by the former Prime Minister of Estonia, Laar, who testified that the instant the system changed was only the beginning of the toughest challenges because the nation seemed to be alone at a crossroads. Meanwhile, Albania had another approach towards democratic countries, which offered full financial or technical assistance since the first moments of the state's political openness.

Adhering to this line of discussion, I presume that this theory cannot justify the successful case of the democratization of Estonia and the failed attempt of Albania. Having emphasized this fact, other theories regarding democratization should be evaluated in order to ensure adequate theoretical grounds to be properly linked to the empirical investigation of the two cases considered throughout this comparative study.

### **3.2.1.3 Democratization and Democratic Institutions**

This theory emphasizes the role of institutions in underpinning democratic transformation. According to this theory, “the ‘core of the new institutionalist’ argument is that institutions have an independent effect not only on policies but also on the quality and stability of democracy” (Johannsen, 2000, 1). Definitely, the institutions play an important role in the fortification of democracy, but in the cases of Albania and Estonia, it is important to note that even though Estonia represents a case of “legal restoration,” it should not be forgotten that the communist system left its marks on the institutions by making them less democratic.

Nevertheless, the role that the institutions played in the enforcement of the democratic order after the 1990s must be emphasized. Albania still lacks strong institutions, whereas Estonia is characterized by effective institutions that guarantee the efficiency of the government. Despite the importance of this theory and the fact that “institutional variation also plays a role when it comes to existing democracy's malfunctions, which can be an important factor in their stability and survival” (Welzel, 2008, 86), it is not sufficient to explain the underlying reason for the democratization of Estonia and the formation of Albania's hybrid regime. This argument that the institutions *can't not guarantee the success of democratization*, is argued as follows by the authors that emphasize why the individual has a crucial role in democratizing one's country.

Can democracy be guaranteed to a certain society only through legislation? The answer is no. It is so because society is governed by its written as well as its unwritten laws the moral codes the people learned to abide by throughout the years. It is so because society is governed by governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations originated and supported by the people. Mainly, it is the civil behavior of the people exhibited in the process of resolving differences that is the essence of democracy (Dhamo, Gjuraj, Myteberi, Sinani, & Kaltsounis, 1996, 11).

### **3.2.2 The Political Culture and Leadership's Normative Preference for Democracy as Two Independent Variables that Cause Democratization**

#### **3.2.2.1 Considering Aspects of Political Culture Concepts**

Political theories of democratization are listed as an important group of the structural approach that is thought to explain the causes of democratization. Hence, in this dissertation, these theories will be borrowed to provide a justifiable ground theory which can explain why Estonia was democratized and Albania was not, even though both countries experienced similar struggles. In dealing with the notion of political culture, it is necessary to focus on the analysis of the features of the two countries' political systems to determine whether there have been democratic elements in the attitudes, cognitions, and perceptions among the citizens of Estonia and Albania.

Further political developments have shed light on some aspects of the effect that the political culture has had on democratization. The presence or absence of its competences has led the outcome to be different after the 1990s. The attempt to explain the political actions through the political culture is vital and is related to the origins of the political sciences themselves. Concepts and patterns related to political culture (e.g., subculture, political socialization, elite) can be seen even in the texts of the classical antiquity.

Concepts related to a political culture were introduced in ancient Greece in the writing of great scholars like Plato and Aristotle. Even though Plato mentions this term in a primitive way, the modern rephrasing of the term was coined by Aristotle. He placed importance on the variables of political culture and creates a correlation between social stratification and political structure in the development of political life (Almond, 1992). In the Encyclopedia of Social Science where the notion of political culture is fully elaborated, the concept of the middle class is

also underlined (Almond, 1992). The concept that Aristotle emphasized in the context of the political culture that guarantees stability in the political system is related to the creation of the middle class, as the presence of such a class guarantees that social polarization cannot occur between “servants and lords.” In a manner of speaking, the middle class of a society is fundamental because this class is responsible for ensuring that public works assigned to them are not neglected, and they are not to desire or to undertake their implementation outside their competences to realize them. According to Aristotle, a society which lacks a middle class produces only “slaves and lords” and no free citizens, and this situation is far from the best form of government, which according to him, constituted “the political community”.

Besides Plato and Aristotle, classic authors such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Machiavelli have also made significant contributions to forming the concept of culture. However, unlike Plato and Aristotle, they did not give an analytic explanation of the political culture as part of their theoretical contributions. For example, Rousseau mostly referred to terms such as “clothing” and “opinions” when he discussed political culture. This is because, according to him, these constitute the laws which are very important for the citizens of a country, besides the fact that it is enriched every day, remains vital even when other laws fade away. Thus, according to him, the customs, the clothing, and the thoughts of the people make up the constitution of a country.

Tocqueville has deliberated about democracy in the USA as well as about the genesis of the French Revolution. In his discourses, he emphasizes the importance of the political subculture. In doing this, he analyses the tendencies of the political culture that the French aristocratic class had on the eve of the French Revolution. With the passing of the years, the notion of the political culture was modernized even more in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which stimulated material, moral, and intellectual progress (Almond, 1992).

In the theory of political culture, within the wide panorama of the evolution of the notion, the liberal point of view has to be mentioned. This point of view appeared not to be interested in the study of the notion of political culture as long as the tendencies in engagement and participation in the political life of the citizens appeared automatically in an increasing progression.

Regarding the importance of political culture, Marx also did not see it as a problem on its own. Influenced by the illuminist tradition, Marx perceived that the historic process focused more on dialectic terms than in the development approach. Thus, he did not see intellectual progress as necessary or as an incentive for material progress. However, this last point produces three subcultures (that of the capitalist exploiting class, that of the exploited working class, and that of a universal illuminist class) and a rational and creative society (Almond, 1992). Further, it can frequently be noticed in the theoretical debates among the authors of various currents that the Marxist point of view was opposed by scholars, including Mosca and Pareto, who underlined a constancy in the aspect of exploitation by the elites and the increase of the tendencies of the authoritarian regimes in the future. However, again, the illuminist viewpoints were advanced, and the interest in the cultural models seemed worn out until the First World War.

After this period, it seemed like a new era had started for the political culture from the point of view of modern research models as well as that of the increasing enrichment of theoretical concepts. A motive for this change became, without a doubt, the state from which the human society had emerged after the Second World War. The attempt to give a rational ‘human’ answer to the cruelty and irrationality of the tragic events that had happened was at the core of the development of the theories on political culture. Many intellectuals made their contribution to the formation of the term “political culture.” Among them, we see the tradition of sociological theories represented by Weber, Mannheim, Durkheim, etc. and the tradition of psycho-anthropological theories influenced initially by Freud and including also Nevitt Sandford, Ruth Benedict, and many others.

From this perspective, political culture cannot be contained simply inside the framework of political sciences without emphasizing its relationship with other social sciences as long as this term is attributed to an entire system made of the behaviors, perceptions, and beliefs of individuals. However, because of the increase in the attention given to the research on the political culture, there is a need to lay the foundation for the development of a modern methodology and research technology called survey research. (Almond, 1992).

### 3.2.2.2 Almond and Verba's Concept of Political Culture

Besides the various currents that evolved from the theoretical family of the political culture, Almond and Verba, in their publication "The Civic Culture" (1963), tried to use the comparative methods among the five countries under study (i.e., the United States of America, West Germany, Britain, Italy, and Mexico) in order to discover the correlation between the political culture and the liberal democracy. They used the notion of the political culture in the format of a critical factor on democratization as well as an essential theoretical approach, which they elaborated extensively in their book "The Civic Culture".

The main factors that motivated them to conduct this study were the insecurity that had spread after the Second World War regarding the dilemmas the humanity was facing and the norms of freedom (Almond & Verba, 1963, 3). The problem raised by the scholars lies in the dilemma of whether a stable democracy would be found, and whether such a democracy would prevent society from repeating its dark past as a result of installing faulty political systems which generate destructive consequences for human society from political, economic and social perspectives. In this way, to fulfill the aim of constructing the theoretical and empirical basis of the political culture they first struggled to determine the notion of political culture.

In defining the term political culture, Almond and Verba followed the definition of the types of political orientations outlined by Parsons and Shils. They included three very important elements: (1) "cognitive orientation" (i.e., knowledge of and belief about the political system; its roles; and the incumbents of these roles, its inputs, and its outputs); (2) "affective orientation" (i.e., feelings about the political system, its roles, personnel, and performance); and (3) "evaluation orientation" (i.e., the judgments and opinions about political objects that typically involve the combination of value standards and criteria and feelings" (Almond & Verba, 2015, 15).

In addition to further elaborating the theory of political culture, their assertion is based on a difference between the three kinds of political culture: parochial, subject, and participant. In the parochial type of political culture, the citizens are aware only of the existence of the central government and "parochial expects nothing from the political system" (Almond & Verba, 1963, 17).

In a subjective political culture, the citizens see themselves not as participants in the political process but as subjects of the government. The authors summarize that “the subject is aware of specialized governmental authority; he is affectively oriented to it, perhaps taking pride in it, perhaps disliking it; and he evaluates it either as legitimate or not. But the relationships toward the system on the general level, and toward the output, administrative, or ‘downward flow’ side of the political system; it is essentially a passive relationship” (Almond & Verba, 1963, 19).

In a *participant* political culture, the citizens believe that they can contribute to the system but also that they are affected directly by it. Almond and Verba specify that in this type of political culture, the individual members of the participant polity may be favourably or unfavourably oriented toward an “activist” role of political objects. They tend to be geared toward an “activist” role of the self in the polity, though their feelings and evaluations of such a role may vary from acceptance to rejection...” (Almond & Verba, 1963, 18).

Almond and Verba emphasize that these types of political cultures, despite having a clear division among them based on their characteristics, do not stay intact or remain unchanged when new elements of the political culture are added. This statement implies that “the parochial orientations must adapt when new and more specialized orientations change when participant orientations are required” (Almond & Verba, 1963, 20). The essential idea of Almond and Verba is that democracy is more stable in societies where a parochial political culture is balanced with a participant political culture. This supposition is expanded by Eatwell, who supports Almond and Verba’s argument regarding their theoretical point of view that a stable democracy requires a balance between a ‘subject’ and a ‘participant’ culture, as well as a high and stable level of support and social trust, which is created by the participation of people who belong to different groups (Eatwell, 1997, 1).

### **3.2.2.3 Almond and Verba’s Viewpoint and the Correlation with Individuals’ attitude**

If referring to the concept of “civic” in the context that the scholars themselves defined, it restricts the behaviour of the individual to rational behaviour, by which the citizen must be “well informed and to make decisions – for instance, his decision on how to vote – on the basis of careful calculation as to the interests and the principles he would like to see furthered” (Almond

& Verba, 1963, 29). In fact, the involvement of the individual in policy-making is an important factor in the context of the theoretical ground that underlines the relation of the structure with the agent approach in the democratization theories as an initiator of political change.

Almond and Verba also emphasized the relationship between micro- and macro-politics. They stated that “since political systems are made up of individuals, it may be taken for granted that particular psychological tendencies in an individual or among social groups are important for the functioning of the political systems and their outputs” (Almond & Verba, 1963, 31). They support the correlation between micro- and macro-politics as the cause and effect of each other. They state that political culture, in reality, can be determined from the connection between micro- and macro-politics (Almond & Verba, 1963, 33).

Furthermore, what, from their point of view, had significant importance in determining what constitutes civic culture, is that the orientations of "participant" political culture may combine with the typology of the "subject" political culture as well, but it does not replace it. At the same time, they also emphasize that the individuals, despite participating in political processes, still retain the orientation attitude that belongs to the subject in a parochial culture. Following this logic, Almond and Verba place importance on socialization as a crucial component in the formation of a civic culture. They state that in this context, socialization matters as a feature that reinforces the democratic polity through a pattern which allows the individual to maintain the unavoidable discrepancy among “primary, his obedient output, and activist input roles” (Almond & Verba, 1963, 35).

Remaining on the topic of the theoretical background of socialization, Ronald Inglehart summarizes that early socialization is an incentive force for cultural change. From this perspective, it is very important to emphasize that the individual's orientations are directed by the culture, specifically by the political culture. Among other things, Inglehart emphasizes that political culture cannot be changed rapidly and immediately. Continuing this course of interpretation, Inglehart argued that the actions could not come as a consequence of external stimuli because they reflect early models adopted during the process of socialization and interaction with other members of the society. Moreover, these models cannot easily be changed because they are deeply rooted in the individuality of everybody.

The author, in order to strengthen his argument, specifies that the way in which individuals react to situations is influenced by internal models of subjective orientations that are

culturally determined and extended in the long term. He further claims that these subjective orientations reflect changes in the process of socialization, whereby this process itself is affected by early learning that conditions later education. He also explains that it is difficult for later education to undo early learning.

According to Inglehart, this supposition implies that the actions cannot be analysed as a result of external stimuli (Inglehart, 1990, 19). The influence of early socialization and Inglehart's theory was emphasized to correlate the macro perspective of political culture with the micro perspective of the agent-oriented approach of elite pacts in the context of decisions made by leaders.

These two theories are connected through the mechanism of socialization, which puts the individual at the centre by utilizing the process of socialization. This process is transmitted through generations. This does mean that components of political culture, are reflected in the society when the circumstances favor their appearance. Thus, they influence immediately the democratizing processes by promoting the democratic culture or impeding it. Under these conditions, the political elite play a role of great importance and are decisive in this process throughout their decisions. This argument is widely elaborated by Welzel. The author has studied the power of the political elite on the influence over the democratic turns of a country. He has emphasized that crucial actors representing the opposition regime and the government regime that constitute the elite strata are generally viewed as essential determinants for democratization processes (Welzel, 2008, 82).

### **3.2.3 Leadership's Normative Preference for Democracy**

As a theoretical ground for the dissertation in support of the agent-oriented approach as an approach which groups many families on the theory of democratization is borrowed from Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán's theoretic approach, who also "argue for a theoretical approach situated between long-term structural and cultural explanations and short-term explanations that look at the decisions of specific leaders" (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 1). In their theoretical approach, they state that the actors play a determining role in the regime's outcomes. According to them, the actors form preferences that are connected to what they would

like a specific regime to produce. Starting from this, they behave in a certain way to fulfil this preference.

The most important arguments and assumptions that these authors have used to build their theory emphasize that:

***- Political actors should be at the centre of theories of regime survival and change.***

Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán established that political actors are central to the transformation process toward the eventual destination (i.e., successful democratization) while stressing that structures or cultures are not the components that determine the outcomes. Nevertheless, at the same time, they notice that “structures and cultures affect the formation and preferences of actors” (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 20).

In addition, they place the actors at the centre of democratic changes but do not ignore the effect and influence that the structure or culture has on these actors. Sticking to this logic, they establish their theory between structural, or long-term, cultural approaches and agency and contingent action approaches (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 21).

***- They emphasize the role of political factors that help political regimes survive or lead them to fail.***

When the authors refer to “political factors,” they directly specify the influence of the actors’ normative preferences regarding democracy and dictatorship. Moreover, they determine the characteristics that these actors must have in order to be classified as actors with a normative preference for democracy, as well as the characteristics they must have in order to be classified as actors’ normative preference for dictatorship. Following this line of argument, they emphasize that the preferences of the actors are crucial for the democratic outcome of a regime that is most likely to survive. They state that actors’ normative attitudes about democracy and dictatorship influence the regime’s survival or failure. If the most powerful actors have a normative preference for democracy – that is, if they believe that democracy is intrinsically the best political regime even if it does not satisfy their other policy preferences – democracy is likely to survive (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 22).

Discussing the theoretical review, even though the authors refer to Latin American countries in their study, their approach fits very well with the post-communist democracy system in Albania and Estonia. This is reflected in the connection between two independent variables

(political culture and actors' normative preference for democracy) and the dependent variable (democratization).

### **3.3 Analyzing and Describing the Most Important Political Turns for Both Countries (1912-1939)**

Since the proclamation of the independence and creation of the Albanian state in 1912 up to the present day, Albania has gone through many political challenges and significant historical and political developments and is still facing a lot of issues that obstruct the path towards democracy.

#### **3.3.1 Crucial Moments of Political Development in Albania (1912 – 1939)**

In the context of the many challenges faced during its state-building process, Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 mainly due to Austro-Hungarian and Italian support in the aftermath of the Conference of the Ambassadors in London. Albania was declared an independent country but it had to remain under the surveillance and tutelage of the Great Powers. After the establishment of the borders, what remained from Albania, was a small country with small towns and an urbanization rate of 15.9 percent and with a number of 27 inhabitants per square kilometers (Erebara, 2012).

Despite multiple invasions of seven foreign armies: Austrian, Italian, Greek, Serbian, Montenegrin, French and Bulgarian during World War I (1914-1918), “the Great Powers attempted to guarantee the independence of Albania” (Elsie, 2010). This decision was a *de facto* recognition of the independent Albanian state, even though around 30 per cent of the population was left outside the Albanian territories. The great powers decided to leave out Kosovo and Çameria by giving it to Serbia and Greece respectively. “On the other hand, a Greek community of about 35,000 inhabitants was included in the territory of Albania” (Elsie, 2010). Furthermore, they arranged the appointment of a German prince, Wilhelm Zu Wied. In an attempt to govern, the prince encountered a lot of problems that made it impossible for him to familiarize with this country and this eventually led to his departure from Albania only six months after he arrived.

Even after the independence, Albania remained an ambition for the neighboring states to acquire as much territory from it as possible. As Robert Elsie (2010) writes in his "Historical Dictionary of Albania," even though Albania somehow managed to win the independence, it remained a target for conquest from neighboring countries. These ambitions were facilitated by the internal organization, which was filled with conflicts and chaos. In addition, there was no leader to guide the political movements in the country.

Amidst this chaos, the US President Woodrow Wilson pressed the Great Powers to build a plan to separate Albania from its neighbors. Thus, in 1920, attempts were made to build a new government through a National Conference held in Lushnje. During the same year, Albania became a member of the League of Nations, resulting in international recognition for the first time. For the first time, the 1920s saw the start of political organizations divided into two groups. On the one hand, the conservative forces comprised of landowners (Bajraktaret) under the direction of Ahmed Bey Zogu and, on the other hand, intellectual liberals, and Democrats seeking to instill Western ideas and make Albania like Europe. This group was led by Fan Noli, who was educated in the US. Despite the political chaos observed between these two forces, there were obvious attempts to create a democratic state between the years 1920 – 1924 (Lampe & Mazower, 2006).

The pursuit of a sustainable political climate was at the center of the above-mentioned period. A study by Krasniqi and Hackaj indicated the creation of political parties for the first time during 1920-1923, highlighting that these resembled competitive parties with prominent democratic values such as free elections. These created parties, reflected these democratic values through concrete programmes that stimulated among other things the freedom of choice, the respect for the rule of law, and furthermore, both political camps created, accepted and promoted the concept of a majority coming out of competitive elections (Krasniqi & Hackaj, 2014, 32).

In 1924, after Zog's departure to Yugoslavia, Noli took over the country with democratic means and a significant purpose of conducting land reforms. He did not enjoy international support in these attempts but, however, became the target of an assassination attempt by Zog who returned to Albania where he ruled for about 14 years. Zogu first ruled as president and later turned Albania into a monarchy where he ruled as King Zog during 1918 - 1939<sup>1</sup>. Albania was

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the data cited for the period 1912-1939 are adapted from [www.britanica.com](http://www.britanica.com), and they were also triangulated with numerous historical publications on Albania.

also affected by the great depression of the 1930s, making it impossible for King Zog's economic reforms, under Italian financial aid, to have a long-lasting impact on the Albanian economy. During the time of Zog's rule as a monarch, there was an increasing tendency of an authoritarian regime such that it began to hinder the operation and functionality of political parties.

It can be stated that King Zog's period brought about some Western reforms, such as the education reform as long as elementary school became compulsory “but there were so few teachers that only 36 percent of children were in school in 1938” (Bruno, Felton, Haywood, Thomas Kerrigan, Lund – Lack, Plowright & Swift, 2010, 1623). In addition, King Zog I was also given credit for some specific attempts to Europeanize Albania. Thus, Zogu tried to attract the students who had completed their studies in the West, convincing them to return and use their Western schooling (Ahmetaj, 2014, 212). Another emancipating move was giving women the right to vote. It can be said that Albania was the first country in the region to allow women to exercise their political will through voting. This episode was also described by many researchers of political activities in Albania during those years who noticed that even though the living standards were much lower than in any other European countries, it was made possible for women to gain equal rights. (Bruno, Felton, Haywood, Thomas Kerrigan, Lund – Lack, Plowright & Swift, 2010, 1624).

From the standpoint of political organization though, as stated above, Zogu showed his dictatorial characteristics. Despite the emergence of two political parties which at first were seen as a sign of political plurality, thus an indicator of the birth of democracy, Erebara underlined that it was fictitious as long as the electoral system, that is similar to the one that we have today, was more predisposed to determine who the winner was, more than it was focused on the electoral process in itself (Erebara, 2012).

Subsequently, the following years saw a deep economic crisis due to the debts Zogu took from Italy. The relationship between the two was initially deteriorated as Italy threatened with military action, and then Italian troops landed in Albania in 1939. This was when King Zog and his family left Albania once and for all.

### **3.3.2 Crucial Moments of Political Development in Estonia (1912 – 1939)**

Although Estonia is usually referred to as one of the three Baltic States along with Latvia and Lithuania, linguistically and ethnically, Estonians are not related to their southern Baltic

ethno linguistic neighbors. However, they are related to the Finns and belong to the Finno – ugric ethnolinguistic group (Miljan, 2004, 62).

Due to the political developments over the years, Estonians have always had the feeling of homeland love and patriotism. So, for them, the National Awakening had dated far earlier than the time when they were officially able to gain and experience their independence.

The National Awakening (1860 -80), led by Johann Voldemar Jannsen, his newspaper *Eesti Postimees*...., awakened ethnic pride in the Estonian language and native peasant culture rooted in the mythology of ancient greatness. This provided both the educational trust and the intellectual strength to resist the imperial Russian pressures of the 1880s and 1890 (Miljan, 2004, 68).

Estonian intellectuals came together with a single purpose: let's return Estonia to the Estonians. The slogan of the Young Estonia literacy group, "let us remain Estonian, but let us become European," perfectly expressed the thrust of Estonian cultural and political aspirations throughout the 20th century (Miljan, 2004, 69). So in the first attempts at statehood, Estonians had a Western approach in stating their demands. Furthermore, 1917 was the year Estonia established its army for the first time, despite the World War which had been going on for three years.

Political developments changed at a rapid pace also due to the continuing struggle between states to gain and occupy as much territory as possible. Thus, under the constant threat and pressure of an invasion from Germany and Bolsheviks, the independence of Estonia was proclaimed on February 24, 1918. The Maapaev Union declared the Independent Republic of Estonia and formed the Estonian Provisional Government (Miljan, 2004). Thus, this was despite the next day invasion from the German troupes. Even though Estonia was recognized as an independent country from the Great Powers such as England and France and had their support, "a reinvigorated Red Army attacked Estonia only 10 days after German Collapse" (Miljan, 2004, 70). After this moment, amidst the presence of the remaining German troops, the Provisional Government convened for work. The Provisional Government's work did not last long because, on 28th November 1918, the fight for Estonian independence started after the Red Army attacked Estonia at Narva. As mentioned above, the Estonian army had just been created and was small in number. This also led to the Red Army occupying about half of Estonia at the end of the same year. After continued counterattacks along with Finland's help, Estonia secured the Red

Army withdrawal. In the aftermath of this victory, attempts to establish state institutions in Estonia are observed. Thus, the Constituent Assembly was established on 23rd April 1919 (Rosenthal, 2012). The first elections took place on 5-7th April 1919, and the majority of votes went to left-wing parties. However, this was followed by a temporary governing structure, constituting the first parliamentary institution. One of the most important policies that this Parliament approved was the Land Reform (Miljan, 2004). Another important political and historical step for Estonia according to Miljan (2004) was the Treaty of Tartu on February 2nd, 1920, where Russia officially recognized the territory of Estonia (Rosenthal, 2012). This peace pact had a considerable positive impact on Estonia as it started to function as an independent state and as it was considered becoming a “birth certificate for the Republic of Estonia, which for the first time gained independence from foreign rulers” (Berg, 2003, 106).

The established parliamentary system solidified its importance and became active in the decision-making process along with the 100 elected representatives. Likewise, the constitution began to show its effects in the late 1920s. Following these political events, the first parliamentary elections were held on November 27-28th, 1920, and the newly formed a parliament with the elected prime minister Konstantin Päts started work in early 1921 (Frucht, 2005). In the framework of the important events in the recognition of the Estonian territory, another critical historical and political moment was the recognition “de jure by the Supreme Council” of Estonia's independence on January 26, 1921 (Scott - Keltie & Epstein, 1923, 876).

For the first time on May 30, 1923, were held the democratic parliamentary elections in Estonia as well as the organization of a referendum about a law that would supposedly exclude religion from the curriculum. Most people who took part in this referendum rejected this law. They decided that religious curricula may be elective for students, but it should be mandatory for grade school pupils (Frucht, 2005, 77-78). Furthermore, in 1925, another law was adopted for the cultural autonomy of the minorities. This law was annulled in 1940, but its approval lists Estonia as one of the first countries to protect minorities with a specific law adopted by the parliament itself. This law expressed the willingness and responsiveness of state institutions to such cultural issues of particular importance and “went far beyond the more limited minority rights provisions adopted by most other newly-created states of Central and Eastern Europe at this time, and...could be described as unique in the Europe of the day” (Smith, 2016, 89).

In this period, Estonia made steps forward in economic growth and stability, making possible the processing and exportation of mainly agricultural goods to the west. The economy was stable until the 1930s, together with the years associated with depression in Estonia as well. During the years of depression, there was an economic downturn mainly reflected in the number of goods exported. This event also marked the rise of the level of unemployment. Therefore, all these factors contributed to a terrain favorable to a political crisis “boosting” the viability of communist pressure. (Smith, 2001, 17)

Thus, the radical group in the Estonian War of Independence and the Union of Participants in the Estonian War of Independence (Vaps) started gaining considerable support around the 1930s. In March 1934, the Vaps movement was outlawed, and many of the members of this movement were arrested. Fearing this movement, the ruling political leader Johan Laidoner, together with the governing leadership, adopted some precautionary measures such as restricting press freedom, postponing the elections, as well as dismissing the parliament. (Kasekamp, 2009).

The country entered a "silent" state. A presidential institution was established in 1937, and the parliament was divided into two chambers. People's liberties were limited, and martial law predominated during these years. It is during this time that the newly flourishing democracy in the early 1920s began to fade. It is observed an increase in fear and the undertaking of a series of measures to stop the spread of communism. In this atmosphere of pressure, authoritarianism increased even among those leaders who tried to establish a democratic order and values in Estonia. This unrest continued until September 28, 1939, when the war between Germany and Poland began. Estonia tried to position itself in a neutral role, but the opposite happened. With the argument that Estonia could not be a neutral country because it would disrupt the balances of the Baltic States, the Soviet Union managed to deploy military troops within the Estonian territory (Pajur, 2009).

With the signing of the Pact of Mutual Assistance, Estonia allowed the Soviet Union to build a military base (Theroux, 2011, 31). Despite the invasion until 1940, the Soviet Union did not intervene in Estonian domestic affairs. This lasted until Germany conquered France. This moment marks the Stalin's decision to end the independence of the Baltic States. So, on June 21, the Red Army invaded Estonia with the justification that it had violated the pact and had not allowed Soviet troops to build a military base. On July 21, 1940, the National Council stated that

Estonia was the Soviet Socialist Republic which officially joined the Soviet Union on August 6. This date signaled the beginning of a new era in Estonian politics that lasted for about 50 years.

Based on the analysis above, it is clearly noticed that Estonia, before the tendencies of the authoritarian regime, was a parliamentary democratic republic, where the supreme power belonged to the people: “the one hundred- strong Riigikogu, the Estonian parliament, had legislative power. Executive power was implemented by the government headed by the State Elder, both of them politically answerable to the parliament” (Pajur, 2009). Furthermore, the article of Pajur highlights the importance of the mother tongue and its inclusion in the school curricula. It was also ensured the possibility to obtain education in all the levels, from primary school up to university level, and the University of Tartu became a national university. Meanwhile, it is noticed an emancipation also in the minorities, who had the chance to study their own language as a second language and to use in their own way the cultural autonomy that was ensured in that time.

From this analysis it is observed that until the attempts for state formation in 1912 for Albania and 1918 for Estonia, both states experienced considerable common political and historical developments. Historically, both countries were under the pressure of invaders: Ottoman Empire in the case of Albania and Russia for Estonia. Intellectuals, such as Ismail Qemali in Albania, and Konstantin Pats, Konstantin Konik, who formed the Estonian Rescue Committee in Estonia, took over a national movement by raising the flag and proclaiming the independence. Moreover, as shown in the historical and political developments chronologically listed above, it is noticed that the first attempts of Estonia were not only to create a state, but also to lay the foundations of a democratic country. This was represented in a democratic way by Estonians, despite the chaos of the political developments of the years between the First and the Second World War.

In addition, for the first time, there is a constitution that guarantees the rights and freedoms as well as parliamentary elections and a referendum in 1923. It should be noted that, in spite of the attempts to democratize and Europeanize the Albanian society, Albania did not at any moment climb these steps in its path to democracy. Albania in most of these years was characterized by a rather fierce domestic war between the leaders and the great democratic chaos.

### **3.4 The Features of The Political Culture in Albania and Estonia in Pre - Communism**

#### **3.4.1 The political culture in Albania in the Pre - Communism Period Reflecting Fragmentation from External Invasion for the Internal Power**

The attempt to create an Albanian political heritage independent from the influence of foreign invaders started before the official Declaration of Independence in 1912. It is mostly focused on Albanians' fight and continuous struggle to achieve detachment from the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that this detachment cannot be described as an immediate and finished process. By specifying what is stated above, I argue that it was not an immediate process because there had been attempts to separate from the Ottoman Empire during the five-hundred-year conquest up until 1912. At the same time, it cannot be described as a definitive process because the consequences of this invasion were reflected and determined by the continuity of the political, economic, and social life in Albania. It must be mentioned that by influencing all aspects of life, they also influenced the creation of the political culture that would determine the course of political continuity in Albania.

Not wanting to linger on the effects of that the Ottoman occupation had on the reflection of the political culture in Albania, if it has been positive or not, in this thesis, the focus is particularly to pinpoint whether any elements of the political culture that have been inherited over the years have had an influence of, and, if so, how these elements may have determined the formation of particular attitudes. This correlation helps us make the association between the citizens' political attitudes and the democratic or non-democratic outcome of the society after the fall of communism.

The political culture in this period, as Ahmeti (2015) defines it, is characterized by the spirit of the National Renaissance. In his explanation, the political culture is reflected in significant problems regarding various inherited problems and challenges that resulted from the struggle to create an independent Albanian state. Furthermore, according to his statement, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, this culture was confronted with transmissible discontinuity, an ideal world, and different frames of mind against the demand of time and the battle for the restoration of the Albanian identity. This battle was tested by various obstructions, particularly inward Albanian ones, and supported by external circumstances. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire left the Albanians financially and spiritually ruined (Ahmeti, 2015).

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Albanians found themselves in a continuous mental “war” and struggle to borrow European models not only in terms of their daily life but also in their mentality. This could be seen in all aspects of political and social public life. Besides the struggles, “the mental structures and the value systems will not be absorbed successfully” (Ahmeti, 2015).

In fact, when the author describes the characteristics of the political culture of that period, he describes, among other things, “the collective form of thinking” as a particular element that has influenced the formation of people’s attitudes, causing adverse effects in the democratic approach of Albania after the fall of communism. In reality, this collective way of thinking is perceived not only as a characteristic apart from the nature of political culture in Albania but also as a reflection of this characteristic on the success of the process of democratization after the fall of the communist system. This assumption also stands because of the collective way of thinking. According to (Ahmeti, 2015), it contrasts European individualism and gives way to the development of concepts that are associated with the enforcement of the leadership cult and concepts like nationalism and populism as a political ideology. Furthermore, this political culture typology seems to have accompanied the citizens even after the Declaration of Independence of 1912 despite the setting of new priorities as a newly formed state. Again, a significant objective for Albania during this period was to keep the borders of the newly formed state intact. This situation was, of course, due to the country’s location during the Balkan Wars and the First World War.

In November 1913, Prince Wied was appointed as a candidate for Albania’s throne. Even though he stayed in this post only six months and had supposedly brought the Western spirit to Albania. Because of his prevenient origin, he found himself in an environment where he was not aware of the cultural mentality and where he encountered many clashes among the local leaders, most of whom wished to still be under the influence of the Ottoman Empire. Prince Wied did not cope well with the situation, and this led to his leaving the throne only six months after his succession. After Prince Wied’s quick departure, Albania fell back into chaos and anarchy.

During the short period of Prince Wied’s rule, no governing reforms were carried out to guarantee the improvement of the Albanians’ situation. As Cullhaj (2017, 30) emphasizes, he did not undertake any reforms and never governed outside the city of Durrës. Thus, after Prince Wied’s departure, Albania did not have any improvements in the aspect of governing platforms,

and it returned to political instability. Therefore, revolts were noticed during the first week after Prince Wied's departure. "Barely a week after Wied's departure yet another violent revolt, this time led by supporters of the Young Turks, laid siege to Durres. The rebels raised the Ottoman flag, imprisoned Wied's supporters and called for, among other things, a Muslim prince" (Vickers, 1995, 86).

Meanwhile, this chaotic situation left Albania for many more years to come without political organization and amidst a continuous opposition of war for power among the various rebel groups. After Wied's departure, Albania returned to its pre-war state, whereby disagreements and chaos dominated. There was no united group of resistance against interferences by foreigners. In the north of Albania, the governing was performed by local clans presided by a person as its leader. In the south of Albania, an unstable state dominated; this state was characterized by revolts and strikes of the Greek 'Epirot' bands. Above all, what most accurately characterized Albania was a state of anarchy created by the supporters of the rebel groups that fought among themselves to obtain as much influence and political power as possible (Vickers, 1995, 86-87).

Moreover, the First World War further encumbered Albania's internal situation. The political culture seemed to be underdeveloped and was characterized in the following years by politics oriented more towards personal interests than towards national goals. Very few leaders of the time could make their decisions independently of their religion or personal interest. In this political climate, no agreement dominated that could serve in the best interest of the country. Under these conditions, Albania lay between the East and its Ottoman heritage and the West and the creation of a Western European parliamentary government. Thus, it can be said that Albania remained undeveloped and dominated by a class of politicians who were interested in preserving a socio-economic status-quo founded by the Ottoman Empire, which was mostly feudal because the majority of the population were peasants without land and with no role in the political process (Lampe & Mazower, 2004, 240).

Aside from the attempts to create order, this unstable political and economic situation continued even during the years 1920-1925. This is reflected in the frequent change of government that occurred until 1922. During this time, about seven governments had been in power. While the government changed, no political reforms were undertaken. This unbalanced political climate was also reflected in the frequent change of governments from 1920-1925. It

was noticed that “political groupings, which were based more on personal relationships and enmities than on ideology or principle, remained inchoate and shifting” (Crampton, 1997, 145).

Although tangible reforms could not be seen on the horizon, the first attempt to form political institutions and to draft a law which “was the first constitutional document promulgated in Albania without foreign dictation” (Crampton, 1997, 144), which was seen in the Congress of Lushnja in 1920. This statute would also determine the creation of an assembly of seventy-nine members and a council formed by four men. This council was all-inclusive from a religious point of view based on the fact that it included one Catholic, one Orthodox, and two Muslims, one of which was a Bektashi and the other of which was a Sunni (Crampton, 1997, 144).

As mentioned above, it is thus seen as a genuine statutory organization that was drafted as an attempt to institutionalize the government. This statute was supposed to be all-inclusive; the Supreme Court was to be constituted by a representative from all religious groups. However, during these attempts to build the state, “the legislation agreed upon at the Congress of Lushnja had begun to show its limitations, leaving the government increasingly impotent” (Vickers, 1995, 100). The government of Sulejman Delvina that came out of the Congress of Lushnja was overthrown rather quickly.

Some of the reasons for this instability lie in the many rivalries in the internal political climate. Many politicians of that time tried to antagonize the success of the opponent. Their ambition was focused on their personal success and the failure of their opponent, not on the pursuit of national goals (Mema, 2015, 5).

Amidst the political tension in Albania during those years, the first elections were held in April 1921. For the first time, political pluralism emerged, as the two opposing political forces (the Democratic Party and the Populist Party) received the same number of votes. Led by Fan Noli, the “Popular Party saw themselves as essentially liberal and Western-oriented” (Vickers, 1995, 101). When referring to these elections, we automatically imagine the connotation of liberty. If there are elections, this implies the existence of alternatives to choose from. However, as specified by Vickers (1995, 101), the elections were concentrated on a small group of people who had a great influence in the country. The situation in Albania reflected the absence of the free press as well as a lack of intelligentsia.

### 3.4.1.1 Characteristics and Features of Political Culture during King Zog's Rule

Along with the appearance of the first political parties in the country, a representative of the Populist Party who dominated Albanian politics for years was Ahmet Zogu. Zogu became Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs at the age of twenty-seven. The domestic political situation would not continue to be untroubled for long because the party would begin to contradict itself. The political atmosphere would then become characterized by revolutions and anti-revolutions up to the beginning of Zog's dictatorship, now under the title of the King of Albania. Zog used the Constitution to legitimize his absolute power, initially through a presidential constitution which served as a bridge to go on in 1928 in a "royal dictatorship with the Founding Statute of the Albanian Monarchy" (Ahmeti, 2015). This Constitution was created to enable the enforcement of the absolute power of Zog during his rule as a monarch.

According to Cullhaj (2017), Zog developed a political system that resembled an authoritarian regime. He further emphasizes that, among other things, "another weak point was the absence of the middle-class. Both of them were conservatives, the peasants lying in extreme poverty, and the aristocracy being primarily concerned in preserving its ruling position. The Albanian aristocracy became ever more oblivious of the underdevelopment of the economy and social situation, while they insisted on the preservation of the status quo" (Cullhaj, 2017, 40).

When analysing King Zog I's rule, besides the attempt to modernize Albania and the achievement of some reforms, Zog did not make it possible for a developed and upgraded Albania to be left after his departure, nor would Albania remotely resemble Western countries. He reigned as an autocrat and, as every autocrat, oppressed the most intellectual part of society. After Zog invested a lot in the establishment of order, he did not continue to follow the necessary reforms for the modernization of the country. His autocratic tendencies were also reflected in his actions against his opponents. As a result of their opposition, they were punished in various forms, sometimes by being exiled from the country. The elite and the bourgeoisie, even though they were small groups, often conformed to Zog's regime because doing otherwise would bring unemployment and economic difficulties (Crampton, 1997, 148).

Thus, the political atmosphere in Albania is bright. It is seen as a form of oppression for those who thought differently and who would be punished as a consequence. Very few opponents would remain to criticize the king's rule. However, despite the difficult situation, a

few intellectuals fought to enlighten the minds of Albanians so that they would not conform to the stagnant reality that they were experiencing. Among the most prominent Albanian intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s was Branko Merxhani, who, with his professionalism, was a great intellectual opponent. He, along with many other intellectuals who followed, played a vital role in the struggle to create a thinking spirit that was as much nationalist as it was democratic.

The intellectual doctrine that was called “Neoshqiptarizma” was focused on departing as much as possible from the oriental spirit and culture and on being represented by democratic principles. This movement would fight to spread cultural elements that would serve as promoters of the social and political changes in the country. An article about Branko Merxhani also lists several newspapers that were the most important instrument through which the Western mentality was spread. Their viewpoints were expressed in the journal “Demokratia” of Gjirokastra as well as in a number of press organs that were published in Tirana, like “Illyria”, “Minerva”, “Neoshqiptarizma” and especially in the monthly cultural magazine “Perpjekja shqiptare” the main organ of “neoshqiptareve”. “Perpjekja shqiptare” was one of the most qualitative magazines of the Albanian press, which started in October 1936 with Branko Merxhani as its editor-owner. The first issue of this magazine would begin with an article by Branko Merxhani “Starting work” with the motto “There is no politics! Just Culture!” (Tetollari, 208).<sup>2</sup> After making a considerable contribution to the intellectual life of Albanians, in 1940, Merxhani left Albania as a sign of revolt after fascism was settled.

As a result of the struggles, notable progress was achieved in the educational system through the creation of elementary and secondary schools. However, the schools lacked teachers and the finances to afford the appropriate reforms. As a consequence, the majority of the population was illiterate and Albania would be described as the most undeveloped country in Europe. As Vickers (1995) would explain, “nonetheless, during the interwar years, Albania remained Europe’s least developed and poorest country”.

However, apart from the challenges outlined, the pre-communist or interwar period seems to have contributed to the creation of an environment that fosters the evolution of a social-cultural and political elite in Albania, which was situated towards Western concepts and

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<sup>2</sup>The article published in the daily newspaper “Panorama” gives a panorama of the life and works of Branko Merxhani. The information was taken from the web page: <http://www.panorama.com.al/branko-merxhani-na-duhet-kulture-kalbesiren-e-kemi-ne-veten-tone/>

governmental issues. This was, for the most part, constructed during the rise of a public debate that manifested in newspapers from the 1920s to the 1930s.

Despite Albanian intellectuals' endeavors, which were in accordance with these Western perspectives, two frames of mind were distinguished in terms of the positions that Albanians held toward these public debates. One group opined that they should ascertain and adapt traces of Western civilization and development from the West. The other group, which seemed to be larger, maintained the perceiving that a quickened development would be perilous to individuals and to the nation. Notwithstanding endeavors to create a system that could promote civilization and a strong national identity, the Albanian intellectual elite encountered many problems in creating a constructive climate in which public debates could be held as a way of including citizens in decision-making processes. Aside from this effort, in the following years Albania was characterized by the extraordinary polarization of citizens and groups of the East and West, King Zog's ban on political parties and censorship, and the discontinuity of instruments that could have served as a basis for the establishment of Western and democratic societal elements, such as public debates, during the communist era (Çullhaj, 2017).

Alluding to the political culture of Albania and to the separation between the East and West, an especially significant characteristic that the Gerxhani and Schram mention in their research is the presence of *clans*. When they describe the term 'clan,' they allude to a gathering of peoples who have a solid bond that has more to do with a relationship than a common interest. They determine that clan groups are connected through "kinship, culture, religion, race, and language, as well as through political interests" (Gërçhani & Schram, 2000, 6), and it is these points of interest that make these connections significantly more grounded than other types of connections.

A notable feature of these clan groups in Albania is the relationship they have with politics and the mutual impact they have on each other. Thus, Albania has historically been a politically divided society. In 1920, the northern part of Albania generally consisted of conservative groups, led by Ahmed Zogu, while the southern part comprised intellectual liberals and Western-minded democratic politicians. This division was continuously and deliberately exploited for political reasons since these years and was subsequently reflected in post-90s politics. Therefore, the authors point out that in the following periods, whether in the communist or post-communist era, policies continued to favor these clan groups. This reality also manifested

itself in people's voting behavior, as groups were forced to "vote against one's own or in favor of the other clan's party" (Gërkhani & Schram, 2000, 9).

### **3.4.2 The Political Culture of Estonia in the Pre-Communism Period**

The literature indicates that in 1918, Estonia gained its independence. After almost 700 years of invasion from Russia, Germany, etc., it was finally possible for the country to be governed by the Estonians themselves. In this new reality, the next challenge for the country was to create state institutions to strengthen the democracy and to make the nation independent and safe. This was important in order to strengthen the country's security and to protect it from any possible invasions, (especially from a potential Russian invasion, as this was perceived as the biggest threat).

It must be stressed that during the interwar period, attempts to establish a democratic state were immense. The efforts consisted of establishing democratic institutions, which in Estonia have invariably been favored, inspired by the emphasis on the elements of national identity among citizens. In a parallel way, efforts were made to forge a democratic political culture, which laid a strong basis for building the foundations of the state. These attempts, which took place after the fall of the communist regime, would come to fruition when democratic order was established.

Having mentioned this, the objectives of the state's cultural politics were considered as primary objectives for the development of nationalism and civilization as instruments in creating an inherent national and cultural identity. Thus, it can be specified that, by referring to the democratic political culture noticed in Estonia from 1918-1940, the political culture was developed as a result of fruitful cooperation between the state and society.

In the cultural and political development of Estonia, a very important role seems to have been played by the Estonian community houses (also called *Rahvamaja*). Cultural activities were organized in these community houses. These activities ensured the periodical meeting of the inhabitants who initially conducted only cultural activities but later took on forms of political gatherings. Inside these community houses, notions of national identity and issues of nation building were often discussed.

Thus, as specified by Kulbok-Lattik, the creation of these community centers, date back to the second half of the nineteenth century and have played a key role in addressing various

problems, mainly regarding national issues (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 17). In continuation of this argument, the Estonian community houses not only enriched the community's cultural life but also, according to Kulbok-Lattik (2015), they became "pre-state cultural institutions". The Estonian community houses played an important role in the formation of the cultural identity and in the nation-building process, mainly during the most critical periods, such as those of the German and Russian invasion.

Estonia during those years contained elements of a democratic political culture that was the focus of the political developments with the primary intention of nation building. As Kubok-Lattik would emphasize, in addition to being seen as a very important mechanism in the process of nation building, the culture played a vital role in political mobilization. It is also noticed that a crucial role has been played by the intelligentsia – those who were active within the borders of Estonia and those who made their continuous contribution in exile. As the author would presume, "the creative intelligentsia and cultural societies have always played an important role in Estonian society" (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 82-83). It is important to emphasize that the number of intellectuals who had the status of refugee and who had made their contribution to the enforcement of national policies is thought to be about 2000 (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 20).

The reflection of the democratic culture elements is noticed even in other factors that are mirrored in society, like the creation and functioning of the community houses, which date back to the late nineteenth century. One of the revealing components of the development of this culture has also been the periodic publication of the Estonian newspaper. This newspaper was quite efficient in this period. It intensified people's awareness of political issues and was central to various debates about nationalism and nation-building issues, which were very sensitive matters for the Estonians. In this way, the Estonian newspaper has kept alive the liberal ideology and has also continuously called for the improvement of the economy through the gathering of richness. Another aspect which has been the focus of the continuous writings has been the need to increase education. This has been seen as a very important element that is directly related to the spread of the principles of democracy (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 17).

Meanwhile, the civil society blossomed up until the second half of the nineteenth century. About fifty-five community houses were listed in 1914 (Kulbok-Lattik, 2012; Uljas 1990, 9; Karu, 1990, 624). Through these statistics, we can notice the influence of civil society in the overall society. Cultural policy was more influenced by the civil society than it was coordinated

by state mechanisms. This period and the influence that the development of social society had on the general culture of the country preceded and determined the establishment of the cultural institutions and aided the creation of adequate conditions for state interference through the corresponding legislation from 1925-1934.

Furthermore, a very important role in the rise of the cultural policy was also played by the political elite and the intellectual caste. Through their debates, the theoretical arguments for the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions were revealed. This is seen as the Democratic Era of Estonia, which was characterized by clear and productive cooperation between the civil society, the political elite, and the intelligentsia. As a result, during the independence period of 1918-1934 in Estonia, the essential processes related to nation building, civil society building, and state building, were combined by enabling their mutual development. Above all, it set the precedent of the establishment of dialogues between the political and civil structures. This is considered “one of the main requirements for the progress of ‘civic culture’” (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 85).

Given these points, in this period of time, some of the most important principles of democracy were developed and thus became a reference point for the establishment of political culture for the Estonians. Those who were in the Diaspora who played a very important role, as well as for those who lived within the borders of Estonia. Following this argument, Li Bennich-Björkman, in his publication “Political Culture under Institutional Pressure” (2007), best reflected the cultural situation of Estonia in the first years of its independence through several surveys completed by 291 people who had lived in Estonia between the wars.

What is of great interest is that Bennich-Björkman (2007) emphasized that the most important “cultural themes”<sup>3</sup> were formed in the First Republic of Estonia. These themes laid the foundation for a modern society. Among the most important cultural themes were communalism, individualism, achievement orientation, tolerance, and political scepticism. All these characteristics, which were identified during the first period of independence, had the potential to become part of the organization of the perceptions and the collective behaviours of citizens. They had also been present during the communist period, although they were not able to develop until after the fall of the communist regime, when an adequate terrain had been created. They

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<sup>3</sup>By the term “cultural themes,” the author who borrowed it from Eckstein adapts the definition of a “silent value” that is appropriate in a certain context. Based on the organization and classification of these cultural terms. we may better perceive which elements of political culture have been more prominent in Estonia during the interwar period.

have influenced the way the country was governed by leading the nation towards total democratization.

### **3.4.2.1 Communalism, Individualism, and Achievement as Components of Political Culture in the Estonian Pre-Communist Period**

#### **Communalism**

From 1920-1940, communalism was quite high in the Estonian society. Communalism refers to a civil society that can be described as quite active and cooperative, with voluntary associations covering various aspects of life and fields of interest.

A particular characteristic of Estonia was that a great part of society continued to contribute considerably to the cultural and political aspects of the country. Li Bennich-Björkman has emphasized that many common ideal notions – as well as the will to stay and support each other – have stimulated the feeling of trust and the will to work for the common good. She supposes that the common suffering of the people helped to keep the feeling of belonging alive for Estonians living within the borders of Estonia, as well as for those abroad. According to the author, “joining together in organizations also became an expression of citizenship” (Bjorkman, 2007, 10).

#### **Individualism**

Individualism was seen as one of the most important characteristics of the culture of Estonia in the 1920s and 1930s. It played an essential role in fostering socialization within society by affecting the early development of this process. This characteristic contrasted with the collective characteristics that were noticed, for example, in the Russian culture (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 11).

It is stated by various authors that a cause of Individualism in Estonia might have been the influence of the Baltic German nobility. Supposing that the Baltic German regime lasted for many centuries, immediately after the Great Northern War, the German barons enforced their control over the Estonian territory, mainly in relation to “the administrative institutions, the estates, and the native serfs, while the Estonian territory as such remained part of the greater

Russian Empire” (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 12). The German influence dominated Estonia as a consequence of gaining total independence over this territory. This fact is specified by Kulbok-Lattik (2015, 29) as an established agreement intended to maintain order among the Baltic provinces.

This situation lasted until the beginning of the First World War, when Russia exhibited an increasing tendency to extend its power in the region. Meanwhile, the German situation has been used as an argument also by other authors, who emphasize the fact that even though Estonia was involved in the Soviet Union after the loss of its independence, the Western influence still remained strong in the society (Titma 1996, 277). The influence of Germany and Russia in Estonian society was so strong that it influenced the creation of an ethnically stratified society in which it can be clearly noticed that the Estonians were at the lowest strata.

This situation continued until the period of national awakening at the end of the nineteenth century, which greatly influenced the intellectual strata. After this phenomenon, the social structure stopped having an impact on the way society was organized. As a consequence, this greatly influenced the strengthening of equality and the softening of the hierarchy, which was reflected by a characteristic of the cultural features during the Estonian First Republic.

When referring to the term “equal,” it is important to emphasize that the research for this period states that it means that every person is responsible for the way he builds his future. This kind of equality is appreciated in terms of identifying the features and differences of the individual. One’s individuality is perceived in the efforts to achieve success in life, not by inheriting it or achieving it without personal merit. Thus, the issue of equality was not perceived in the prism of equality in the outcome but in resources and gains depending on the individual’s capabilities and efforts.

This perception of equality and the way society functions seems to have accompanied and characterized the cultural mentality even after the communist years (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 21). Moreover, this finding was also emphasized by the former prime minister when he had to explain the motives behind various monetary reforms, land reforms, etc. He admitted that one of his goals was to teach the Estonians to walk on their own feet.

## **Achievement**

Another exceptionally important component that influenced the formation of the political culture was specified as the “cultural theme” by the author. This component was an achievement in the context of the continuous efforts of the government to offer enough possibilities for the massive participation of citizens in educational programs in schools and in higher education institutions. This line of policy-making was intentional. Education was seen as an arm of the development of human capital. The opportunity that would be given to citizens would affect the creation of a more solid society, which would create all the necessary prerequisites for citizens to walk on their own feet and be protected from every threat that came from the neighbouring countries who wanted to conquer Estonia.

### **3.4.3 General Remarks Regarding the Political Culture of Estonia**

Considering all the components that characterized the favoring of a general culture to create a democratic state after gaining the independence of Estonia in 1918, it turned out that one of the most important reforms that greatly influenced the change of these now well-established structures in society was the “land reform.” During the First Republic, the “Agrarian Law” was one of the most important laws because “overnight, it turned a ‘feudal’ peasantry into a nation of propertied small farmers” (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015).

Also, in the context of the achievements of the new Estonian government of that time were the strong efforts to create the appropriate conditions for adequate education at the pre-university level as well as at the university level. What is most striking during the interwar period is that theoretical matters of civic education and of nationalist concepts were involved in the continuous training in school environments. In addition to being focused on knowledge about the native country, the lessons provided in civic education were integrated, and “the civic training focused on citizens’ rights, how democracy worked, and how to vote” (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 38).

This fact can be seen in the reality of Estonia of those years. This reality testifies for the priorities set by the government and by the citizens. Besides emphasizing the national issues, notions about democracy civic rights and the way we vote are gained. On the contrary, this is alien to the Albanian reality of those years, where the attempts to build and improve the educational system were noticed in the years of King Zog I’s reign, but none of these attempts were of distinguished importance. This period will be considered, for Estonia, as the time when

the foundations of a democratic state were laid. It is also a time of the creation of a Western culture that would be reflected even in the post-communist reality and would help in the creation of a democratic state in the following years after the fall of the communist system.

After this period (i.e., from 1934-40), in Estonia, as in other European countries, nationalist tides started to be noticed, and these preceded autocratic regimes. These years would be labelled as the “silent era” of Päts, which would bring a pro-totalitarian ideology, which was created and spread under the care of the nationalist cultural policy that was related to the organization of social, cultural, and political life. There were also tendencies among government officials to control and monitor citizens’ initiatives, mainly those who had a political character.

With all the censorship performed, it can be said that the regime was an authoritarian regime of a medium scale until the 1940s, when the Soviet era would start through the Sovietization policies. During the period of Sovietization, the cultural part of society was instrumentalized in favor of enforcing the pro-Soviet propaganda. This propaganda spread even to the community houses, which, as centers for the promotion of the Estonian culture, were used as propaganda tools by the Soviet states. As specified by the author, “cultural centers that had operated on the basis of free initiative and civil society were taken over by the state, becoming state-operated and censored cultural institutions of the Soviet era” (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 18-20).

### **3.5 Analyzing and Describing the most Important Political Turns for Both Countries (1940-1990)**

#### **3.5.1 Crucial Moments of Political Development in Albania (1940– 1990)**

The "friendly rapport" of those years between Albania and Italy, prominent in the Albanian domestic politics during king Zog's rule, came to an end before the start of World War II in 1939, when Italy occupied Albania and King Zog was forced to leave the country immediately. In these conditions, the facts show that once more, Albania found itself in the crossroads of political instability, where it lost its previously earned independence again. In the context of local politics, Enver Hoxha emerged as the "ruler" or "conqueror" of Albania for the next 40 years using the winning cards of the National Union and by fully exploiting this ideology. He would remain in power until his death in 1985. Consequently, in 1942, Enver

Hoxha became the leader of the newly established Communist Party (O'Donnell, 1999). Thus, the Labour Party remained as the only political force in power for about forty-six years, by controlling every aspect of the social, political and cultural life. As soon as the Labour Party rose to power, Albania adopted the "Soviet pattern" and stayed under this sphere of influence until 1960 (Tarifa, 1995, 133).

It should be noted that after the immediate departure of King Zog, Albania faced some obstacles simultaneously. On one hand there were some political challenges as it did not have an established and functional political system that could take the situation under control (O'Donnell, 1999, 8). On the other hand, Albania had some inherited problems related to the social and economic development. Due to these political movements, until 1945, Albania was viewed as "an extremely under-developed nation compared to other countries in Europe" (O'Donnell, 1999). The country in those years was underdeveloped and backward in many aspects. Albania would be viewed as "...the only country in Europe not to have a university prior to World War II" (Elsie, 2010). Also, the ending of World War II, left Albania in a semi-feudal state, with an agrarian dominating economy and the country would be noted as the poorest nation in the region (Tarifa, 1995, 133).

Impacted by the developments of that time, the first political groupings started to appear in the country. The Resistance Group, set up to fight against the foreign invaders during World War II, attempted to win the support of the Albanian people who backed the struggle for the protection of Albania's borders. The Resistance Group comprised of three political clusters.

*The Legality* was a group led by Abaz Kupa, a former partisan communist partisan influenced by the British, and sought revitalization of the monarchy in Albania. This grouping revolved around the argument that only Zog's regime was legitimate. *The National Front (Balli Kombëtar)*, led by Mithat Frasheri, is labeled as an anti-fascist, anti-communist as well as an anti-Zogist group. There was also a third political cluster, the Communist group, led by Enver Hoxha, who on November 8, 1941, became the leader of the new Albanian Communist Party (BBC, 2018).

The Communist Party had the support of Yugoslavia as a result of a reciprocal relationship established in those years, which would have lasting effects for years to come in the international coalition arena. Under these circumstances of political development, the years 1942 - 1943 marked Enver Hoxha's empowerment as a leader, culminating in taking over the country

after the withdrawal of German troops, officially in 1944, and establishing the People's Republic of Albania in the same year. As it has often been observed in the domestic political developments of Albania, the chaos and hostility among the political groups was quite harsh, not only during those years but throughout the entire Albanian political life. This internal chaos deepened considerably during 1943-1944. Apparently, after the Mukja Conference held on August 3, 1943, an alliance was created between the representatives of the National Front (Balli Kombëtar) and the Communist Party, through the signing of a Pact that would fight the invaders. However, it was soon realized that this alliance was divided due to the fight that existed among each other and supporting the foreign invaders. Thus, after the departure of the Italian troops and the German invasion, the Italians still present in the Albanian territory surrendered and were kept hidden in the mountains of Albania. Not only did they stay sheltered, but they also participated in the fight against Germans under the battalion "Antonio Gramsci". Partisans took advantage of this moment of alliance with Italians to fight and take over the National Front (Balli Kombëtar) Movement. Under this hostile pressure, the latter leaned on the support of German invaders, thus signaling the failure of the primary goal of the Pact reached in Mukje: the protection of national interests. This episode was greatly exploited by the communist party and served to dampen the influence of this movement among the wider population. The Communist Party also started working against the Legality Movement, gaining more and more ground and control in the country (O'Donell, 199, 8-10).

In the run-up to the December 1945 election, the Democratic Front was elected with an overflow showing that the "92 percent of the electorate voted and that 93 percent of voters chose the Democratic Front ticket" (Barolli, 2019, 252). The reality that was reflected during the elections was incredibly purposeful propaganda and fear practiced against opposition represents, and in truthfulness, it created an impact on the candidate lists in light of the fact that how solitary the delegates of the Democratic Front appeared in them. An offensive campaign continued during the ensuing time comprising liquidating, discrediting, and sending in exile to the country's opposition elite (Barolli, 2019).

According O'Donell (1999, 12), the first thing Enver Hoxha did as soon as he came to power was to establish Special Courts to denounce war crimes. In fact, what he did was the first political movement to be followed by the establishment of a strong foundation for one of the most ruthless communist regimes, while, many of those who were chosen to deliver justice

ended up being judged and convicted by this false justice. One of the people that was condemned after some years by these special courts, was Koci Xoxe himself, the Internal Affairs Minister, and one of the most important ministers of Enver Hoxha's cabinet. The conviction of Koci Xoxe was joined by the condemnation of many adversaries who were captured and a few were even executed, yet in addition, following here and there the qualms of the Albanians leaders that came because of the shaking up of relations among Yugoslavia and SU (Brzezinski, 1967, 387).

As mentioned earlier, Albania and Yugoslavia had good relations, but this did not last long following Yugoslavia's statements that even though it had lobbied for the recognition of the independence of Albania, it did not think that Albania was able to guard and protect its sovereignty unequivocally. Thus, this was a valid motive for joining Yugoslavia under Tito's leadership. Under this pressure, economic cooperation was established between the two countries; however, it resembled more of a unilateral agreement where all the strings were in Yugoslavia's hands. This relationship lasted until 1947 when Albania began to strengthen relations with the Soviet Union. Subsequently, in 1948, Albania completely dismantled ties with Yugoslavia. This is also due to the deteriorating relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. So, in 1948, the Soviet Union began to help Albania economically (O'Donnell, 1999, 36-37).

Along these lines, the ensuing occasions in the arena of international relations with a restrictive relationship between the SU that endured somewhere between 1948 and 1960. In this structure, the SU started to aid Albania monetarily because not long after the separation with Yugoslavia, Albania lost the financial guide that got from this nation (Krisafi, 2015). The first five years of the relationship between Albania and the Soviet Union were outstanding until Stalin's death in March 1953. The impact Stalin's death had on the Albanian people would be portrayed in this way:

Stalin's death was keenly felt in Albania. Enver Hoxha assembled the entire population of Tirana into the capital's largest square, made them all kneel and take a two-thousand-word oath of "eternal fidelity" and "gratitude" to their "beloved father" and "great liberator" to whom the Albanian people owed "everything (O'Donnell, 1999, 38).

Following Stalin's death and Nikita Khrushchev's rise to power in the Soviet Union, financial assistance provided to Albania was not the same as before, thus amplifying the rift in this bilateral relationship. Indeed, as far as international politics was essential, these pacts and

relations would often determine the pursuit of national policies. This fact is also evidenced by the behaviour of the Prime Minister Tuk Jakova and the Minister of Education, Bedri Spahiu, who after Stalin's death, accused Hoxha during the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Albanian Labour Party in 1955, of implementing very harsh policies since it did not allow any different thoughts or freedom of debate among the members of the party, especially regarding important matters. Of course, this would cause the two-party exponents to be called revisionists and to be expelled from the party (O'Donell, 1999, 38).

The relations between Albania and the Soviet Union continued to be tense due to the peace established between the latter and Yugoslavia. Considering the fact that Albania was declared among the biggest enemies of Yugoslavia, Enver Hoxha feared that it could affect maintaining his position and status within the Party. According O'Donell (1999), it was this moment in the stage of international politics when Albania started to build bridges with China. China started to provide economic assistance to Albania, and this fact did not go unnoticed by the Soviet Union, which in turn amplified its trade relations with Albania and was very generous with economic aid. Despite the approach with China, the situation continued to be relatively good for Albania and the Soviet Union up to 1960s, notwithstanding minor incidents that were kept out of the public sight.

One of the motives commonly used as the basis of the breakdown of communist alliances was a tendency to accuse other countries of not fully complying with or not correctly understanding the Marxist-Leninist ideology. This ideology was at the heart of the communist political platform. Declarations such as Albania was the only country that contributed in building communism, continued to be made by Hoxha even after Mao's death. In this context "Hoxha believed that Albania could be 'a light-house' for the world Communist revolution and he himself the sole and undisputed theorist of latter-day Marxism-Leninism" (Tarifa, 1995, 137).

The Soviet Union, specifically its leader Nikita Khrushchev, used precisely this ideological maneuver to accuse Mao Tse-tung of not sticking to this ideology, thus harming the communist bloc. SU expected Albania to have the same reaction, but this did not happen. Under the pressure of these events, SU decided to discontinue financial aid for Albania. Bilateral relations between the Soviet Union and Albania ultimately ended in 1961, thus ending economic aid from the SU. This influenced the increase of tension in the international policies and as highlighted above, any tension at the international level directly influenced the internal political

developments. Thus, Koco Tashko and Liri Belishova, two senior officials, were accused of supporting the Soviet axis and were dismissed from their official positions followed by further measures such as the internment of the latter for many years (O' Donnell, 1999, 48).

Regarding international relations, it appears that the breakdown with the US is a repetitive story that proceeds with China a decade later, bringing Albania into total isolation. While for Albania these alliances appeared to be significant in light of the fact that they gave financial help and guaranteed the security of the country, for the partners in the present case, the intrigue was principally in misusing and utilizing the port to the Adriatic coast for naval purposes. What is distinguished, however, is that in all international political relations, "there seems to be a stable relationship between a small client and a larger patron" (Vickers & Pettifer, 1997, 207).

What is noticed in the influence of all these political movements is that even though there is talk about a communist bloc, at certain times in other countries like the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia and then China, there was a tendency of opening towards the West. Unlike these countries, in Albania, it is seen blind isolation and total disruption from Western culture until almost the end of the Communist period. Enver Hoxha's policies were, in fact, self-isolating and destructive for both the economy as well as social and human aspects in Albania. The terror among Enver Hoxha's opponents was extensive, and this was emphasized in Nikita Khrushchev's speech at the Twenty-second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union where he specifies among other things that all the Albanians that founded the Communist Party and fought against the Germans and the Italians, almost all of them, fell victims of the crimes committed by Mehmet Shehu and Enver Hoxha (O'Donell, 1999, 55).

Albania has upheld China more than once in the conflict it has had with Moscow since 1958 and has kept up a similar official position with China on issues of reciprocal peace, de-Stalinization, and the issue of Yugoslavia's break with socialist policies. Albania yet again agreed with China when it propelled an assault on the Soviet Union's leadership of the international communist movement at a communist party conference held in Moscow in 1960 (Zickel & Iwaskiw, 1994). In 1961, Albania's only ally remained China, who was asked for a loan due to the difficulties in the Albanian economy as a result of the severance of the relations with the Soviet Union. This period is marked as a tough one not only for the political but also for the economic situation of Albania. The relationship between the last two allies, who tried with

fanaticism to keep "intact" the Marxist-Leninist ideology while, according to them, all other communist countries had betrayed it, lasted until 1969. This event marks the year when China seemed to take an interest in a possible collaborative relationship with other countries. This event would leave Albania in total isolation and lack of protection. The relationship between the two countries continued, although its strength was waning. Due to the ongoing decline of the financial aid Albania received from China, these relations experienced drastic changes until Mao Zedong's death in 1976. As O'Donnell (1999), mentions it, the relationship ends when representatives of Soviet Union led by Tito, visited Beijing and were warmly welcomed by them. Later on, in 1978, China officially announced the termination of all financial aid to Albania, officially making Albania the most isolated country until the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985. After the final cut of ties with China in 1976, Albania discussed the making of a new Constitution which would once again re-emphasize the position of Albania on following without compromise and with ideological precision the Marxist-Leninist ideology along with addressing the critical state the country was experiencing in those years due to self-isolation (O'Donnell, 1999, 74- 76).

In addition to political isolation, which is unique in the political history of those years, there is also the proclamation of war against religion in 1967. As a result of a violent anti-religious campaign, every individual or group that did not comply with the orders of that time was convicted. This campaign would be considered as one of the most unpredictable and unprecedented, alias a "cultural suicide", which was characterized by the burning of valuable icons and books. Everything related to religion became a real taboo in the following years (Elsie, 2010).

After the death of Enver Hoxha on April 11, 1985, the power was passed onto Ramiz Alia, who could not be attributed the same aggressive line of policies. Moreover, this was also due to the anti-Communist spirit that had started to appear in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. After Enver Hoxha's death, Alia was faced with the same dilemmas that Khrushchev faced when he decided to criticize the policies followed by Stalin, and by the end of 1980s, based on the mild policies undertaken by him, the people started to think that he would be the "Albanian Gorbachev" (Tarifa, 1995, 138-139).

In July 1990, many young people began to turn their gaze to the West. They crossed the wall of foreign embassies and sought asylum. It seems that this episode marks the beginning of

the end of the communist era which turned Albania into a totalitarian regime, and the beginning of a new era: the period of a long and infinite democratic transition. It should be emphasized that the description above, based on the unfolding of the political and economic relations, has left out many details. However, it has touched all the key moments that influenced the domestic political developments of Albania.

The lack of flexibility in the international political developments, as well as the constant fear (justified or not) of the Albanian leader of 40 years, Enver Hoxha, of plots on possible occupations of Albanian territory, impacted the way policies were designed and implemented throughout his regime. Therefore, we can say and conclude that the isolation of Albania and the development of these oppressive policies had a significant effect on the fate of the country after the '90s.

Concerning the economy, even though following the severance of the relations with China, Albania resumed trading relations with Yugoslavia. Hence, it still believed in "self-reliance" as an efficient way to develop the country. During these years, Albania suffered an economic crisis that was reflected in the everyday food items of the population through (tollones), the rations and the limited amounts that an Albanian family was supposed to consume in a month. While counting the positive or negative effects of the self-isolation policy pursued by Enver Hoxha, it could be noted that Albania was listed as a country without public debt and this was a bit difficult for a country geographically located in Europe. As the author states: "The most obvious demonstration of the success of this policy is seen in the fact that Albania had little if there is any foreign debt" (O'Donnell, 1999, 88). From a political point of view, this economic aspect would be a big incentive to build a modern state after the regime was changed. However, this never happened.

In addition to the events and developments in the international platform, under Enver Hoxha's regime, Albania turned to a totalitarian country, one of Europe's most isolated places, where each life was monitored and continuously controlled. The policies of those years focused on imposing collective thinking. Albanians could not decide for themselves about anything, even about the way they dressed, and sometimes whom they wanted to marry. State control was pervasive. Thus, if one were to describe the organization of social life, it could be said that it was completely controlled and monitored.

However, a Western spirit began to emerge in the early 1970s. Some of the more courageous youth of that time, influenced by the Italian TV shows they viewed in great secrecy, tried to mimic the Western fashion of those years in clothing or hairstyle. Consequently, this behavior angered the regime, which in turn launched a violent campaign against those who had shown signs of sympathy for Western cultural elements. Again, to keep every aspect under the full control of his authority, a “reign of terror” mainly towards intellectuals would follow the period of Western tendencies displayed in the streets of Albania, and it would last for two years, from 1973 to 1975. During this period that is also considered as a setback for the development of Albania, about 130 writers and artists, were obliged to leave the cities and to work in the fields and on construction sites (Elsie, 2010).

The control was extended to the intimate and private lives of regular people. Thus, marriages often took place to fix one's biography or could not be performed due to "bad biography". The "bad biography" term refers to cases of prejudices by the community of individuals by having in the family a person who has been condemned by the communist system for various anti-Communist crimes. Divorces were not allowed unless they received permission from various governmental instances such as the Central Committee ..., etc. As far as human rights and freedoms are concerned, Albania was impeccable and is seen as a model in their oppression. As expressed in a bulletin of the Institute of Political Studies for Elimination of the Ministry of Justice, “for the first time in the history of the independent Albanian state, the Ministry of Justice was eliminated as an unnecessary structure”; "This practice had not happened in any of the countries of the communist bloc" (ISP, 2019). Likewise, although the parliamentary elections were conducted periodically, "Zeri i Popullit" states that "100% of Albanians participated in the polls and 100% voted for the Communist Party"<sup>4</sup>. This is an indicator of a typical totalitarian regime.

### **3.5.2 Crucial Moments of Political Development in Estonia (1940– 1990)**

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<sup>4</sup>The study was conducted by the Institute for Political Studies. It started in the form of a bulletin or pamphlet to alert young people about the way life was organized under the communist regime during 1945 – 1990 and was retrieved from the website <http://isp.com.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Albania-1945-1990.pdf>.

Estonia, like all the countries of Eastern Europe during the late 30s, was situated in the middle of both the pressure from the risk of conquest from Germany pursuing extremely aggressive politics and the pressure and the influence of the Soviet Union. From 1938 and until the end of 1939, almost all Czechoslovakia was under the German occupation as a consequence of the Munich Agreement. Under such circumstances, the Soviet Union was forced to find a common language with Germany. Thus, in August 1939, both countries signed the Treaty of Non-Aggression (the Molotov-Ribbentrop or Hitler-Stalin pact). This treaty, whose protocols were kept secret, apart from defining a period of peace between the two countries, had also "the secret protocol of the treaty [that] divided the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe - Finland and the Baltic countries plus Bessarabia that belonged to Romania - belonged to the Soviet sphere, while Poland was divided" (HIIO, 2012).

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, Germany attacked Poland and so did the Soviet Union, dividing it into two parts. Under such pressure, the allies of Poland, France, and Great Britain declared war against Germany. This military tension and unrest in the international arena pushed Estonia to declare neutrality. The Soviet Union pressured and coerced the states of the Baltic States to sign a pact of Mutual Assistance and then established military bases in Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. Automatically, these countries became allies of the Soviet Union and in "August 1940, [Estonia] was incorporated into the Soviet Union" (BBC, 2018).

This period lasted until June 22, 1941, when Germany broke the pact and declared war on the Soviet Union, resulting in a German conquest by September. Due to the tension created, Estonia found itself as part of a war between two major totalitarian countries. However, it remained under the German invasion until the fall of 1944, a date that marks the return of the Soviet Union to Estonia. Many Estonians left their country to immigrate to Western countries. The period of the return of the Soviet Union was quite a dark period in the Estonian history since the second period of sovietization would be as harsh as the first and the effects would be felt in various aspects of the Estonians' life, like agriculture that was forcefully collectivized in 1949, with many deportments and murders, that this repression affected about 12 to 14 percent of Estonia's inhabitants (Mertelsmann, 2016, 2).

Hence, a state of terror reigned in the country during Stalinism. Every aspect of life was controlled and surveyed by aiming somehow the sovietisation of the social life, the repression of every form of resistance, as well as the control of every economic aspect (Tannber, 2012). Based

on these radical changes, on all effects, Estonia was now one of the republics of the Soviet Union and as such was named as the "Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic", when every aspect of socio-political life was controlled by Moscow and where the most critical decisions for Estonia were made. The Communist Party of Estonia followed strict Stalinist policies, with decisions made by the Council of Ministers. However, any organization of political life or decision-making was directly orchestrated by Moscow. It should be noted that there was no other visible opposition party and the regime quickly suppressed any objections that could arise so "dissidence was suppressed by the bodies of state security (KGB) and other military organizations. The huge system of prison camps (Gulag) had its branches in Soviet Estonia, too (Tannberg, 2012).

Nevertheless, it was evidenced that resistance movements against Soviet oppression and terror were never absent in Estonia during those years, even though at certain times the persecution was so intense that they could not function. The most active resistance movement from the incorporation of Estonia in the Soviet Union until 1953, the year that coincides with Stalin's death, was Forest Brother which consisted of different armed groups, but that in the 1950s shrank as a result of the deportations and arrests (Laar, 1992, 26). This movement was extensively weakened after the political movement of "mass deportation" in 1949, which was mainly directed to the relatives of the opponents of the regime, but not only as long as over 20,000 people were forcibly sent to Siberia (Tannberg, 2012).

Another feature of the resistance is the movement of young people, which continued even after the subsequent attacks on the resistance as mentioned above. This youth movement showed similarities to the outset of typical democratic movements that emerged in the 1960s affecting and shaping proper policies. The oppression against these standard democratic moves in Estonia started to decrease after Stalin's death. Nikita Khrushchev, after criticizing the harshness that characterized Stalin's governance, pursued policies that were more open to the West (Mertelsmann, 2016, 2).

The democratic engagements of those years were not only seen as part of the Estonian democratic movement but also as a struggle against communism and the policies pursued so far. Despite Estonia's society opening up to some Western elements, mainly watching TV or listening to radios, such as the BBC, this period also marked an attempt to Russification of the society in the late 1970s. Russification consisted of the spread of powerful propaganda in favor of the Soviet Union. Those fluent in Russian were promoted to good jobs. This was significantly

disputed, mainly by the intellectuals, arguing that this was a forced push to spread the Russian language, mostly in the educational system that was already part of the Russification policy. Thus, they started to make their opposition moves, mainly through such tools as public letters addressed to various organs, international organizations and foreign governments. In the pile of these letters, among the most interesting ones was the “Letter of the Forty”, in 1980, a letter that was signed by forty cultural Estonian figures and it emphasized the risks that lied behind the implementation of the Russification policies. Among other opposition activities that intensified in this period, were the gathering and documenting of various facts related to the disrespect and oppression of the human rights as well as the coordination with organizations which operated in exile, to publish these facts (Tannberg, 2012).

Changes in the economy were also visible during the Soviet invasion. Thus, in the second Soviet occupation, the land reform left uncompleted during the first one was carried out along with the process of collectivization. Thus, between 1947 and 1949, after the restoration of the Soviet occupation, precisely as a result of the collective policies “in total, about 927,000 ha of land was expropriated from 44,000 landowners, including over 242,000 ha of agricultural land (Tannberg, 2012). This policy, helped to completely destroy the farm system and concentrated every private property under total state administration, which did not attempt to centralize only the economy, but also every aspect of life, including the social and cultural ones. Therefore, the cultural life was the epicenter of total control. The purpose was the Russification of its every aspect. However, what kept the Estonian cultural elements active was the communication, not forbidden by the Soviet Union, between the Estonians inside the official Estonian territory and the ones outside it. During the period of Soviet domination, Estonia was kept away from the West, and religion was controlled and censored to prevent the spreading of innovation. Hence this would translate for Estonia into a total domination and control of all living, economic and social aspects. By intentionally isolating it from the West, to somehow prevent the diffusion of ideas that could impinge the regime, this isolation, unlike what the communist party presupposed, left the country an undeveloped one (Tannberg, 2012). After this dark period for Estonia, a new spirit was set in motion. The wind of change was felt after the arrival of the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. Policies were less oppressive, and Estonia showed the first attempts of self-governance. By taking advantage of this opportunity, began the first movements in search of political freedom, economic reforms and they started to ask for more decision-

making autonomy. Thus as a result of these changes, in the Autumn of 1987 among the Estonian society, it started to enthusiastically being discussed the idea of Estonia's self-management or "Estonian acronym IME" (Värä, 2012).

Thus, "Popular Front campaigns for democracy" were launched in 1988. "Singing revolution" brings a third of the population together in a bid to ensure national unity and self-determination (BBC, 2018). In 1988, based on the attempts to combat the Russification policy, a group of intellectuals sought political and economic autonomy for Estonia with the argument of protecting cultural identity. The "Singing Revolution" represented a series of concerts that turned into a massive popular movement. Following these events, the first political party, the "Estonian National Independence Party", was established in the same year (Värä, 2012). The subsequent events would emphasize once more the tremendous attempts to gain Estonia's independence as well as bringing back identity symbols such as the flag of the Republic of Estonia. The main purpose of such activities and organizations that followed these years was to restore the Republic of Estonia "on the basis of legal continuity" (Värä, 2012).

In an attempt to analyze and compare the political events of those years in both countries, it is worth pointing out that all the authors and researchers who have been involved in such analysis of the events, whether historical or political, have encountered difficulties in identifying facts on the proceeding of the events as well as the available statistical data. This is due to the lack of records or deliberate destruction of communist propaganda and policy. This, however, has no limited research on events during the communist regime. As discussed above, a pursuit of the same oppressive policy is noted for both Albania and Estonia. If Stalin used "mass deportation" in Estonia, "internment" among others was widely used in Albania, as a way to fully control and isolate any dissemination of opposing ideas to the communist regime.

Similarities are also observed in economic reforms. Land reform and collectivization were central to communist policies. As such, this reform was likewise executed in Albania. In a mainly agrarian economy, a collectivist policy which consisted of nationalization of private assets and state control of all production to be then distributed in an "equitable" way was pursued both in Estonia and Albania. Generally, the land reform resulted in numerous adverse effects in post-communist Albania and Estonia. Thus, in both countries, there was a problem of property restitution to former owners. Chaos and lack of adequate reforms followed both countries in the early 1990s.

Despite the oppressive ways of the communist regime, it is noticed a more considerable Western approach much earlier in Estonia than in Albania. As mentioned previously, despite the controlling power of the police in Estonia, the policy changed after Stalin's death in 1953. It can be emphasized that a good opposition movement emerged, gradually evolving from initial armed resistance to a more structured movement. It was designed and initiated by young people and intellectuals who became very active in social and political life because in Estonia, "the number of people who embraced communism or National Socialism because of their existing ideological convictions was remarkably small" (Subrenat, 2004, 140). The opposite happened in Albania. An oppressive campaign, one of the most ruthless in the history of communism, was launched when the first signs of Western behavior emerged among the population. This campaign was mainly directed towards intellectuals.

Perhaps Estonia has been more motivated in its struggle for democracy and freedom, due to having a specific enemy to fight in order to protect its identity. De jure, this was an additional motive for failure in democratizing the society. Nevertheless, it has inspired a stronger and more resistant war. Whereas, the enemy did not have a name in Albania. It was the Albanians themselves who "fought" Albanians. It can be assumed that communism could not have been instated, nor resisted for so long without the support of a large group of the people who (un) intentionally identified with that system giving it more power to dominate the Albanian society for nearly 45 years.

### **3.6 Communism's Legacy and The Political Culture**

#### **3.6.1 Characteristics of the Albanian Political Culture under Communism**

As noted earlier, the political, economic, and social transformations that occurred in Albania during the communist period were affected and have strongly directed the course of political flaws based on the ideology of Karl Marx and the theory called Marxism. According to the author, these changes were based on a social theory of historical materialism that makes a parenthesis of the social relations and the correlation between material needs and the conditioning of the quality of their relations with each other, of the social institutions as well as the dominant ideas of the society (Sokoli, 2017, 2).

The importance of Marxism lies in the fact that this doctrine, which “originally consisted of three related ideas: a philosophical anthropology, a theory of history, and an economic and political program” (McLellan & Chambre, 2019), was practiced as part of many socialist movements until 1914. The authors emphasize that a new Marxist theory appeared later. This theory is called Soviet Marxism. It was elaborated by Vladimir Ilich Lenin and changed by Joseph Stalin to officially become the philosophic doctrine of the communist parties after the Russian Revolution of 1917. This philosophical doctrine somehow led to the creation of the communist period in Albania. The communist party was based so much on this doctrine that it can be considered that Albania had “the most dogmatic and Stalinist regime of all the Socialist countries” (Wilczynski, 1981, 10).

The penetration of this ideology would be transformed into a totalitarian system in Albania that would affect all spheres of Albanians’ lives. This system was based on the creation of a culture of fear and terror. According to Ahmeti (2015), the misfortune of this regime in Albania would not be only that it would motivate and strengthen the regime of the dictator Enver Hoxha but that it would also find the support of the masses “by ‘allowing’ him to take the power of absolute authority” (Ahmeti, 2015).

During the communist regime, terror and anarchy took hold of all aspects of social life. Thus, it can be noticed based on previous research that much pressure was exerted on all independent associations, intellectual groups, media, and all foundations. As a result, they were immediately shut down. The terror was accompanied by the murder or imprisonment of all liberal deputy members, members of the opposition, and intellectuals who could dare to challenge the authority of Hoxha’s power (Krasniqi, 2004, 28). Furthermore, the author argues that since Albania was a peculiar and extreme example of the strict implementation of Stalinism, the climax of the dictator’s attitudes and actions was seen in 1967 when he ordered the closing of all religious institutions as well as the closing and isolation of the society. This was also accompanied by the burning of foreign literature, regardless of whether this literature had scientific, political, religious or cultural content (Krasniqi, 2004, 30).

What was visibly apparent in the social life of Albania during the communist years is that the party-state exerted total control on all its aspects and on all spheres of intellectual life that could influence the spread of the ideologies that contradicted this authoritarian regime. Thus, tremendous pressure was placed on universities, the media, and schools. Not only was every

activity controlled, but so were the textbooks that were used by these institutions. The intellectuals were attacked so much that many of them emigrated while others were interned and were prohibited even to practice their profession. The free press did not exist. Every material that was published had to meet the conditions required by the party before it was released and put at the service of the population (Dedej, 2015).

Like every other institutional and social aspect, the media was controlled by the state and utilized to spread the ideology that maintained the totalitarian regime. To fulfill this purpose, the information that the media transmitted was well-structured to spread the principles and the ideology of the state-party. In this format, the state-controlled and administered every aspect of social life by organizing the people to build the “Socialist” Albania. When referring to the press, this included the written press, which also was turned into a tool for the distribution of the collective propaganda (Paja, 2015).

As can be deduced about the political culture of these years, it is remarked that the intellectuals declined to adequately contribute to the transformation of policies and to establish opposition to the communist system of Albania. Thus, Albania was distinguished from other Eastern European communist countries. Likewise, other prominent structures the society, such as universities, did not produce a favorable climate for democratic development since their activities were closely regulated by the communist party. Therefore, the communist period, which continued for almost 50 years, completely discouraged democratization in Albania. Elite communists in no way allowed the creation of the preconditions of democratization because “maintaining its power with ideology as an instrumental tool to control the masses” was of immense importance for them, “and any kind of reform was considered valid as long as it did not threaten their political power” (Çullhaj, 2017, 26).

### **3.6.2 Characteristics of The Estonian Political Culture under Soviet Communism**

The period of the communist regime started with the return of the Red Army in 1944. The Red Army had held back the German Army, which had occupied Estonia from 1941-1944 (Bjorkman, 2007, 85). Bjorkman further argues that one of the primary purposes of the Soviet policies and the implementation of the communist doctrine, mainly between the years 1944-1953 (i.e., until Stalin’s death) and with the change in the continuation of aggressive policies, was the deep and active penetration of the roots of the Estonian culture in such a way that it would alter

every cultural aspect with the only purpose being the transformation of the Estonian society into a Soviet republic. The ideology behind the imposition of the Soviet culture was to create a system of indoctrination and re-education of the people through the mechanisms of agitation and propaganda (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 83).

Nevertheless, besides this territory and the attempts to Russify the society, there was an active resistance by the intellectuals, who in the years of communism during the leadership of Stalin, made every attempt to keep alive the spirit of nationalism and preserve the elements of national identity. This attempt significantly influenced the acceleration of the “post-Stalin cultural recovery” (Misiunas & Taagepera, 1993, 127). An obvious goal for the Soviet government seemed to have been the undoing of every democratic struggle that had been achieved during the interwar period. In this way, the government hoped to permeate every aspect of the citizens’ lives, especially in the cultural aspect. Next, what had started being built in the aspect of the democratic order as free and fair elections, democratic institutions, and political rights, were transformed into very centralized communist policies implemented by the Soviet state. The influence of this transformation was also extended to cultural life. Textbooks were replaced with Russian ones, the right of association was totally prohibited, the active lives of the various cultural organizations vanished, and all hope for democracy was replaced with repression, fear, and terror (Bjorkman, 2007, 86).

During the period of the new democracy, or the interwar period, the community houses played a significant role in the activation of society for the creation of democratic order in Estonia. During the period of Soviet pressure, these centers were targeted first in order to change their mission. Consequently, in the context of this purpose (and after a detailed study of the means of altering the activity from these community houses), the Soviet Government changed the objectives of these centers by turning them into propagandist centers to spread the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Thus, even the Community houses were Sovietized, and the Soviet cultural and ideological viewpoints steadily permeated through them (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015).

Nevertheless, besides the influence of the transformation of the function of these centres, it is essential to stress that they did not entirely lose their original purpose. Kulbok-Lattik (2015) suggests that because of the “uncontrollable essence” of these centers, their entire activity could not be controlled and monitored. So, they secretly continued to exert their secret political functions even though the censorship was enormous. The author borrowed the notion of Bakhtin

(1985, 187-192) to conceptualize that the hidden activity of these centers and that the civil society did not disappear with the Soviet repression and pressure but continued their activity in secret by compensating in public square. He further expresses:

This is why that, even during the darkest Stalinist era of the Soviet totalitarian control-state, the regime was not able to completely demolish this part of civil society, where human action was related to the cultural practices of people, leisure time, amateur art, popular folk dance, etc, even if these practices were used as political representation. This list represents everything which could be conceptualized as Public Square, as the popular culture of masses opposes and ‘cancels the dominant cultural mindset of rational dogmatic antitheses of binary constraints’, as Lotman (1987, 5-14) explains (Kulbok-Lattik, 2015, 113).

### **3.6.2.1 Characteristics of the Political Culture in Estonia in the Communist Years after Stalin’s Death**

Until 1953, a year which coincides with Stalin’s death, the isolation from the outside world somehow had left the population within the borders of Estonia in a state of total darkness. Besides this, with all the pressure and attempts to exert the communist ideological pressure, nevertheless, “public skepticism toward Communist ideology remained widespread during the decades of occupation” (Bjorkman, 2007, 57).

The years after Stalin’s death were characterized, as described previously, by a tendency of liberalism and openness toward the West. As Bjorkman (198) states, the years between 1953 and 1960 showed that there was a revival of the culture and autonomy of Estonia. The most important part was the allowing of contact with the Estonians who had left the country, and the positive result of the establishment of these relations with ‘the outside world’. This brought many positive aspects because it affected the economic growth and the growth of the autonomy and freedom of thought and action. Next, the exile communities strengthened the value and culture of Estonia considerably because they helped with the preservation of the cultural traditions as well as the democratic values which emerged during the interwar period. Among other things, it is necessary to emphasize that after the 1960s, components of the Estonian culture like poetry, drama, and literature were “resurfacing” (Bjorkman, 2007, 88).

The years between 1968 and 1980 constitute what the author will describe as the “third phase”. This phase is characterized by an increasing tendency of openness towards the West, which initially started with the movement of people, motivated to meet their relatives who had

emigrated. The influence unavoidably began to spread to all the other spheres of life, such as economic, political, and cultural. As such, “once again the Baltic States, and particularly Estonia, were in the forefront of this development, far ahead of the rest of the USSR” (Bjorkman, 2007, 90).

## **Conclusions**

The chapter started in the first part with the analyzation of some physical and political similarities of the countries chosen in this study. The motive to mention the similarities not only political, but also of some physical characteristics, serves to explain the motives that lie behind the choice of Estonia as a comparative case to be studied together with Albania. Based on Mill’s “Methods of Differences” the factors that have helped or impeded in this outcome, which in this concrete occasion is the democratization, may be evidenced and addressed correctly only by studying two similar countries and that have different outcomes.

In this dissertation, the political culture and the leadership’s normative preference for democracy are the independent variables. These two factors, when successfully combined, produce a successful democratization process. However, the argument that I propose is that, in this regard, an inherited political culture is as important as the leadership’s normative preference for democracy.

Thus, attempting to prove the hypothesis, the second part of the chapter, continues with the analysis of the critical junctures and the influence on the political culture in both countries, respectively for the pre-communist and communist period. During this narrative, traces of a real democratic culture have been evidenced in Estonia and the opposite has happened in Albania where we have noticed the irresponsibility of the political class and a lack of the features of a democratic culture inherited in years.

In this chapter are evidenced also the behaviours of the political actors, but they are better described in the following chapter, which analyses in a detailed way the first period of the transition. This division is done in this way, because of the emphasis on the period where both countries took on different directions.

## CHAPTER 4

### CRUCIAL MOMENTS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN ALBANIA AND ESTONIA AFTER THE '90s DURING THE FIRST YEARS OF TRANSITION

#### Introduction

This chapter proposes to analyze comparatively, the post-communist period between the cases in this investigation. The analysis is mainly directed in the early years of the transition period. The reason I consider this stage is that at this point, the political regimes of both countries took different directions. Until this juncture, their destinies were designed to have the same political trajectory. Thus, demanding to determine the concrete reason of the successful democratization of Estonia and the obstructed democratization of Albania, from the analysis, carried out, I estimated that the first years of the transition were conclusive in impeding the democratization of Albania and the success of Estonia.

Besides delving into the political actors' behaviour, by spelling out the political developments accurately, during this chapter are likewise manifested and considered some peculiarities of the political culture, through the citizens' behaviour and above all that of the most prominent political actors of this time. By analyzing the political culture and the behaviours of the political actors I aim at establishing whether these last ones have a normative preference for democracy or not and how this tendency has determined the process of democratization. This interpretation and this description help us estimate the veracity of the hypothesis that in Estonia the successful combination of the democratic political culture with the leadership's normative preference has made it probable to produce a positive effect on the process of democratization. The contrary developed in Albania, the scarcity of a democratic culture, inherited since the period of state formation, as revealed in the preceding chapter, has somehow altered the leaders not to make democratic political decisions in the nation's interest, but mostly make decisions directed on their personal interests. This has profoundly impacted the process of democratization by persistently inhibiting it.

The chapter is divided into four sections with the purpose to analyse completely this period from the political developments point of view, as well as the social and economic one, as long as “historical differences in economic, social and political development are often put forward to explain the differences in democratisation between Central Europe on one hand, and Southern and Eastern Europe on the other” (Dauderstädt & Gerrits, 2000, 363).

Following this argument, in the first section are analysed the political events and developments after the communist period for both countries chosen in this study synchronically. In the second section, are analysed the features of the political culture in the post-communist period for both countries in this study, so that we can make a comparison with the differences that are evidenced as well as a logical correlation of how this difference has influenced in the process of democratization. Next the chapter continues with the study of the leader’s behaviour to evidence whether it has a normative preference for democracy or not.

In the fourth section, for the analysis and comparison of the culture of two respective countries, there have been used and interpreted the data taken from WVS, which has analysed the citizens’ perceptions in the third wave of the study.

## **4.1 The First Phase of Transition in Albania**

### **4.1.1 The Most Important Political Events of The First Years of Transition**

The transition concept that is adapted in the dissertation and helps to sustain the empirical framework of the research is the O’Donnell and Schmitter’s notion. They emphasize that “the ‘transition’ is the interval between one political regime and another” (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1991, 6). They specifically underline that “transitions are delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative” (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1991, 6). In an attempt to observe at what interval of this transition are Albania and Estonia found, I have analysed the most critical events that have influenced the progress of this process.

Albania, which is geographically situated in the heart of Europe, was not only the last country to remain loyal to the communist system (and which became more isolated than other

former communist countries as a result), but it was also “... the last East European Communist domino to fall” (Biberaj, 1999, 64). As had happened before in history, Albania was fully influenced by and involved in the political movements of the region. Thus, in the post-1990s, despite the continued efforts of Ramiz Alia to pursue the same isolationist policies that Enver Hoxha had pursued, the spirit of anti-communist movements had already penetrated Albania. As the author states; “Despite Albania’s near total lack of contact with the Soviet Union, the Albanian ruling elite perceived Gorbachev’s reforms as potentially destabilizing to their own regime” (Biberaj, 1999, 47). Despite the unrest and anti-communist movements that began to flourish in the communist bloc, we would see Ramiz Alia attempt to move away from strictly following the hardline policies of a rigid communist regime. He became one of the first heads of state to officially recognize the party established in Romania after Ceausescu’s death. Ramiz Alia realized that the political wind was blowing in the opposite direction of what it had been up until that moment, and so in 1989 with the collapse of the communist rule in Eastern Europe, Ramiz Alia called for changes to the economic system (BBC, 2018).

Alia started making decisions that clearly showed a tendency for new democratization policies. For the first time in the Communist Party plenary, it was decided that the party representatives would contact worker groups to discuss and properly address agrarian policies by “taking into consideration” their demands. In addition, “in April 1990, at the Tenth Plenary of the Central Committee, Alia announced further changes, formally approved by the People’s Assembly in May, which were aimed at improving Albania’s abysmal human rights record. He pledged that the government would take steps to bring its human rights practices to the level of international standards.” (Biberaj, 1999, 51). This is the first time that human rights were articulated as institutional obligations in nearly 50 years of Albanian history. Despite the changes, Alia still expressed skepticism in allowing the creation of opposition political parties, stressing that their legalization could compromise the well-being of Albania’s political prosperity. Being under great international pressure from the “new friends,” Western countries, and the internal opposition from the newly emerging political figures such as Gramoz Pashko and Fatos Nano, new ideas of reforms to enable a progressive development of Albania started to emerge. Another prominent figure among the voices against the regime which pointed out that they were indeed scarce due to a long period of isolation, was that of Sali Berisha’s. Berisha would become one of the most important political figures during the following years in Albania.

Berisha would also be one of the founders of the first opposition political party in the country, the Democratic Party. Affected also by these political developments, Alia's position was unstable until the spring of 1990. On the one hand, he seemed to be undertaking reforms for the opening of the Albanian society, but on the other hand, his practices were in line with strict communist policies. Perhaps one reason for this behavior was the great pressure the communist party members applied to him and his political decisions. In this atmosphere which lacked vision and political control and in which reforms appeared to be on the horizon but were not realistically implemented, and under the influence that the movements of the former communist countries had, people perceived that this situation would not change easily in Albania. Thus, groups of people started to force their way into embassies and asked to leave Albania in search of what would continue to dominate the fate of the Albanian society for the next 30 years: the search of "a better life." This is how the influx of Albanians seeking political asylum in foreign embassies began. This storm was followed by an era of major democratic changes in the country. As the author describes this wave of departures, "the storm began on July 2, when between 100 and 150 Albanians entered the Italian, French and German Embassies" (Biberaj, 1999, 51).

While some waited to see the fate of those who had shown courage and jumped over the embassy walls – to know whether they would be sheltered in foreign countries or handed over to the Albanian authorities – many other Albanians, mostly family members, came to their support giving thus even larger dimensions to the event. The embassy-related events were followed by a wave of people entering the port of Durrës and departing for neighboring countries. These events did not remain unnoticed by neighbors, who often accompanied the front pages of newspapers with different news coming from across the Adriatic. The country that had been hidden and anonymous for more than 40 years was now filling television screens and the pages of newspapers in foreign media. The world had begun to turn its eyes to Albania.

Influenced by the protests in many former communist countries, such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, etc., the wave of protests, which would change the course of the country's history, began with students who initially sought better conditions for classrooms, dormitories, etc. Students started using national motives to call others to join protests in order to empower their message and prompt a response. As depicted by Abrahams, they often cried under patriotic motives to "Come, gather here here" (Abrahams, 2015, 52). Student protests rallied under the slogans "We want Albania like all Europe!" and "All Tirana is with us!" (Abrahams,

2015, 56). As Abrahams (2015, 56 - 68) states, the initial reaction from the state was to oppose using police force and to attempt to intimidate the protesters. However, this reaction only sparked further protests and motivated even more young people to join the movement. One of the students who emerged as a leader of the protest was Azem Hajdari, a student of philosophy at the University of Tirana. The protests began to unite intellectuals who had previously opposed the pursuit of hardline politics in Albania, although Ramiz Aliaj explained that he was trying to react politically so that that Albania would undergo a slow process of change. According to him, rapid changes would lead the country to total anarchy. The intellectuals who started to become very active in that environment and who later became mediators between students and Ramiz Alia were Besnik Mustafaj and Sali Berisha. Berisha became one of the main figures who initiated the negotiations between Alia and the students through Azem Hajdari, who acted as a representative. Following the multitude of these events, December 9 would be a very important moment for Albanian politics and would define them for the next 28 years. The following day, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1990, would mark an irreversible march along the path toward Albanian democracy despite the nuances that this democracy showed in the coming years. At the meeting between Alia and the students held on December 11, the former formally expressed that all measures were being taken to allow political plurality. Among other things expressed in the meeting, Alia stated that,

Everything should be solved with calm and understanding,” he intoned. “The road to democracy is not a boulevard. . . . It demands respect for friends and respect for the law. Otherwise it opens the possibility for anarchy, which is dangerous for everyone (Abrahams, 2015, 63)

In fact, what Alia feared would happen was already happening in post-communist Albania. Looking at Alia’s statements at the time, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether he was a good predictor and well-versed in politics and whispered those words because that was his sincere intention, or he did this as a result of the danger threatening his power. One thing is clear: if Albania in those first years of political transition would have had a gentler transition, as Alia said, maybe today it would be a democratized country.

What students had been asking for over the course of several days was finally happening. A group of intellectuals and students established the first opposition party in the country. The Democratic Party was founded on December 12, 1990. Along with its establishment, the party’s statute was drafted. It is worth mentioning that although this party was created as an opposition party to the existing communist party with the purpose of helping to democratize the country, the de-communization of the country was not mentioned in any of the statutory articles (Biberaj,

1999, 66). In fact, this moment is sufficiently covered in the political discourse of the following 30 years as an element that has hindered the democratic development of Albania. To this day, the perpetrators and the designers of numerous crimes committed during the communist era are still unexposed and have gone unpunished. If we go back to the moment of the establishment of this party, the person who undertook the position of the leader was Sali Berisha, and this was a position he held for almost two decades. The Democratic Party could be considered at that time, more than an anti-communist party, a shield organization where among its militants were included “many reformed Communists, as well as anti-communists, intellectuals, students, workers, former political prisoners and members of their families, and even people who had never before shown any interest in politics” (Tarifa, 1995, 146). Among other things, it is noted that from the very first moments of the creation of this party, there was a pattern of clash and opposition during the process of choosing a leader.

Despite the creation of the first opposition party in the country, student protests did not cease; they simply changed their motive. The students started demanding the removal of communist symbols and the name of Enver Hoxha from the University of Tirana. The demands were not accepted by Ramiz Alia. This decision amplified the student protests. Thus, the month of February 1991 will be remembered for the fiery student protests that attempted in every way to eradicate not only the system but also the symbols that represented it. The protests preceded a student strike that started as the only option left to students to achieve their primary objective: the removal of the name of Enver Hoxha from the University of Tirana. Strikes attracted many family members and other citizens to the streets of Tirana in a demonstration of support. This protest escalated, and the crowd started heading to the square where Enver Hoxha’s statue was located, bringing it down despite attempts by the police to stop it. These moments in the Albanian collective memory will be remembered as the most democratic movement that Albania has experienced. In this context, forced by the circumstances of the situation, Ramiz Alia told RTVSH that after a consultation with other party members, he had agreed to remove the name of Enver Hoxha from the university. Immediately after these events, the exodus began as a major phenomenon during which many Albanians started to leave the shores of the port of Durres in the direction of Italy and many more headed towards Greece. Suddenly “Albania had become an international problem” (Elsie, 2010).

The big exodus wave was also followed by the first parliamentary elections that took place on March 31, 1991, elections which the Democratic Party lost. Certainly, the Socialist Party, a new name for the former Communist Party, won because it was too early for Albanians to forget the fear that had persisted for almost half a century and react through their democratic vote. At the end of the first pluralistic elections, the opposition declared that they were compromised. Although this was confirmed by the international monitors, the results were accepted by the opposition, which promised to work to change the system. After that, the Socialist Party emerged with a new leader, Fatos Nano. Alia had promised that if he won the election, he would withdraw from the position of head of the Socialist Party or the former Communist Party/Labor Party. In fact, this post-election arrangement lasted only about nine months and was soon followed by the unrest that initially started in the form of a Democratic Party protest, with four victims in Shkoder, and then advanced with the riots of the labor union that demanded a salary increase. Found in this situation, “on June 4, the government of Fatos Nano resigned. The DP and Party of Labor agreed to hold new elections in nine months. As a transition, they formed a “Stability Government” (Abrahams, 2015, 98).

Ylli Bufi became the head of the interim government, and the Democratic Party expressed its willingness to participate in this government, hoping to win the upcoming elections and form a government with the support of the parliamentary majority. The participation of the Democrats in the technical government along with the Socialist Party was seen by many analysts and supporters as a form of betrayal against the ideals and principles upon which this party had been established. The basic ground that Democratic leadership provided for its participation in the technical government was that after Nano’s resignation, this was the only way to protect the country from a catastrophe. In fact, the technical government was a disaster itself (Abrahams, 2015, 98).

Within the Democratic Party and its leadership, allegations and counter-allegations started to dominate the discourse. There was fragmentation among the people who led the popular protests of the post-communist years. The members of the leadership started opposing and accusing each other of collaborating with the communist caste for personal benefits and interests. There were also allegations of corruption. Due to the climate created, it is uncertain whether the creation of a technical government was a proper and well-informed political decision or a momentary decision for personal benefits, as it cannot be predicted how political

developments might have gone differently without this technical government. However, it can certainly be concluded that the absence of a definitive break from the communist regime was clear (Abrahams, 2015). This period and these years of transition have determined the fate of Albania's future and perhaps have been crucial in the creation of mass psychological traumas that in some way have stopped time and have placed Albania in a status quo situation from which it can neither retreat nor advance like other democratized countries.

However, apart from the many problems that had emerged in the first years of transition, in certain moments, it seemed like things could have changed for Albania. This was the impression given in the March 1992 elections when the Democratic Party emerged victorious. These elections would be considered as a new era for Albania (Elsie, 2010). In fact, these elections can be noted as the first and only elections that were not contested by the opposition. After this victory, the Democratic Party ruled until 1996. These years were years of great challenges. While attempting to build a state, the government, composed of people who did not have any experience, faced problems that were inherited from the old system. Found under the duress of unfavorable economic conditions, Albania was obliged to seek the assistance of international organizations such as the Monetary Fund, World Bank, etc. The economic situation of those years would be described by Abrahams, the Associate Director for Human Rights Watch program, who has worked for many years in Albania that inflation decreased by 10 percent and the economy increased by 11 percent in 1993, more than in any other country in Europe (Abrahams, 2015, 115).

During the Democratic Party's time in power, measures were also taken to reform the judiciary system, lay the foundations of a democratic country, and establish relevant institutions. It should be noted that the people assigned to certain positions had a lack of experience, which was often reflected in the duties they carried out. Another challenge that Albania faced in the post-90s was the highly discussed issue of returning land to former owners that had been taken from them due to the collectivizing policies of the Communist Party. This issue has been at the center of the debates between the parties in power and those in opposition for many years. The form and manner of compensation have been a source of controversy and is often a central issue in electoral campaigns. The situation was also aggravated by the destruction done to the private property in the first years of transition and this destruction was not seen in any other country under the communist regime (Biberaj, 1999, 117). To find a solution to this sensitive problem for

the Albanian society, the ruling Democratic Party would draft a law that included compensations in lek at a certain rate to former owners. Many of them would remain unsatisfied with this compensation, and in 1994, the first strike of former political prisoners would follow. This strike would be deemed illegal by the government and was ended by police intervention.

The unfair and deceitful game played by the parties with the greatest representation in parliament, the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party, started to dominate the Albanian pluralistic political life. This was a strong and aggressive game, associated with a visible lack of collaboration between the two parties. The authoritarian and not tolerant style of the Albanian political elite inhibited negotiations and compromise between the political parties that was so necessary for Albania's democracy (Fischer, 2010, 427). In this political climate and in this harsh war between the political adversaries, another important moment came in the post-90s political developments was the arrest of the Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano, on July of 1993 on the grounds of corruption during the time he was head of the government in 1991, before the ruling period of the technical government. Certainly, not only did he reject these allegations, but he strongly claimed that this arrest was a purely politically motivated action. Also many other observers, determined this to be as a political trial and in thus he was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment (Fischer, 2010, 428).

If one were to evaluate the government's performance up to 1993, one could say that, with the ups and downs, despite the internal party struggles and hostilities in the leadership, there was some kind of economic stability. Thus, up to 1993, the economy grew by 11 percent, and inflation was under control to a certain extent (Biberaj, 1999, 160). This stability lasted until 1994 when the people began to perceive that things were not functioning properly. The problems were various: the economy, the political and social chaos, the lack of implementation of human rights, and above all, there was an increase in corruption among public officials.

In the struggle between preserving personal privileges and following in the steps of other democratic countries, there was plenty of discussion on the powers the president should have: Should the power of the president be limited and that of the prime minister's strengthened? Theoretically speaking, would Albania be a parliamentary or presidential republic? In an attempt to find the answers and to continue with the political implementation of the political program, a national referendum on the Constitution was held in 1994. The referendum was held after a broad debate between the ruling party and the opposition about the powers the president would

have; the opposition supported a more honorary position for the president with less power than he actually held, while the Democratic Party stated that this was an excuse to create a parliamentary crisis in the country. The referendum on the draft constitution was held on November 6, 1994, and 53.9 per cent of Albanians voted against it and only 41.7 per cent in favor. The referendum, despite being seen as a sign of the voters' maturity, who for many years had automatically approved every decision of the political actors, influenced somehow for Albania to enter into a "political turmoil" for several months (Biberaj, 1998, 275).

In spite of the continued rise and resolution of political crises, the creation of a perpetual conflict culture, partly inherited but fast rooted in the Albanian political tradition, often created the impression that in certain moments Albania was on the path to democratization. So, in June of 1995, Albania joined the Council of Europe, considerably intensifying its contacts with Western countries. That same year, Berisha visited the White House (Biberaj, 1995). In this context and development, no one could have imagined that Albania would step back or that the situation would once again deteriorate to the chaos of the 1990s, resulting in Albania positioning itself even further from the much-wanted democracy.

#### **4.1.1.1 The Unrest and Its Negative Effects on the Development of Albania**

The tensions started in 1996, following the victory of the Democratic Party in the general elections, which was massively contested by the Socialist Party, motivating protests and tension in the country. Due to the contested results of these elections, many protesters took to the streets to ask for the government to resign. However, this was not the only crisis that began in mid-1996 and exploded in 1997. The other major crisis was called the Pyramid Crisis, a Ponzi scheme that sent the country into a state of mass chaos that escalated to the beginning of a civil war in Albania. Many political analysts, in an attempt to find the cause or origin of the failure of the country's democratization, would blame this exact year, during which most people joined the mass protests to demand the money they had invested in these fraudulent companies. This crisis escalated at an incredible speed, and the country suddenly found itself in total anarchy. Elsie (2010) described the state of Albania at that moment in his publication "Historical Dictionary of Albania" That the country was submerged in a total chaos, the public order was substituted with

disorganization, everybody who wished to could have a gun, since the gun depots were forcibly opened, and because of the unrest the foreign governments were obliged to evacuate their citizens from Albania.

After months of a state of the surrender of an inexistent government and of total chaos in the country, June was agreed upon as the date for the new elections which would be carried out with the assistance of international monitoring bodies, especially the Italian troops deployed in Albania. After the elections, the Socialist Party became the ruling party, with Fatos Nano serving as prime minister until October 1998. The country was totally ruined in every aspect: economically, politically, and socially. This would certainly not be the last crisis that Albania would experience. Even before recovering from the Pyramid Crisis, Albania would face another political crisis. Azem Hajdari, the DP parliament member, was killed in an assassination attempt. This event was enough for the Democratic Party and many people to rise up in massive and violent protests to demand the resignation of the government, which was directly accused of being behind his assassination. After the protests, Prime Minister Fatos Nano resigned and was replaced by Pandeli Majko, who held the position until November 1999, to be replaced by Ilir Meta. The instability and the pressure Albania and its institutions faced were also fueled by the influx of people coming from Kosovo as a result of Milosevic's extermination policy. The incoming of the Kosovars accelerated in 1999 when NATO launched the bombing campaign against the Yugoslav army, and so "by the end of the war in June 1999, there were almost half a million Kosovar refugees in Albania, people who had to be fed and cared for in a state that could scarcely feed itself" (Elsie, 2010).

Thus, due to turmoil in its domestic politics, Albania suddenly found itself in an unusual state of emergency. With the government unable to provide public shelters to help people cope with the humanitarian catastrophe, many Albanians opened the doors of their homes and sheltered Kosovo families for months until the end of the bombing and the war in Kosovo.

After successfully overcoming the Kosovo crisis, Majko had gained considerable popularity, becoming one of the most important political figures at the time. However, this was not enough for him to win the vote of confidence in the Socialist Party convention. This led to his resignation, and Ilir Meta would be the new PM, governing until 2001 (Freedom House, 2002). It can be said that some stability was achieved during these years, even though there was

no economic growth, and the country did not make enough steps ahead in the process of democratization.

#### **4.1.2 An Overview of the Social, Economic, and Political Changes on Albania during the First Years of Transition**

During the communist regime, as described in the previous chapter, it was noticed that Albania was considered as “one of the most isolated countries in Europe” (Binder, 1985), where human rights were utterly denied, the lack of respect for the individual was extensive, and society was perceived from the point of view of the masses and not the individual. After the collapse of the communist regime, the obstacles for the establishment and strengthening of democracy were substantial. One reason is that many demanded democracy but did not know what it really entailed. One thing was clear: the so-called democracy was supposed to reflect the opposite of communism, collectivization, or any kind of policies that Albania had experienced up to those years.

As described above, due to the political climate that was created after the '90s, an atmosphere of a lack of co-operation prevailed together with the division and groupings of individuals along party lines labeled as left and right militants. The party struggle was fierce and associated with a lack of consensus even in the decisive moments when Albania needed one. Political discourse was characterized by harsh rhetoric based on accusations and counter-accusations that often aimed at denigrating the individual standing on the opposite side. Criticism was neither addressed to the policies declared by political parties nor to their implementation. The way political parties reacted to the benefits of power by creating political agendas that extended these benefits influenced the creation of successive crises along with the political, economic, and social instability that dragged the political prospects of Albania for many years.

Various issues have been faced by political parties since the beginnings of political pluralism. Thus, from 1991-1992, four governments were changed as a result of political instability; yet the elections of 1992 were seen as a progression in the country's road to democracy for two reasons. *First*, they were considered as the only free elections, the results of which were accepted by the opposition. *Second*, the way these elections were held marked the departure from politics of Ramiz Alia, who resigned on April 3, 1992. The results of 1992 elections and the Democratic Party's victory initiated the country's path to political, social, and

economic transformations. In these first years of transition, “compared to all the former communist countries in Eastern Europe, Albania was least prepared for the painful transition from communist dictatorship to a genuine pluralist democracy and a market economy” (Ramet, 1998, 268).

Regarding the analysis of the presence of democratic elements in the first years of transition, due to a lack of experience or of political determination, the country was characterized by rather weak institutional performance, non-professional administration which was easily influenced by political propaganda, and above all, high levels of corruption. The issues were considerable in the legal domain where there was a lack of stability in the powers the president or the executive were presumed to have. In the executive branch, the government of Meksi seemed to have a weak position. In addition to major social and political difficulties, Albania underwent a period of crisis and paralysis in the economy as well. The economic situation would be described as severe in all international reports and by all analysts. So collapsed was the economic situation in 1992 in Albania that no other Eastern country in Europe had experienced it (Biberaj, 1999, 181). Given these difficulties, Albania began to cooperate with international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which in some way directed the economic policies as a result of the willingness of the local political leaders to delegate. International assistance was visibly present in those years, so “Albania became the largest recipient of Western aid per capita basis in Eastern Europe” (Ramet, 1998, 269). Furthermore the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund announced major programs to help the country’s economic recovery (Biberaj, 1999, 148).

These entities secured the necessary financial assistance to support Meksi’s program for economic recovery from 1992-1993, which consisted mainly of objectives such as macroeconomic stability, assistance to support low-income families, agricultural reforms, etc. Statistics in Albania would show the economic state of the nation when the GDP fell by more than 50 per cent (Biberaj, 1999, 181). To support the economic reforms, Albania also benefited from European Union funding as a result of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement signed with the European Economic Community on May 11, 1992. The funds received from this agreement after its implementation was part of the PHARE program. Stimulated by this financial assistance, the first reforms to stabilize the economic state of the country began in late 1992. It was decided that factories would be closed and privatized in an attempt to improve the fiscal situation and

ease the associated burden on the budget. However, the effect of this action was destructive, mainly in terms of employment. Following the closure of the factories, many people were left without work, which led to a surge in unemployment. There was a drastic increase in prices, resulting in an immediate devaluation of the savings of Albanians. The public sector was privatized in almost its entirety with the aim of developing a market economy, and so “before the March 1992 elections, more than 20,000 shops and small businesses definition, those employing ten or fewer people in the retail trade, services, handicrafts, and transportation were privatized” (Biberaj, 1999, 192). In fact, the problem was not limited to the way privatization was handled. The people who benefited from this privatization were crucial to this issue because “the majority of those who joined the ranks of Albanian fledgling businessmen in 1991 and 1992 were members of the former nomenklatura. ... [T]he most profitable enterprises and shops were bought by former Communist officials” (Biberaj, 1999,192).

Law 7501 held particular importance in July 1991 due to its ramifications in the privatization of large areas of agricultural land. This law was not drafted to honor the right to property, and as such, it created many political and social problems. The cost of this law has been substantial from a financial standpoint, but above all from a social standpoint, and it has often contributed to the creation of large-scale conflicts.

It is true that the Democratic Party attempted to reform Albania during the toughest period of recent history, but it failed to make this undertaking a successful one. As Biberaj states, even though we witness real efforts in establishing democratic institutions, Albanian society remained fragile and far from the path of democratization. He summarizes the situation in the first years of transition below:

The Democratic Party had taken the reins of power in 1992 at one of the most difficult periods in Albanian’s recent history. Given the scale and the novelty of the challenges confronting Albania, the extent of disruption and social dislocation caused by painful reforms, and the weight of a turbulent historic legacy, post-communist Albania witnessed significant institutional and legislative transformations aimed at establishing a new political order. But despite this progress, lack of solid democratic institutions and the failure to achieve a domestic political consensus on key national issues had tarnished the Democratic Party’s rule. Basic institutions of democracy remained fragile, including parliamentary oversight of the executive, lack of an effective judicial system, conformity to the rule of law and a weak and ineffective part system (Biberaj, 1999, 181-182).

In fact, the problems articulated by Biberaj (1999, 181), would continue to emerge as obstacles against Albanian democratization for almost two decades to come. Despite the difficulties in internal affairs, the government continued to enjoy substantial international support, as Albania was deemed a stabilizing factor in the region. Thus, in the context of rapprochement with the European Community, in a clear signal of the recognition of the progress it had made in its difficult transition, Albania was granted full membership into the Council of Europe in June 1995. The prospective for democratization was excellent as long as there was shown a broad aspiration for the European Union integration. These hopes certainly changed due to the successive crises that engulfed the country after the 1996 elections. The year 1997 was considered an unfortunate year that blocked Albania's road to democratization. Despite the national and international political attempts to take the country out of the crisis in the following year, and "despite massive foreign aid in 1998, the country's infrastructure remained in ruins, corruption was high" (Freedom House, 1998), and the government administration was weak or nonexistent. In the Freedom House report of that year, Albania would be considered "partly free," with freedom rating scores of 4.5 (Freedom House, 1998).

#### **4.1.3 Civic and Political Rights in Albania during the First Years of Transition (1990-1997)**

Albania was not only the last communist domino to fall in the region but was also full of problems in the post-communist period, which made it even more difficult for successive crises to be overcome until the 2000s. Biberaj (1999, 148), stated that among all the former communist countries, Albania was the least prepared to undertake genuine reforms that would result in positive outcomes for political and social life. Up until 1997, the extent of crime and corruption was great due to the strenuous economic situation and the massive political crises the country had experienced.

*Corruption*, as one of the indicators of a defective country, was quite high, mainly among public administration officials. What characterized them and other high-position holders in that period was the embracing appropriations of property too quickly, which was also due to the problematic economic context they found themselves in. In this background it is shown that "many officials and politicians who were role models in 1992 fell victim to greed and the mania

for quick profits, siphoning off funds marked for economic development” (Biberaj, 1999). Whereas many others, in an attempt to gain financial influence, were involved in illegal activities, thus leading to benefits from privileges similar to what had happened with their predecessors during communism, imparting the idea and perception among the population that nothing had changed. Despite frequent declarations of government officials that the fight against corruption was the primary goal, the fight was not comprehensive, thus contributing in some way to the creation of a culture of impunity.

**Rule of law.** Crime had so deeply penetrated society that international reports often blamed the state apparatus of being involved by not punishing criminal groups. Therefore, “with a rise in street crimes such as robberies, mugging, rapes, prostitution, and smuggling, organized crime’s tentacles spread deep into society” (Biberaj, 1999, 175). Constitutional laws were drafted in 1992 as a result of the need for legal changes to undertake certain reforms. “Draft constitutions” were also written in other post-communist countries as a functional legal mechanism that would fill the gaps created due to the changes of political systems. The foundation of this draft was the creation of the separation of powers – the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary – to ensure their independence as one of the most important mechanisms of democracy. Despite the efforts made to better regulate this independence, “the draft represented a hybrid of a presidential and a parliamentary system” (Biberaj, 1999, 175).

Apart from other flaws resulting from a lack of experience in the legal domain, the draft contained two specific articles that did not recognize international obligations. “Article 6 (3) prohibited the creation of political parties based on religion or ethnicity. Article 7 (4) stipulated that heads of the large religious communities ‘must be Albanian citizens born in Albania and permanently resident there for the past 20 years’” (Biberaj, 1999, 175). The most important constitutional reform guaranteed the independence of the judiciary. The issues in relation to the rule of law were mainly focused on the legal system, which was being built from square one. Many inherited issues impacted the troublesome judicial system to dominate the Albanian society in the coming years. Many professionals of the judiciary in the communist years were replaced with new ones who were not properly qualified. This led to the creation of a gap associated with numerous problems in this field (Biberaj, 1999, 175).

**Free and Fair Elections.** Albania has always had issues with elections, be it parliamentary or local elections. The problems have mainly been accusations and counter-

accusations regarding voting distortions, family voting, voting manipulation, vote theft, etc. In the history of parliamentary elections, only the 1992 elections were accepted by the opposition, while all the others were contested as having been manipulated.

Due to the turmoil created as a result of the change of the political systems, the DP believed that the opposition would not accept its victory in the March 1992 elections, fearing the possible consequences that these elections could bring. “[T]heir fears, however, proved to be unfounded: The Socialists accepted defeat” (Biberaj, 1999, 137).

The background and tradition of election controversy, boycotts, and electoral crises were reflected in the 1996 parliamentary elections. These elections were contested by the SP, which boycotted the parliament. Criticism due to a lack of free and fair elections also came from the internationals. This led to the next parliamentary elections in 1997 as the country was experiencing total anarchy (Sotiropoulos, Armakolas, Gemi, Valvis, Feta, Agolli, Gianna, Llambro, 2013, 1). The 1997 parliamentary elections will be remembered as being held in a state of great tension and as being associated with fears and terror; however, they were considered acceptable by international observers due to the circumstances of that point in time (Bogdani & Loughlin, 2007, 129).

**Government Accountability.** After the 1992 elections, there was a lot of debate as to whether the political system would be a parliamentary or a presidential one. Certainly, there was as much of a lack of consensus at that point as in any other political aspect at the time, so discussions on this issue came to an end through the popular refusal of Berisha’s draft proposal which called for more powers to be given to the president in the referendum of 1994. In addition to numerous debates, “in practice Albania developed a hybrid presidential-parliamentary system in which the president exercised broad decision-making powers, the prime minister displayed a deferential attitude toward the president, and executive oversight by the parliament was lacking” (Biberaj, 1999, 163). However, from 1992-1996, there was a very good cooperation between the powers. Even though the political battles between the executive and the legislative power were weaker than in any other country of Eastern Europe, this merit was mostly attributed to the DP ability to preserve the majority in the parliament than to the cooperation and compromise between the political parties (Biberaj, 1999, 164).

**Media.** As a country newly emerging from the communist regime, Albania faced difficulties in the application of democratic standards immediately after the collapse of the

communist system, especially in the department of exercising certain rights and freedoms. We can say that the attempts to do so failed to some extent due to the verification of certain abuses. Misconducts were often the result of brutal police behavior, poor management of incidents, and irregularity in the convictions given by the judiciary system. Despite the magnitude of these abuses, often “the officials attempted to minimize the significance of such reports by pegging the problem as the misdeeds of a few policemen...” (Biberaj, 1999, 170). In addition, there were evident issues pertaining to freedom of speech reflected in the imprisonment of the editors of the opposition newspaper *Koha jonë* (Our Time), who were accused to have revealed state secrets and were imprisoned. This fact testifies that Albania once again was being governed by a president with total competences, even over the media (Elsie, 2010).

***Government Responsiveness.*** The Albanian government has shown a lack of transparency in politics for many years of its democratic governance. The electorate has often felt not only unrepresented but also alienated due to the implemented policies. The electoral system has been responsible for this lack of representation due to the associated prevention of certain groups of the population from being represented by their own people. Thus, the 1992 proportional lists created problems and certain communities that did not recognize their representatives in the government. This situation negatively impacted the parliament’s credibility, and damaged the bridges of communication between elected members and voters because a representative democracy cannot be effective without a reliable relationship between these two sides. Similarly, “there was too little communication and feedback to elected officials and voters, and the influence of the broader public on the legislature was negligible” (Biberaj, 1999, 70).

#### **4.2 Crucial Moments of Political Development in Estonia after The '90s (The First Years of Transition)**

In 1991, after more than 44 years of Soviet invasion and a vicious communist regime accompanied by numerous deportations of the population, Estonia voted for its independence from the Soviet Union. In August of the same year, affected by the circumstances in the international arena, the Soviet Union recognized Estonian independence, opening the doors to its democratization. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1989, Estonia fulfilled the will of the people to change systems and won its independence through one of the most authentic protests that took place in the flow

of the events of those years. The protest known as “The Baltic Way” involved around two million people from three Baltic States: Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. Protesters formed a “human chain” about 671 km long, joining the three capitals: Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius. The protest was one of the most important and comprehensive events due to the extensive participation of women, children, and the elderly, who all joined hands that day in the call for independence and the “chain was one of the earliest and largest human chain protests ever to have taken place” (Christie, 2015, 184). This protest attracted the attention of the whole world and supported the “Singing Revolution” through patriotic songs. Thus, the path of democracy for Estonia began as it advanced peacefully and democratically.

In January 1992, a transitional government headed by Tiit Vähi underwent substantial reforms for securing a democratic future for Estonia. The prospect of failing was enormous since communism had greatly damaged the country in all aspects, but the three goals set by this government and the pursuit of continuing politics by all subsequent governments that came to power in Estonia after the '90s were successful. The former Estonian Prime minister Laar (2009), stated that, the three goals comprised the adaptation of a new Constitution, the monetary reform and the conduction of successful parliamentary elections. Considering these priorities, Estonia held a referendum on its fourth constitution in 1992. The Constitution was supported by a wide portion of the population who voted in its favor, so “the Estonian Constitution was approved, 91.2 to 8.8 per cent ... the participation was 66.3 of those eligible” (Taagepera, 2007). This Constitution included many elements from the previous Constitutions “and particularly those of 1920 and 1938” (Nutt, 2005). The political stability of the country is attributed precisely to the implementation of this Constitution and to the successful balance established between the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. The referendum on the Constitution was followed by the 1992 presidential elections, held on September 20<sup>th</sup> of the same year, resulting in the election of President Lennart Meri, as well as the parliamentary elections. On October 19, 1992, Riikigok (the Estonian Parliament) elected Mart Laar as prime minister “with a vote of 54 to 30 and 4 abstentions” (Miljan, 2004, 34). The parliamentary elections of that year were the first free and fair elections in the country and played a very important role in its democratic development. As Laar wrote:

[T]hey provided a clear answer to three important questions: would a clear line be drawn between the existing and Communist Estonia or would the Soviet legacy continue to impact on reality;

would Estonia switch to a market economy or search for a “third way” between a command and market economy; would Estonia unambiguously orient itself toward the West or follow a policy of neutrality, which had characterized pre-war Estonia. The right-wing Fatherland election coalition, who won the elections, along with its presidential candidate, Lennart Meri, provided the most radical answers to these questions. The coalition promised to make a clear break with the past, change Estonia to a market economy and unequivocally turn the country toward the West. (Laar, 2009).

In the context of reforms, another important one which helped get the country out of its crisis was the release of the kroon as the nation’s only legitimate currency in June 1992. All these reforms raised a lot of questions as to whether they would help Estonia’s progress or bring it to total paralysis from which the country would not recover.

The first years of the government were turbulent. The new government did not have much experience, and the situation in the country was rather delicate (Laar, 2009). The difficult situation was also reflected in the daily grocery needs because people would stand in lines for hours to buy bread, one of the most important food staples. The situation peaked when, due to a lack of gas and consequently the inability to heat buildings, the government contemplated measures to evacuate Tallinn. Amidst the chaos created, the only “institution’ in Estonia that seemed to work was the informal market” (Laar, 2007).

Even during the first year of government, it was not known whether there would be enough funds from the budget to accommodate the retirement benefits of the elderly. According to Laar, one of the reasons that led to the intensification of these issues was the short and insufficient preparation time for these reforms. He points out that while many of the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe had started reforms since as early as 1988, Estonia had been unprepared for reforms up until the 1990s.

Estonia was in a state of total chaos in many aspects, but it stood unwavering in one, the approach and the aspiration to be part of the European Union (EU). The determination to be part of the EU was extensive due to the possibilities this union offered and the security it provided for the borders and the independence of the country. The rapprochement with the EU was visible when “the late Helmut Kohl of Germany support[ed] Estonia’s eventual accession to the European Community” in 1993 (Laar, 2009, 34).

In an attempt to successfully get out of the created situation and disorganization, Estonia implemented “shock therapy” through rapid privatization and decentralization. According to Laar, “acting quickly was essential for reforming a country from its roots” (Laar, 2009, 34).

Estonia faced many financial problems, among which there was a banking crisis that threatened the financial system. Policies needed to be very strict to prevent the Russian mafia from interfering with this system. However, the accumulation of a huge amount of rubles in the treasury during the currency reform created a large concern as Russia did not take them back.

Challenges were also faced during other political and social aspects of everyday life. Thus, for instance the establishment of the Armed Forces, which needed to be created from scratch. Another challenge was the establishment of a judicial system with European standards that would guarantee the implementation of the ratified laws because “over 300 different pieces of legislation were ratified in 1993 alone” (Laar, 2009). Problems were also encountered in the business sector, mainly due to the disruption of trade with Russia, the main country which had traded with Estonia until that moment and so it was soon concluded that the only way to establish trade relations with other countries was to produce goods according to European standards. Estonia did just that because “orientation to the West forced companies to thoroughly reorganize and update their production” (Laar, 2009, 12).

With the reforms undertaken, Estonia began to see changes in the economy in the summer of 1993. The way the government designed the changes was notable in the coming years, precisely under the motto “the government would help those who wanted to help themselves” (Laar, 2009, 13). Laar explains that this statement gave rise to much debate due to its implication that “some individuals deserved to be helped more than others,” although, in fact, its purpose was to “change the attitudes of the people” (Laar, 2009, 13). He further argues that this was achieved through the correct implementation of shock therapy: “Estonia was able to realize this principle by relying on competition and implementing radical tax and ownership reforms” (Laar, 2009, 13). The former prime minister explains that in the economic aspect, the radical tax reform was implemented “through the elimination of progressive income tax. Income tax reforms in Estonia started in 1993 with the elimination of the highest tax rate of up to 50 per cent, which was established in 1992” (Laar, 2009, 13-14).

Due to the success of the reforms, the political determination of the leaders in the first years of democracy, and the government’s readiness to move towards the European path, Estonia became a member of the Council of Europe in 1993. Another success was when an internal political crisis related to the removal of Russian military troops was resolved in the right way and subsequently gave a positive push along the road towards the European Union. During this

conflict Estonia found itself at the crossroads because on the one hand, Russia was unwilling to remove military troops from Estonia; on the other hand, there was a determination to resolve the problem in the most peaceful way possible so that Estonia would not be involved in conflicts. Even though it seemed that the political deadlock would not be solved easily, with the help of the West, negotiations proved successful, resulting in Russian troops leaving Estonia on August 31, 1994 (Laar, 2009, 14).

In the course of all these events, even though the previous government had resulted successful, the opposition won in the democratic elections of March 1995. What is important to be emphasized is that despite the change in government, “the political parties that came to power continued to implement these policies” (Laar, 2009, 15). According to him “governments would change in Estonia, but Estonia’s course remained the same. This also brought success to Estonia” (Laar, 2009, 15). Thus, the Coalition Party and the Rural People’s Union won these elections. This result somewhat reflected the dissatisfaction of the elderly and the voters of the rural areas, who were greatly impacted by the reforms. The reforms continued to be successful with the new government; so, in 1997, Estonia was admitted to the first round of negotiations with the European Union, being “the only country from the former Soviet Union” to take part in these negotiations (Laar, 2009, 15). The coalition that emerged as the winner from the elections of 1999 elected Mart Laar as the prime minister. After the electoral process, “the coalition that came to power as a result of the 1999 Riigikogu elections was able to turn the Estonian economy around again” (Laar, 2009, 15). Estonia continued along the path of reform and progress. Commitment, coexistence in government, and the motivation to democratize the country made the country’s progress along this pathway irreversible. As stated by Prime Minister Laar, who contributed to make the European dream a reality, despite many challenges and uncertainties “[W]e never gave up. When the 1980s offered us a new chance, we took advantage of it” (Laar, 2009).

### **4.3 Political Culture in Post-Communist Albania and Estonia**

#### **4.3.1 Features of the Political Culture in Post-Communist Albania**

During the research, many similarities have been noticed between Estonia and Albania, mainly in the aspect of historical and political developments. However, some significant differences, which occurred in the last years of the communist regime, have somehow affected the different courses of the political events that these countries have taken (i.e., that of political pluralism and of a democratic system). Ramiz Alia and Gorbachev rose to the top of Albania and the former Soviet Union, respectively, almost at the same time. Unlike Alia, when Gorbachev came into power, he started to undertake various reforms that changed the politics of the Soviet Union. The reforms that he undertook, and which were not implemented by Alia, aimed at radically changing the communist system and were called “Glasnost,” “Perestrojka,” and “Uskorenie” (Zotaj, 2014).

This fact perhaps has had a direct influence on the historical past. Albania did not experience the openness policies that were applied in the former countries of the Soviet Union as Tarifa (1995) states. Albania suffered the communist regime for longer and in a harsher way than any other country of Central or Eastern Europe. As the author further explains, “indeed it was isolated even from the former communist bloc” (Tarifa, 1995, 135). At the same time, the progress of a democratic journey in the first years of the transition was not even on the right path to producing a functional democracy.

A good starting point or the way a democratic journey is installed in a society which has emerged from the communist system seems to be very important in setting the trajectory of the journey in the future. Following this logic, in the case of Albania, as various authors and researchers have mentioned, this journey was neither peaceful nor fruitful. Thus, Elsie (2010) would define it as a situation where, since the beginning, besides the lack of confrontation between the political parties also in the unfolding of the political dialogue, it is noticed that this dialogue is not based on the Left and Right ideology but, as he states, “with influence, connections, and jobs in the public sector, and with lucrative kickbacks” (Elsie, 2010, xix).

Generally, the Albanian political culture may be characterized as authoritarian by establishing that the Albanian citizen during the transition period has not been a participant citizen and has not exerted his influence on the leading political class to put pressure on the decision-making processes (Pajo, 2017, 128). This has automatically strengthened the increasing authority of the political class and of the political actors. Consequently, by avoiding the

responsibility and the obligation of the citizen to engage in political actions, this is also based on a low level of political trust among citizens.

It is ironic to think that these unique events described above characterized the Albanian political culture for years. Since the transition itself includes a period of moving from one regime to another, the traces of the past undoubtedly determine the steps to be taken in the future. By establishing this, it is possible to rephrase what Biberaj (1999) stated – that Albania had terrible fortune. Besides experiencing one of the worst communist regimes in the world, and this regime lasted longer than those of any other Eastern European state (Biberaj, 1999, 76).

The effects of this destructive regime were reflected and had their impact in the following years for Albania. In fact, some of the greatest challenges which Albania faced at the end of the 1990s were mostly moral and spiritual crises that were directly related to the communist legacy. In the first years of democracy, from 1990-1996, so many people were thought to have lost trust not only in the country but also in themselves that it is thought that close to half a million Albanians fled the country; the most affected population were members of technical intelligentsia (Biberaj, 1999, 70).

#### **4.3.1.1 Civic Participation as an Indicative Component of Civic Engagement**

In countries where the political system is characterized by a recently formed democracy, past political-historical developments are unavoidably reflected in the present political situation. This tends to create a state of apathy and inactivation among the citizens. This situation directly affects their ability to make decisions or to influence the political decision-making processes of the country. The social and political life is organized in such a way that only certain concepts, such as the rule of law, freedom, equality, etc., are merely known about but not experienced. However, the inability to find and successfully implement the mechanisms necessary to respect the rule of law led to phenomena that impair democracy (e.g., corruption, weak institutions, nepotism). Such phenomena will always find more terrain by impairing democratic functioning because “the rule of law is not immune” (Mehmetaj, 2014).

The political culture of the first years of the post-communist period was characterized by a lack of the presence of civil society. Meanwhile, in other former communist countries, as Biberaj (1999) cites, not only was this notion not alienated, but their rise also corresponds with the time of the pre-collapse of the communist regimes. Thus, compared to the other countries, the

notion of “civil society” was at an early stage. This reality happened because the communist regime had a very intensive influence and impact on the people as well as on the leadership and the political culture. In reference to the levels of citizen participation from 1991-1996, it can be said that there has been a lack of demonstrations. The only ones that resulted in great dimensions are those of the year 1997, which occurred as a result of the political turmoil of the pyramidal schemes, which, in fact, were not democratic reactions but turned into “anarchy and statelessness” (Malltezi, 2015).

In Albania, attempts to strengthen the civil society have been made since 1991, after the creation of the first opposition party. A contribution to the development of their activity was made by Western donors, who, within the framework of strengthening the democratic values, were very interested in stimulating the participation of the civic society. In the support of this objective, it can be noticed in various international reports that from 8000 registered NGOs, about 200-300 are active. Through them, “Albanian citizens, civil society organizations and the mass media are generally able to express their opinions freely” (BTI, 2018).

Even though people’s legal and material rights to exert their activity has been guaranteed by covering many spheres of social life in the field of advocacy, the monitoring of the government, and the provision of expertise, according to the same BTI report (2018), means that the greatest parts of the NGOs have cultivated connections with the politics, and this last one has influenced the productivity of their activities by underlining that “civil society in Albania remains weak and politicized” (BTI, 2018).

#### **4.3.1.2 Political Trust as an Indicator of Democracy Approval**

Political trust is a very important indicator which synthesizes the positive perception of the actions of individuals and organizations. It can also be seen as a subjective phenomenon that shapes behaviours. Trust in the government may be established as the trust among the citizens that the government acts in the fairest possible way (Easton, 1965).

Various reports based on actual studies related to the behaviours of Albanians towards the public institutions repeatedly testify that a logical basis instills a lack of trust in governmental institutions. This fact is reported by the BTI (2003), which specifies that the efficiency of democratic institutions often is negatively influenced by interferences and influences exerted by the political actors. Under these conditions, these institutions often fail to protect and preserve

their bias. Various problems have been noticed that seem to have influenced the loss of trust of the citizens towards the institutions. The results that are found among the platforms of the political parties which seem more oriented towards certain personalities and interests than towards clear ideas and visions. Moreover, one of the problems oriented in this report seems to have continuity because it is also found in the BTI report of 2018. This problem is that political actors often reflect a hostile climate between them, and, often, the “political opponents are slandered and combated like personal enemies” (BTI, 2003).

Despite the repeated disappointments that the domestic political class has caused during the transition years, it seems that the Albanians are willing to embrace democracy. This is demonstrated by various polls. “The European Social Survey” conducted in 2012 shows that 92 per cent of Albanians found it important to live in a democratically governed country, which was the highest share among 28 European countries and exceeded the unweighted average of 12 post-communist countries by nine percentage points (BTI, 2018).

This indicates that the dormant state created was not a testimony of the Albanian citizens’ will but an outcome of the political actors' decision-making platforms. The process of decision-making, which often has resulted oriented by the interest more than by well-defined objectives to reach good governance, has shaped a half-democracy and a continuous political bloc that periodically reverses the process of European integration and steady development.

This condition has produced a low level of public trust, mainly in the Albanian governmental institutions, which are perceived as less trustworthy than international institutions like NATO and the EU, which inspire confidence. The results are specified in these parameters and in the report drafted by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (2016), which, through questionnaires, reached some conclusions related to aspects of civic engagement and participation as well as political trust in Albanian public institutions, which ask “citizens to rate their level of trust towards a number of Public Institutions at the central and local level as well as towards other important actors (Media, Civil Society etc)” (Lame & Pepa, 2015, 13-15). The authors also explain that:

2015 data show that the most trusted institutions in Albania are NATO and EU, which enjoy 74% and 72% of public trust, respectively (% of surveyed citizens expressing “I have great trust” or “Basically I trust”). In the midst of low trust levels in other institutions, Religious Institutions enjoy the third highest trust rating. More than one in every two Albanians (52%) state that they trust religious institutions; 15% do not have any opinion. Roughly one in three Albanians

surveyed trusts the Government; the Government (34%) appears to enjoy greater trust than the Parliament (22%).

#### **4.3.2 Characteristics of Estonian Political Culture after the Fall of The Communist Regime**

After the 1990s and after the Declaration of Independence, Estonia chose to follow the way of National Restoration, established a democratic political order, and followed the rules to operate in a free market economy. All these reforms directly affected the Estonians' way of life and of course, also the changing of their belief system. One more advantage on the way to the democratization of the country was also the parliamentary democracy that Estonia experienced in the interwar period together with Gorbachev's policies of openness and perestroika. Also, based on the two factors above, "Estonia was a fertile ground for the building of democratic institutions" (Titma & Rämmer, 2006, 278 - 279).

It is obviously noticed that since the first years of the political pluralism, Estonia showed a clear orientation and set a specific objective on the road towards the EU. This characteristic was not only reflected in the citizens' wishes but also in the programs of the governments had just created by enabling Estonia to be one of the most successful countries in the process of joining the EU (BTI, 2006, 1).

Furthermore, in the BTI report, it is described that this perspective was also clarified by the typology of installing a democratic order and democratic institutions, where it is observed that there is a tendency of returning to the parliamentary system in the same situation of that of the pre-war period, and this seems to have accelerated the consolidation of the institutions and procedures with a high norm of legitimacy. Thus, as part of the democratic transformation it was created an institutional basis "that meets the highest standards of the rule of law, democratic control, and political representation – at least for its citizens" (BTI, 2006). The law and the institutions seem to have functioned with efficiency and efficacy because, during the first years of the transition, Estonia fulfilled all the legislative and political tasks to adopt and reckon the necessary legislation to become part of the EU.

The proper functioning of the law has enabled the establishment of the democratic institutions, the functioning of which in spite of the time and again episodes of tension and disagreement between the central and local power, the democratic governing has never been

impinged. In addition, these institutions have been accepted as legitimate by all the representatives of the political forces as well as by non-governmental associations (BTI, 2018).

Referring to patterns of political culture, the only vital problem with Estonia has been the Russian minority and its integration in the social life considering the strong crisis that happened between the Estonians and the Russian community that lives within the borders of Estonia. Let us remember here the incident with the Bronze Soldier or the new format that was crashed through the cyber war. However, the Integrating Programme of 1999 that predicted a detailed plan for the years 2000-2007 was a well-detailed all-inclusive framework of all the economic, social, legal, political, linguistic, and cultural aspects of life, which enabled the gradual integration of this community into the Estonian society (BTI, 2006).

#### **4.3.2.1 Political Participation in Estonia**

Political participation in Estonia did not seem to have resulted in high levels and was not widely spread until 1996. One of the possible causes of this reality, according to Titma and Rämmer (2006), is the tendency of stabilization after the euphoria of the political activity, which seemed to have taken great dimensions by the late 1980s and early 1990s. After 1996, all the attention of the citizens, even at the debate level, was focused mostly on the economic aspects by leaving aside the treatment of political matters. This tendency was clearly seen since there was also weak participation in the voluntary associations. It has been stated that “a large share of the Estonian population (85 per cent) were not participating in any voluntary association in 1996” (Titma & Rämmer, 2006, 283).

However, in the BTI report (2006), it is emphasized that very quickly, Estonia developed a “vibrant civil society”. What is distinguished above all in the development of the Estonian civil society is the establishment of a cooperation network between the diverse associations, society, and politics. This civil society characteristic is a continuing policy of the civil society format also in the interwar period, when there was fruitful cooperation and civil society was a very important component in policy-making. The continuous stimulation of these policies has also been incentivized by the Estonian state, which by guaranteeing the legal and financial framework, stimulates the formation and well-functioning of different NGOs.

Despite the ups and downs of civil society activity in Estonia, which has encountered problems during the first years of the transition, the support for the democratic norms and the political institutions is high. It seems that the citizens are satisfied with these democratic norms and the way that democracy works in their country, which is close to the EU countries. Thus, in the BTI report (2018), the following is stated:

According to a 2016 Eurobarometer survey, the level of satisfaction with the workings of democracy at the national level in Estonia (51%) was roughly equal to the EU average (48%) and one of the highest among the Central and East European member states.

Thus, referring to the statistics, one can clearly form the impression that the civil society has its own problems when compared to the Nordic countries or EU countries, but it has a more complete and impetuous development compared to many former communist countries. Meanwhile, there have also been continuous and concrete efforts from the Estonian government to activate and include this entity in the process of policy-making. Only in 2016 was a special advisor appointed to deal with civil society matters. This legal framework, supported by government programs, has enabled an increase in the engagement of the civil society, especially in recent years. According to a study carried out by the Centre for Civil Society Research and Development at Tallinn University, 31 per cent of Estonian citizens are members of a civil organization, and about half of them are active (BTI, 2018).

#### **4.3.2.2 Political Trust**

Political trust in public institutions is relatively high despite the fact that there is an increase in the apathy among the citizens that is reflected in the electoral processes. In a survey conducted in 1999, about half of the respondents said that even though they had little interest in political issues, they still had a high level of trust in the president, the defense forces, the media, and the local administration. Also, very important is that, despite the fact that the trust in the prime minister, government, and parliament has fluctuated, there have never been fluctuations that impinge the trust in the institutional democracy (BTI, 2006).

According to the BTI report (2018), this trend of trust was maintained even in the following years. In 2016, the level of institutional trust was the highest of all countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Such a confirmation also comes from the European Social Survey carried

out in 2012. According to the survey, 85 per cent of Estonians consider it important to live in a democratic country.

#### **4.4 Characteristics of Leadership's Normative Preference for Democracy for Albania and Estonia**

##### **4.4.1 Albania's Leadership's Normative Preference for Democracy**

Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013), in trying to study democratization and political regimes change in Latin America, among other things, emphasize and examine as an independent variable correlated inevitably with the regime survival or regime breakdowns the political actors. The reason behind this choice is that the political actor's choices and behaviors determine the regime's outcomes. They emphasize that structures and cultures influence the actors' actions but do not directly cause regime outcomes. Even though the authors do not specifically focus on the political culture of a country, the intention in this dissertation is to emphasize that the political culture and political actors are unavoidably connected to each other and that as long as the political culture affects political actor's belief system, their attitudes, and behaviour, it is indisputable that they directly or indirectly affect the regime outcomes, whether they are democratic or not.

This statement, combined with the importance of the political culture of the masses, is evident, as the authors themselves state when disclosing their theory that “in many democracies, some actors with strong normative commitments to democracy coexist with others who have radical policy preferences. But if radical policy preferences become prevalent, the actor's commitment to democracy lose their centrality in the political process” (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013). This finding emphasizes that, despite the actors' determination or preferences, if a political climate becomes dominating, it eclipses this motivation. Thus, it can be seen that the political culture unavoidably plays a decisive role in the formation of the democratic preferences of the political actors.

The authors have tried to study the political actors' variable in its complexity and also in terms of its continuous interaction with other variables (e.g., international influence) by arguing that the connection and the combination between these variables affect the outcomes of the regime. However, I wish to adapt the variable of the leadership's normative preference for

democracy when testing the hypothesis during this dissertation. This is because in the cases of Estonia and Albania, which I have considered, it is indisputable that the international influence has been evident. This influence has also been felt in all the countries of the region, but it has not had a different impact on the most important political actors in order to bring changes via the process of democratization. On the contrary, this thesis is trying to prove that in the case of Estonia, the priorities that the political actors set have been crucial for the democratization of society. Meanwhile, in Albania, the lack of compliance and the non-democratic choices made by the political actors since the period of state formation have resulted in a non-democratic regime which has lasted until now, thirty years after the fall of the dictatorship.

In Albania, from the time of state formation until today, the most important political actors have been more focused on their personal interests than common interests related to the democratization of the country. As Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013) emphasize, “waves of democracy may stabilize when most actors in a region develop strong democratic norms and moderate policy preferences, but they may recede if key actors in key countries renege from democratic commitments in order to gain short-term political advantages or if they embrace radical positions”. Based on the discussion above, it can be affirmed that during the qualitative comparative analysis of the political developments, the historical cases help us to establish possible empirical connections between the two independent variables (political culture and leadership’s normative preference for democracy) and the dependent variable (democratization).

In this framework and in an attempt to find an explainable correlation, the intention is to emphasize the role that the different actors have or do not have in the democratic product of the governing system. Schmidt’s argument aids the understanding that the leadership’s determination is essential in the acceleration of the process of democratization because, as he puts it, “changing into democracy may fail when there is a lack of will and when it is acted clumsily” (Schmidt, 2012, 446).

Remaining in this context, and referring to the Albanian reality, Fischer states that historically, in Albania, foreigners have used local elements for their own purposes. This has rarely happened in any other countries in the Balkans or even further abroad than that. In Albania, one can find people who are prepared to sacrifice the national case for their own interests (Fischer, 1999, 62-63).

Fischer's analysis also extends during the communist regime by analysing the alliances and the motives of their downfall during this period. Besides the issue of the alliances during this regime's rule, if the political culture is to be related to the omnipotence of the decision-making of the political leader, it is peculiar that in Albania, unlike in Estonia, an extreme idealism of the communist leader existed. He was established as the source of absolute knowledge, a supreme power, and a prophet who enjoyed the right to lead the Albanians towards the formation of the new socialist Albania (Zotaj, 2014, 107).

It seems that the communist regime in Albania, through extreme measures and control over every living aspect, not only prevented the creation of liberal elite but created the legitimacy of conformity and apathy that would later characterize the civil society (Biberaj, 1999, 72).

An in-depth analysis carried out in the preceding chapters of the political events in Albania before the transition years revealed that the political actors have not been oriented towards the democratic normative preference. These findings come out while decoding the categorization that the authors Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán make through the coding rules that they have followed. In order to determine which cases are instances of radicalism or of normative preference for democracy, they have derived a set of classifications and behaviors where, among other things, it is specified that the political actors are coded as "lacking a preference for democracy" if they were to act at least in one of the following ways:

- 1) expressed ambivalence or questioned "bourgeois," "liberal," or "formal" democracy;
- 2) expressed hostility toward democratic institutions [such as parties, legislatures, courts, or electoral bodies] rather than simply challenging their decisions;
- 3) questioned the validity of democratic procedures when these produced unfavorable results;
- 4) claimed to be the sole representative of the people;
- 5) questioned the legitimacy of any opposition outside an encompassing national movement; or
- 6) frequently dismissed peaceful opponents as enemies of the people or the country.

Government officials were also coded as lacking a normative preference for democracy if they 7) introduced programs of partisan indoctrination into the public school system or the military; or if they 8) manipulated institutional rules frequently in order to gain political advantage. Nongovernmental actors were considered as lacking a preference for democracy if they 9) expressed willingness to subvert the constitution; or 10) accepted the use of fraud, political exclusions, or violence for political purposes. (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 116).

Otherwise, "actors were coded as having a strong normative preference for democracy if they did not exhibit any of the ten hostile behaviours above and as fairly strong but not entirely consistent in their normative support if they exhibited ambiguity with regard to any of these ten indicators" (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 116-117).

Following these rules, this part of the study will focus mostly on the political decision-making of the most important actors during the first period of the transition. The main argument developed during this phase is that Albania and Estonia changed in opposite directions precisely during this period of time owing to the decisions taken by the most important political actors of the time.

It seems that the actors in the political class are considered related not only to the study of the transition but also to the democratization processes. This is also true of the processes integrated in the EU, as mentioned by other authors, such as Krasniqi (2008, 127), who states that in Albania, it is mainly the political class which is held accountable for inhibiting Albania from achieving positive results in reforms and the democratization of the country. The author emphasizes that, differently from other ex-communist countries, the historical political leaders are still active today in politics.

Referring to the codes established by Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013), throughout the post-communist period in Albania, many of the coded actions above have persistently dominated the political climate. Thus, the elections have systematically been objected, and it has been abused with their result, as well as with the process itself. Thus, the institutional rules have been manipulated in order to gain political advantages. This has happened since the first years of political pluralism and still continues with the latest political developments, such as the local elections of 2019, during which the largest opposition party (DP) did not participate in the elections, and the SP held the elections almost as the only political force, winning in all municipalities.

However, returning to the 1990s, what characterized the Albanian transition, and what was not seen in Estonia, was that even though the powers changed, the people who became the main political actors (e.g., Sali Berisha, Gramoz Pashko, etc.) during the communist regime also used to be quite important. Berisha was a cardiologist who provided medical services for the influential people of the political bureau, and Pashko used to be a member in 1990. Also, Arben Puto started to represent civil society (Biberaj, 1999, 70). Meanwhile, the opposition force (SP) was presided by Fatos Nano, who also “had grown up in the communist elite” (Abrahams, 2015, 95).

This fact clearly shows that Albania did not have a new elite; instead, the old one was recycled. The complete opposite occurred in Estonia. Immediately after the 1991 referendum to

gain independence from the Soviet Union, the government was formed by thirty-two-year-old Martin Laar and a cabinet of young people with an average age of thirty-five who had no connection to the “previous Soviet occupation” (Sola, 2018).

Since the beginning of the post-communist years, the political climate in Albania has lacked tolerance and co-operation, and the power has been concentrated in very few people: the leaders of the greatest political parties in the country. Thus, different authors have emphasized these phenomena and have related them to the transitory phase in the country. Immediately after the DP came into power, the power itself was concentrated under the authority of the leader of the party, Berisha, who seemed to have more power than the state organs themselves. This power was reflected in concrete guidelines about the jobs that the ministers had to do. In addition, “party leaders told ministers what to do. Albanians seeking jobs or promotions joined the party and followed the party line” (Abrahams, 2015, 114).

Abrahams (2015) further states that during the time that Berisha performed the function of the president from 1992-1997, his authority was so high that Meksi, who was elected as prime minister, did nothing but follow Berisha’s directives; he did not challenge Berisha even once, and this was why Meksi had been elected for this public post.

This political climate has characterized Albania in the following years, and the political parties appear not to have changed in terms of their mentality or in terms of the model of internal governing. It seems that there is no ideological difference between them. They are mostly oriented towards certain ways of achieving personal success and profit.

Regarding the above discussion, it was also noticed that the differences between the political parties lie mostly in matters of the party’s leadership than in serious programs and platforms where the electorate can make a clear difference among them (Freedom House, 2002). This problem was also identified in the 2003 BTI report, which emphasizes that a feeling of discontent had risen among the citizens. This feeling was reflected in the decrease in the number of voters, and this failure is attributed mainly to the policies of the parties. On the other hand, the lack of a considerable number of supporters for both parties made it possible for the political leaders to strengthen their power. At the same time, the report states that in Albania, the political actors were willing to get involved in antagonistic confrontations with the other party and damage the social and political integrity “while encouraging regionalism and clan structures” (BTI, 2003).

Referring to the behaviour of the political actors, it seems that the situation continued. In a later report of Freedom House (2005), it is clearly stated that along the road towards the EU, the main barrier is the political leaders, as directly stated by the EU. Having underlined this, it seems that the main problem is that Albania's leaders can be described as authoritative and as having a tendency towards centralist thinking. This doesn't leave room for new people to bring about the changes that the country needs. The traces of the communist system appear among post-communist Albanian leaders, who have been socialized by the old system and consequently reflect "mindsets and habits of the past" (BTI, 2006, 6). Moreover, the report argues that in addition to the fact that the political leadership tends to follow long-term objectives, its purposes are shadowed by the individual's interests. This report emphasizes the fact that this situation is the same even for the leader of the opposition party.

This argument, which refers to the main political leaders of the nation, is supported in a study carried out by the Political Studies Institute which deals with the issue of the establishment set in Albanian politics and the political actors who have been in power since 1990. The study indicates that it is difficult to find another European country where the same politicians who started the transition continue to stay in power even today. Moreover, it is stated that Albania's leaders constantly blame the opposition party for their losses by moving away from political ethics and responsibilities (ISP, 2019).

#### **4.4.2 Estonians Leadership's Normative Preference Democracy**

Estonia is one of the post-communist countries that have experienced rapid development, and it is today listed as a totally democratized country. It is clearly seen from the political developments that a very inherent merit in this journey was that of the political actors of the early years of the transition. This is the case as long as Estonia was transformed from an economically and politically ruined country in the 1990s into a totally democratized country within a very short period of time. It is important to emphasize that significant role in the undertaking of the reforms was played by the political actors, who as the author argues, through their political decisions "make each scene flow correctly" (Sola, 2018). The author further argues that in the road towards modernization and the reforms undertaken mainly in the economic aspect, four main important political actors have been crucial for Estonia. These have made significant contribution in different fields and they are: Mart Laar who reformed the economy

after 45 years of socialism, Toomas Hendrik who initiated the technological development, Andrus Ansip who continued the reforms undertaken by Hendrik but who also influenced the restoration of the economy after the crisis involved Estonia, and lastly Taavi Kotka who invested in the innovative sector in concrete programs like the E-Residency (Sola, 2018).

The elites of the former communist countries are known to have some common characteristics, and they generally drive the communist regime that have a significant impact on their belief system as well as their behavior even during the transition period. However, it is important to emphasize that unlike all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in Estonia, the old political class that belonged to the communist period did not sufficiently survive to continue with a successor communist party (Adam, Tomšič & Kristan, 2008).

Moreover, Adam, Tomšič and Kristan (2008) emphasized that Estonia after the 1990s was characterized by a quick change of governments, mainly in the first decade after the Independence. Thus, this influenced the configuration of the elites who were directly affected by these changes by affecting also the circulation of their political posts. However, besides these changes in the leading positions, the fact that it is politically important is the will of all the political actors to solve the collective problems, mainly during the period 1994-2003.

One of the most important reforms and political actors that have led to the economic reform known as “the shock therapy” was the former prime minister of Estonia, Mart Laar, who has written a lot regarding those years by politically analyzing the situation. He stated that sometimes the right decisions taken at the right time must be implemented immediately because it is only through this way that it is possible to achieve the necessary success. Otherwise when the decisions take a long time, even though they may be the right ones, they still do not yield fruitful results. In addition, he himself emphasized that to undertake all the necessary reforms, it takes an institutional democracy. To achieve this last one, a total detachment from the communist past is necessary, either that of the structures or that of the people who represent the past regime. Laar (2008) further stresses that the determination and the commitment of the government of Estonia to carry through the reforms, besides the fact that by implementing them immediately increased the unemployment and created a feeling of discontent among the citizens, ended up being one of the greatest successes which resulted in a democratic product.

Besides, to fulfill the reforms, Laar argues that it was necessary to deal with such matters like the corruption and organized crime as typical issues that are quite problematic in the first

period of the transition in many post-communist countries. However, to do this, a very important role was played by the civil society, the rule of law, and the decisive implementation of the market economy. The Laar government has put every effort into strengthening these fields and, at the end, it succeeded as long as Estonia became a part of the European Union and NATO. In addition, it turned into an inspiration for many other countries which have been through the same crossroads as Estonia because *“the ‘Estonian miracle’ teaches that only by trusting the people and empowering them are reforms made irreversible. Only in this way can we build a better future for ourselves and our children”* (Laar, 2008).

To continue the analysis of Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013), in all the studies on the political development of Estonia starting from the period of state formation until now, it results that the political actors have had a continuous consensus to meet the objectives that would translate into a democratic regime outcome. This is attainable as long as the democracy formed and achieved in Estonia is widely accepted by all the political actors and is not known to have any anti-democratic forces among the political actors or military or any significant voice in Estonia (BTI, 2018).

Through all the codes established by Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, political actors, mainly in the first years of the democratic transition, have not come across any tendency of their manifestation. They have not shown any ambivalence regarding the norms of the democracy, nor have they shown any sign of hostility towards the democratic institutions. They have also not doubted the worthiness of the democratic procedures, and this is clearly demonstrated also in the electoral system where not only have they acknowledged the elections as legitimate, but every violation or evidenced case of corruption or not of the political actors has been accompanied by a resignation from the public post held. To continue with the codes described by the authors, the political actors have been co-operative when achieving the vital objective for the country—which was the integration in the EU and NATO, as the only salvation to move away from the danger by Russia. Hence, this has been the common priority of all the political forces. The governmental programmes have never been created by individual desires or with benefitting interests, but have been long-term platforms, well-studied with the only purpose of increasing the wellbeing of the citizens and the continuous and irreversible progress of the country. This is clearly seen even during the economic crisis of Estonia in 2008. Here the need to undertake immediate reforms rose in order to survive the crisis. With good decision making at the right

time, the taxes did not rise as it happened in many other countries that went even deeper into the economic crisis. However, the governmental expenses decreased drastically. This brought about the fact that, once more, the political actors by making the right decision made Estonia one of the countries that efficiently and effectively came out of the economic crisis faster than other countries did. Based on this analysis, it can be clearly seen that the political actors, during the first years of the transition, had a tendency to have a strong normative preference for democracy (Scott Mainwaring & Anibal Pérez-Liñán, 2013, 116-117).

#### **4.5 The Analysis of the Political Culture and the Political Perception of Albania and Estonia according to World Value Survey (WVS)**

The analysis and comparison of the citizens' perceptions regarding the political culture of the two countries in this study was taken into consideration as the indicators of World Value Survey. This includes the third wave that corresponds with the years 1995-1999. The samples have also been taken for Albania in 1998 and for Estonia in 1996. The third wave is utilized for data collection for two reasons. Firstly, both countries have been studied at the same time in this wave; thus the analysis is more complete. Secondly, it corresponds to the first period of the transition, and this is a period when both countries took different paths in the road of democratization. Albania remained a hybrid regime and Estonia is classified as a democratic regime according to the classification of Freedom House. Being in these conditions and given the fact that the primary goal is the investigation of the general characteristics and features of the political culture, it is convenient for this argument not to stop in the specific analysis of each component specifically but on the analysis of the whole phenomenon.

The respective questions of the WVS during the political action session gather information from the answers given about how active the citizens are to commit to the political issues. Staying on this terrain, the citizens were asked if they have ever been engaged in this nature of political activity like "signing a petition". They were provided with four options respectively "have done", "might do", "would never do", and "don't know". The options they chose, according to the states, are presented below as follows:

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Albania</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
Have done	18.0%	23.0%	13.0%
Might do	34.1%	28.2%	39.8%
Would never do	38.0%	33.0%	42.8%
Don't know	10.0%	15.7%	4.4%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021

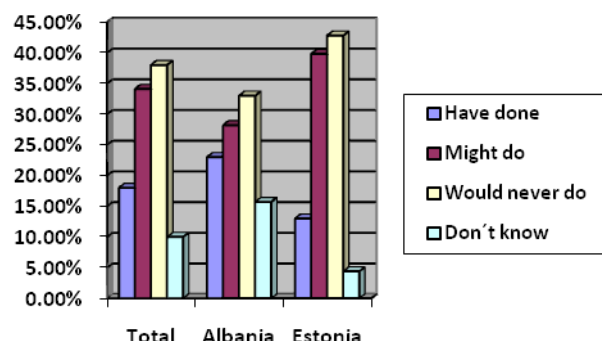


Figure 2 – Citizens commitment to political issues; Albania and Estonia

While the citizens of Albania have been more active in giving the option “have done” or “don't know”, the citizens of Estonia tend to be more oriented in giving the answer “might do” or “would never do”. This is clearly noticed and it can be interpreted from the chart above. It is worthy to note that in Estonia, there is no sufficient civic commitment in the aspect of activity and commitment of the civil society.

Following up the next question “How interested would you say you are in politics?” that the citizens answered, the statistics is shown below. Clearly, it can be seen that the Estonians are more interested in political matters. This does not imply a commitment to concrete activities, but it is mostly regarded as an interest in a general level of the political developments.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Albania</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
Very interested	7.6%	8.2%	7.1%
Somewhat interested	35.0%	28.1%	41.7%
Not very interested	37.4%	39.1%	35.7%
Not at all interested	19.3%	23.7%	14.9%
Don't know	0.7%	0.8%	0.7%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021

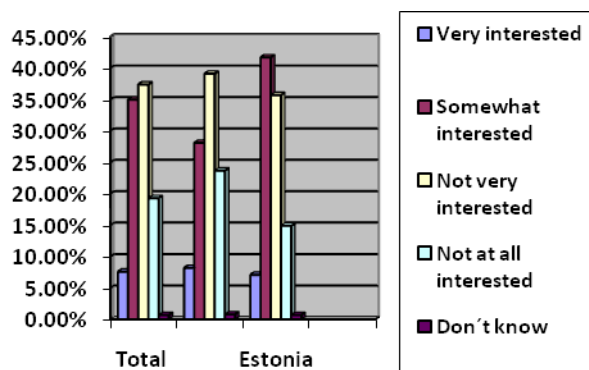


Figure 3 – Citizen's interest in politics; Albania and Estonia

To continue with the question of interest in the cognitive level, a concrete behaviour that shows political commitment is related to the question of how active or inactive the citizens of

both countries are in regards to the politics of their countries. From their responses which is shown below, it is perceived that Albania is practically more committed by being involved in political parties either in an active way or an inactive one. However, the largest parts of the surveyed Estonians do not really engage in any political party. This perhaps makes them more detached from the direct political dependence. Even though they are interested in political matters, for them it is not an expression of interest in becoming a member of a political party or not. However, becoming a part of a political party and being very active has been the answer of almost 20.4 percent of committed Albanians.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Albania</b>	<b>Estonia</b>
Active member	6.8%	13.1%	0.6%
Inactive member	10.8%	20.4%	1.4%
Not a member	82.2%	66.1%	98%
Don't know	0.2%	0.4%	0%
(N)	2.020	999	1.021

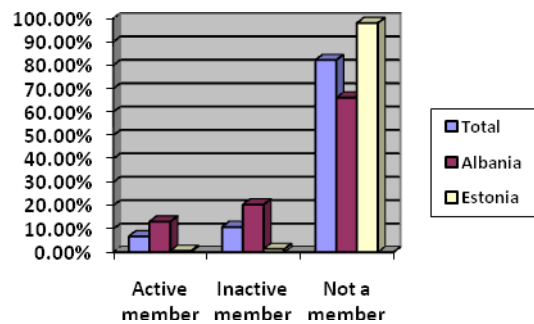


Figure 4 – Citizens' concrete behaviour that shows political commitment; Albania and Estonia

The people surveyed were interviewed in regard to their perception about the way the country was being governed. Here, option 1 means “very badly and the opposite” and option 10 means “sufficiently well”. According to the results below, it is clearly expressed that the Albanians have chosen mostly the values between 6 to 9, where the value 8 is the most chosen option. Thus, this expresses a form of satisfaction with the way they are being governed. Besides the fact that in the years that the surveys were carried out, it is important to remember that Albania was undergoing a total political, economic, and social crisis. Consequently, the Estonians have preferred to answer in a more balanced and uniform way by choosing the values between 5-8 which is spread almost evenly. Also, it is noticed that the options “very badly” and “badly” were selected more by the Estonians than the Albanians.

	Total	Albania	Estonia
Very bad	1.2%	0.1%	2.4%
2	1.2%	0.3%	2.2%
3	2.4%	0.6%	4.1%
4	2.9%	0.7%	5.0%
5	9.9%	3.4%	16.3%
6	11.5%	11.4%	11.6%
7	17.2%	20.6%	13.9%
8	26.5%	36.5%	16.7%
9	14.5%	23.5%	5.6%
Very good	3.8%	1.8%	5.7%
Don't know	8.9%	1.0%	16.7%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021
Mean	7.04	7.65	6.33
Standard Deviation	1.84	1.26	2.13
Base mean	1,840	989	851

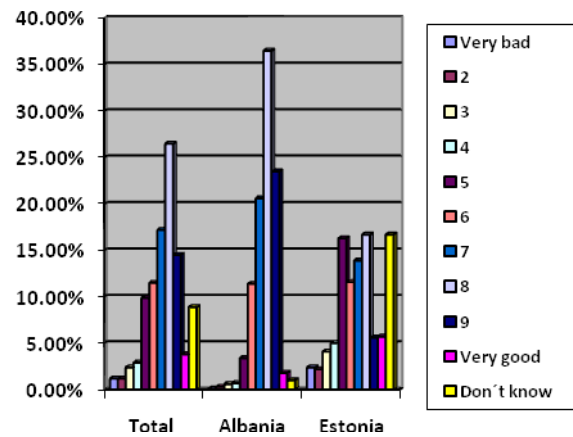


Figure 5 – Citizens' perception regarding the way country was governed; Albania and Estonia

Next, the questions focus mostly on the evaluation of the different types of the political systems, for which the people surveyed will be asked if the system according to them is good or not. Related to these issues on the question if “Having a strong leader” is perceived mostly as something positive or not, we will see that the Albanians are more prone to evaluate positively the correlation between having a “strong leader” and “a good system of government”. On the other hand, the Estonians tends more to answer regarding the options “fairly good” and “fairly bad”. It is clearly seen that the Albanians still continue to identify a political system with a politically strong leader based on their perception.

	Total	Albania	Estonia
Very good	18.7%	29.1%	8.4%
Fairly good	40.2%	48.0%	32.6%
Fairly bad	20.8%	8.5%	32.8%
Very bad	8.7%	0.4%	16.8%
NA	11.6%	13.9%	9.3%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021

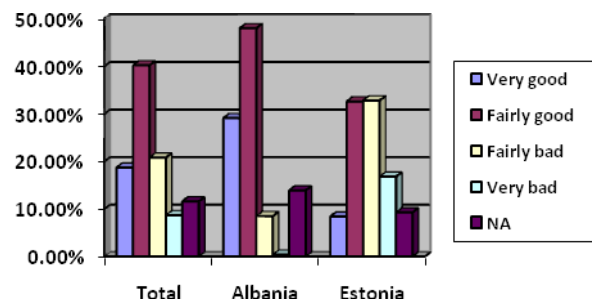


Figure 6 –Citizens' evaluation of the different types of the political systems; Albania and Estonian

In order to continue with this session of questions, addressed to the fact whether “having experts make decisions” seems something positive or not regarding a political system, the surveyed people have answered almost in the same way to the question above. It is a noticeable fact that Albanians still answered positively based on a very good component of a political system, whereas the Estonians are separated almost evenly in the thought that it is “fairly good” and “fairly bad”.

	Total	Albania	Estonia
Very good	18.7%	29.1%	8.4%
Fairly good	40.2%	48.0%	32.6%
Fairly bad	20.8%	8.5%	32.8%
Very bad	8.7%	0.4%	16.8%
NA	11.6%	13.9%	9.3%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021

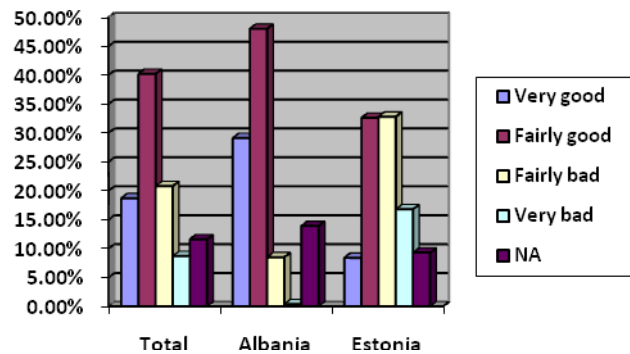


Figure 7 –Citizens’ evaluation of the different types of the political systems; Albania and Estonia

Referring to the question on how it is important to “have a democracy political system”, it seems that Albanians are more prone to think that a democratic system is a better political system because most of them have valued the option “very good”. In fact, during the whole history of the creation of the state, Albanians have been noticed for their western tendencies. Also, the people’s desire has always been to be identified with the developed western countries. However, this desire has never been possible because of a policy which has not always played “the cards” right to make getting closer to the West possible.

	Total	Albania	Estonia
Very good	55.5%	75.4%	36.0%
Fairly good	32.1%	18.9%	45.0%
Fairly bad	4.5%	0.9%	7.9%
Very bad	1.2%	-	2.4%
NA	6.7%	4.8%	8.6%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021

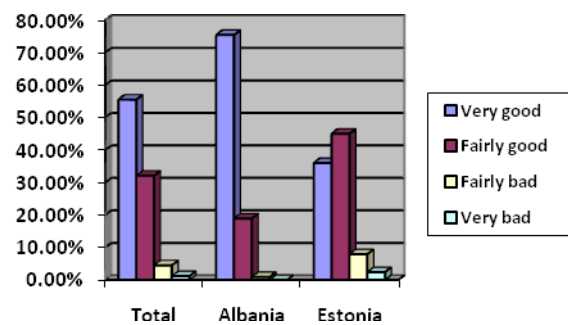


Figure 8 –Citizen’s evaluation of the importance of “having a democracy political system”; Albania and Estonia

Regarding the question on which type of leader seems better, the one who is perceived as the right one and cooperates or stands firm, it is noticed that the majority of Estonians are the ones that think that a good leader should cooperate instead of standing firm. However, a considerable part of the people surveyed in Albania, about 24.5%, think that a good leader should stand firm.

	Total	Albania	Estonia
Stand firm	20.5%	24.5%	16.7%
Cooperate	67.8%	61.6%	73.8%
Don't know	11.7%	13.9%	9.5%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021

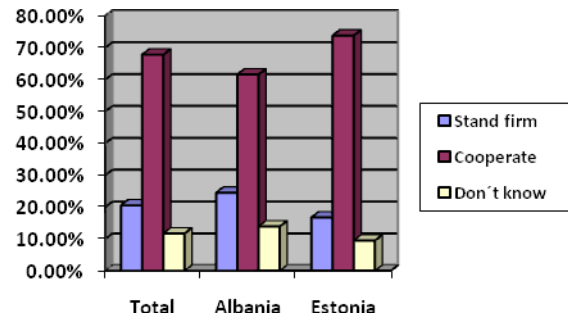


Figure 9 –Citizens' evaluation of type of leadership; Albania and Estonia

The last question selected from Word Value Survey is precisely related to the individual freedoms. In the question “If you had to choose, which would you say is the most important responsibility of government?” it is clearly seen that Albanians would choose in great numbers the option “maintain order in society”. Definitely, this comes as an immediate need towards the problems encountered in those years. While it is seen that a good number of Estonians think that it is necessary to maintain order in the society, they have also evaluated the necessity to respect individual freedoms.

	Total	Albania	Estonia
Maintain order in society	70.3%	90.6%	50.4%
Respect freedom of the individual	28.4%	7.9%	48.4%
Don't know	1.3%	1.5%	1.2%
(N)	2,020	999	1,021

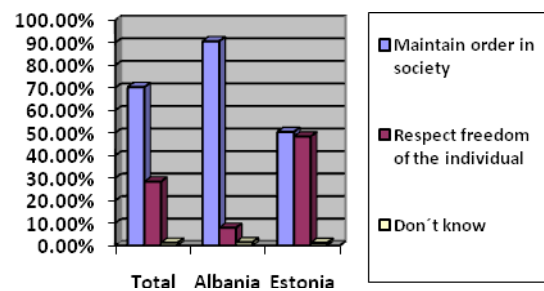


Figure 10 –Citizens' evaluation of the most important responsibility of government; Albania and Estonia

#### **4.6 Findings Regarding Political Culture of Albania and Estonia**

From the whole research conducted during this wide period, it is noticed that between the two countries taken into consideration for this study, there have been similarities in the historical and political developments. There has been diversity in the approach that citizens have had towards political matters. Thus from the observation of this political development, it is evident that in Estonia has dominated a democratic political climate that combining with democratic institutions have met with all the conditions to ensure a functional democracy during the interwar period. This has been a source of influence and a strong push to favor the national restoration after the years of independence after 1990. The opposite happened in Albania, where the whole political climate, in all the time fragments, has been dominated by institutional anarchy.

In the interwar period, besides a quick development of civil society in Estonia, it is also noticed that there was a great cooperation with the state, and the civil society operated so strongly that it could often substitute even the state structures. More so, the importance of the civil society was also emphasized in schools, where trainings were carried out about the way democracy should function. Among other things, a significant factor in spreading the political ideas in Estonia has also been the Media, through which broad circulation has helped to increase the awareness of the people about political matters. They were even regarded as “guarantor of continued progress in keeping with liberal ideology” (Kulbok Lattik, 2016, 17).

This period of civil society blooming lasted until 1934 where, in many countries in Europe, the nationalist ideas started to strengthen and influence the growth of an autocratic regime. This regime later brought a forced control on the activity of the civil society, which was mainly an activity that dealt with political matters.

The activity of the civil society and the popular political commitment did not stop being active even in the darkest days of the Stalinist period. During this period, the repression was quite strong to erase even the evidenced traces of the institutions established in the pre-war period. However, the soviet period in Estonia which lasted almost fifty years cannot be considered uniform. This is because until Stalin’s death, it was a dark era with exterminating and very aggressive politics. This phase was followed by another that was quieter and it varied between the years 1954 and 1968, when the national culture was allowed to re-emerge. A third

period between 1968-1980 witnessed an increase of the pressure from Russia through the policies of Russification on one side and the tendency of orientation towards the West on the other side. It is considered as an aspiration of the Estonian people, as well as the final period, which corresponds to the stagnation and the process of liberalization that was followed by the independence in 1990 (Misiunas & Taagepera, 1993, 91).

After 1990s, a fast and steady development in Estonia was noticed. Through the undertaking of the various and successive reforms, it was possible for them to get totally and successfully integrated into the NATO and EU by guaranteeing a steady democratization for the country.

In the course of the political developments that have happened in Albania starting from the interwar period, it can be considered that the civil society “fought” to survive more than to be a determining factor in the political decision-making in the interwar period. During the communist period, it fought to eradicate every trace that could be related with the civil society, no matter how remote. In the communist period, “Albania was totally isolated from the rest of the world” (Kaltsounis, 2010, 53), unlike Estonia that is not aware of a uniform phase of the socialism. The communist period was very harsh and did not create any chance for the development of the democratic institutions, nor for a somehow liberal culture that could favor a gradual opening to the West. However, this would likely continue after the change of the political systems. Meanwhile, after the 1990s, the transition period was even more chaotic by creating continuous crisis, which slowly served to create a precedent of the creation of the typology of a non-democratic political culture among the citizens and even less in the political leaders. Thus, they reflected this culture in every aspect of their decision-making.

It seems that these crisis and political instabilities served as an argument for many researchers, among them Wolfgang Merkel. Merkel made a classification of the level of political culture in the former communist countries; from this classification, it was shown that Estonia belonged to the group of countries with a high level of political culture. Nevertheless, Albania was characterized at the third level with low standards of democracy and of the political elites (Merkel, 2010). This political culture categorized in different stages seems that, besides the difficulties that both countries went through from the period of state formation, it translated into concrete works by the political actors in Estonia to democratize the country. However, in Albania, it seems that Ficher’s description shows that there are no other states he had seen people

that were willing to sacrifice their country for their personal interests. Thus, this would turn into a curse that would accompany the Albanian political arena for a long time.

## **Conclusions**

In the conclusion of this chapter the emphasis is on the differences in all the political events of the first transition years, unlike all the other periods on which the study lay. The differences are easily perceived and dominate mostly on all the phenomena where the political actors' attitude is decisive for the process of democratization, phenomena such as corruption, government effectiveness, etc. Meanwhile, it is clear that in Estonia the political actors have a clear objective, the integration in the EU and the membership in the NATO. It is clearly noticed that their every political decision made by them is in sync with these priorities. Whereas in Albania it is continuously emphasized that the political climate is dominated by anarchy, chaos and the lack of cooperation. Meanwhile from the analysis of the coding rules borrowed from Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, it is clearly seen that the political actors have a normative preference for democracy, whereas the opposite results in Albania. In the correlation I try to do to the variable of political actors' normative preference for democracy, it is clearly seen that even in the interpretation of the results of the WVS, the surveyed Estonians are more oriented towards a cooperative leader.

Meanwhile, referring to the political culture trends, at the perception and behaviour level, from the research it results that the citizens in Estonia have had a greater approach than Albanians towards a more democratic political and institutional culture. Based on the previous chapter, it seems that this culture has been inherited from the interwar period and has resisted also during the communism period. Nevertheless, in Estonia, at a behaviour level, in the first years of the transition, it is noticed a decrease in the civic organizations. Thus, the insufficiency of the only correlation of the political culture with the prosperous road towards the democratization, brought the necessity to include the variable of the leadership's normative preference for democracy, as a decisive variable in the democratic outcome.

In the following chapter, the study focuses mostly on the analysis of the process of democratization as an outcome or as a variable dependant on the comparison of the civic and political rights rate. When measuring these values were used the reports of Freedom House of

various years, as an instrument which covers the study of the democratization case for both countries since 1998.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYZING THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN ALBANIA AND ESTONIA AFTER THE '90s.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter consists of a detailed study through the Freedom House reports from 1998 till present for both countries selected in this study, respectively Albania and Estonia. The reports are analyzed in such a way that it is examined the nation's rate of democratization but at the same time are also evidenced the elements of the political culture such as the civic participation or organization in various associations, by bringing out the differences and similarities.

In the same fashion, through the analyzation of these reports, I classify the behavior of the various political actors in front of challenging situations and at the same time verify whether these political actors are more predisposed to make decisions that encourage the nation's democratic development or decisions that are only to their own advantage. The study extended in a long period, helps us observe if these features are momentary or consistent in the political culture of Estonia or Albania. The chapter also analyses the political and civil rights in Estonia and Albania by elaborating particular problematics such as corruption, rule of law, etc.

#### **5.1 The Connection between the Democratization and Freedom House**

Democratization is a particularly important process because it helps a society to become more open to change and to become less authoritarian. Democracy is a governing system that is translated into mechanisms, institutions, and an ideal system in which the people are governed according to their will. What appears to be quite important in the process of democratization is precisely the starting point of a country in this process. The process of democratization, as well as democracy itself, may evolve in many phases depending on the circumstantial features of different countries (Boutros-Ghali, 1996, 1-2).

In considering that the process of democratization is quite important for a society and protects it from being an authoritarian society, it should be emphasized that in the case of the two countries chosen for this study (Albania and Estonia), it is a vital process in that the pasts of these countries consist of authoritarian systems that once inhibited the development of democracy. The problem starts with the fact that two countries that have experienced the same political difficulties are not similar in terms of the outcome of the process of democratization. Estonia democratized successfully, whereas Albania continues to remain in a rotten system with remnants of the past that inhibit every moment of the country's development.

To properly assess the process of democratization within the overall framework for both countries in order to reach a concrete conclusion, the differences in their historical, economic, social, and political development have been examined in the previous chapters (Dauderstädt & Gerrits, 2000). However, by treating democratization as a dependent variable – and, thus, as an outcome – in this dissertation to support the proposed theory within a “broad body of empirical evidence” (Teorell, 2010), I chose to use data released by Freedom House to measure the level of democracy of the respective countries.

Freedom House data are used by many researchers to measure democracy according to political rights, civil liberties, freedom status, and other metrics. Freedom House has measured the level of democracy for many countries since 1972. As of 2009, Freedom House measures the level of democracy for 194 countries and 14 selected territories (Hogstrom, 2013, 207).

The inclusion of this instrument to measure democracy is based on the research conducted during the analysis of the most important political developments in Estonia and Albania during their transitions. This analysis reveals that the greatest problems for Albania are related to corruption, the rule of law, and free and fair elections. Meanwhile, in Estonia, there were no problems related to free and fair elections during the post-communist period. Also, the rule of law has immediately and effectively functioned. Regarding corruption, even in cases where it has been identified, respective punitive measures have been taken.

Among other things, all the problems identified during the transition are somehow attributed to individual behaviors that are related to the features of the political culture of a country as well as to the political actors' determination to implement reforms that help develop the country. Thus, the Freedom House index measures the progress of these parameters over

several years, which allows for the analysis of (among other things) whether the leadership’s normative preferences are democratic.

Another motive for choosing this measuring instrument is that the categories that Freedom House studies are divided into political rights, which are also divided into three subcategories (i.e., the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and the functioning of the government) and civil liberties, which are divided into “four subcategories, associational and organizational rights, freedom of expression and belief rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights” (Hogstrom, 2013, 207). All these subcategories are mentioned in this chapter as products or dependent variables and are intertwined with evidenced components to measure political culture as defined by Almond and Verba (1963, 19) as the extent to which individuals participate – but at the same time are also influenced by – a political system. Simultaneously, these categories are also related to the behaviors of political actors, who, in every action that they take, reflect a normative preference for democracy, which, among other things, is also established by coding rules to determine whether the actors question the “validity of democratic procedures when these produce unfavorable results” (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013).

Thus, the study of the Freedom House index and its use as a measuring instrument of democracy is necessary to form the puzzle and to find a meaningful correlation between the independent variables of the political culture and leaders’ normative preferences for democracy, with the dependent variable of democratization.

## **5.2 Democratization in Albania according Freedom House Parameters**

### **5.2.1 The Situation of Civic and Political Rights in Albania from 1998-2001**

	Status	Freedom Rating	Civil Liberties	Political Rights
1998	Partly Free	4.5	5	4
1999	Partly Free	4.5	5	4
2001	Partly Free	4.5	5	4

Source: Freedom House

Table 1 – Civil Liberties and Political Rights for Albania 1998 - 2001

According to the data from Freedom House, Albania remained at a constant level of democracy from 1998 (the year in which the data entry for Albania began) until 2001. Despite

the reforms, the extents of civil and political rights were not satisfactory. It should be noted that “Albania’s civil liberties rating changed from 4 to 5 due to increased civil unrest and corruption” (Freedom House, 1998).

Some of the characteristics of these years’ reports made by Freedom House, describe every aspect of Albania’s social and political life and at the same time elaborate problematic situations which this country has faced and depending on these characteristics is done the categorization and classification of the type of regime. Thus, while trying to make an analysis of the events for the country, among other things, the 1998 report emphasized the lack of freedom of speech and stated that “Albanian Radio-Television controls all electronic broadcasting. Its structure and leadership became a major political issue during the year” (Freedom House, 1998). Freedom of speech is considered as one of the most important parameters through which the level of democracy in a certain country is measured. Thus, the more a media is censored, the more it is likely for a regime to become authoritarian.

However, apart from the negative aspects, some positive remarks in this report are found in the religious domain, affirming that “religious activity is unrestricted in this predominantly Muslim country, which also has Orthodox Christian and Roman Catholic minorities” (Freedom House, 1998). In addition, there was a recognition for the rights of workers to gather and be represented in trade unions, but there were also restrictions due to the lack of independent trade unions related to political parties. Thus, “the umbrella Independent Confederation of Trade Unions of Albania has about 280,000 members. The Confederation of Unions, a federation that is linked to the Socialist Party and which succeeded in the Communist era, represents some workers in education and petroleum and telecommunication industries” (Freedom House, 1998).

Reservations have been expressed about the judicial system, stressing that “Albania’s judiciary has been hampered by political pressure, insufficient resources, and corruption” (Freedom House, 1998). An overview of this report points out that corruption has penetrated all levels of society, mainly among civil servants, as “corruption is endemic at all levels of government, private business, state enterprises, and the civil service” (Freedom House, 1998).

Following the interpretations of the FH reports, the report of the following year, indicates that the situation in Albania in 1999 “was again plagued by instability” (Freedom House, 1999). The problems of the judiciary system were massive in terms of a lack of efficiency due to inexperience and corruption, and it was noted that “judges often [had] little formal legal

training...” (Freedom House, 1999). But, once more, as stated above in the previous year report, specifically in the section of individual freedoms, the report concluded that Albania made some steps forward in the area of freedom of religion, as religious communities are allowed to practice their faith freely, though some issues remained regarding properties confiscated by the state during communism. The report specifically states, (Freedom House, 1999) the disputes regarding the properties of the religious communities are in fact a reflection of the general issues with properties, which characterized Albanian society after the collectivization conducted by the government during communism. Meanwhile, little progress was shown in respecting individual freedom; the opposite happened to the freedom of the press. In terms of freedom of the press, although the approval of the “Law on Private and Public Broadcast Media” in 1997 would seem to give some degree of freedom to the media and detach it somewhat from governmental influences, various problems still occurred.

While summarizing the successive reports of FH, the situation would appear constant for Albania until 2001, when an attempt was made to integrate democracy into politics. Changes to the electoral code were discussed for the first time in 2000, when “the Albanian Parliament adopted the new provisions despite an opposition boycott in May” (Freedom House, 2001). On the other hand, as for honoring political rights and civil liberties, the report emphasized that the freedom of expression and of the press, as well as the freedom of association “are generally respected” (Freedom House, 2001). Among other things, what is noticed is that for the first time, the report speaks of the freedom of women in the framework of respect for human rights. Freedom House reports that “the trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of prostitution remains a significant problem” (Freedom House, 2001).

### **5.2.2 The Most Important Political Developments in Albania from 2002-Present**

Problems did not leave Albania even after the troublesome years of great unrest leading up to 1997. They were visible in all aspects of the operation of the country. As an independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom and democracy around the world, Freedom House started assessing the level of democracy in Albania in 1998. Freedom House’s rating for Albania up until 2018 indicated a static and stable process of democratization, positioning the country in the “partially free” category. Even the index of civil liberties and

political rights has remained unchanged at the 3-point level from 2003 to 2019. In a close examination of the reports, the only significant improvement was in the section of political rights in 2002, with a slight change from 4 to 3 points.

The parliamentary elections of 2002 took place in four different rounds. In the end, regardless of contestations and allegations of irregularities, the SP was able to form a government headed by Prime Minister Ilir Meta. Even though these parliamentary elections were deemed as more democratic than previous ones, the BTI report stated that “Albania has not yet convincingly passed the test of free and democratic elections” (BTI, 2003). In addition, this report points out that “the country is now on the path to a gradual democratic and economic consolidation”, indicating that the country is on the right path but that the transformation is expected to be gradual because it also states that reform will “take several more years”.

The same is highlighted by the report of Freedom House, which mentioned the problems encountered in Albania until 2002, emphasizing the spread of crime (in particular, organized crime), problems with drugs and women’s rights, as well as official corruption that remains present in Albania in 2019. Specifically, the report states that “continuing problems plaguing the country are organized crime, trafficking in drugs and women, and official corruption” (Freedom House, 2002).

Political instability, along with a lack of consensus and collaboration, was also observed inside political parties. Thus, three prime ministers were replaced within one year of governance. In particular, after a year of heading a Socialist Party government, Meta left the position of prime minister to be replaced by Pandeli Majko, who was then succeeded by the SP chairman, Fatos Nano. The issues that brought about these frequent changes were not limited to the political parties; the efficacy in governance and policymaking was also responsible, as the change of a prime minister was often translated into changes in the government program along with major changes in civil servant positions.

Despite the ongoing problems and fairly rigid climate that defined Albanian politics, there seem to have been ups and downs in the relations between the opposition and the in-power government in the country. Naturally, relations within political parties were strained, but the opposition occasionally co-operated with the in-power government. Thus, in 2002, it appeared that there was some sort of mutual understanding among the largest political parties in the country, though these were short-lived, as disputes started again in 2003. According to a BTI

report, an inability to resolve internal problems was observed despite attempts to improve the state of affairs in Albania. As highlighted in the report, “the political climate remains charged with conflict. There is no evidence of a native ability to solve problems. The country still needs to build the capacity to provide the foundation for good governance, economic growth, legal certainty and increasing participation” (BTI, 2003). The political situation deteriorated once more in 2004 as massive protests started due to contestations of the results of 2003 local elections and the poor living conditions in the country. Local elections were also labeled “as a setback” by international observers (Freedom House, 2004). Similarly, BTI reports that the Nano Government did not work sufficiently to decrease the economic disparities and it seems also that there was a lack of will to continue with the reforms (BTI, 2006, 12).

Despite some progress, the situation in Albania until 2005 was still fragile in terms of implementing the necessary reforms to democratize the country. The BTI (2006, 16), report for this period states that even though the process of reforms seems irreversible, 15 after the fall of Enver Hoxha’s regime, again the democratic changes were limited from the start as a result of the essential absence of the “legal, civil society and democratic traditions”.

In 2005, the parliamentary elections brought the DP to power despite the ever-present contestations after any election campaign in Albania. Freedom House would conclude that the election “marked the first peaceful change of power in the country’s post ‘Communist History’” (Freedom House, 2006). During the DP leadership, one of the greatest successes in the process of democratization in the country was achieved through the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in June 2006. This was considered the first step in the long road of accession to the EU. The rapport between the two sides intensified, and the EU started pressing the government to make judicial reforms and to expand the fight against corruption in the framework of EU integration. The government responded by undertaking a series of reforms primarily related to the training of judges and the fight against corruption (Freedom House, 2007).

In the following years, despite the successes and achievements identified by the EU, Albania was still stuck in the trap of the disagreements between the two largest parties in the country, and this negatively affected the reforms undertaken by the government. One such incident happened in 2006, the year in which the opposition (SP) suspended and blocked any amendment to the Electoral Code that they did not deem appropriate. The situation changed on

January 12, 2007, “and although the resulting constitutional and electoral reforms were generally seen as an improvement, their late timing placed a serious logistical burden on the Central Electoral Commission” (Freedom House, 2008). Instability and lack of consensus also marked domestic politics during 2007 with the election of President Bamir Topi. These elections took place in four rounds, and another electoral crisis was barely avoided. The government’s performance deteriorated during 2008, and a severe incident took place in Gerdec, a location near Tirana, with the explosion of a weapon-dismantling plant. This incident “killed 26 people, injured 300, and displaced some 3,000 others” (Freedom House, 2009). The following events would be consequential for the Albanian politics, with the resignation of the minister of defense and the investigation of the episode.

Fortunately, apart from the unrest at the local level, Albania did not suffer internationally as “the proper dismantling of the ammunition stockpile was one of the conditions for the accession to NATO. Nevertheless, the alliance formally invited Albania to join in April 2008, and induction was expected in 2009” (Freedom House, 2009). Undoubtedly the entrance in the NATO would be considered as one of the greatest achievements for the Albanians who thought that this was an irreversible step in the road of democratization. But in fact for many more years to come, this would remain the only success achieved. The internal political crisis would dominate the Albanian reality.

Following the description of political developments, on April 2008, an example of collaboration in adopting some constitutional amendments and amendments to the Electoral Code were observed between the major political forces: the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party. This was unexpected considering the tensions in the previous month. The electoral system’s transformation into a regional proportional system was approved. This was an amendment that would disadvantage smaller parties. Changes to the Electoral Code were followed by the 2009 election, the results of which gave no single party the majority of the votes. Consequently, a coalition government was formed. Part of the governing coalition together with the ruling party became also “the Socialist Movement for Integration” (Freedom House, 2010), which would become an important political actor in the country in the following years. Even though the Socialist Party had taken 65 seats in parliament, this was enough to call the elections rigged, boycott the parliament, and organize street protests. The opposition boycotted the parliament until the first half of 2010, blocking parliamentary proceedings, especially when they

concerned decrees that needed 3/5 of the votes. Despite all attempts by European MPs to negotiate the situation, it remained unchanged. Despite these circumstances, “Albania was formally welcomed into NATO in April 2009, and later that month it filed its application to join the European Union (EU), with which it already had a Stabilization and Association Agreement” (Freedom House, 2010). However, the EU emphasized that the reforms should be more progressive and visible before it would take steps towards accepting Albania. (Freedom House, 2011). The peace in Albanian politics was once again broken in 2011 when the government in power got involved in another scandal, forcing Deputy Prime Minister Ilir Meta to resign after a video about a corruptive affair regarding a hydropower tender was published by a private media outlet. This event aggravated the opposition, leading to violent protests that culminated with four protesters getting killed on January 21. The political situation in Albania was more reflective of an arena involving a power struggle than of a platform that showcased the determination to govern a country. This setting pushed the country away from the EU because “the political deadlock since mid-2009 has obstructed reforms linked to Albania’s bid for European Union (EU) candidacy, with EU officials warning that candidate status will not be granted absent substantial progress” (Freedom House, 2012).

The parliamentary elections of 2013 brought the Socialist Party to power in coalition with the LSI (SMI). The defeat resulted in the resignation of Sali Berisha, the head of the Democratic Party at the time, after holding that position for nearly two decades. The country’s new Prime Minister, Edi Rama, decided to make rapprochement with European Union a priority for his government. In fact, motivated by the initial efforts of the new government created in 2014 “the European Union (EU) officially designated Albania as a candidate for membership in June 2014, following three successive rejections” (Freedom House, 2015). The opposition boycotted the parliament for several months until the intervention of the European MPs convinced them to go back. The local elections held in June 2015 would define the state of democratization of Albania: the freer and fairer the elections would be, the more likely Albania was to take steps towards the EU. International observers once again raised questions on issues that would compromise the results (Freedom House, 2016).

Regardless of the government’s intention to fight it, corruption and organized crime remained the main issues that hindered Albania’s progress. As stated in the 2017 report by Freedom House,

Corruption and organized crime remain serious problems despite recent government efforts to address them, and the intermingling of powerful business, political, and media interests inhibits the development of truly independent news outlet (Freedom House, 2017).

Under the premise that the two most pressing issues in the Albanian society at the time (i.e., the irregularities in the local elections of 2015 and the ongoing discourse of organized crime and corruption) could distort the integrity of the votes in the 2017 parliamentary elections, the Democratic Party decided to boycott the parliament. After the intervention of the international community, the elections were held a week later than had been previously announced, resulting in a victory for the Socialist Party. It seems that the precedent of the boycott, which had already turned into an element of the political culture, would determine the fate of Albania, as in March 2019, the opposition, DP and LSI (SMI), decided not only to boycott the parliament but also to burn the mandates in an unprecedented move in Albanian politics. The political situation remains tense, and there is a lack of consensus and understanding, affecting the classification of Albania in the status of Party Free for more years to come.

### **5.2.3 Corruption as an Indicator of the Insidious Political Climate in Albania**

Corruption has been a negative phenomenon deeply rooted in Albanian society. It is perceived and seen as one of the significant obstacles toward democratization and integration into the EU. All international reports during the years have specified the inadequacy of efforts to fight corruption on the part of all Albanian governments. A Freedom House report has rated Albania as the most corrupt countries in the region. So, According to the Freedom House report (2002), a survey conducted by USAID, it stated that Albania was the most corrupted country in the region. Meanwhile even World Bank declared among other things that the phenomenon of corruption was deeply institutionalized in the Albanian reality. The described circumstances remain the same in the years to come while pointing specific problems regarding the implementation of the law against corruption approved in 2005. Corruption is linked to two important elements: (i) the bonding of politics and crime and (ii) the impunity of the key politicians involved in corruptive affairs. The reports stated that “Albania was ranked 108 out of 146 countries surveyed in the 2004 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index” (Freedom House, 2005).

In 2006, the situation would be described as follows: “Corruption pervades all areas of life in Albania, and up to the elections it appeared to be increasing” (Freedom House, 2006). Albania climbed the rankings, indicating deterioration in the state of corruption as it “was ranked 126 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International’s 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index” (Freedom House, 2006). Given the circumstances, the government attempted to fuel the struggle against corruption. Thus, “the European Commission reported that the number of public officials prosecuted and sentenced for corruption increased during the first quarter of 2006” (Freedom House, 2007). Efforts in this war were mainly focused on reducing bureaucracy and increasing the accountability of civil servants. Although this resulted in a slight improvement in this war, “Albania was ranked 111 out of 163 countries surveyed in Transparency International’s 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index” (Freedom House, 2007). In addition, the BTI report emphasizes that corruption in Albania remains high, stating that “among the most important challenges is the struggle against corruption, as Albania has one of the most corrupt systems in all of Europe” (BTI, 2008).

Improvements seem to have been made, according to the European Commission’s report in November 2007, due to legislative and institutional measures that led to the creation of an anti-corruption entity. It was stated that “a new task force within the prosecution’s office to combat corruption and financial crime” (Freedom House, 2008) was created. The efforts were reflected when “Albania was ranked 105 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International’s 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index” (Freedom House, 2008). With all these efforts it seems that they failed when in 2008, the explosion incident in Gerdec would be reported as an event tied to corruption due to suspicions that the government was involved in and benefited directly from this activity. As the report of Freedom House would state “Prime Minister Sali Berisha, his family, and other top officials were suspected of profiting from the arm-export scheme unveiled in March 2008” (Freedom House, 2010).

In 2010, corruption remained a worrisome phenomenon as “corruption is pervasive, and the EU has called for rigorous implementation of anticorruption measures” (Freedom House, 2010).

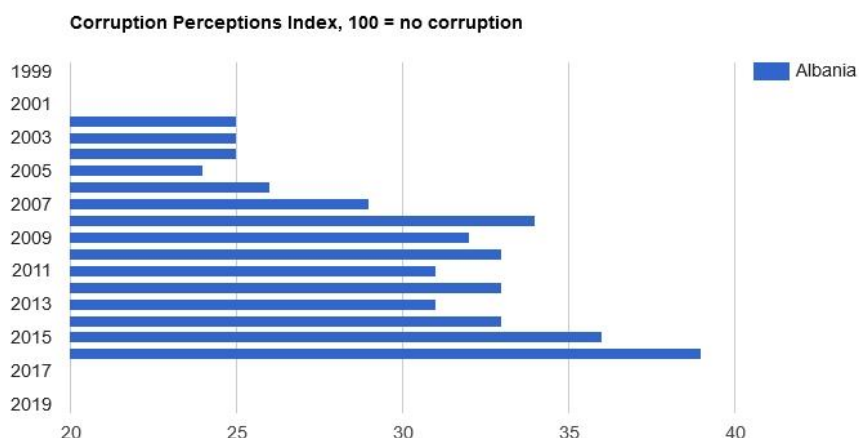
According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, Albania’s corruption rankings for 2008-2013 are listed below:

- *2008 Corruption Perceptions Index - Albania was ranked 85 out of 180 countries*

- *2009 Corruption Perceptions Index - Albania was ranked 95 out of 180 countries*
- *2010 Corruption Perceptions Index. - Albania was ranked 87 out of 178 countries*
- *2011 Corruption Perceptions Index - Albania was ranked 95 out of 183 countries*
- *2012 Corruption Perceptions Index - Albania was ranked 113 out of 176 countries*
- *2013 Corruption Perceptions Index - Albania was ranked 116 out of 177 countries*  
(Freedom House 2008, Freedom House 2009, Freedom House, 2010; Freedom House, 2011; Freedom House, 2012; Freedom House, 2013; Freedom House, 2014)

Until 2013, the decline in the corruption index was noted due to this and many other issues ever present in Albanian politics. Corruption persists at high levels and remains the biggest obstacle that obstructs Albania in its EU path. It mostly appears in mechanisms related to elections as well as the judiciary branch of the government. A Freedom House report specifically states that “the electoral framework lacks robust transparency provisions on campaign financing, requiring no disclosures before Election Day. Convictions of high-ranking officials and judges for corruption and abuse of power remain rare (Freedom House, 2014). The reports of 2016 still underline that these convictions are unusual (Freedom House, 2016).

Ongoing instability continues to define the domestic political developments when a former interior minister is accused of being involved in the international trafficking of narcotic drugs. So, “in October, the office issued a request to the parliament to arrest former interior minister Saimir Tahiri, a PS lawmaker, on drug trafficking charges. Ruling party lawmakers declined to revoke his parliamentary immunity on the grounds that the prosecutors needed to present incriminating evidence against him to the parliament” (Freedom House, 2018).



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 11 – Corruption Perception Index; Albania

According to statistics obtained by the World Bank, corruption in Albania increased throughout the period of 2003-2016. In fact, these statistics are very much in line with all EU progress reports, showing that the greatest war Albanians have to fight is the war against corruption.

#### 5.2.4 Civic and Political Rights in Albania from 2002-Present

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

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

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

#### Civil Liberties and Political Rights for Albania; 2002 – 2019

The reports over several years imply that the situation in Albania has remained unchanged over this period of time in the civil liberties and political rights domain. As a result, Albania remains a partially free country despite being at the end of the third decade since the fall of the communist system.

In 2014, Freedom House established components specifically targeting Civil and Political Rights. In fact, this categorization provided a clear vision of the positive developments as well as of the hiccups and regressions of the country over the years. The categorization for Albania is as follows.

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

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

The table above shows a slight improvement in the government functioning domain in 2017, but generally, there have been no significant improvements. In terms of civil liberties, the reports indicate many issues related to women's rights and organized crime that deal with human trafficking despite the intensification of efforts to fight them. In addition, the report mentions drug production and trafficking as persistent phenomena adversely affecting the path of the integration of democratization of Albania.

Another negative aspect in the area of civil rights remains the rights of the Roma community, which were mentioned for the first time in the Freedom House report of 2006. The concern about women trafficking and the rights of the Roma community remained unchanged in the 2010 Freedom House reports. Awareness on the part of the Albanian government increased, but this growth is noted mainly in the drafting of legal provisions and strategies, not in their implementation. Freedom House states that "Albania is a source country for trafficking in women and children, with the latter typically exploited as beggars in European countries" (Freedom House, 2010). In the war for women's rights, the struggle to improve the legal framework for women's representation in politics has expanded considerably. Thus, the inclusion of a 30 percent gender quota boosted the representation of women significantly, and "the EU reported in 2010 that the government has made an effort to combat the practice but that more effective prosecutions were needed" (Freedom House, 2011). Despite the efforts to fight it, violence against women remains one of the biggest problems of the Albanian society, as several attempts of violence against women resulting in deaths were reported in January 2019.

***Associational and Organizational Rights*** - (Freedom of association, academic freedom, freedom of the press, and freedom of expression). Albanian legislation guarantees respect for these rights, but shortcomings have not been absent in reality. An analysis of these rights in the 2003 reports indicated that in 2002, "on the whole, these rights are respected, but significant problems remain" (Freedom House, 2003; Freedom House, 2004).

***Freedom of the press*** - Reports emphasize that Albanian journalists are quite vulnerable to phenomena that affect freedom of the press such as physical abuse, threats, and government intervention to influence the news. Such issues have been present even in 2018 reports. It is worth noting that freedom of the press is one of the most important indicators of the degree of democratization within a society. It is a fact that, as a result of all these pressures, the media has lost credibility in the eyes of the people; yet, it remains a watchdog of democracy. (BTI, 2008).

A series of events has compromised the freedom of the press over the years. The table below shows reports from 2004-2018.

Freedom House, 2003	The 2002 report declares that the journalists in Albania risk becoming victims of physical attacks, as well as risk being accused for crimes against public officials or policies in case they report news which is critical towards them.
Freedom House, 2004	The Internal Affairs minister, Luan Rama, attacked the editor of one of the most prominent newspapers in Albania.
Freedom House, 2005	On May 2004, the Prime Minister filed a lawsuit against the editor of Koha Jone newspaper, which resulted in 2 million Lek (almost \$ 20,000). The journalists and interest groups protested for irregularities in the legal procedures.
Freedom House, 2006	The lawsuits against the journalists for critics have become legitimate and common. Again this year it is reported that the police used excessive force against a TV correspondent that was filming one of their activities.
Freedom House, 2008	The journalists are often subject to attacks and intimidation even though the motives of these attacks are not clear. It is also reported that the government has increased the economic pressures in the media, for example, the 12 million euro fine placed towards Top Channel TV about unpaid taxes.
Freedom House, 2009	The lawsuits for legitimate criticism against journalists are common and the reporters are still afraid of physical attacks against them.
Freedom House, 2010	The reporters are not safe in their job, and still remain fragile towards attacks or intimidations.
Freedom House, 2011	The TV and newspaper journalist, Piro Nase was attacked in November 2010 by two men who threatened him in relation to his job.
Freedom House, 2012	Some journalists were attacked during the protest on 21st January 2012.
Freedom House, 2014	Concerns were raised regarding the editorial independence mainly related to the electoral campaigns.
Freedom House, 2016	The OSCE media monitoring observed that in the 2015 elections, the main media in the country favored one of the largest political parties. This favor was also done by the public media.
Freedom House, 2018	The reporters have very little safety in the country and meanwhile the problematic of favoring one of the largest political parties when reporting the news during the electoral campaign, it was reported to be great in the elections of 2017.

*Academic Freedom* is guaranteed by Albanian legislation, and yet unscathed freedom was far from realized during these transitional years. In the 2002 and 2003 reports of Freedom House, it is cited that “academic freedom, however, is considered limited” (Freedom House, 2003). One of the most concerning issues with academic freedom is the interference of politics. A 2006 report states that “the government does not significantly limit academic freedom, although it has interfered with appointments at educational institutions” (Freedom House, 2006). This concern was also reported in 2009, when interventions in the ministerial ranks were made along with the scandals of fake degrees, including one awarded to an MP. The report states that

“it was reported in March 2008 that the Education Ministry had certified fake degrees, including a law degree for a member of parliament; the politician allegedly assaulted a reporter who confronted him on the issue” (Freedom House, 2009). Political interference is also evident in electoral campaigns where students and teachers are pressed for support both in campaigns and elections. These claims were made in the reports of 2011, 2014, and 2016 which specifically express that “the government generally does not limit academic freedom, although students and teachers have faced political pressure ahead of elections” (Freedom House, 2011; Freedom House, 2014; Freedom House, 2016).

*Freedom of association* is legally guaranteed and relatively respected, but problems persist (Freedom House, 2005). In numerous protests through the years, different groups are dispersed by police through various means. Thus, “in the massive protests that took place in February 2004, groups attempted to storm official buildings and at some points were dispersed by police using gunshots and tear gas. However, the protests were largely peaceful” (Freedom House, 2005).

However, despite the problematics, there are moments which reflect an improvement of this situation, so, for example in the same year’s report, some 200 NGOs were noted to have had an impact on policymaking because “their influence on the government is slowly growing” (Freedom House, 2008). While there was a growing influence of NGOs operating in Albania up until 2008, the opposite is observed in the reports of subsequent years. Thus, in 2012, 2014, and 2018, the reports explicitly stated that “nongovernmental organizations function without restrictions but have limited funding and policy influence” (Freedom House, 2012; Freedom House, 2014). This shows a downward trend in the influence of NGOs on politics, thus affecting the overall democratic performance of the country.

*Judicial System and Rule of Law* have always been problematic throughout the years of democratic transition because “the judiciary’s independence has been repeatedly compromised by arbitrary interference from politicians of both the ruling party and the opposition” (BTI, 2006, 5). The issues in this domain are different and are not new to Albania. They revolve around problems inherited from the first years of transition, such as corruption and unqualified and under-trained judges. During 2002, 2003, and 2004, Freedom House reported that “overall, however, international observers still believe that the judiciary in Albania is inefficient and prone to corruption, and judges are often inexperienced and untrained” (Freedom House, 2002;

Freedom House, 2003; Freedom House, 2004). Measures have been taken in the judiciary system within the context of the fight against corruption, but problems persist because the “enforcement of judicial decisions is weak, especially when rulings are against government interests” (Freedom House, 2006).

The coming years have not been marked by any improvements. The judicial system has lost not only its credibility but also its efficiency, as the enforcement of court decisions have been vague. In the 2011 report, it is noted that “the judiciary and law enforcement agencies in general are inefficient and prone to corruption, and the implementation of court decisions is weak, especially when they go against government interests” (Freedom House, 2011).

Another way in which political pressure is imposed on the judicial system is through the appointment of judges. This setting has often created deadlocks affecting the independence of the judiciary. As a result, in 2016 it was stated that “the court has generally failed to address corruption in the judicial sector and is widely considered to be politicized” (Freedom House, 2016).

Many laws which would monitor the level of corruption were drafted and adopted through extensive discussions, and in “2016, parliament approved a variety of reforms designed to boost the independence and capacity of the judiciary. Implementation of the reforms, considered essential to the country’s bid to join the EU, has been slow” (Freedom House, 2018).

***Regarding the Rule of Law***, it can be said that the police have not been sufficiently trained to respect the rights of those who violate the rule of law and have therefore often been involved in violent actions while performing their duties. Thus, the presence of physical violence has been repeatedly emphasized in various reports from Freedom House. Reports of different years have specified the following:

*“Violence by police does occur, although it is generally investigated and perpetrators are disciplined.”* (Freedom House, 2005); *-”...punishment for these abuses, if carried out at all, is generally less than that warranted by the offense.* (Freedom House, 2006); *“Police undergo human rights training and monitoring but often use excessive force and torture.”* (Freedom House, 2007)

In addition, the progress report of 2008 suggests that further advances have generally been taken to forestall the torment and abuse of prisoners. Still, a better implementation of human rights standards and indictment of abusers is required. Despite the recommendations of

progress reports over the years and the contributions made in this regard, no noticeable improvements were reported in subsequent years.

*Free and fair elections* have been a decisive factor in assessing the process of democratization in the country. In Albania, elections have not only been very problematic over the years but have also been the main reason for parliamentary boycotts and instability in the country. Apart from the 1992 parliamentary elections, the results of which were accepted by the losing party, all other elections up until 2001 were contested for various reasons. Even in the 2001 elections, which were rated as the most democratic in the country's history, there were numerous debates about the transparency of the process.

Once again, irregularities were noted by the international monitoring bodies in the 2004 local elections. OSCE's observers mainly noticed the phenomena of "family voting". In December, Albania's Electoral College ruled that the local elections had to be repeated in 130 of 346 precincts (Freedom House, 2004). Parliamentary elections were also contested in 2005. Despite the clear and decisive victory for the DP, the Socialist Party was resistant to accept the result. Meanwhile, these elections are ranked as the most effective elections in Albania because "while the election was not free from fraud, it was praised for bringing Albania's first change of power without significant violence in the post-communist era" (Freedom House, 2006). The irregularities identified in the parliamentary elections were passed down to local elections, thus making them part of the electoral process.

A series of irregularities were reported in the 2013 elections despite their acceptance by the international community. The issues reported by OSCE largely fall into the categories of using public administration for party interests, buying votes, and family voting, a phenomenon encountered in previous elections as well. The Freedom House report explains that "the problems reported by monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) included the partial use of administrative resources, pressure on public employees and students to attend campaign events, and various missed deadlines" (Freedom House, 2014). Irregularities were once more identified in the local elections of 2015, which were one of the conditions or tests carried out by the EU for the development of Albania (Freedom House, 2016). Issues such as vote-buying were noted in the 2017 parliamentary elections, as "the mission also noted allegations of vote-buying and voter intimidation" (Freedom House, 2018).

### **5.2.5 Albania and EU relations**

After the fall of the communist regime, European Union membership became one of the priorities of Albania. As a result, any government that has come into power has embraced EU integration as the foundation of its policies. To become part of this community, Albania has consistently been required to meet criteria that would not only make it part of Europe but that would also help with the democratization of the country. Standards set as a condition for EU integration focus on all aspects of political and social life, such as fundamental liberties, good and democratic governance, the rule of law, etc.

Despite the efforts and hopes of Albanians, the country remains in the initial stages of EU accession. The year 2001 was when Albania took the first steps towards joining the EU as a result of a series of efforts to become part of the European project. The EU Commission made a recommendation for the initiation of talks on the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Albania, leading to the approval of directives for opening SAA talks with Albania in October 2002. Despite Albania's reception of an invitation for the opening of the negotiations, numerous problems led to the slowdown of this process. A 2002 Freedom House report specifically states that:

Although Albania was invited to open negotiations with the EU on a Stabilization and Association Agreement in October, realistic analyses of the country's situation suggested that it has far to go to join European integration efforts (Freedom House, 2003).

The ongoing monitoring of Albania in the framework of this agreement showed the progress and development made for each year based on the objectives set out in each progress report. In 2003, problems would continue to surface as far as corruption, organized crime, and economic reform were concerned. As a result, "in February, realistic analyses of the country's situation suggest that it has far to go to join the EU." (Freedom House, 2004). Issues were also reported about the will of the leaders to implement certain policies to democratize the country and successfully finalize this agreement. Another 2005 report would emphasize this issue by stating that "in March the EU accused Albania's leaders of lacking the political will to meet the preconditions for concluding the agreement" (Freedom House, 2005).

The EU doors would remain closed until June 2006, when the SAA was signed as a result of the 2005 electoral elections, in which Albania met certain standards, thus making progress along the road to joining the EU. In this context, "under international pressure, the government

undertook a series of reforms aimed at eradicating corruption and strengthening the rule of law, striving to fulfill the conditions for further integration with Europe” (Freedom House, 2007).

In subsequent years, attempts have been made to enforce the conditions imposed by international pressures. However, it does not seem that the necessary criteria were met, and so “in November 2008 it was found that corruption, including in the judiciary, remained a serious challenge” (Freedom House, 2009).

The European Commission recommended that Albania be given candidate status as a result of a soft power transfer without major problems in the elections of 2013, but the European Council was not convinced and decided to postpone the decision for another year. Lastly, “the European Union (EU) officially designated Albania as a candidate for membership in June 2014, following three successive rejections” (Freedom House, 2015). In November 2016, “the European Commission recommended that the European Union (EU) formally open accession negotiations with Albania once it has made tangible progress in implementing the judicial reforms, especially the vetting process. The European Council accepted the recommendation in December” (Freedom House, 2017). In 2018, “the European Commission recommended that the Council should decide that accession negotiations be opened with Albania in light of the progress achieved, maintaining and deepening the current reform momentum” (European Commission, 2018). Albania’s integration in the European Union, more than being a goal in itself, is a guarantee of the development and stabilization of democracy in the country.

### **5.3 Analysis of The Democratization Process In Estonia After The '90s.**

#### **5.3.1 The Most Important Political Developments in Estonia from 1999-Present**

The reports compiled by Freedom House from 1998 to 2018 have been used in this study as a measure for analyzing democratic changes in Estonia. A close examination of these reports reveals a ‘free’ status in the first years of data collection and the stable retention of this status in the years up to 2019. In the civic and political rights rankings, an improvement was noticed around 2004, which subsequently influenced Estonia’s full integration into the EU. “Estonia’s EU accession on May 1, 2004, formalized the successful completion of post-communist transition” (BTI, 2006). As noted in the narrative section of the reports, Estonia has developed a

prosperous democracy despite the difficult political situations in the early years of systemic change. Estonia has developed exponentially, with progressive reforms that led to the irreversible democratization of the country.

The biggest problems in the domestic political developments were mainly related to the rights of the Russian minority who remained within Estonia's borders after the country's separation from the Soviet Union. The Russian population was relatively high despite the lack of accurate data and certain requirements of Estonian citizenship for census purposes which resulted in an inability to register. A Freedom House report of 2001 states that a number between 30.000 – 80.000 people live illegally in Estonia, without having the right documents.

In fact, since the 1920s, Estonia has been quite tolerant and generous in its policies regarding minorities, but there was a dilemma after the 90's as to whether the country should continue pursuing this policy trajectory or to change it after winning its independence. In the framework of developing policies for minorities, "Estonia's parliament voted in 1998 to ease citizenship restrictions for the country's resident stateless children" (Freedom House, 1998).

Parliament voted on this law as an initiative to somehow facilitate the integration of this community socially, politically, and economically, and mainly not to penalize children belonging to this community. Still "Max van der Stoel, the OSCE's High Commissioner for National Minorities, criticized the new legislation as unfairly limiting the voters' choice of candidates and inhibiting the integration of Russian-speakers into Estonian society" (Freedom House, 1998). The integration of this ethnic group into the political and social life of the country was of great importance not only to the political stability established with Russia but also to serve as a precondition for Estonia's integration into the European community.

In the parliamentary elections of March 1999, the Center Party won with 28 parliamentary seats; however, the Reform Party, Pro Patria, and the Moderates formed a coalition with a combined 53 seats, pushing the Center Party into opposition status. Mart Laar, who had previously held the post in 1992 was reinstated as the prime minister. The newly elected government, passed a law which directly affected the minority communities. Thus, a law passed in parliament in February became an issue during this period. All officials or civil servants in bureaucratic offices and in the private sector were required to speak Estonian fluently. This law, "which went into effect in July, was criticized by political parties representing Russian speakers and by representatives of some international organizations" (Freedom House, 1999). In June

2000, as a result of the discussions in response to this law, “the law was further amended to no longer require the unconditional use of Estonian in the private sector, but only in certain areas where it would be in the public interest, such as those involving health or safety” (Freedom House, 2001).

In the developments of the internal political arena, the political situation was generally peaceful until 2001 when “the former Soviet Estonian leader Arnold Ruutel staged a surprising political comeback with his victory in the country’s presidential election” (Freedom House, 2002). Ruutel came to power also as a result of some dissatisfactions with the previous government. Prime Minister Mart Laar resigned in January 2002, following the loss in the vote of confidence for the mayor of Tallinn and the election of former opposition leader Edgar Savisaar as the new mayor. This gave Savisaar and his party a greater area of influence in the country. After the resignation of the former prime minister, the Center Party had an open space for a new government coalition, thus “the Center and Reform parties signed coalition agreements in Tallinn, of which Savisaar was reelected mayor, and in Tartu, where the Reform Party captured the most seats. Voter turnout was more than 52 percent, higher than for the previous 1996 or 1999 elections” (Freedom House, 2003).

The results of the 2003 parliamentary election showed a decrease in the influence of the Center Party leader, Savisaar. Thus, Parts, the chairman of a new political force Res Publica, formed a new government coalition. The coalition formed in 2005 would be involved in some controversy, for Parts asked the President Ruttel to dismiss and replace the two ministers representing ‘Reform’. The dismissal was required for Defense Minister Margus Hanson, who had been charged with keeping classified documents in his apartment and who was later announced as having disappeared. In addition, Foreign Minister Kristina Oulad was forced to resign after the disappearance of 91 confidential documents from the Foreign Ministry. On top of these scandals, which caused a lot of fluctuation inside the government cabinet, Justice Minister Vaher would be another cause for the resignation of Prime Minister Parts. The reason behind this decision was that he sought to draft a plan for implementing a quota system for corruption cases to be prosecuted every year by a prosecutor in each region. This plan would spark a lot of debate among political forces. Those who opposed this decision argued that this proposal indicated the continuity of the policies of the Soviet regime and, thus, were unacceptable. After the resignation of Parts, a new cabinet was formed, headed by Prime Minister Andrus Ansip of

the Reformist Party. However, regardless of the coalition disputes, Estonia made steps forward in the area of civil rights as reported by Freedom House: “Estonia’s civil liberties score improved from 2 to 1 due to the effective implementation of judicial reforms and greater economic freedom” (Freedom House, 2005).

In continuation, changes did not only occur in the government cabinet. The 2006 presidential elections were followed by replacements of senior officials, as President Arnold Ruutel was unable to get a second mandate and was replaced by former Foreign Minister Toomas Hendrik Ilves. The following year would be full of crises that stemmed from an attempt to remove a bronze statue of a World War II soldier from the center of Tallinn in April 2007. This event sparked protests that lasted for two days, resulting in one death and 150 injuries. This would turn out to be one of the biggest and most violent protests in the democratic history in Estonia. These events preceded also a new format of the clashes between the two countries. So, for the first time, there were evidenced a series of cyberattacks against Estonian official sites. These were credited to Moscow as a response for the situation created in Estonia.

During the following years, the main challenge for Estonia was the management of the economic crisis. Thus, the main political developments followed by the parliamentary elections held in March of 2007, which “led to a ruling coalition comprising the Reform Party, the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica, and the Social Democratic Party, with Andrus Ansip returning as prime minister” (Freedom House, 2008). During his time as prime minister, Ansip faced a bad coalition atmosphere due to a slowdown in the economy starting in 2008. As a result, he implemented some policies on cutting spending on personal revenue, unemployment benefits, and security at work. These reforms sparked debates, and a consensus was reached with difficulty. However, the challenge in the next few years was to revitalize the economy, which preserved its serious condition in 2009, but showed improvements in 2010 as a result of “long-term fiscal austerity measures”. In 2011, Estonia officially entered the Eurozone, and the government continued to pursue the previous policies to assist the financial stability of the economy.

The next parliamentary elections were held in the same year, and Ansip was re-elected. The result indicated that “the Reform Party won 33 seats, with its coalition partner, IRL, capturing 23 seats”. The new parliament reelected Toomas Hendrik Ilves for a second 5-year term (Freedom House, 2013). Even though he won in the parliamentary elections, Andrus

Ansip's influence soon began to fade. This is reflected in the local elections in October when the Center Party won 32 per cent of the vote nationwide. During the elections, there were numerous allegations regarding the use of public funds by the Center Party for the benefit of its own electoral campaign. Based on this fact and faced with the 2015 parliamentary elections and a declining influence, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip resigned, thus opening the door to the search of a new leader in the Reform Party. Subsequently, "a new coalition government headed by Reform's Taavi Rõivas was quickly approved. Prime Minister Rõivas abandoned Reform's previous coalition partner, the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica (IRL), to form an alliance with the Social Democrats" (Freedom House, 2015). Also the changes in the government created the possibility that for the first time, in 2016, a woman was elected president. Kersti Kaljulaid was elected after five attempts had been made to elect other candidates. Following this political events "Jüri Ratas, became prime minister of a new coalition government after Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas of the Reform Party lost a confidence vote in November" (Freedom House, 2017).

Apart from the fact that there have been many "delicate" moments in politics, one of the reasons why Estonia was democratized is that the government has been stable both in setting priorities and in pursuing them and this was mainly achieved thanks to the political stability (BTI, 2018).

### **5.3.2 The Development Trajectory of the Economic Context in Estonia**

During these years Estonia went through some quite difficult economic crisis, but the right political and economic decisions helped the country not to step back in the road of democratization. The political actors acted quickly and wisely in finding the right way to overcome these obstacles. Unlike many other countries, Estonia managed to successfully overcome this crisis in the best possible way and with no financial consequences for the country.

The 1999 Freedom House report points out that while the banking sector had experienced positive changes since 1999, it was evident that Estonia did not remain untouched by Russian financial crises because the latter remained Estonia's largest trading partner in the fishing and agriculture industries despite Estonia's efforts to wean from this dependency. This led to "negative growth in Estonia's economy during the first half of 1999" (Freedom House, 1999). As a result of these changes, "unrealistic growth expectations built into Estonia's 1999 budget by the outgoing parliament forced the legislature to adopt a 1 billion *kroon* (\$67.2 million) cut in the

state budget in June after weeks of intense debate” (Freedom House, 1999). This unstable economic situation lasted until 2000 when improvements started to take place.

Attempts were made to harmonize “Estonian legislation and practices with requirements for eventual European Union (EU) membership, for which Estonia remains a front-runner among Eastern European and former Soviet states” (Freedom House, 2001). The years 2008 and 2009 slightly overshadowed the steady economic parameters, resulting in the government’s debate on spending cuts, reducing personal income tax, and reducing unemployment benefits. Meanwhile, in 2009, unemployment grew to 14.5 per cent. The situation remained constant until 2010 when some improvements were made. For example, the “unemployment rate decreased from 19.8 per cent in the first quarter to 13.6 per cent at the end of 2010” (Freedom House, 2011).

Consequently, in an attempt to enhance the economy, the government planned and followed “long-term fiscal austerity measures” (Freedom House, 2011). Recovery in the economy continued in 2012, with a decrease in the rate of unemployment, which “for 2012 stood at 10.2 per cent” (Freedom House, 2013). In 2017, “a tax reform was adopted that raised both the minimum wage for full-time workers and the amount of tax-free income for low- and middle-income earners, among other changes that aim to make the system more progressive” (Freedom House, 2018).

### **5.3.3 The Developments of International Affairs – The Duality of the EU-Russia Relationship**

As far as international relations are concerned, the policies followed were closing the gap between the European community and Estonia. Thus, in 1998 Freedom House reported that “Estonia began formal negotiations for fast-track accession to the European Union (EU)” (Freedom House, 1998). The path of progress and peaceful relations with international institutions continued in the coming years when, in November 1999, “Estonia became the 135th member of the World Trade Organization (WTO)” (Freedom House, 1999). With a clear vision, Estonia continued to adopt the legislation and follow the chapters needed to be accepted into the EU. As a result, in 2001, with determination, dedication, and hard work, the country managed to complete 19 negotiation chapters out of 31.

Estonia’s positive performance in international relations is also reflected in the official invitation that the country received from NATO and then from the EU to join both organizations.

On May 1, 2004, Estonia became part of the EU; on 29 March of the same year, Estonia became part of NATO after fulfilling the necessary conditions. After successful adherence in these communities, unifying with the EU politic was the next goal and intending this, “Estonia voted to ratify the European Union (EU) constitutional treaty” (Freedom House, 2007). In addition, “Estonia received a formal invitation from the EU to join the euro currency zone on January 1, 2011. In December, Estonia joined the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)” (Freedom House, 2011).

While Estonia’s relations were increasingly becoming better with the West, the opposite was true for Estonia’s relations with Russia. In 2005, Estonian relations with Russia continued to deteriorate when Ruutel refused an invitation to attend the celebrations in Moscow marking the end of World War II in March 2015. This rapport continued to suffer in the coming years, and “little progress was made on finalizing an Estonian-Russian border treaty” (Freedom House, 2007).

Subsequent to Russia’s invasion of Georgia, in fear of spreading influence over former Soviet countries, “countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland were motivated to unite their concerns in a joint declaration in fear of the sprawling Russian influence over former Soviet countries. Russia was blamed for causing this conflict” (Freedom House, 2009). Following this situation, tensions continued to oscillate, and depending on the political developments in the region, Estonians perceived some degree of threat during the tensions between Russia and Ukraine such that “tensions between Estonia and Russia spiked in September, days after U.S. President Barack Obama announced that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would step up its presence in the Balkan region” (Freedom House, 2015). Also, during 2015, the way toward finishing the expected border treaty among Estonia and Russia (Freedom House, 2016).

#### **5.3.4 Corruption in Estonia during the Establishment of the Democratic State**

Corruption in Estonia does not pose any existential problems undermining democracy. That is why, apart from the incidents associated with convictions during the years of democratic governance, there have been no serious problems, and “Estonia is considered the least corrupt country in the former Soviet Union” (Freedom House, 2008).

Strangely, as a place where the historical past has had limited instances of freedom, Estonia has proven to be quite successful in achieving free and fair elections through the years and it is also distinguished because it was a pioneer in implementing an electronic voter and citizenship participation system. This has ensured that Estonia enhances transparency not only during the electoral process but also in the implementation of government decisions, as “government decisions are almost instantly available on the internet, where Estonians may comment and exchange views” (Freedom House, 2008).

Although Estonia remains a relatively uncorrupt country, Freedom House reports have described some corruptive instances involving senior officials. One blatant case of corruption is the case of Finance Minister Tonia Palts, who resigned after an investigation “amidst a Tax Board investigation into alleged tax evasion at Plambos Holdings, an entity owned by Palts” (Freedom House, 2004). Moreover in 2007 “the security police announced a corruption probe into a land-exchange deal involving well-known political and business figures. Legal guarantees for public access to government information are respected in practice” (Freedom House, 2008). In May 2009, another minister, Villu Reiljan, the former minister of environment, was reported to have been involved in corrupt affairs regarding the sale of a building that belonged to the Ministry of Environment. As a result, “the former minister received a suspended jail sentence” (Freedom House, 2010). Three court judges were also charged with corruption in 2010, and “Savisaar, too, head of the Center Party, was accused of taking €1.5 million (\$2 million) from the president of Russian Railways for use in the 2011 elections” (Freedom House, 2011). Despite the charges, he did not plead guilty and claimed that the money was taken to build an Orthodox church in Tallinn.

However, despite the corruption scandals, what is worth emphasizing is that at the moment of uncovering these affairs, the institutions have exercised their functions. Following allegations made against several senior officials in 2011, an anti-corruption draft act was approved in February 2012. It essentially aimed to increase transparency in the public sector as well as to obligate politicians to publicly declare their wealth. Furthermore, two important officials were detained in 2012, and “in March, a former advisor to the Tallinn city government and an official in the Center Party were both sentenced to several years in jail after being convicted on bribery charges” (Freedom House, 2013). In another corruption-related scandal, a former member of the Parliament of Ansip’s Reform Party, Silver Meikar, was accused of the

embezzlement of a large sum of dollars that funded this party in 2009-2010. Even though Ansip dismissed the claims, prosecutors initiated an investigation, and "President Toomas Hendrik Ilves called for Michal's resignation. Michal finally stepped down in December" (Freedom House, 2013). Also in 2013, "Culture Minister Rein Lang resigned amid allegations that he had improperly installed one of his allies as the editor in chief of an independent newspaper" (Freedom House, 2014).

Even though a number of issues occurred, the one that most strongly reinforced the fight against corruption is the social responsibility through which the actors implement their duties. This is reflected in the resignation act that has always occurred after evidence has shown that senior officials have been accused of alleged corruption. Despite resignation being a responsive reaction, "no criminal convictions have followed" (Freedom House, 2014).

In 2014, regular citizens perceived an increase in this phenomenon; however, it does not pose a real threat to democracy in the country. Several corruptive scandals involving politicians from both the opposition and the in-power government continued during 2015, to the point that, "in September, Edgar Savisaar, the mayor of Tallinn and leader of the Center Party, was detained by police on suspicion of taking bribes in 2014 and 2015" (Freedom House, 2016).

In the rankings that Transparency International has given over the years, Estonia has been in a very good position.

- *2005 Corruption Perceptions Index - Estonia was ranked **27 out of 150** countries*
  - *2006 Corruption Perceptions Index. - Estonia was ranked **24 out of 163** countries*
  - *2009 Corruption Perceptions Index - Estonia was ranked **27 out of 180** countries*
  - *2010 Corruption Perceptions Index - Estonia was ranked **26 out of 178** countries*
  - *2011 Corruption Perceptions Index - Estonia was ranked **29 out of 183** countries*
  - *2012 Corruption Perceptions Index - Estonia was ranked **32 out of 176** countries*
  - *2014 Corruption Perceptions Index - Estonia was ranked **26 out of 175** countries*
  - *2015 Corruption Perceptions Index - Estonia was ranked **23 out of 168** countries*
- (Freedom House, 2006; Freedom House, 2007; Freedom House, 2009; Freedom House, 2011; Freedom House, 2012; Freedom House, 2013; Freedom House, 2015; Freedom House, 2016)

### 5.3.5 Civic and Political Rights in Estonia from 1999-Present

	Status	Freedom Rating	Civil Liberties	Political Rights
1998	Free	1.5	2	1
1999	Free	1.5	2	1
2001	Free	1.5	2	1
2002	Free	1.5	2	1
2003	Free	1.5	2	1
<b>2004</b>	<b>Free</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
2005	Free	1.0	1	1
2006	Free	1	1	1
2007	Free	1	1	1
2008	Free	1	1	1
2009	Free	1	1	1
2010	Free	1	1	1
2011	Free	1	1	1
2012	Free	1	1	1
2013	Free	1	1	1
2014	Free	1	1	1
2015	Free	1	1	1
2016	Free	1	1	1
2017	Free	1	1	1
2018	Free	1	1	1
2019	Free	1	1	1

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

Table 4 - Civil Liberties and Political Rights for Estonia; 1998 – 2019

Since 1998, Estonia has been a free country with a fairly good performance in civil liberties and political rights. The political reforms undertaken led to the sustainability of the progress made. Estonia is described as a consolidated democracy in the Freedom House reports and, as such, guarantees civic and political rights in the best way possible. In 2004, reforms to the judiciary system, as well as economic reforms, marked the start of the irreversible movement of Estonia toward the European Community. In the context of respecting civic and political rights, Estonia's only problem has been related to addressing matters pertaining to the Russian community living within the Estonian territory.

As reported above, until 2001, a number of criteria needed to be met for one to pursue a career in the public or private sector. Among these criteria were Estonian language requirements. In fact, this policy was often at the center of criticisms made by this community and by other

international organizations as being discriminatory against this group. This why in May 2001, parliament received an enactment that set out explicit necessities of Estonian-language capabilities for private-segment representatives (e.g., pilots, rescue workers, and teachers). The law was based on a past amendment to the language law that passed in June 2000 (Freedom House, 2004). Earlier, Estonia had made progress and abolished the Estonian language criterion for those who wanted to be representatives in parliament and in local councils. Thus, “the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe cited this development as a key factor in the group’s decision to end its nine-year mission in Estonia at the end of 2001” (Freedom House, 2002).

However, the issue of conditionality for the full integration of the Russian community into all social and political areas of the country remained a heated topic even in 2006. Amnesty International’s report stated that this population “faced discrimination in education and employment because of language and citizenship requirements for employment and limited possibilities to study in Russian in institutions of higher education” (Freedom House, 2007). In the context of the numerous efforts in this area, a 2011 law required Russian-language high schools to teach the Estonian language in 60 percent of their programs in order to provide students with the necessary qualifications to run for public office. Furthermore “the Tallinn government, which was controlled by the Center Party, planned in February 2012 to establish a public school where primary and secondary students could attend classes in Russian at no cost” (Freedom House, 2013).

	2014	2015	2016	2018
<b>Political Rights (ToT)</b>	<b>39/40</b>	<b>39/40</b>	<b>38/40 (-1)</b>	<b>38/40</b>
Electoral Process:	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12
Political Pluralism and participation:	<b>15/16</b>	<b>15/16</b>	<b>15/16</b>	<b>15/16</b>
Functioning of Government:	12/12	12/12	11/12	11/12
<b>Civil Liberties:</b>	<b>56/60</b>	<b>56/60</b>	<b>56/60</b>	<b>56/60</b>
Freedom of Expression and Belief:	16/16	16/16	16/16	16/16
Associational and Organizational Rights:	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12

Rule of Law:	14/16	14/16	14/16	14/16
Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights:	14/16	14/16	14/16	14/16

Table 5 - Categorization of Civil Liberties and Political Right for Estonia; 2014 -2018

In 2016, in the “Function of Government” section, a drop of one point was noted due to corruption scandals involving some senior officials, while all of the other parameters remain unchanged.

### 5.3.5.1 Freedom of Association and Assembly

Estonia has been very successful in assuring freedom of association and assembly and this fact is underlined and stated by various international reports such as the BTI report that assumes that “freedom of association and assembly is unrestricted within the basic democratic order. Civil society in Estonia is uninhibited, and laws regulate the creation of NGOs and other free associations” (BTI, 2008).

Different NGOs have also been active in drafting many laws that were subsequently adopted by Estonia. This is clearly described in the Freedom House reports referring to the state of affairs in 2005, which remained unchanged in subsequent years. The report specifically states that “the government involves NGOs in the drafting of legislation and NGOs are invited to testify on pending policies” (Freedom House, 2006).

As Estonia displayed a few positive trends in the fulfillment of civic and political rights, social life was not plagued by major protests. In fact, one of the biggest strikes after independence took shape in 2003. As the report clearly expresses, “20,000 workers participated in a one-day strike coordinated by the Organization of Employee Unions and aimed at greater benefits for teachers and cultural workers” (Freedom House, 2006). Another large-scale but violent demonstration resulting in the death of a protester and injuries to many others occurred after the attempts to move the bronze statue of a soldier from the center of Tallinn as described above in the description of political events in Estonia in 2007. This incident led Estonia to restrict public gatherings until 2008. As was reported, “public gatherings may be prohibited to ensure public safety” (Freedom House, 2009).

A very important aspect related to the civil rights is the fact that the NGOs were seen as major participants in the policies of the country for as long as the government involves nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and ordinary citizens in the drafting of legislation. According to the BTI (2018) report, civil society development is commendable compared to other former communist countries.

### **5.3.5.2 Freedom of Press**

The 1999 report of Freedom House notes that freedom of speech and freedom of the press are respected and that there are “three national and five local or regional private television stations which broadcast both Estonian and Russian-language programs” (Freedom House, 1998). The presence of television programming in Russian indicates respect for the rights of Russian ethnic minorities. However, the 2006 report of Freedom House describes that this is insufficient “... considering the size of the Russian population in Estonia, the proportion of programs in the Russian language remains small” (Freedom House, 2006).

Although Estonia guarantees freedom of the press, there have been some involvements and attempts to exercise political influence that did not violate the press’ independence, and reported cases are scarce and sporadic. In 2013, the “culture minister Rein Lang of the Reform Party resigned amid allegations that he had pressured the independent newspaper *Sirp* to install one of his allies as its new editor. Lang denied that he was stepping down in connection with those claims” (Freedom House, 2014). Whether in the reports of Freedom House, BTI, or other groups, it is clear that “freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Estonian Constitution and is buttressed both by additional legislation and an extensive mass media, including both Estonian- and Russian-language outlets” (BTI, 2008). Estonia is also unique in that it “is one of the most internet-friendly countries in the world” (Freedom House, 2007).

### **5.3.5.3 Judiciary System and the Rule of Law**

In the 1998 reports of Freedom House, it is concluded that Estonia’s judiciary system is independent and professional. Issues have been identified pertaining to the force used by some police officers while interrogating suspects. Accordingly, “despite some recent improvements in

the country's prison system, overcrowding and a lack of financial resources and adequately trained staff remain a problem" (Freedom House, 1998). Until 1998, the death penalty was in effect in Estonia. In March 1998, parliament voted "to abolish the death penalty, despite opinion polls indicating that the majority of Estonians favor capital punishment" (Freedom House, 1998).

While the judiciary system is exempt from government intervention, some problems have prevailed because "low salaries and heavy workloads continue to deter many lawyers from choosing a career in the judiciary" (Freedom House, 2001). In addition to low salaries, constant problems encountered during 2001-2003 were reported to be "the quality of some court decisions and the heavy workloads of many judges" (Freedom House, 2002). The first major event concerning justice occurred in March 2002 when "Judge Merle Parts, who presided over cases involving organized crime, was shot and seriously wounded" (Freedom House, 2003).

The improvement in the judiciary area continued in 2002 through the adoption and successful implementation of laws related to the monitoring of the judiciary branch of government. The purpose of the court action was to minimize and eradicate the influence of politics over the judiciary system. Thus, a new criminal procedure code was launched in 2004 and "as a result, the arbitrary, legally weak court decisions that were a feature of post-Soviet Estonia have become increasingly rare, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Heritage Foundation, and the U.S. and Canadian governments" (Freedom House, 2006).

According to the BTI report on unemployment, "the Estonian courts are independent and free both from executive intervention and, by and large, from corruption; where corruption issues have been revealed, judges have been investigated and removed by the designated authorities" (BTI, 2018).

#### **5.3.5.4 Free and Fair Elections as a Democracy Guarantor in Estonia**

The first recorded free and fair Estonian elections were those of 1992. Reports on subsequent elections both in parliamentary and local elections indicate the same: that elections are free and fair. Problems have been encountered only in relation to individuals, mainly to the group of Russian citizens living in Estonia who are not registered as Estonian citizens. Although they may vote, they can neither be candidates nor members of political parties.

The following elections at the legislative but also at the local level, are not only reported to be free and fair, but Estonia is also the country that for the first time created the possibility of voting through the internet. So, even the parliamentary elections of 2003 were reported as "free and fair" (Freedom House, 2004), and later through its local elections of 2005, "Estonia became the first country in the world to enable citizens to vote countrywide over the internet" (Freedom House, 2005). Increasing transparency and participation guaranteed higher levels of democracy such that "the 2007 polls were notable as the world's first parliamentary elections to employ internet voting; about 30,000 people voted online" (Freedom House, 2008).

However, despite the success achieved in the electoral process, regarding the inclusion in elections, as an outcome of citizenship policies, "only citizens may participate in national elections. As a result, ethnic Russian residents of Estonia whose citizenship remains undetermined—constituting about 6.5 per cent of the population—cannot vote in national polls. Resident noncitizens are permitted to vote in local elections, but may not run as candidates" (Freedom House, 2015).

Following the reporting on the electoral process, it is evident that the elections of 2015 were also reported as free and fair. Subsequently, the local elections of 2017, which took place after the administrative reform that marked the convergence of municipalities, diminished the amount of electoral posts by approximately half and dissolved the county standard of government, which involved a "record turnout online, with 32 percent of participating voters using this method, thus demonstrating strong public confidence in the e-voting system" (Freedom House, 2018).

### **5.3.5.5 Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights**

Even though Estonia guarantees a high level of fair implementation of civic and political rights, the published reports highlight problems related to women's rights. The legislation provides that women enjoy the same rights as men, but they are not paid equally and "are underrepresented in senior-level positions and the government" (Freedom House, 1998). The same status is identified in the follow-up reports and the 2004 reports. Some improvements were made although in 2007, where about "one-fifth of the members of Parliament were women" (Freedom House, 2007).

However, regarding the respect of individual rights a major concern remains regarding the trafficking of women because “Estonia is a source, transit point and destination for women trafficked for the purpose of prostitution” (Freedom House, 2007). Despite the adoption of the action plan in January 2006 to monitor traffic and to build a database in 2007, again “in 2008, 55 women received assistance, including psychological and legal counseling, through a Nordic-Baltic pilot project trafficking victims” (Freedom House, 2009).

Gaps are also seen in the pay between men and women, even though they should be paid the same for the same job. Because of this, “the World Economic Forum’s 2010 Global Gender Gap Report downgraded Estonia’s ranking by 10 places, finding that Estonian women make only 65 percent of a man’s wage for the same job—the largest gap in the EU” (Freedom House, 2011). Motionless in 2015, the reports continue to stress that discrepancies exist in the workplace. This is illustrated by a gap that is rated among the largest in Europe: “women in Estonia earn on average 30 percent less than men do, which is the largest gap in the European Union” (Freedom House, 2015). The report shows no changes, reflecting the presence of the same issues in 2018.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter considered all the Freedom House reports in detail in measuring the rate of democratization in Albania and Estonia. All the problems regarding civil and political rights were analyzed, and it was shown that Albania, in almost all the categories that were analyzed, the results were problematic. However, two of the most evident problems are that the elections are not at all free or fair and that corruption is prevalent. In fact, both these problems are affected by and unavoidably related to the political culture at the level of goodwill and determination to participate in the electoral processes and to see it from the perspective of implementing the obligations that the citizens have towards their country as well as in the predispositions to be organized and active in the process of decision-making, where a significant level of negligence is observed. It is also noticed in the citizens an exasperation and acceptance of the phenomenon of corruption. This situation is also used by political actors. In every governing mandate, it is clear that not only do they resist fighting the phenomenon, but they compromise with it. In fact, for

Albania, these two problems have been among the most persistent that have prevented it from joining the EU.

Meanwhile, Estonia's democratization process was quiet and irreversible since the Freedom House began recording data. Besides the problems already noted, what is noticeable is the degree of reflection from the political actors, who have immediately resigned after governmental scandals. Also is the level of compromise and cooperation to ensure the continuity of the policies that ensure the road of development.

The following chapter focuses on the findings and conclusions derived from the study of all the periods relevant to this dissertation. This is done to create a more inclusive panorama of the phenomenon by creating the correlation cause-consequence between political culture and the leaders' normative preferences for democracy and democratization.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THE COMPARISONS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES STUDIED (ALBANIA AND ESTONIA)

#### Introduction

This chapter aims at making a comprehensive report of the conclusions that were evidenced by the analysis carried out in the preceding chapters. The chapter is structured in such a way that it is divided into three parts in the analysis of these findings. In the interwar period, in the communism period as well as in the transition period which is also the most crucial period as long as both countries took different directions in their journey towards democratization.

Through the analyzation and comparison of the events during these periods I aim at creating a logical argument of the reason why these countries followed distinct trajectories. This way separate figures can be related that in the conclusion will establish a theoretic framework, self-sufficient to justify accurately the relation between the independent variables, the political culture and the normative preference for democracy, and the dependent variable that is the democratization.

In order to fulfill this objective and to analyze the variables in a more detailed way, some detailed components of the political, economic, and social developments that occurred during the transition will also be analyzed. The variable of leaders' normative preferences has been considered during all the observed time segments. However, in the transition period, it is thoroughly studied and greater attention has been placed on it, as it is perceived as being unavoidably linked to the undertaking and the successful finalization of democratic reforms. Therefore, to investigate this statement, the impacts that these decisions have had on both countries are compared.

## 6.1 Analysis of the Comparison between the Two Countries, Albania and Estonia, During the Pre - Communist Period

Democratization is a complicated process due to its multifaceted character. On debates about democratization, many questions have been asked about the circumstances that have initiated the transition and the completion of the process. It is challenging to determine a specific factor, since a democratization-fulfilling theory must meet certain criteria. As Teorell points out in his democratization consideration, this theory first of all, should be sufficient to include all the aspects of the regime change in time and space, but this ought to be done in such a way as not to compromise the veracity of the events as well as not to lose the ability to explain specific cases by identifying casual mechanisms. The ideal theory of democratization should enable the short- and long-term explanation of the dynamics of the change of trajectory of the regimes from autocratic regimes in democracy and vice-versa. By nature, it should create the possibility to determine the outcomes depending on special occasions and circumstances that influence in these cases. It ought to guarantee the existence of more than one factor that stands convincingly as an argument to explain this theory and these factors should not be mutually contradictory. This theory must be supported by as many empirical evidences as possible. But, above all this theory *“should transcend the structure and agency which is divided by specifying how and when structural constraints affect the desires and beliefs of social actors, while at the same time providing some logic for understanding why these actors make decisions the way they do, and how the interaction of these decisions produces an outcome in terms of regime change”* (Teorell, 2010, 16).

Considering all the criteria listed above, we can conclude that it is difficult to negotiate and establish a correlation between the cause and effect of democratization. However, excluding various causes, this can lead to the most relevant factor that has hindered the success of democratization in the case of Albania, or that has helped its achievement in the Estonian case. In the event of making a correlation of the democratization process for the two nations considered, Albania and Estonia, we can plainly express the story of political developments. Thus, this is because there are numerous likenesses since the start of state formation.

Therefore, first, we need to know where we came from to choose the path we are destined to follow. In order to intertwine the academic debates with the actual practices during transition,

whether it is successful or not, the most important events with the greatest impact on these two countries have been chosen as the focus of the study. Sharp differences are observed after the 90s, with Albania still in transition and Estonia completely democratized.

Following the circumstances where we look on an even transitioning Albania from one part and a fully democratized Estonia from the other, it is observed that the transition process is still ongoing in Albania, while Estonia has completed it successfully. One fundamental distinction that appears to have contributed to this is that in Albania, the process of building democracy amid political transition cannot be characterized as rebirth. Nevertheless, it is regarded as a reconstruction. However, the inverse occurred in Estonia. Reform of the system and the democratic transformation was seen as a continuum in regard to “legal restoration”. Therefore, in this manner the continuity of the democratic transformations, after the 90s sustained the legacy of the statehood in the first republic before 1940 (BTI, 2003)

Consequently, the concept of continuity in state building is available in Estonia. This is because of the development of the institutional structures in the pre-Communist period that have bolstered and propelled the democratic processes after the collapse of the communist system. Democratic processes are present as long as Estonia has held the first democratic parliamentary elections and the first democratic referendum regarding religious teaching in the school curriculum. Meanwhile the first signs of a democratic regime emerge in Estonia, a buildup of autocratic power of King Zog is seen in Albania. Moreover, a non-supportive climate, along with an absence of consensus among newly emerging political forces, dominated the internal politics of that time period.

According to what Teorell indicated above, the theories of democratization should overcome the separation between structure and agency as long as the structure, in this case the attempts to establish a democratic setting as early as the 1920s in Estonia, has influenced political actors who have undertaken important decisions in the early years of democratic transition to make the necessary changes in the country’s democratization. The political transformation of both countries has had considerable similarities in historical developments starting from the beginnings of state formation. However, it diverges in the efforts to institutionalize democracy in Estonia during this period and the lack thereof in the Republic of Albania.

## **6.2 Analysis of the Comparison between the Two Countries, Albania and Estonia, During the Communist Period**

By referring to the similarities that these two countries experienced during the communist regime, one similarity would be the experience of the long and dark years of the communist regime with devastating consequences in every aspect of the political, economic, and social life in both countries. But besides the similarities in the political system, there were notable differences. This is mainly because communism was enabled by its people in Albania, which gave the system considerable strength. However, this was mostly attributed to the oppression of invasion from a foreign country in Estonia. In this context, there was a high chance that communism would be more pronounced in Estonia. On the other hand, according to the conclusions of various authors, communism in Albania was quite fierce in leaning towards totalitarianism. The communist regime in Albania was classified as the most isolated and dictatorial regime.

Considering its specificities, communism is a “political and economic doctrine that aims to replace private and profit-based economy with communal control of at least the major means of production (e.g. mines, mills, and factories) and the natural resources of a society” (Dagger & Ball, 2018). Starting from its definition, communism showed the same symptoms in both countries. Thus, Estonia and Albania were characterized by an extreme politicization of society, violence and terror, nationalization of almost all the means of production through collectivization policies, planned economic production policies, animosity towards Western countries, and isolation tendencies as an internal tool of repression. The results were similarly devastating for both societies. No matter the common symptoms, the way the system was introduced was not the same in both countries.

Thus, in Estonia, communism appeared as a result of the invasion of the Soviet Union and of the implementation of the secret pact (Molotov-Ribbentrop). The plan of the pact was to allow Estonia to become part of the SU (HIIO, 2012). This system was not embraced by most Estonians. Organized groups pursued a resistance, initially armed through the group called "Forest Brothers", and then intellectually through various organisms. As former Prime Minister Laar said, even though "Forest Brothers" became martyrs, they influenced the creation of a

resistance movement, which lasted during the soviet period (Laar, 2006).<sup>5</sup> The struggle has been largely driven by patriotic motives. The sense of unity and belonging strengthened the opposition greatly.

At the same time, Albania embraced this system considerably, unifying around it. The Albanian society was prepared to accept such a system due to its traditional peasant past and a psychologically positive attitude towards the demagogy of the communist party. This was due to the fact that the latter had taken credit for the victory in the anti-fascist war. Analyzed from this point of view, the communist party of that time climbed the ladder of power with full approval of the people. Communism was born within the society and the people became a substantial part of this system, either consciously or not. Also, as a result of this successful inception, the elimination of the opposition which was part of the implementation of the communist doctrine began quite early. This enabled and ensured the destruction of the intellectuals that could obstruct the long-term expansion of this system.

A change in the progress of the events during the communist regime in both countries is also due to the fact that after Stalin's death, Estonia started to pursue a different political course. This was more open to the West, and it enabled contacts between its citizens within and outside the borders. However, an important impact on democracy in Estonia after the 90s is the evidence of a "continuation" policy in the post-communist period, known as the "legal restoration".

On the other hand, in Albania, it can be inferred that communism had serious consequences on all social aspects of the country. This triggered the creation of a political culture that seems to have hindered the democratization of society even after the fall of the system. The political culture and the general climate of this regime were characterized by the creation of elite with no responsibility to its people, and of a leadership framework or model of authoritarianism, that avoids the active participation of the people in public policy making. However, what greatly affected the Albanian society in the transition years is the emergence of political elite rooted in communism but governing in another period of time. This is known as the democratic transition.

Conversely, the opposite happened in Estonia. Following the coming into power of the newly elected Government, every tie with the "invaders" was broken. In order to be "liberated"

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<sup>5</sup> The interview of the former prime minister of Estonia after the democratic elections of 1992 was taken from a workshop held at the university of "Francisco Marroquin", in the Auditorium "Milton Friedman" Guatamala, September 14th 2006, referred to Mart Laar with the topic: "The Baltic Tiger: How did Estonia did it.", retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Lasy0pfn1is>

from them, Estonians fought against communism as well as the culture its doctrine sought to install. In these circumstances, why not fight the war when they had all the means to win it? The institutional structure was ready for it since from a *political point of view*, the first democratically elected Prime Minister, Mart Laar, and his cabinet was so young that not only did they not have any connection with communism, but also, they do not even consider politics as a means of personal gain. From an *institutional and legal aspect*, there were institutions set up since the Interwar period. Even the 1992 constitution was a continuation and adaptation of the constitutions of 1920 and 1938. *Economically*, “the reform strategy for the national economy hardly referred to the first independent Estonian Republic (1918-1940). Nonetheless, it typically tackled the strategic challenges and opportunities of a post-industrial world economy” (BTI, 2003). Apart from all the above-mentioned aspects, Estonia was a society with a political culture inclined towards democratic norms and values in all its components. This was because “Behind Almond and Verba’s resulting collections of percentages was the theory that a stable democracy required a specific set of attitudes based on a complex balance of ‘subject’ and ‘participant’ cultures, and needed high levels of system support and social trust fostered by overlapping memberships of different groups” (Eatwell, 1997).

### **6.3 Analysis of the Comparison between the Two Countries, Albania and Estonia, during the First Period of Transition**

Despite the differences in the onset and outcome, the transition phase seems to be a common step for all the former communist countries. This phase also defines the type of democracy that follows, and is generally defined as the state through which a country passes from an authoritarian regime into a democratic regime. Huntington (1991) has grouped the countries of the former Soviet Union along with Albania because they belong to the third wave of democratization, with the transition starting at the beginning of the 1990s for both countries.

From a theoretical point of view, there has been a lot of discussion about the process of transition itself and how it has subsequently affected the democratic development of a country. The issue with the theoretical definition of transition is finding common and comprehensive answers for every country that passes through this phase, as well as identifying the local factors

that mark the transition towards democracy, even though democratization in itself is defined as a "natural process" (Carothers, 2002). In an attempt to find answers, one of the greatest scholars of democratic processes, as well as an activist in promoting democracy in the world, Thomas Carothers, published a paper in the *Journal of Democracy* in 2002 titled "The end of the Transition Paradigm" in which he identified five core assumptions. The first determines the fact that every country that steps away from a dictatorial regime may be considered a country in transition towards democracy. The second assumption determines that democratization must go through three stages relevant to this process. The first one is the "opening" that defines a period of confusion but that is characterized by political liberalization, the system tries to find a balance between a soft line and hard line politics. Later the process continues with a "breakthrough" of the capitulation of the old system and the rise of a new democratic system that is installed by the election of a new government through the election process which determines usually through a new constitution, the structure of the democratic institutions. Lastly, comes the third phase which is known as "consolidation" and is defined as a slow process but guided by real purposes, where through the reformation of the state institutions, the election process, the strengthening of the civil society and the definition of the new norms of democracy, the process turns in final democratic product (Carothers, 2002).

This model clearly states that an authoritarian government can only be followed by a democratic government and order. According to him, any transition necessarily leads to democratization. Based on this predisposition, both Estonia and Albania came from an authoritarian regime and were headed for a final destination of democratization. The reality is that Albania went through a difficult transition period and even though the roads to finalizing this transition seemed successful, democratization did not happen due to the presence of a hybrid regime. Meanwhile, Estonia also moved through the labyrinths of a difficult transition and successfully completed it. Also, "Estonia's full EU membership by 2004 symbolically marks the completion of the main transition process" (BTI, 2003).

Therefore, in an attempt to explain the transformation of the countries, the first opening phase occurred in both of them but the process itself had differences. The difference for Albania in this first stage is the lack of a strict division between soft-line and hard-line policies, due to the absence of a strong motivation to definitively separate from the communist platform. Neither the leader of the Communist Party, Ramiz Alia, nor the intellectuals that undertook a role in this

process, including the leaders of the opposition in the following years, were adamant about a radical separation from the communist past. The "war" against the communist leadership took place several years later when an official investigation was requested about some Communist Party officials, including Ramiz Alia. Contrary to Albania, after taking the power in Estonia in 1992, Laar says that any relationship with Russia was broken thus signaling the functioning of Estonia as a country on its own. Breaking the relationship with Russia implied breaking relations with communism (Laar, 2009).

Later in the "breakthrough" phase, both countries under investigation, held the first pluralistic parliamentary elections. The win of the Communist Party of March 1991 election in Albania drew criticism by the newly formed opposition calling them undemocratic. Meanwhile, in Estonia, the first elections that took place in 1992 were free and fair elections. Albania also developed an electoral process, which in the history of post-communist elections was defined as democratic progress in 1992. Unfortunately, it was not enough to create a precedent which would lead to the tradition of free and fair elections.

### **6.3.1 The Constitution as an Important Element of the “Breakthrough Stage”**

As specified by Carothers (2002), at the “breakthrough” stage, it is necessary to draft a Constitution that will include all relevant legislation to justify the legal and political changes required by political pluralism. In addition, both countries drafted a Constitution that would serve as a legal basis for guaranteeing democratic values and principles. In Estonia, the first post-communist constitution was voted in a referendum with massive support by the citizens. Consequently, the implementation of this constitution ensured political stability. In Albania, however, the referendum on the changes of the Constitution was not only rejected by the people, but served as a cause for creating political instability.

In addition, a "continuation" is noted in Estonia, as the 1992 Constitution was an adoption of the 1920 and 1938 constitutions. Meanwhile, Albania needed to write a new one as a result of the abolishment of the old constitution. From 1991 to 1998, the legal framework in power was "The Main Constitutional Provision" (Alimehmeti, 2011). The reason for functioning with this legal framework in the absence of the Constitution is precisely the failure to draft and approve it. Between 1991 and 1998, some continuous efforts to adopt an appropriate constitution, failed because of the failure to approve the drafts as well as refusing by a

referendum the final draft on 6th November 1994 (Alimehmeti, 2011, 165). Thus as a result, until 1997, due to the lack of a Constitution, the competencies of executive, legislative, and judiciary powers were not divided according to the respective legal requirements. Due to the conditions of a non-strict separation of the powers and of the political chaos, Albania found it quite difficult to progress through the third stage of this premise, consolidation. Moreover, the initial conditions of Albania were not suitable for finalizing a successful democratization. The country was characterized by political instability since the early 1990s, with an inherited shortage of political traditions and democratic institutions. Initial reforms, whether political or economic, did not demonstrate sustainability and stability, thus contributing to the emergence of successive crises and building of an anarchic climate in the country.

Conversely, the opposite occurred in Estonia, where the transition period was characterized by a very successful change of framework, both politically and economically. The consensus and determination of the government and the people to democratize the country was essential for transforming Estonia and turning it into a developed country.

### **6.3.2 Elections**

Elections can be defined not only as a promoter of democracy, but above all as the guarantor of this system. Thus, as Carothers (2002, 7) states, the elections are essential and guarantors of democracy but also a necessary process for the development of democratic reforms.

Albania has always faced problems with the electoral processes, whether parliamentary or local elections. Problems have been mainly centered on countless accusations and counter accusations of vote distortions, family voting, voting manipulation, vote theft, etc. In the history of parliamentary elections, only the results of the 1992 elections were accepted by the opposition. In addition, the 2005 parliamentary elections were an exception due to the peaceful transition of powers from one political force to the other, while all the other electoral processes were contested as irregular. International reports list Albania's elections as far from free and fair and one of the main factors that hinder the development of democracy in the country. They are cited repeatedly by all European Commission reports as a condition to enter the EU.

Meanwhile, in Estonia, elections are reported as free and fair since their first occurrence. They have met the highest European standards and have always reflected democratic principles

despite the ethnic problems of the Russian minorities within the Estonian borders, who, due to the legislation in force, remained out of the voting process. However, besides the criticisms of not including and not treating this community equally, the principle of "Free and Fair" elections was not violated, and Estonia became the first country to apply the E – Government system successfully, making it possible that the 2017 local elections would have “record turnout online, with 32 percent of participating voters using this method, thus demonstrating strong public confidence in the e-voting system” (Freedom House, 2017).

### **6.3.3 Economic Development**

Although structural elements like the economic level, political history and institutional legacies are important for the successful transition, different authors, among whom even Carothers, emphasize that they are not decisive and determinant factors in the transition process, neither during it, nor in the final process or the outcome that this process produces in itself. Whereas a decisive factor that makes this process successful, more than the above mentioned components, are the predispositions of the elites to move forward in the road of democratization (Carothers, 2002). Given the presumption that the elite can lead this process successfully, it must be equipped with ideologies and democratic norms that pertain to the "belief, attitudes and cognitions" of the leader as an individual or the group as the elite. Therefore, it can be concluded that the structural elements as a political culture are just as important in defining the leader's democratic orientation to make the right decisions just in time to better guide the democratization process.

This has happened in Estonia, where all democratic institutions have been designed to successfully lead and democratically end the transition process. In Estonia, economic, judicial, and parliamentary reforms proved to be very successful in establishing a democratic order. This is not only because the leader and the elite made democratic choices, but also because there was a democratic tradition among the citizens that directed the process of state formation. The determination of the political class in Estonia was dominated by only one aspiration: steering the country towards the united Europe at all costs. Thus the democratic promoters considered as quite important the possibility of state formation as an important part of the transition process

because, as Carothers (2002, 717) states, democracy-building and state-building are “two sides of the same coin”.

Meanwhile, Albania did not proceed in this direction, because democracy did not go in the same way with the process of state formation. While all political parties, in power or opposition, articulated the best democratic values and principles, they did not properly implement these reforms to build the foundations of a functioning democracy. In Albania, politics as the main instrument of change has added barriers to the transition processes.

Referring to the advantages of the success of Estonia’s democratization, in correlation with what was analyzed above; a BTI report highlights the advantages for Estonia's success in this long way of democracy:

The advantageous initial and framework conditions include the proximity of the boom-region of the Baltic Sea, the small size of the Estonian economy, the consensual determination of the population and its politicians to transform Estonia into a prosperous market-economy and a modern democracy, the availability of the pre-war First Estonian Republic as a framework of reference, legitimization and mobilization, and, last but not least, the prospect of EU and NATO membership. The disadvantageous factors include the presence of a large Russophone minority, partly concentrated in a peripheral region and partly opposed to the strategy of Estonian state and nation building as well as major socio-economic disparities within the country, partly coinciding with ethnicity (BTI, 2003).

If we analyze the most important democratization theories, including Lipset's theory that emphasizes the importance of economic development in the success of the democratization process, we can say that although Estonia’s economic development was exponential, it did not happen because it was more developed to start with. On the contrary, the country was in a total collapse; however, there was a vast compliance to implement the reforms properly.

In a public speech, the first prime minister of Estonia, while describing the situation during the first years of democracy, presented an overview of the “normal” condition of a food store at that time in Estonia in a PowerPoint presentation.

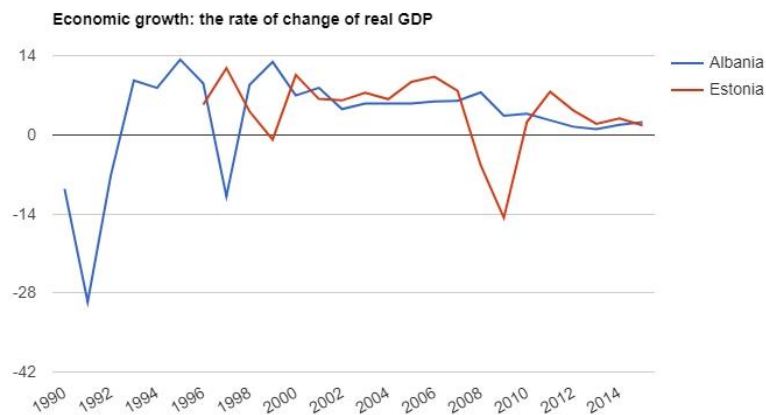


Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Lasy0pfn1is>

Figure 11 – Food store in Estonia in the first years of transition

In addition, he explained that there were only Russian vodka and Armenian whiskey. In a synchronic way, the same socio-economic and political contexts have been maintained in Albania since the Prime Minister of the Albanian Government of Stability stated that Albania had only six days of bread left. It is inferred that the chaos was the same in both countries.

*In economic terms*, the two countries experienced an increase in oscillations in economic growth over the coming years. This is seen in the chart below;



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 12 - Economic growth: the rate of change of real GDR, Albania and Estonia

Referring to the chart, both Albania and Estonia have had their own fluctuations in economic growth. There was greater stability after 1997, while Estonia in 2008 saw a regression that is visible in 2008 compared to Albania, but this did not prevent the country from democratizing.

Also, in the framework of the economic reforms of the two countries, they implemented the "shock therapy" as a radical measure to emerge from the economic collapse. Both countries suffered a devaluation of currency. However, while the currency remained the same in Albania (Lek), Estonia changed the Old Russian Ruble to Kroon.

Undoubtedly, this reform would cause chaos in Estonia, despite the prime minister's declaration that it was "to stabilize the monetary system to fight down the system and to create the basis for the economy" (Laar, 2006). He implemented these reforms against the advice of many foreign diplomats not to do so and despite being a novice in the economic field. He was supported by his statement that until he was elected as the prime minister at the age of thirty-two, he had been a historian who had only read one book of economics all his life. He asserted that these reforms were implemented because if "we decided that we wanted to get this country out of this situation, we really need radical reforms" (Laar, 2006). Owing to the effect they produced at the very first moments of their implementation, reforms proved to be successful and to have a significant influence on the development of the economy, despite being opposed by a great portion of the society. Laar states that economic reforms were associated with land reform, which was governed by the rule of law and the return of confiscated land during communist times to former owners. The outstanding implementation of the privatization of public property had shown a success.

#### **6.3.4 Rule of Law**

Rule of Law is also a government priority in Estonia. Its rigorous application would ensure more protection and better management of the land so the owners would compete in European markets and increase production. Particularly, they would learn to "walk on their feet". Indeed, the course of history progressed this way, and it taught them to walk on their own feet in the path of democracy. Laar's cabinet consisted of a group of young people who, just like him, in an "International European meeting [stated that]...., the security would not want to let us in, because they say nobody from us looked like a Prime Minister" (Laar, 2006). However, this is

because his cabinet was made up of young ministers with no experience, and this was well noted in those diplomatic meetings dominated by people with years of experience on their shoulders. Laar says that “...in the first meeting, “we were all so young, my ministers were actually even more younger, my minister of foreign affairs was twenty seven, my minister of Interior was twenty six, my minister of justice was twenty seven too”. Nevertheless, despite the young age, they took the right decisions at the right time.

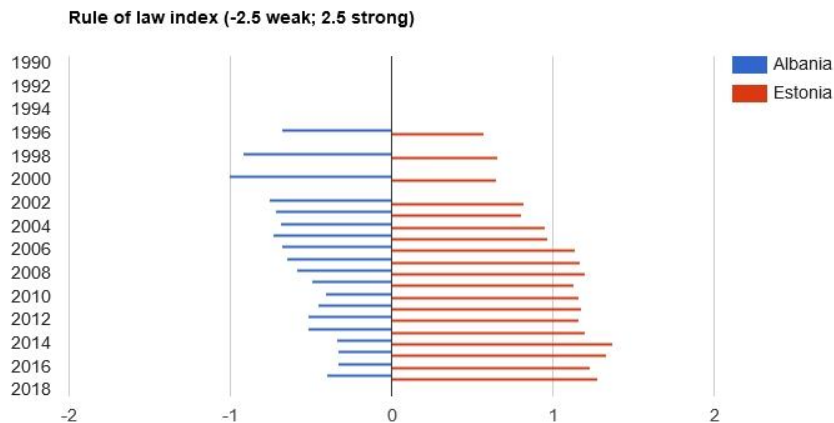
In Albania, none of the above reforms proved to be so successful as to overcome the obstacles that would lead them to the path of democracy, although the assistance provided by the internationals was even greater than that in Estonia. In the aspect of economic reform, there was an attempt to implement the shock therapy, which did not prove successful. As Kalemaj states:

Albania had signed a trade and cooperation agreement with the European Union in 1992, when Albania as a result became eligible for PHARE funding – under external relations aid scheme. Albania also underwent the shock therapy, which consisted of rapid privatization and structural reforms that elsewhere (i.e. Czech Republic, Estonia) proved to be highly successful (Kalemaj, 2016, 107).

Furthermore, the ruling political class elite apparently did not completely lose connections with communism, also because the political leaders of post-communism either came from communist families or were collaborators of that regime. So, many ideologies, intentionally or not, were passed down onto them influencing their way of thinking, which would be reflected in policy and decision-making process after the 90s. Privatizations and the law of compensation of former land owners caused years of social, economic, and political problems and conflicts.

### **6.3.5 Rule of Law and the Judiciary System**

The Rule of Law and the Judiciary System preserved some of the unsolved problems that have accompanied Albania during the transition years.



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 13 – Rule of Law index Albania and Estonia

As seen from the graph above, despite improvements in Albania in recent years, we see that it has always been weak in performance since 1996. Meanwhile, Estonia has shown a steady strengthening of the Rule of Law due to the priorities set by the government in 1992, as well as the ongoing reforms it has undertaken to ensure its application.

Another component of the effectiveness of Rule of Law is **Corruption**.

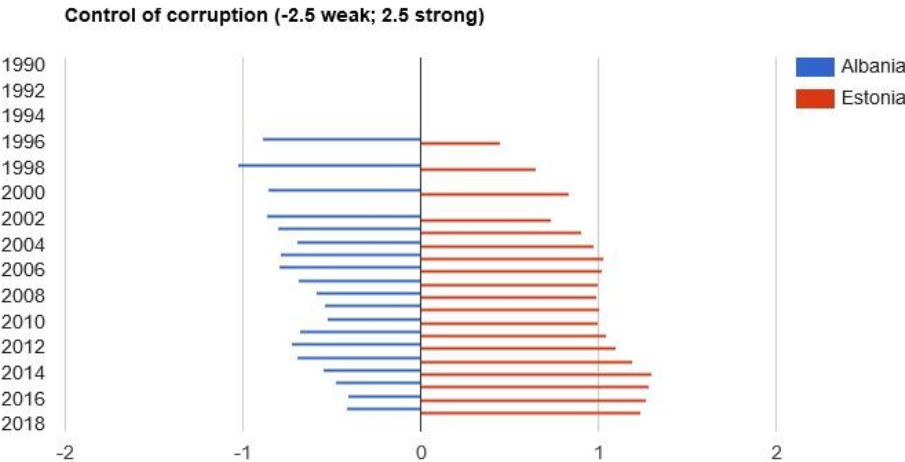
Comparing the level of corruption in Estonia and Albania, high figures of corruption appear in Albania as a result of continuous scandals during the beginnings of the democratic state.

However, there have been reports of corruption in the first government, the government of Stability. Since 1991, the situation of the involvement of senior officials at the ministerial level in corruptive affairs was aggravated by a climate of impunity. Not only were there no penalties, but these officials have continued to maintain their previous positions even after denouncing the scandal. As evidenced by the reports analyzed by the Freedom House, the issue remained the same until 2018. It also emerged in the European Commission reports, referred to as a hindering factor in negotiations with the EU.

Estonia too has displayed many problems related to corruption among senior officials, even ministers, but these episodes have never been a cause to obstruct the development of the

country. Estonia is one of the countries with the lowest levels of corruption among the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Former analysis of the reports revealed a culture of accountability and high social responsibility. This is because after any reporting of involvement of senior officials in a corruption affair, official resignation has been implemented and turned into tradition. Therefore, this is in accordance with the legal, political and social obligations, regardless of the time the investigation started.

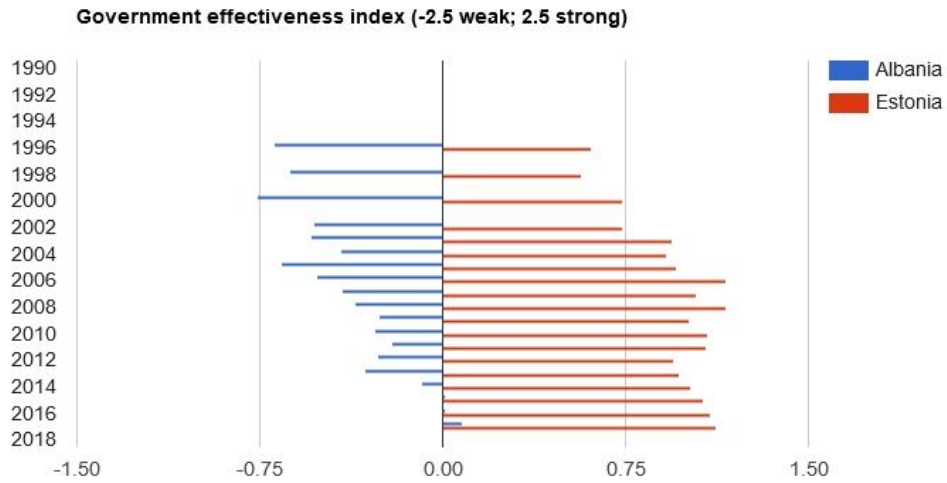


Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 14 – Control of Corruption Albania and Estonia

The graph above “captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as capture of the state by elites and private interests” (The Global Economy, 2018). As seen from this graph, control of corruption in Albania is weak and has remained such, in comparison to Estonia, which has increased throughout the years.

### 6.3.6 Government Effectiveness



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 15 – Government Effectiveness Index; Albania and Estonia

The graph above demonstrates the index of Government effectiveness, which measures the level of perception about the public services as well as their level of independence from the political pressure. It also measures the quality of the formulation and implementation of these policies as well as the government's will to respect them (The Global Economy, 2018).

Comparing the two countries, it is clear that Albania has a lower effectiveness, while Estonia has been growing steadily since 2002. It is noted that the perception of the government's effectiveness in Albania have been experiencing a slight increase only in 2017.

### 6.3.7 Voice and Accountability Index

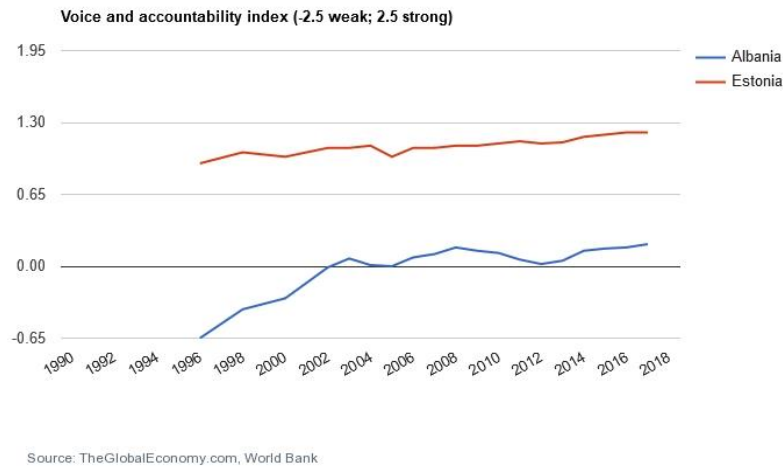
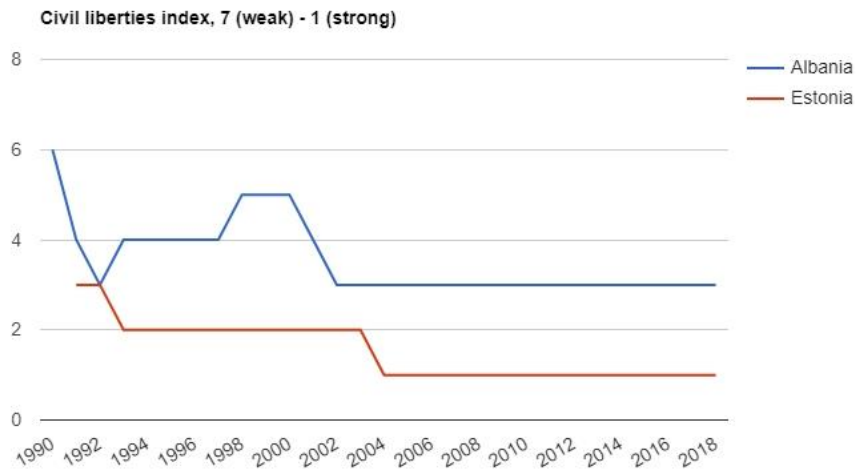


Figure 16 – Voice and accountability Index; Albania and Estonia

“The index for Voice and Accountability” measures the perceptions about the degree in which the citizens can participate in the election of their government as well as the citizens’ possibility to exert their freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media (The Global Economy, 2018).

It can be seen that Albanians have had a low performance over the years based on its ability to actively choose their own government. The curve rises slightly above the average rate and has a slight fluctuation; but generally, there is a low representation. Meanwhile, in Estonia, a high participation is noted at the very beginning of data collection in 1995. It should be added that many NGOs and citizens are included in the process of drafting legislation as specified in the Freedom House reports.

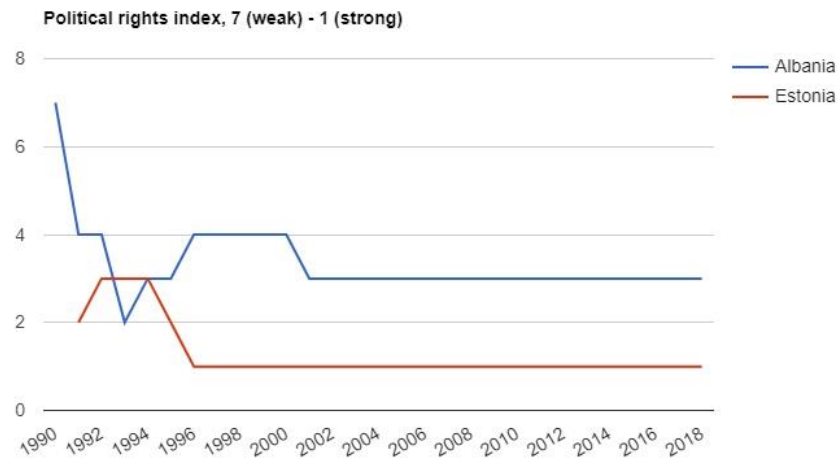


Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 17 – Civil Liberties Index; Albania and Estonia

The Civil Liberties index from the Freedom House assesses the following: freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights (The Global Economy, 2018).

The graph indicates that Estonia has consistently respected civil liberties and has shown stability in respecting these rights. In Albania, since 2002, there have been no changes in the status of the civil liberties. This means that despite the efforts, little meaningful work has been done in this regard.



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, World Bank

Figure 18 – Political Rights Index; Albania and Estonia

The political rights index clearly shows the discrepancy between Albania and Estonia in exercising political rights that are mainly related to electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and the functioning of government (The Global Economy, 2018).

In conclusion, Estonia and Albania experienced a lot of similarities in their political history, but there were different results at the end of this long and tiresome journey. Estonia succeeded in showing how the motivation, determination, and courage of people who love their homeland can change the nation's fate and make it a better place for its citizens. Another reality is seen in Albania. Lack of consensus that characterizes the political discourse, misguided political decisions, and lack of motivation and determination are the elements that create artificial obstacles damaging the country's progress and development.

Perhaps, at the end, war against communism was more vital and indispensable for Estonia because it saw democracy as the "ultimate salvation" from the country's troublesome past. Perhaps, Balcerowicz's theory was true when it states that "liberalization from foreign domination produces in a country a special state of mind and corresponding political opportunities. Hence, the government has the possibility to make decisions that would not be made under normal political and economic circumstance" (Sargsyan, 2016).

Albania remained stuck in what Carothers calls "gray zone" because as the author points out that these countries "...suffer from serious democratic deficits, often including poor representation of citizens interests, low levels of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of the law by government officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy, very low levels of public confidence in state institutions, and persistently poor institutional performance by the state" (Carothers, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

The chapter initially tried to make a comparative analysis of the two countries, Albania and Estonia, with the findings that were evidenced during the whole period involved in the study, since the state formation until the present years. By wanting to analyze the differences that have influenced the different outcomes in the process of democratization, it is noticed that besides the similarities in the change of systems, in the typology and the period of time, in Estonia there have been more tendencies of the formation of a democratic political culture. This democratic political culture has started since the period of state formation, has been somewhat resistant in the communism period and flourished again during the transition years in what was called the legal restoration. This politics was continued with persistence and continuous efforts by all the political actors that had important political posts by showing that they have a normative preference for democracy. Somehow this analysis highlighted these differences by also emphasizing the shortcomings of a democratic political culture in Albania's case, by continuing with a dictatorial regime that erased every possible trace of a democratic culture, and later with a transition period that somehow inherited a political culture with autocratic features. This authoritarian characteristic of the political culture was reflected even in the leaders through their political decisions that produced anarchy and chaos for years.

In a considerable part of this chapter, were treated various aspects of the political, economic and social developments during the transition years, where it was clearly evidenced that there is an obvious difference in the development of the two countries in all the aspects like the rule of law, corruption and the election system. All these differences have also influenced in the different approach that these countries took in the road of democratization.

## CONCLUSIONS

The democratization of a country remains a crucial process since it can be perceived as a “guarantor” of the establishment and sustainability of a democratic order where the individual is free to exercise his rights. Above all, the democratization process will be of particular importance as long as it is somehow reflected as an antagonistic system of communism.

The analysis of democratization is of particular interest for countries such as Albania, as on behalf of this process, certain policies are implemented by the country’s most important political actors. However, despite the efforts, there is still much work to be done, and this process is incomplete in Albania. Therefore, in order to further understand the dynamics of this process in Albania and to justify the reasons why democratization has stalled, different theories were interpreted throughout this dissertation. This dissertation has explained why democratization for Albania has not yet ended its cycle with a ‘happy’ ending. Instead, in many other countries which, like Albania, have suffered the consequences of regimes other than democracy, like communism, they have had a different development in the process of democratization, concluding this cycle successfully like it appeared in the Estonian case.

This dissertation contrasts theories that play influential roles and provide a rational academic explanation of why democratization flourishes in some countries and fails in some others. However, the significant theoretical approaches, like the modernization theory or institutionalism theory, have not justified the long stagnation of Albania’s transition to democracy.

Provided that no single argument can fully explain the failure of democratization in Albania, this dissertation reviews the feasibility of merging two variables appurtenant to contrasting approaches so that the mismatch of the puzzle can be composed. In addition, it must be determined whether Albania is the only case in which democratization failed given some advantages – such as ethnic homogeneity, relatively strong economic development of the early years of transition, and unconditional international support. Thus, to establish a detailed analogy of this process, Estonia was studied as well. Estonia was chosen because of its proximity (not particularly in a physical sense, but in terms of political developments. So, by adopting Mill’s method of difference, the natures of these countries’ comparable trajectories of political development were investigated, albeit with dissimilar outcomes.

Longing to focus on the course of democratization for both countries, the approaches that appeared to be pertinent to interpret the breakdown in Albania and the success in Estonia pertain to the theory of political culture as part of the structural approach and normative leadership's preference for democracy as part of the agent-oriented approach. Both variables proposed above are representative of the approaches that are most persuasive in democratization studies.

As evidenced above, this solution of combining the two approaches is considered an efficient opportunity because a review of the literature revealed that no single theory could justify the different outcomes. Therefore, this combination cannot be considered as an experiment from a theoretical point of view, as it has been implemented before in the social sciences under one umbrella theory called the actor-network theory (ANT). This theory serves as the basis of my theoretical framework because it covers the theoretic context of the two independent variables that I have selected (i.e., political culture and leaders' normative preferences for democracy). Consequently, this theory best fits the dissertation because, as Ritzer (2004) assumes, this theory best covers the division between agency and structure and makes the dividing line between the theories invisible.

Thus, by aiming to find logical cause-and-effect arguments to explain this phenomenon, this dissertation aimed to justify the fact that a successful combination of a pre-existing democratic political culture and leaders' normative preferences for democracy have helped the successful democratization in Estonia. Meanwhile, a lack of a democratic political culture together and a lack of leaders' normative preferences for democracy have caused Albania to remain stuck in this process. This dissertation addressed the variables of political culture and leaders' normative preferences for democracy, as reflected in various textbooks, reports, and primary sources. At the same time, to determine the elements of political culture, the WVS data (specifically, the data collected during the third wave) were used. This data decodes the behaviors and perceptions of the individuals of both countries regarding issues related to political culture.

Meanwhile, to empirically measure the process of democratization, FH reports from various years were used. By analyzing these reports, the greatest problems that have encumbered the democratization of Albania were identified. It was also clearly observed where the dividing line is and where these issues differ in Estonia. Furthermore, from the analysis of the reports, it was observed that the most prominent problems in Albania that encumbered the democratization

process were the rule of law, corruption, and the absence of free and fair elections. Meanwhile, these issues have never been major problems in Estonia and, therefore, have not impacted the process of democratization. On the contrary, Estonia has had free and fair elections since its first parliamentary elections after the 1990s. Of the former Soviet countries, Estonia is among those with the least corruption, but even in the evidenced cases it has been accompanied by the act of resignation by the political actors. Also, Estonia has never had any problems with the rule of law. In matters of the rule of law, an efficient division of the three powers (i.e., judicial, executive, and legislative) has been observed.

Thus, to further justify the selected methodology, the idea of empirically observing the independent and dependent variables as a cause-and-effect process was precisely to treat the whole process in a continuous and all-inclusive way, in its input and output. This method of analysis also enabled the exploration of the phenomenon and the decoding of the variables in a detailed way and over a long period of time, from the period of state formation until the present date.

Consequently, only extended in this time period of analyzing all the components, the dependent and independent variables in comparison with another country, similar to Albania but with a different outcome like Estonia, was it possible to find an empirically and theoretically argued answer to the research question: How does political culture influence the democratic trajectory of former communist countries?

Formulating this research question, besides somehow enabling us to extend the research in a long period of time to analyze in depth all the internal factors that have persistently influenced this process, it also helps to create a correlation among the components of the political culture and the effects that they have had on the process of democratization. Thus, to better achieve this objective, a division in three time frames (i.e., in the pre-communist, communist, and post-communist periods) was enabled. One of the main intentions was to find out if any components of a democratic political culture have been present since the pre-communist period in either case, and, if so, how the critical junctures have impacted them and how the political culture has affected the political system. Furthermore, in order to better complete the framework of the empirical analysis of the two independent variables included in this study, when analyzing the critical junctures, the behaviors of the most prominent leaders for all the time frames analyzed become clear and provide a conservative guideline regarding how oriented these

leaders have been towards democratic norms. A combination of longitudinal methods was used to complete this study, to cover the long time period of this study, and to carry out the process-tracing analysis.

So, based on the empirical analysis of the predictions made in Albania regarding the causes that encumbered democratization, by using these study methods mentioned above, I created a general and logical framework referring to a possible negative correlation between the absence of a democratic political culture in Albania, which was somehow inherited through generations, and the democratization process after the 90s. On the other hand, by mutually combining the political culture with the individuals attitudes and the direct impact that they have with each other, I have argued that this relationship has unavoidably influenced the leaders preferences, which after the 1990s, have been characterized by a non-democratic decision-making and this has been translated into concrete policies that have encumbered the democratization of the country.

These findings are in line with the hypothesis that political culture and leaders' normative preferences for democracy influence the democratization process. A democratic political culture has resisted time and repression during the communist regime in Estonia by later influencing an incitement acceleration of the democratization process after the 1990s. Meanwhile in Albania, not only do we not find any traces of a democratic political culture in the pre-communist period, but even those that are found were totally removed and eradicated during the communist regime. This phenomenon later influenced the appearance of the new elites with roots that extend to the communist period. This has translated into an autocratic leadership style with a noticeable absence of normative preferences for democracy.

Within this context, by carefully analyzing and tracking the traces of the democratic political culture in the post-communist period for both countries and by looking at how critical junctures have influenced the political culture, I have tried to contribute not only to the theoretical approach in the framework of democratization theories but also in the empirical definition of the factors that have encumbered Albania's democratization. Thus, if we may establish the added general value of this dissertation, I would add that a component is the theoretical framework which includes a new theory in the studies of the democratizing processes that is the leadership's normative preference for democracy, a theory introduced by Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal S. Pérez-Liñán. The authors projected this theory to describe why

democracies either break down or survive in Latin America, but that in the present dissertation is adapted as a representative of the agent-oriented approach group of theories that explain the democratization approaches. The added value consists of the analysis leaders' normative preferences for democracy have had on the democratization process in Albania after the 1990s.

Another source of added value is the combined and parallel longitudinal analysis of political culture and the most important political events for both countries. This type of analysis made it possible to make an adequate comparison to find a factor that has facilitated the democratization process in Estonia while democratization was unsuccessful in Albania. In this way, I advance the statement that democratization in Albania has been greatly encumbered in the first years of the transition because the political leaders have not had normative preferences for democracy.

Many sources were critically analyzed to create the theoretical and empirical framework of the hypothesis stated above. Various textbooks, papers, and reports were examined, many of which are related to political culture or to the most important political developments in both countries since the period of state formation. In addition to comparing the countries, the indexes and reports of Freedom House have been utilized to establish how much the leaders and the most prominent political actors of both countries have influenced the continuous democratization in Estonia and the obstruction of it in Albania.

The analysis of Estonia, which was done to compare its democratization process with that of Albania, allows an in-depth comparison of the political situation to be made. In this way, it can be determined which elements of the political culture have facilitated or encumbered the democratization process. Furthermore, by dividing this study into several study periods, I have identified the critical junctures and how these have influenced the political culture, and vice-versa, for both countries.

However, several difficulties and limitations were encountered in this study. For one, this study examines a relatively long time, and at the same time, the synchronic comparison again in a long period of time of both countries. Thus, besides the lack of literature regarding the political culture mainly for the pre-communist and communist periods, it was often easy to get lost in the historical literature. This is because the line dividing the historical literature from literature about important political developments was often not clear.

In summarizing this project, the first chapter summarizes all the pieces of the puzzle of research in this dissertation. It focuses on establishing the methodology, defining the research questions and the hypothesis put forth in the dissertation. It continues with the operationalization of key terms, such as democratization, political culture, and leaders' normative preferences for democracy. Also, a theoretic framework with a preliminary literature review is given in this chapter. This review precedes a detailed analysis of the most important theoretical concepts and approaches, which is the topic of the second chapter.

The second chapter initially provides a more detailed analysis of the most important theoretic concepts and approaches and engages in the debate of the main theories of democratization. The purpose of analyzing these theories in detail was to assess the theories of political culture that underlie this process as causal factors. Another purpose of this analysis was to find out why this theory, on its own, cannot explain why democratization was unsuccessful in Albania. Thus, the purpose of this study was to fill the theoretical gap that existed in the literature and to support the proposition set forward in the theoretical framework to unite two different approaches into the ANT in order to analyze and adapt the empirical findings in a later phase. The ANT best fulfilled the theoretic framework since the goal of this study was to explain how political culture and leaders' normative preferences for democracy have influenced democratization while demonstrating why Albania did not successfully democratize while another country with a similar past did. Based on this investigation and the overall findings, including those centered on the successful combination political culture and leaders' normative preferences for democracy, as well as on inheritance since the period of state formation and how these factors have influenced the contrasting outcomes in Albania and Estonia.

In the following chapters, the dissertation continues with an empirical analysis that traces the elements of an existing democratic political culture in the pre-communist and communist periods for Estonia and Albania. A detailed analysis of the most important political events of the two countries in these periods has made it possible to discover how there has been a period of democratic blooming in Estonia, which has laid the basis for an institutional state and a state of the right of law. This evidence is provided by tracking the activities of a civil society that was active to the extent that it was involved in state institutions and in the political decision-making process. Also, the existence of a democratic political culture is best indicated by the conduction of a referendum that was held regarding the inclusion of religion in the educational institutions

and in the drafting of the constitution and the respective laws that guaranteed the rule of law. Indisputably, a country that enables the participation of its own citizens in making decisions through a democratic instrument and, at the same time, respects their decisions in institutional ways, of course it has self-sufficient instruments to ensure a functional democracy.

At the same time, while in Estonia a proper democracy was established, many foreign authors define the situation of Albania as one of total political, economic, and social chaos. During this period, Albania was characterized by leaders who never put the state's interests before their personal interests.

These findings from the research support my initial premise that a democratic political culture in Estonia has been essential to the country's predisposition to further its democratic processes since the 1990s. Meanwhile, the absence of a political culture in Albania has obstructed the democratizing processes because of the lack of a democratic tradition generated across generations. The theoretical part of relating the political culture to the individual through socializing processes is always present, as a political culture can be neither inherited nor activated without a component of the agent-oriented approach that is the leader and the most important political actors in all the time periods taken into consideration in this study.

Meanwhile, from the above-stated finding, the question naturally arises of how the pre-communist and post-communist periods can be correlated without acknowledging what happened with the political culture during the communist era. Thus, by investigating this time period, it was also shown that Estonia and Albania had different tendencies regarding the development of their respective democratic political cultures, which means that the communist period in Estonia from the typology of the political culture is divided into two main periods. The first phase covers the Stalinist regime, during which time a great similarity between the political, social, and cultural situations of Albania is noticed. The second period was the post-Stalinist period, which began with Stalin's death and is characterized by openness policies. While the masses in Albania became on with the political actors and with the communist ideology, the removal of any traces of resistance (especially intellectual forms of resistance) in Estonia was active and has not stopped opposing the communist regime. The intellectuals of diaspora have continuously fought to preserve their national identity. Thus, the war against the communist regime in Estonia looked like a war to preserve the Estonians' cultural identity. This war has not ceased to exist since the beginning of state's formation.

This war was also reflected in the first years of the post-communist period, during which time the most prominent leaders who gained power after the 1990s, such as Laar, would say that the only way to ensure the untouchability of the borders was accomplished through continuous democratization and following the road towards EU and NATO. The goals set forward by all the political actors of all political forces were clear and united. Thus, the contribution of the political actors was crucial for this process in Estonia.

The inclusion of political actors as a variable was necessary to give a reasonable explanation of why the democratization resulted successful in Estonia while the opposite happened in Albania. This argument is further supported by the assumption that from the analysis and interpretation of the wave of study of WVS, it best supports the proposed argument by me initially that the variable of the democratic political culture, elaborated on its own could not explain the various differences in the outcome for both countries. Following this line of argument and the interpretation of the data, it can be seen that besides the fact that there has existed a democratic political culture in the pre-communist period, in Estonia, whereas in Albania there are very few traces of such a culture, the interpretation of the data from the WVS study, conducted almost in the same period after the 1990s does not show enough major changes in citizens' perceptions about the matters of political culture to explain the differences between the outcomes of the democratization processes for both countries. We can see a relatively similar process of participation of the citizens in the decision-making processes as well as reduced activity in civil society. Thus, in order to justify the quick democratization of Estonia, by not being satisfied only with the political culture, the leadership after the 90s is seen as a dominant factor and a promotor that has irrevocably pushed the progress of this process.

Also, the FH reports were analyzed because they can measure democratization while also linking instrument the two variables, as they coincide with the analysis of the components of political culture by measuring the behaviors of citizens' and leaders because, as per the theory included in Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán's study, coding rules coincide with matters such as free and fair elections and the rule of law. The reports of Freedom House explain these matters quite well.

Thus, from the analysis of the FH reports, it can be noticed that the major problems in Albania consist of matters such as corruption, a lack of free and fair elections, and the rule of law. The difference between Albania and Estonia lies in the fact that all these matters result from

having functioned adequately since the first steps of the formation of the democratic state. The conclusions of these reports highlight the fact that all these matters are related to the political culture of the masses, who accept these phenomena (in Albania) or have refused them (in Estonia). At the same time, from the analysis of the FH reports, a greater political responsibility is noticed among the political actors. This responsibility is often associated with acts of resignation in cases of discovered corruption in Estonia.

In addition to attempting to find the causes of the failure of democratization through a comparative analysis with another country that has succeeded in this process, the analysis also aims to demonstrate a model of success. This model may be implemented in Albania by following the same steps that Estonia followed. Thus, this study can continue to be refined by other researchers so that concrete models can be provided in terms of the interventions that are necessary for Albania to successfully overcome the blockage that has befallen her.

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