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**Title:** *Democratization from Within: Political Culture and the Consolidation of Democracy in Post-Communist Albania.*

### **Thesis' Abstract**

The study of the political culture paradigm has never been developed conceptually or methodologically in the academic environment of pre-and-post-communist Albania. In the early communist period, direct studies on this concept – i.e., scientific studies initiated from domestic scholars outside the leading guide of Marxism-Leninism theories – were absolutely forbidden by the ideological viewpoint of the regime. Social sciences and especially political science was seen by the regime as bourgeois science and for ideological reasons political science was excluded from its activities as an academic discipline. The regime restrictions on empirical information limited the heuristic power of the theories that could *ipso facto* have been utilized by the domestic scholars in today's research activities. Consequentially, limited data resulting from historical arguments and speculation based only on scant evidence led to studies mostly in the publicist realm with a *strong ideological* viewpoint. Following the change of political regime, these restrictions affected the new generation of political culture researchers in Albania. Scholars from this generation, generally employed investigative tools (that is, largely survey methods) that mostly could not delve into the conceptual complexities and internal contradictions of political culture theories without any literary legacy on this subject. Moreover, foreign scholars' accomplishments lacked contextual understanding, whereas those of domestic scholars were over simplified and based on generalized assumptions mostly inspired by Western style post-communist literature. In this situation, it has been a mandatory task to describe *ex nihilo* how Albanians grasp the conception of political culture both in its development and in its structure

This research draws on qualitative methods to implement an interpretive analysis of contemporary Albanian political culture and democracy. Relying on anthropology and sociology for guidance, this investigation engages the depth and complexity of political culture and democracy, integrating the cultural conceptualizations of anthropologists, political scientists as well as sociologists. The main fields of research are the country's late and somehow incomplete separation from communist values and the country's problems with today's corruption and political trust.

Based on the findings I will analyze the democratic values to derive historical-theoretical as well as empirical-logical convergences and divergences which have influenced Albanian political values. The logical conclusion is checked against existent

theories of political culture and democratization. Finally, the problems arising from the plurality of scientific methods require the creation of an additional framework to formulate a conclusion about Albania's possibilities and potentials of *democratization from within*. It should be noted, however, that it is not in the intention of this research neither to create a new theory, nor to demonstrate exhaustively and definitively the evaluation of existing theories, but only to explain a single case: democratization from within, the effect of political culture in the consolidation of democracy in post-Communist Albania. Consequently, this research is rooted in the class of "case studies". In relation to the object studied here, the approach will not be limited only to the empirical and qualitative methodology, but the methodological approach will be eclectic. To put it with Giplin, the eclectic approach may not be the road to scientific inquiry, but often is the only effective way.

The first chapter of this dissertation begins with a brief presentation of the heterogeneity of Albanian history and its distinctive paths toward modernization. This presentation sheds light on some topics that were intentionally distorted by the official historiography of the communist regime, i.e. the authoritarian legacy left by Ottoman Empire and the role of the prominent political figures like King Zog and Enver Hoxha that have governed Albania since its independence. In response of the reviewer's requests I have added some paragraphs that shed light over Zog's limitations during his governance, as well as I have enriched the bibliography regarding Enver Hoxha's governance. However, I need to underline here that the main difficulty in addressing these requests is devoted to the limited existence of objective unbiased literature about each one of these figures. This remains a constant problem throughout the investigation of all chapters.

The second chapter is devoted to the definition and practice of political culture in post-communist countries and its relation to liberal democracy. It focuses on notions of democracy and democratization, understood with reference to Albania's reality.

The third chapter is devoted to the use of the survey method employed in Albania as a tool for measuring value change. In this chapter I engage in a critical investigation of the surveys developed in post-communist Albania, especially those that attempted to measure political attitude in a transition society. Through the use of qualitative research I criticize the findings of these surveys unfolding their unsuitability in a transition society.

The fourth chapter attempts to demonstrate that the principles of democracy and democratic values are neither novel nor alien but have authentic roots in Albania's culture. With reference to the use of the *Kanun* of Lekë Dukagjin, and to the phenomenon of the religious tolerance and the cultural-ideological deliberation that took place between 1920 and 1930, I expose the deliberate elision of the Albanian conceptions and practices that took place in the country before the communist regime came to power. Even in this chapter I have addressed reviewers' requests regarding the role of Lekë Dukagjini in the *Kanun* formulation, as well as I have added a few critical paragraphs about the role of the *Kanun* in today's Albania.

Ultimately, this study attempts to show that the efforts made by the Western countries to *export democracy* to Albania and to promote consolidation through political

tools generalized from other alien realities without taking into consideration Albania's internal values have turned out to be in the long run a "political abortion". However, this study should be construed neither as a critique of democracy nor as a defense of it; it is also not a balance sheet of the success or failure of democracy and democratization processes in Albania but rather it aims at presenting an alternative approach to democratic consolidation through Albania's authentic cultural heritage.