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Irma Spahiu

Osgoode Hall Law School, York University

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Exploring the “faces” of Europeanization from an Albanian perspective

Irma Spahiu
Osgoode Hall Law School,
Toronto, Canada

Abstract. Europeanization is a process existent in all countries applying for EU membership, including Albania. This article aims to explore Olsen’s faces of Europeanization by looking at how this process has taken place in Albania and if it has led to substantial changes in the Albanian politics and governance. It has been argued that Europeanization is a dual process that affects both domestic policies and European Union. The article explores this relationship in the Albanian case. It argues that Europeanization in Albania is occurring in an “Albanian fashion-way” with some unique features which are labelled as ‘Europeanization by convenience’.

Keywords: Europeanization, integration, conditionality, processes and, institutions.

1 Introduction

The term “Europeanization” is often used interchangeably with European integration. However, its understanding is not restricted to such limitation. There is considerable conceptual contestation with regards to the meaning of the term, but also to the influence it has to the European polity and beyond. Europeanization strongly affects not only the members of the European Union, but also the prospective members that aspire to join the Union. The study of how Europeanization takes place in the candidate countries in the EU is worth exploring in this regard. According to the European Commission there are six countries with candidate country status at the moment¹⁷. Albania is one of them – a country which has sought for long to join the EU, but only recently, on June 2014, was granted candidate status.

This paper incorporates different approaches to Europeanization to help its understanding and how it works in practice. In doing so, the paper focuses on the candidate countries to join the EU- Albania in particular. The question asked in this paper is: What are the “faces” of Europeanization from an Albanian perspective? To answer this question, in section one, I first conceptualize Europeanization, and then look at some of its approaches. In section two, I analyze the concept from an Albanian perspective focusing at similar or distinguishable patterns from other cases where Europeanization has taken place. I look at some developments in Albania and provide data from some human rights indexes. In section three, I revisit Olsen’s faces of Europeanization and look at them from an Albanian perspective. At the end, I will draw some conclusions on the applications of Europeanization, lessons to be learned from the Albanian case and the future of Europeanization for the EU and the region.

As part of the methodology for this paper I engage with previous literature review on Europeanization, and then I contextualize it from a social, political and legal perspective. I explore the faces of Europeanization developed by Olsen and build on his work by using Albania as a case study for this research. I use the “Rationalist institutionalism” as a theoretical framework to explore the Albanian Europeanization.

2 Understanding Europeanization

2.1 Conceptualization

¹⁷ They are: Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Iceland and Albania. See European Commission-Enlargement, Available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/check-current-status/index_en.htm.

Europeanization is defined in many ways. One of the earliest conceptualizations of the term is by Ladrech, who defines Europeanization simply as ‘an incremental process of reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the extent that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy making.’¹⁸ Olsen argues that ‘Europeanization’ is a fashionable but contested concept. According to him, the term is applied in a number of ways to describe a variety of phenomena and processes of change.¹⁹ The term is also defined as domestic change caused by European integration. Vink uses the definitions of Hix and Goetz to explain Europeanization as ‘a process of change in national institutional and policy practices that can be attributed to European integration.’²⁰ Harmsen and Wilson take a different approach when they define Europeanization as ‘the emerge and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance, that is, of political, legal and social institutions that formalize and routinise interactions among actors and of policy networks specializing in the creation of authoritative European rules.’²¹

For the purpose of this paper I will use the definition by Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier who describe Europeanization as ‘a process in which states adopt EU rules that cover a broad range of formal and informal issues and structures. This means the transposition of the EU law into domestic law, the restructuring of domestic institutions according to the EU rules; or the change of domestic political practices according to the EU standards.’²²

According to Exadaktylos and Radaelli ‘Europeanization is a process, not an outcome’²³. In addition, Europeanization is not a unique process and a sui generis phenomenon. Rather, Europeanization is conceptualized in a way that makes it possible to compare European dynamics with the dynamics of other systems of governance. Olsen argues that the dynamics of Europeanization can be understood in terms of a limited set of ordinary processes of change.²⁴ Olsen calls them the ‘faces of Europeanization.’ Five changes can be distinguished for this purpose.

The first change is related to the external territorial boundaries. It involves the territorial reach of a system of governance and the degree to which Europe as a continent becomes a single political space. The European Union has turned out to be attractive for most European states, and it is continuing to grow. However, recently there are some signals that it is stopping its enlargement. Europeanization is highly connected to the European Union, and Radaelli argues that ‘Europeanization would not exist without European integration.’²⁵

The second change is related to the development of institutions of governance at the European level. It means building formal-legal institutions with a collective action capacity to make and enforce binding

¹⁸ Ladrech, Robert (1994), “Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The case of France”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol 32 (1), p. 69-88 at 69

¹⁹ Olsen, J. P.(2002). The Many Faces of Europeanization. *JCMS* 40(5), 921–52 at 921.

²⁰ Vink, M..(2002). What is Europeanization?and Other Questions on a New Research Agenda. Department of Political Science, Leiden University at 4.

²¹ Harmsen, R., & Wilson, Th. M..(2000). Introduction: Approaches to Europeanization. *Yearbook of European Studies*, 14, 13-26 at 14.

²² F Schimmelfenning and U. Sedelmeier (eds), *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*. Cornell University Press, 2005 at 7.

²³ Exadaktylos Th., & Radaelli, C. M.(2009). Research Design in European Studies: The Case of Europeanization. *JCMS(Journal of Common market Studies)*, 47(3), 507-530 at 510.

²⁴ See Olsen, J. P..(2002). The Many Faces of Europeanization. *JCMS* 40(5), 921–52

at 923.

²⁵ See Radaelli, C. M..(2000). Whither Europeanization? Concept stretching and substantive change. *European Integration online Papers (EIoP)*, 4(8), 1-25 at 6.

decisions and to sanction non-compliance. The European states came out devastated from the conflict of World War II and understood the need for collaboration. Riedel states that 'At the end of World War II European countries succeeded in overcoming nationalism by developing political instruments towards European integration.'²⁶

The third change is related to the penetration of national and sub-national systems of governance. Europeanization here involves the division of responsibilities and powers between different levels of governance. All multilevel systems of governance need to work out a balance between unity and diversity, central coordination and local autonomy. Spohn argues that 'Through the process of Europeanization, these varying national institutional frameworks are at the same time influenced by the emerging forms of European religious governance, European immigration policy and European citizenship.'²⁷ The process of adaptation has not been the same for all countries. Especially the Eastern Europe countries have faced a lot of difficulties when they have gone through the process of adaptation. Speaking about Romania, Dobre noticed that 'Given that post-communist Romania had no regional institutional structures and has been constitutionally defined as a centralized, unitary state, the internal institutionalization of regions and the creation of regional development policy provide an example of how EU conditionality triggers domestic change and adaptation.'²⁸

The fourth change relates to the exporting forms of political organization and governance that are typical and distinct for Europe beyond the European territory. Europeanization here concerns relations with non-European actors and institutions and how Europe finds a place in the larger world order. Camyar argues that 'Europeanization is not just confined to member countries, but also extends to aspiring non-member countries.'²⁹ Research has identified at least two mechanisms of Europeanization in those countries: anticipation and conditionality. Anticipation is based on the expectation of possible accession to the EU in the foreseeable future. The premise is that the aspiration of a country to join the EU triggers self-initiated policy and institutional changes. This mechanism is persuasive in its nature. The conditionality mechanism works when aspiring countries are confronted with a set of policy requirements that need to be satisfied to achieve EU membership. It tells what aspiring countries need to do to become a member state. The conditionality mechanism is coercive in its nature. Camyar explains these mechanisms taking as examples the cases of the Czech Republic and Hungary.³⁰ I will return to explore this change deeper in the next section. The fifth change is related to the political project aiming at a unified and politically stronger Europe. The degree to which Europe is becoming a more important political entity is related all the other changes, namely territorial space, center building, domestic adaptation, and how European developments impact and are impacted other systems of governance and events.

2.2 Different approaches to Europeanization

Many authors define Europeanization using two main approaches, the top-down, and the bottom-up. For instance, Howell argues that 'Europeanization incorporated an interactive process that involved bottom-up and top-down procedures.'³¹ According to him, Europeanization can be understood

²⁶ Riedel, S..(2008). Challenges to the democratic accommodation of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in ACP and EU countries : Challenges in EU countries. *ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, Committee on Political Affairs at 2*

²⁷ Spohn, W..(2009). Europeanization, Religion and Collective Identities in an Enlarging Europe : A Multiple Modernities Perspective. *European Journal of Social Theory* 12(3), 358–374 at 365.

²⁸ Dobre, A.M..(2010).Europeanization and new patterns of multi-level governance in Romania. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 10(1), 59–70 at 67.

²⁹ Camyar, I..(2010). Europeanization, Domestic Legacies and Administrative Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Hungary and the Czech Republic. *European Integration*, 32(2) 137–15 at 138.

³⁰ See Camyar at 140.

³¹ Howell, K. E..(2004). Developing Conceptualisations of Europeanisation: A Study of Financial Services. *Politic*, 24(1), 20–25 at 21.

from a bottom-up or top-down perspective meaning that at different times the emphasis on Europeanization will either be based around mechanisms of change in terms of up-loading from the domestic to the EU level or downloading from the EU to the domestic level.³² The 'top-down approach' to Europeanization looks at the change emanating from the impact of the Union onto the national policy. Exadaktylos & Radaelli observe that 'In top-down models, empirical research starts from the presence of integration, controls the level of fit/misfit of the EU-level policy *vis-à-vis* the Member States and then explains the presence or absence of domestic change.'³³ However, one must go beyond the degree of fit in theorizing EU adaptation to understand the top-down approach. Mastenbroek & Kaeding argue that even in case of a misfit with domestic beliefs, adaptation may occur and that key to such changes is social learning. Actors may adjust their norms, and bring these into line with those specified by the new EU policy.³⁴

From a 'bottom-up' approach Europeanization occurs when states begin to affect the EU policy in a given area. European-level developments do not dictate specific forms of institutional adaptation but leave considerable discretion to domestic actors and institutions. European signals are interpreted and modified through domestic traditions, institutions, identities and resources. In this context, the bottom-up approach helps to understand the flow of the policy developments.

There is another approach to Europeanization that falls under the umbrella of the so-called 'new institutionalism'. Vink argues that 'Institutional approaches can be characterized most concisely by the notion that 'institutions matter.'³⁵ There are two kinds of responses to this question: a cultural and a calculus approach. The cultural approach emphasizes the extent to which individuals turn to established routines or familiar patterns of behaviour to attain their purposes. In this approach, institutions affect the very identities, self-images and preferences of the actors. This logic of action leads to the calculus approach because institutions have an impact, as Vink observes, 'by altering the expectations an actor has about the actions that others are likely to take in response to or simultaneously with his own actions.'³⁶

There has been some concern related to the question whether Europeanization, weakens the role of the state. Many agree that there are changes in political organization, structures and peoples' minds. Fink-Hafner argues that research, in fact, now reveals that Europeanization brings about both convergence and divergence among national models of co-coordinating EU affairs. According to him, 'While old(er) EU members were involved in creating the EU in terms of its polity and policies, the latest newcomers (such as Slovenia, Estonia and Hungary) have had to incorporate EU policies and adapt institutionally before having any say in their formation.'³⁷ This may bring some inequality arguments and may generate some conflict and resistance between members and the Union. Mastenbroek and Kaeding argue that 'if member states do not succeed in uploading their policies, they will not happily adjust to the resulting decision-making outcome, because of the high costs of adaptation.'³⁸ The sooner the members states fits into the Union policies, the

³² Ibid at 24.

³³ Exadaktylos Th., & Radaelli, C. M.(2009). Research Design in European Studies: The Case of Europeanization. *JCMS(Journal of Common market Studies)*, 47(3), 507–530 at 510.

³⁴ Mastenbroek, E., & Kaeding, M..(2006). Europeanization Beyond the Goodness of Fit: Domestic Politics in the Forefront. *Comparative European Politics*, 4, 331–354 at 345.

³⁵ Vink, M..(2002). What is Europeanization?and Other Questions on a New Research Agenda. Department of Political Science, Leiden University at 10.

³⁶ Ibid at 11.

³⁷ Fink-Hafner, D..(2007). Europeanization in Managing EU Affairs : Between Divergence and Convergence, a Comparative Study of Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia. *Public Administration*, 85(3), 805–828 at 805.

³⁸ Mastenbroek, E., & Kaeding, M..(2006). Europeanization Beyond the Goodness of Fit: Domestic Politics in the Forefront. *Comparative European Politics*, 4, 331–354 at 333.

smoother will be the process of integration. This is not easy to achieve, and usually, it needs time and a lot of efforts. Moreno discusses that 'Europeanization confronts a gradual and necessarily 'slow' process of accommodating cultural, historical and political diversity within the Old Continent.'³⁹ It is a matter of coordination and adaptation between the parts and the whole, where parts play a significant role. This process must work on both sides, leaving space to the states to prevail whenever it is questioned their power to make decisions.

3 Europeanization, the “Albanian fashion-way”

3.1 Europeanization in the Balkans and Albania

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Europeanization strongly relates to European integration (see Radaelli, Vink, Riedel). Indeed, for many countries, especially those of the Eastern Europe, Europeanization and integration have taken place concurrently. Albania, and other prospective countries to join the EU have gone through both processes at the same time after the collapse of communism in their attempts to build their democratic states. According to Nasho Ah-Pine, 'The democratization process in Albania is one of the most difficult ones given its tumultuous historical legacy, its difficult economical situation and above all, given its extreme domestic political polarization.'⁴⁰ Nasho Ah-Pine explains the Albanian peculiarity with the total isolation of the country for decades and the real paranoia which left a legacy of 'political passivity' since for many years Albanians did not have, but one, political alternative.⁴¹

Explaining Europeanization of the Balkan countries Anastasakis talks about the “Eastern Style Europeanization” as a process of deep transformation and modernization of economies, politics and societies.⁴² They all came out from communist regimes, some more totalitarian than others. The transformation element was not present for all other Western European states that first joined the EU. Regime change did not happen for them, at least not at the same time as their Europeanization. Eastern Europe has developed in a unique distinguished way which Anastasakis identifies as “Eastern Style”. Schimmelfenning argues that “In the case of quasi-members and candidate countries, it is clear that the transfer of the *acquis communautaire* is at the core of Europeanization.”⁴³

In an attempt to find a model to explain the transformation process of the Balkan countries, Radovanovik notices another feature. He observes that the transformation of these countries towards Europeanization has occurred while trying to overpass the Balkanization process. Radovanovik argues that ‘Since the fall of communism in the ’90s, the Western Balkans have been undergoing fundamental and multiple transformations that are complex in their nature and uneasy to be explained by a single paradigm or model.’⁴⁴ The Balkans has transformed territorially, politically and socially.

³⁹ Moreno, L..(2007). Europeanization, Territorial Subsidiarity and Welfare Reform, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 17(4), 487–497 at 494.

⁴⁰ Elda Nasho Ah-Pine, Albanian Integration into the UE: Security, Europeanization, democratization: which project for the democracy? ECPR, August 2011 Reykjavik at 2

⁴¹ Ibid, at 6.

⁴² Othon Anastasakis, The Europeanization of the Balkans, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Summer/Fall 2005, Vol XII, issue 1 at 79.

⁴³ Frank Schimmelfenning, Europeanization beyond member states, *Living Reviews in European Governance*, Vol. 7, (2012), No. 1 at 5. Available at <http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2012-1>

⁴⁴ Tamara Radovanovik, From 'Balkanization' to 'Europeanization' of the Western Balkan countries, *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, Vol 2, no 4, April 2012 at 208.

The Europeanization process of the Balkan countries is in many cases equated to the process of EU accession. As I mentioned above (Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier's definition), the process meant to bring about the transposition of the EU law into domestic law, the restructuring of domestic institutions according to the EU rules; or the change of domestic political practices according to the EU standards. All the countries in the region are, depending on their progress, falling behind or going forward towards the EU accession. The table below shows the status of these countries in the EU.

Table 1: Steps from opening of negotiations with the EU for the SAA⁴⁵ to accession

	SAA initiall ed	SAA signe d	SAA Ente rs into force	Applicatio n for membersh ip	Commissi on opinion	Candida te status granted	Start of accession negotiati ons
Albania	2003	2006	2009	2009	2010	2014	-
Croatia ⁴⁶	2000	2001	2005	2003	2004	2004	2004 (joined 2013)
BH	2007	2008	-	-	-	-	-
Macedo nia	2000	2001	2004	2004	2005	2005	-
Monten egro	2006	2007	2010	2008	2010	2010	2012 ⁴⁷
Serbia	2007	2008	2013	2009	2011	2011	-

Source: Balfour & Stratulat 2011, p. 8; Updated by the author from http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/index_en.htm

Along with other Western Balkan countries, Albania was recognized as a potential country for EU membership in 2003 at the Thessaloniki Declaration⁴⁸. The country had been refused the candidate status for three times from 2009 (when SAA entered into force) to 2013. In October 2012, the European Commission recommended that Albania be granted EU candidate status, subject to completion of twelve key measures in certain areas. Only in June 2014 the EU granted Albania the candidate status.⁴⁹ At the General Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg in June 2014, Ministers from the EU Member States have agreed – based on the recommendation by the European Commission - to grant EU candidate status to Albania despite Britain, Germany and France being reluctant to grant the status of candidate.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Stabilization and Association Agreement

⁴⁶ Note that Croatia became a Member of the EU on 1 July 2013.

⁴⁷ Accession negotiations started for Montenegro on 29 June 2012.

⁴⁸ Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, EU-Western Balkans Summit, Thessaloniki Declaration, Available at <http://www.stabilitypact.org/reg-conf/030621-thessaloniki/declaration.asp>

⁴⁹ European Commission, EU candidate status for Albania, **27.06.2014**. Available at

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/albania/index_en.htm

⁵⁰ EurActiv, EU to grant Albania 'candidate' status, 25.06.2014. Available at

, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/enlargement/eu-grant-albania-candidate-status-303071>

Albania still needs to meet key priorities, with particular focus on administration and judiciary reform, fight against corruption and organized crime and fundamental rights.⁵¹

What all the countries of the Balkans have in common is that their process of joining the EU is based on conditionality, which according to Camyar has a coercive nature. All these countries are confronted with a set of policy requirements that need to be satisfied to achieve EU accession. Using the Rationalist Institutionalism theory developed by Mark and Oslen⁵² can be noticed that the EU's domestic impact on candidate countries follows a logic of consequences where formal domestic institutions and veto players are the main factors impeding or facilitating changes in response to EU adjustment pressures. They will act rationally by complying to these pressures because they fear consequences if they were to act otherwise. The main problem about conditionality is its coercive nature. For conditionality to work, it is important that it is also persuasive and considered legitimate. As Sedelmeier argues 'If a candidate country – elites and publics – positively identifies with the EU, or holds it in high regard, the government is more likely to be open to persuasion and to consider the rules that the EU promotes as legitimate and appropriate.'⁵³ The concern about conditionality comes from the very fact that it only present on the pre-access period. After the country joins the EU, there are no conditions any more, so the country may risk stagnation in the Europeanization process, if not regression. Preoccupied with this problem, Sedelmeier rightfully argues that "The finding that conditionality-the external incentive of membership- was the key mechanism that led to the adoption of EU rules by the candidates make the question of post-accession compliance more salient."⁵⁴ Addressing the same concern Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier engage in an analysis of the EU's impact in candidate countries, which according to them 'has resulted primarily from the external incentives of accession conditionality rather than social learning or lesson-drawing.'⁵⁵

If one looks at public perception in the Balkans, most of the people consider themselves part of the EU and they have aspired for long to join the Union. Data from Gallup Balkan Monitor revealed that in a 2009 survey, people from many countries in the Balkans were in favor of their country joining the EU, varying from 63% in Serbia to 93 % in Albania.⁵⁶ The same data shows that Albanians 'are among the most optimistic among potential new members in the Balkans – on average, they believed that their country would join in 2014.'⁵⁷

However, looking at the reasons behind this 'EU obsession', Mungiu-Pippidi observes that: The Eastern Balkan publics wanted to join Europe, ..due to increasing poverty and the stark contrast between their economic performance and that of the Central European countries....Europe was, therefore, needed as much for its money as for regime legitimacy and security... After securing domestic domination (in business as well as the judicial system and politics), communist successor parties in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania made European accession their next important objective.⁵⁸

⁵¹ European Commission, Memo/14/439, EU candidate status for Albania, 24 June 2014

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-439_en.htm

⁵² March, James G. and Olsen, Johan P., 1989, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics*, Free Press, New York. [Google Books]

⁵³ Ulrich Sedelmeier, *Europeanisation in new member and candidate states*, *Living Reviews in European Governance*, Vol. 6, (2011), No. 1 at 16. Available at <http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2011>

⁵⁴ Ibid at 25.

⁵⁵ Schimmelfennig, Frank and Sedelmeier, Ulrich (Eds.), 2005b, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, *Cornell Studies in Political Economy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY at 9.[Google Books]

⁵⁶ Gallup Balkan Monitor (2010), *Gallup Balkan Monitor: Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans-2010 Summary of findings*, at 7. Available at http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/files/BalkanMonitor-2010_Summary_of_Findings.pdf

⁵⁷ Ibid at 10.

⁵⁸ Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *When Europeanization meets transformation: Lessons from the Unfinished Eastern European Revolutions*, in Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss

If one looks at the Albanian GDP data, this long time aspiration gets its explanation. Albanians are the poorest in the region. According to The Global Finance Albania's GDP In 2013 was the lowest in the Balkans, with a significant difference with other countries, except for Bosnia-Herzegovina which had a slight difference with Albania.

Table 2: Gross Domestic Product Based on Purchasing-Power-Parity (PPP) Per Capita

	Albania	Croatia	BH	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
GDP	8,290	18,066	8,406	10,945	12,101	10,787

Source: Data taken from The Global Finance <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/worlds-richest-and-poorest-countries>. The currency here is US dollars.

Many Albanians see the EU as the only hope to escape poverty, and as a job market. As the data shows because of the poverty, Albanians see the process of joining the EU more as a convenience than as a way towards substantial change for themselves.

However, the biggest problem with the Balkan countries is their political environment, which conveys serious problems with their market institutions, administrative capacities and their rule of law. Mungiu-Pippidi calls the democratization process going on in these countries 'unfinished transformations.'⁵⁹ The labeling is interesting since many of these countries are still experiencing deep transformation of their political institutions, administrative culture, and some of them even changes in their territories. In their analysis of the Albanian integration Bogdani and Loughlin look at its political situation and arrive in a non-optimistic conclusion that 'Albania is far from a fully democratic system.'⁶⁰ As disappointing as this may sound, the authors justify their conclusion with these findings: 'The political and economic system of Albania established after the onset of democracy has ... been faulty and problematic... it is poor, incompetent and irresponsible political leadership which has been the principal factor that has prevented Albania achieving good results in its attempted reforms.'⁶¹

To understand the situation in Albania and the region, I am providing some data on the scores of different indicators of democracy. The data is very useful for shedding some light on the statements and findings of the authors mentioned in this paper.

3.1 Some data on the Albanian Europeanization

As discussed above, Europeanization is closely related to other processes such as democratization and European Integration, in general terms, or judiciary reform, fight against corruption and organized crime and fundamental rights, more specifically. The following data demonstrate how Albania and other countries in the Balkans are doing in terms of all these processes.

Table 3 represents the democracy scores for seven countries in the Balkans between 2001 and 2012 on a scale of 1 to 7. This is a Freedom House Index, part of the program Nations in Transit (NIT). It is notable here that countries are grouped in three categories according to these scores: semi-consolidated democracies, transitional governments and hybrid regimes (Albania is part of this second group), and

(editors), *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Post-communist World*, pp 59-81, Cambridge University Press 2010 at 68.

⁵⁹ Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *When Europeanization meets transformation: Lessons from the Unfinished Eastern European Revolutions*, in Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss (editors), *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Post-communist World*, pp 59-81, Cambridge University Press 2010 at 61 and 67.

⁶⁰ Mirela Bogdani and J. Loughlin, *Albania and the European Union: the tumultuous journey towards integration and accession*. I.B. Tauris, 2007 at 85.

⁶¹ *Ibid* at 30.

semi-consolidated Authoritarian regimes. Albania was scoring better (very close to the first group) till 2006, but not as well in 2012.

Table 3: Democracy Score Changes between 2001 and 2012



Source: NIT 2002, NIT 2007, and NIT 2013.

Note: The NIT ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. Available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/blog/democratic-scorecard-western-balkans#.VCQrqlfXZ8>

Table 4 below gives data on democracy score only for Albania from 2005 to 2014. Albania's democracy score has slightly decreased, instead of increasing in ten years.

Table 4: Albanian Democracy Averaged score 2005-2014

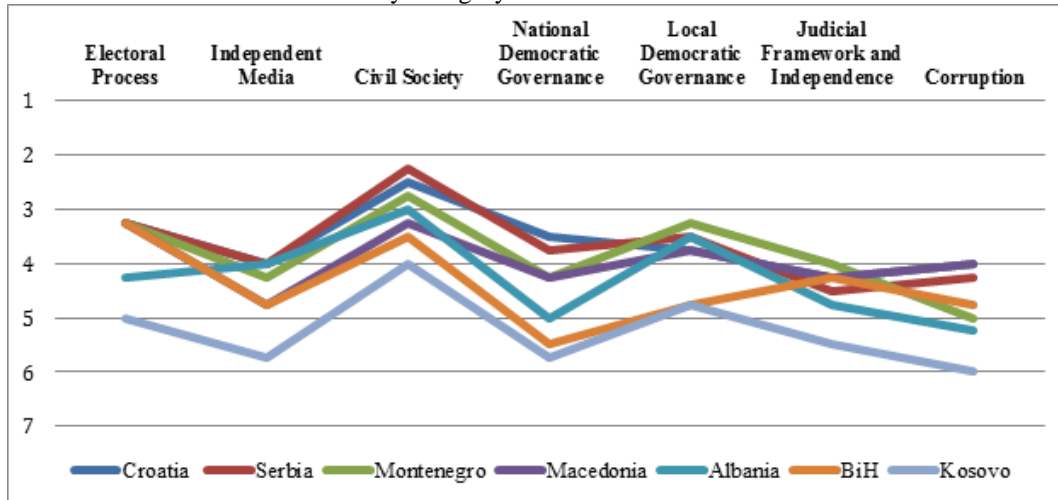
(The data above are drawn from The World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2014*)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Electoral Process	3.75	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.00
Civil Society	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Independent Media	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
National Democratic Governance	4.25	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.75	4.75	5.00	4.75
Local Democratic Governance	3.25	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	3.00	3.25	3.25	3.50	3.50
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.75	4.75	4.75
Corruption	5.25	5.25	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.25	5.25
Democracy Score	4.04	3.79	3.82	3.82	3.82	3.93	4.04	4.14	4.25	4.18

NOTE: The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/albania#.VCQ17_IdXZ8

Table 5 below represents the same data as Table 1 (same Balkan countries), but the democracy score is comprised by performance on seven different categories (of democracy). This is data from Nations in Transit 2013 of Freedom House. It is noticeable that Albania scores better in civil society, but not as well in the electoral process, national democratic governance or corruption.

Table 5: Democratic Performance by Category



Source: NIT 2013.

Table 6 below, shows rate changes of all the data included in Table 2. It is clearer here when countries are improving or declining in their performance. Albania has no sign of improvement for any of the performance categories in four years (2008-2012).

Table 6: Rating Changes between 2008 and 2012

	Croatia	Serbia	Montenegro	Macedonia	Albania	BiH	Kosovo
Electoral Process	=	=	=	⬆️	⬆️⬆️	⬆️	⬆️⬆️
Independent Media	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️⬆️	⬆️⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Civil Society	⬆️	⬆️⬆️	=	=	=	=	=
National Democratic Governance	⬆️	⬆️	=	⬆️	⬆️⬆️⬆️	⬆️⬆️	⬆️⬆️
Local Democratic Governance	=	⬆️	=	=	⬆️⬆️⬆️	=	⬆️⬆️
Judicial Framework and Independence	=	=	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️⬆️	⬆️	⬆️
Corruption	⬆️⬆️	⬆️	=	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️	⬆️

Source: NIT 2009 and NIT 2013.

Note: ⬆️: 0.25 improvement; =: status quo; ⬆️: 0.25 decline.

Table 7 below uses another index, Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) produced by Transparency International. CPI measures the level of corruption from 2003-2012. In this table, it is evident that Albania is ranked the lowest in the region (113), with a big gap between countries like Croatia (62) or Macedonia (69).

Table 7: Corruption Perception Index⁶²

⁶² Here the score is the higher, the better, but ranking is the opposite, meaning the smaller number the better.

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
	Rank						
	(score)						
Macedonia	69 (43)	69 (3.9)	62 (4.1)	71 (3.8)	72 (3.6)	84 (3.3)	105 (2.7)
B&H	72 (42)	91 (3.2)	91(3.2)	99(3)	92 (3.2)	84 (3.3)	93 (2.9)
Serbia	80 (39)	86 (3.3)	78 (3.5)	83 (3.5)	85 (3.4)	79 (3.4)	90 (3.0)
Albania	113(33)	95 (3.1)	87(3.3)	95 (3.2)	85 (3.4)	105(2.9)	111(2.6)
Monteneg.	75 (41)	66 (4)	69 (3.7)	69 (3.9)	85 (3.4)	84 (3.3)	N/A
Croatia	62 (46)	66(4)	62(4.1)	66(4.1)	62(4.4)	64(4.1)	N/A

Source: Transparency International CPI

* The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks countries/territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. A country/territory's score indicates the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 - 10, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 10 means that a country is perceived as very clean. A country's rank indicates its position relative to the other countries/territories included in the index.

With all the empirical data and the findings from different authors on Europeanization, I now move on to explore the faces of Europeanization in Albania closely.

4 The faces of Europeanization from an Albanian perspective

The first change according to Olsen relates the territorial reach of the system of governance, meaning the expansion of the EU territorial boundaries. The EU's commitment to enlargement has been positive, at least until recently. This is rational for reasons of economic dominance and political power, but also, as Noutcheva argues, 'because of the enormous stake in the stability of the region, an objective that is advantageous to the citizens of both the EU and the Western Balkans.⁶³ Europe has suffered from wars and conflicts for many years in its history prior to the creation of the Union. The Balkans, in particular, has been seen as a source of conflict, so the EU wants to avoid any instability in the region by merging the remaining countries in the continent into the European family. The Head of the Rule of Law and Human Rights Department of the OSCE presence in Albania has noted that 'the objectives of the EU concerning the Albanian integration are more about security and stability targets in the region rather than checking that the state build the political system in accordance with European rule.'⁶⁴

Analyzing Albania's situation, it is worth noticing that in recent years there has been some attempts to revive the Great Albania by joining Kosovo and Albania. If this were to happen, some instability might occur because of territorial claims involving neighboring Albanian countries such as Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece. By having Albania inside the EU, such developments could take a different direction.

No matter how plausible the idea of enlargement may sound, it is noticed recently that there is some stagnation in the enlargement process in the EU. Especially, after the economic crisis of 2008, and the collapse of some of the European economies, such as Greece, the EU has been suffering from some

⁶³ Gergana Noutcheva, "Fake, partial and imposed compliance: the limits of the EU's normative power in the Western Balkans", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17 (7) 1065-1084 at 1069.

⁶⁴ Elda Nasho Ah-Pine, 2011, at 15.

doubts and concern about its future. Rupnik argues that ‘The crisis of the euro and the challenges it poses to the EU’s cohesion and leadership raise concerns about the EU’s ability at the same time to keep an eye on the enlargement ball. ...The result is mutual distrust or pretense: ‘We pretend we want you, and you pretend you’re getting ready.’⁶⁵ This situation, could last for long and creates, what Rupnik labels as ‘accession fatigue’ for the aspiring members who may get tired of waiting. In this case, an ‘enlargement fatigue’ within the EU meets ‘accession fatigue’ in the Balkans. These two conditions question the whole process of membership in Albania since, first, the EU has not yet overpassed the crisis and second, Albania, as the poorest country in the region, will put even more of an economic burden to the EU if it were to become a member. In the mean time, the accession period is lasting relatively long in Albania, starting with the SAA in 2003 (see table 1 above) and could cause an accession fatigue amongst Albanians.

The second change, the development of institutions at the EU level, has little to do with Albania since the country, as a non-member, has almost nothing to contribute to these developments, at least for the moment.

The third change is the adaption of national and subnational systems to the EU and the adoption of the EU norms to the domestic systems. For Albania, as well as other Balkan countries, it is the latter that applies the most - the adoption of the EU norms. These countries do not have the power, nor the position to dictate any rules to the EU, even when they have to do with their accession. In this context, Anastasakis argues that ‘The candidate countries wishing to join the EU have no say over the rules of accession, they merely have to abide by them.’⁶⁶ However, Anastasakis notices that ‘the weaker partners are also in a position to affect the course of their Europeanization via the introduction of new EU principles and practices emanating from their particularities.’⁶⁷ For instance, when Albania requested the candidate status in 2010, the European Commission outlined twelve key priorities as identified in the EU 2010 Opinion on the Country’s European Union Membership Application⁶⁸. Albania did not comply with all twelve priorities and was denied status three times. However, in the 2013 request, these priorities were more focused on the reforms of the judiciary, fight against corruption, protection of human rights and administration reform, the rule of law and fundamental rights.⁶⁹ Albania got this the hard way by facing three rejections until finally getting the candidate status in June of 2014. This is a sign of some relief from the EU for the Albanian status and demonstrates that negotiations take place according to the country’s particularities. The adoption of the EU rules could not happen following the same pattern for all countries in the region. It is a fact that Albania is the poorest country in the Balkans and has had the toughest communist regimes in the world. In this context, the adaptation of EU rules in Albania could only be incremental and allow for some variation.

The fourth change relates to exporting forms of EU political governance beyond EU territory through conditionality – meaning what to do to become a member. It is obvious that conditionality is the dominant mechanism of the EU’s influence. It mostly focuses on adjustment costs, political constraints, state administrative capacity, both executive and judiciary. One of the main challenges to meet conditionality is that the adoption of legal norms of *acquis communautaire* into the domestic legislation is not a

⁶⁵ Rupnik 2011(Editor), *The Western Balkans and the EU: 'the hour of Europe'*, Chaillot papers, N°126, June 2011, at 28.

⁶⁶ Othon Anastasakis, *The Europeanization of the Balkans*, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Summer/Fall 2005, Vol 12(1) at 82.

⁶⁷ *Ibid* at 83.

⁶⁸ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union*, paragraph 3, p.2. (2010). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0680:FIN:EN:PDF>

⁶⁹ European Commission, MEMO/13/888 16/10/2013 - [Key findings of the 2013 Progress Report on Albania](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-888_en.htm) http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-888_en.htm

mechanical process, not a literal approximation of legal text, but an approximation of standards'⁷⁰, according to Daci. From the data provided above, it is evident that Albania has a lot to do to satisfy the EU's conditionality. It is surprising to see that although one of the conditions for Albania is reducing corruption, its corruption index (table 5), is getting worse, and it remains the highest in the Balkans. Also, Albania is showing signs of decline in electoral processes, national governance or judicial framework (table 3 and 4). Other disappointing data comes from table 1, which shows that Albania was scoring better till 2006, and was grouped as a semi-consolidated democracy, and then changed classification to the transitional government after 2006. All the data provided by these indexes do not demonstrate compliance with conditionality which focuses exactly on corruption, judicial independence, human rights. What then explains these developments in Albania? One may ask: why other countries in the region are performing better than Albania, although they have entered the Europeanization process similarly around the same time, if not later? One gets an answer if looks back at the history of Europeanization process in Albania. As I explained before, Anastasakis talks about an 'Eastern Style Europeanization' where this process is described as a deep transformation. In order to successfully enter the Europeanization process a country should be 'transition ready', meaning that transformation has to come before Europeanization. Albania is still experiencing an ongoing transformation, and as stated at the previous section, the Albanian political class is to blame for this state of being.

There is an interesting pattern in the Albanian Europeanization. On the one side, the Albanian political class suffers from incompetency and poor leadership. Data shows that they have performed worse than any other country in the Balkans. On the other side, the Albanian public have aspired for long to join the EU, and as data shows, more than any other country in the Balkans. The Albanian politicians have taken advantage of their people's aspirations, and both political parties in the country (Socialist and Democrats) have made the EU membership, an important part of their agenda. The Europeanization process in Albania has been following this pattern that I call 'Europeanization by convenience' – using the process to gain popular vote. This behavior can be explained by the Mark and Olsen's 'Rationalist institutionalism'. Political institutions in Albania follow a logic of consequences, they use Europeanization as a 'strategy' to win elections since they know the public will support them. However, they are not seriously committed to responding adequately to all EU adjustment pressures. This has led to cosmetic adjustments of policies, not substantive changes on Albanian national identity.

The fifth change relates to the political project for a stronger Europe, the degree to which Europe is becoming a more important political entity. For this project to be successful, there is a need for a re-evaluation of all policies for the EU enlargement, especially regarding the Balkans. Fuch and Roller argue that 'The experience with the countries of the EE⁷¹ made the EU more vigilant with new membership because 'Given the difficulties of transformation processes and the lack of democratic tradition,...once countries...become members of the EU, a resulting destabilizing effect cannot be excluded.'⁷² To avoid this from happening Rupnik suggests that 'The Balkans requires a rethink of the EU approach to enlargement, which cannot simply replicate the pattern so successfully applied in Central Europe. ...But that, in turn, requires the EU to overcome the hesitation between containment and integration and to renew its commitment to the Balkan's European future in order to restore its credibility in the region and at international level.'⁷³ Considering that Europe is still experiencing economic difficulties, Rupnik and Zielonka ask a further question 'Are the most democracies in Central and Eastern Europe mature enough to cope with the negative implications of the current crisis. I would push this question even further: Is Albania ready for an ongoing post-accession Europeanization process? Considering the

⁷⁰ Jordan Daci, The European Integration of the Albanian system, International Conference on Balkans Studies (ICBS 2008) at 15.

⁷¹ EE- Eastern Europe

⁷² D. Fuchs & E. Roller, Learned Democracy? Support of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, 36(3) International Journal of Sociology 70, 71 (2006).

⁷³ Rupnik 2011 (editor), The Western Balkans and the EU: 'the hour of Europe', Chaillot papers, N°126, June 2011, Edited by Jacques Rupnik at 30. http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp126-The_Western_Balkans_and_the_EU.pdf

performance demonstrated so far, it is difficult to conclude that Albania is ready. If the Albanian political class would not overcome the challenge of using Europeanization as merely instrumental for political reasons, the EU accession project is destined to fail.

5 Conclusions

To sum up, I explored the Europeanization process in the Balkans and Albania which despite being a dual process, plays a more important role in changing the domestic political structures than those of the EU. The Balkan countries have had little to say about the EU enlargement policies in the Union or their conditionality. There is an interesting pattern in the Europeanization of Albania. On one hand, the EU has used Europeanization more rationally (as a strategy for stability in the region) than normatively (to induce domestic change). On the other hand, Europeanization has been used instrumentally in Albania in an 'Albanian fashion-way' and has not resulted in substantive domestic change of Albanian politics and governance. The 'Europeanization by convenience' has brought about cosmetic adjustments to respond to the EU conditionality. For Albania the EU accession is more of an 'EU obsession' than social learning or lesson-drawing.

Because Europe has recently experienced economic challenges, and post-accession problems with some countries of the Eastern Europe, it is required from the EU to rethink its approach to enlargement. The EU's Balkans approach cannot simply replicate other patterns previously applied in Central Europe because of the unique features of Balkans countries. At the same time, the Europeanization of the Balkans requires the EU to overcome the hesitation between containment and enlargement which deeply affects its commitment to the Balkan's European future in order to avoid an Europeanization fatigue. The dichotomy 'enlargement fatigue' and 'accession fatigue' may have major implications for the future of the EU integration. The future of Europeanization profoundly depends on the engagement of both parties involved in this ongoing process.

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