

Abstract

The accession process of Albania into the European Union is defined by the gradual fulfilling of the Copenhagen criteria. With the aim of promoting democratization reforms in candidate countries and improvement in the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union has exerted pressure into domestic political structures in Albania through a series of Europeanization Mechanisms. This dissertation uses qualitative analysis to examine the impact of the Europeanization Mechanisms in the democratization process of Albania after the signing of the Stabilization and Association agreement. The theoretical domain of the research falls within Europeanization and Quality Democracy theory. The data gathered in the form of document analysis and interviews serve to test the hypothesis of the direct relationship of Europeanization an input in democratization in the case of Albania. The results suggest that both the conception and practical application of the Europeanization mechanisms with regards to the democratization process are faced with a series of challenges. Democratization is a process that combines structures, policies, and norms. In their current formulation, Europeanization mechanisms are able to affect only the first two. In terms of practical application, extreme polarization of Albania's political system combined with a weak judiciary have greatly impaired the impact of EU conditionality in domestic democratization reforms. A redirection of Europeanization efforts towards the development of civil society could create the required internal pressure to push forward the process of democratization.

Keywords

Europeanization Mechanisms, European norms, Democratization, Political Conflict,

Civil Society