

# *Acting as a pivot state. A new dimension for the Albanian foreign policy* \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

*Recent changes in the world order have modified the behavior of small states. The current structure of international system nowadays greatly influences the foreign policy of a small country. Albania as a small state has shown the first signs of adaptation to this new context. The power vacuum in international politics as no country or group of countries has the political and economic leverage to drive an international agenda or provide global public goods is the main factor leading to some recalibration in foreign policy agenda. This essay suggests that the new format in international relations has dictated a new strategy on foreign policy.*

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*A pivot state, as referred in the study, shows flexibility not only to survive but also benefit from the current system. The results of this study show that Albania, exposed to these changes, has taken steps towards a new foreign policy agenda. Having healthy relations with the US, guiding the country towards membership in the European Union, strengthening ties with Turkey or opening the door to large investments from the UAE are creating momentum for this move towards a pivot state.*

**Key words:** *new world order, fragmentation, Albanian geopolitical space, foreign policy with alternatives, alliance, pivot state*

## **I. Introduction**

New global order has been used as a designation for certain periods, during which the balance of power has changed and consequently the role of individual states. In addition to the international arena, during such a period there are profound changes in the structures of states and ideologies on which the functioning of power is based. Despite different interpretations, the new world order underscores a world governance in terms of joint efforts to identify, understand or address problems beyond the possibility of nation-state solutions.

The Western alternative of Albania is clear and oriented towards Brussels and Washington. Messages for these two orientations are present in every election campaign and normally in the Albanian institutional line. The United States has already announced that it has common interests with Albania, mainly for “the development of a new European security architecture, including the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), combating terrorism, and strengthening democratic institutions and stability throughout Southeastern Europe” (Embassy fact sheet). In short, Albania’s stability is paramount to the US.

Albania is also part of the policies of the European Union, which does not contradict the American line. The EU focuses on Albania not only in the field of security (as in the case of the US), but it also monitors the process of Albania’s integration into the Union and aims to carry out deep reforms for the transformation of the country. Despite Euro-skepticism, Albania is part of the European Union’s grand strategy. So, the Western line is already an integral part of Albanian electoral platforms.

However, considering the changes in the current international system, Albania has shown the first signs of adaptation to a foreign policy with alternatives.

## II. Literature review

Small states constantly strive to play a certain role in the international system. This role does not depend solely on their capacities. Accordingly, the small state can be defined as “the state which is characterized by limited national capabilities and the way by which it uses such capabilities in achieving the objectives of its foreign politics, to make a comparison between its capabilities and other countries’ capabilities. It must be perceived as a small state by its leaders and other states’ leaders in the international system” (Galal, 2019, p 46). This author identifies the criteria for the small states: national capabilities; relationship between gaining power and its arrangement in the international system; and the element of perception (ibid).

In this framework, it can be noted that the actual structure of international system nowadays greatly influences the foreign policy of a small country. The current international institutional framework seems to be in crises and deeply affecting the foreign policy agenda of a small country. As shown during the pandemic Covid-19, the contemporary global order is widely said to be in crisis. However, states seem to know how to adapt to the new order. According to Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Hofmann (2019), “what we are witnessing is not the collapse of the current world order, but rather its transformation and adaptation into a broader, more flexible and multifaceted system of global governance – a change within the order rather than of the order” (p 1).

This new global order in the eyes of Bremmer (2013) comes as G-Zero. “A G-Zero World is one where we have an absence of global leadership. And I think there are a lot of reasons for it. The United States is less willing, as we’ve seen, to provide the guidance of the global economy and global security—it doesn’t want to be the global policeman. We’ve heard that very clearly from President Obama. It doesn’t want to be the lender of last resort. It doesn’t want to bail out the Europeans. Doesn’t want to lead globalization. It’s just not popular” (Gray, 2013).

In his book “Every Nation for Itself: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World”, Bremmer (2012) explains “the growing G-Zero power vacuum in international politics as no country or group of countries has the political and economic leverage to drive an international agenda or provide global public goods” (p. 26). As such, this author provides four scenarios for the future world: the G2—a U.S.-Chinese partnership; Concert—a G20 that actually works; Cold War 2.0—or something worse; a world of regions—to each his own; and scenario x—the G-subzero.

Current analyses lead us to believe that the international system is closer to the scenario: a world of regions—to each his own. Such agenda creates the possibility for the states to set their own agendas. So, according to Bremmer (2012), the small states have two options – becoming pivot or shadow states: a pivot state is a country able to build profitable relationships with multiple other countries without becoming overly reliant on any one of them; or becoming shadow states, those that would want to have the freedom of pivot states but remain frozen in the shadow of a single power (p. 94).

Acting as a pivot, small states must show readiness and flexibility not only to survive but also benefit from the current system. Albania, as an example of a small state, is trying to pursue a foreign policy with alternatives, as it is having healthy relations with the US, setting an agenda towards membership in the European Union, strengthening ties with Turkey and opening the door to large investments from the UAE. Taking such stance in the current system seems very likely as a formula for success.

### **III. Understanding the international institutional framework: which NATO does the prime minister refer to for assistance?**

Prime Minister Rama openly stated after the meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, that Albania is a NATO country and any attack on us is an attack on NATO. This declaration came as a reaction to the interest of journalists for the threat coming from Iran, after a message issue by supreme leader of this country (Çdo sulm mbi ne, 360 grade).

With these words, Mr. Rama refers to the principle of collective protection of the founding treaty of NATO. This principle is reflected in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which states that “an attack on an ally is considered an attack on all allies.” (Collective defense - Article 5). It should be noted that this article has been applied only once in the history of the Alliance after the 9/11 attacks against the US, when NATO intervened in Afghanistan.

This principle was reiterated in the final statement of the NATO summit, held in London in December 2019, although many divisions have recently emerged between NATO members (London Declaration, 2019). After the Alliance suffer a shock when President Trump declared that NATO was “obsolete” and its members did not pay the required percentages for its operation, before the London summit (Johnson, 2017), President Macron added a dose of skepticism about NATO. He said that NATO suffered “clinical death” (Nowak, 2020, p. 1). However, this summit ended with a positive political statement, at a time of many challenges such as confronting and defining terrorism; the form of confrontation with Russia; and the functioning of the collective defense.

However, the main leaders of the allied countries presented different views on the three above issues. In fact, such views caused cracks within the organization.

Even though the second priority point underlines Russia's position, all three issues point to the direct danger posed to Albania in the context of the US-Iran clash. In the current situation of NATO, when its common mechanisms seem not to properly work, will Article 5 be reactivated, in case of aggression by an allied country?

According to Bremmer (2021), "America's NATO allies—the former Soviet republics Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and former Warsaw Pact member Poland, in particular—will remain on alert for years. Estonia and Latvia are home to a larger percentage of ethnic Russians even than Ukraine. A troubled history with Russia and the anger stoked by the fight for Ukraine makes Poland the most aggressively anti-Kremlin voice in Europe. Further feeding the anxiety are Eastern European fears that Russia cares much more about the future of its former communist allies than Western Europe or America ever will, and that Moscow will fight harder and longer to preserve its influence in Ukraine than Washington, Brussels, or Berlin will defend Ukraine's right to self-determination" (Bremmer, 2021. p. 12).

In case of a Russian attack, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty will obligate the United States to enter a war. How much public support can any US president expect if he is one day forced to honor that pledge? In March 2014, YouGov asked one thousand adult Americans if the United States should use military force if Russia attacks one of its neighbors. Just 40 percent said the United States should defend Poland, 29 percent would support a defense of Turkey, and just 21 percent would support a U.S. defense of Latvia. All three are NATO members. Only 56 percent of those surveyed would defend Britain. (Calabria, 2014). Therefore, Bremmer (2021) concludes that "if you can barely get a majority of Americans to support a defense of Britain, it's clear that the American people want no more foreign wars of choice" (p. 33)

The situation in NATO - a political and military alliance - is in a kind of stagnation, where the political dimension is not matching the military one. European Union is in a similar situation: the technical side often clashes with the political one (as happened, for example, in the case of non-opening of negotiations with Albania: European Commission gave the green light for the opening of negotiations, while some political segments - i.e., some member states - objected to the recommendation given by the Commission). In this kind of decision-making paradox, Albania found itself in a possible conflict with Iran.

Albania, in its vision for NATO, makes a projection of two NATOs: the military machine that plans collective defense in Europe and beyond, and the political alliance that fluctuates depending on the agendas of the leaders of the member countries.



The first NATO seems to function well. The London Declaration produces optimism in this regard, as follows:

NATO guarantees the security of our territory and our one billion citizens, our freedom, and the values we share, including democracy, individual liberty, human rights, and the rule of law. Solidarity, unity, and cohesion are cornerstone principles of our Alliance. As we work together to prevent conflict and preserve peace, NATO remains the foundation for our collective defense . . . We reaffirm the enduring transatlantic bond between Europe and North America, our adherence to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and our solemn commitment as enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty that an attack against one Ally shall be considered an attack against us all (excerpt from the London Declaration at the Summit on 3 - 4 December).

The second NATO – the political one – is in trouble. First of all, it should be noted that the Alliance has a deep internal problem. The so-called Quad - the US, Britain, France and Germany, which has defined the West's orientation in recent decades, has not functioned since the beginning of the Trump presidency. In addition to Trump's unilateralist dimension, the US has often ignored allies in many of the decisions (most recently, the withdrawal of troops from the Kurdish area in northern Syria). There are other "anomalies" of the second NATO, such as Turkey and France do not agree on the form of confrontation for the terrorist threat; Turkey rejects NATO's plan for missile installations in the Baltic region, to protect Europe from Russia; allies urge US to consult with them on the withdrawal from Syria; Turkey ignores allies over conflict with Kurds; Poland and the Baltic states have different approaches to the Russian threat; to Macron, Europe's security depends on good relations with Russia; Germany is ambiguous as, on the one hand, considers Russia a great threat, and on the other hand, cooperates with it for the Nord Stream pipeline; after Brexit, Britain seeks to reinvent itself, as it tries to strengthen transatlantic relations and European security, avoiding to become a "second-tier player", as Donald Tusk has put it; Macron has proposed a European army as an alternative to NATO, etc.

Is NATO's problem deeper than these diagnoses? In addition to being "obsolete" and in a "clinical death", Friedman (2019) considers NATO anachronistic for the present time. The question is whether, in the current context (with two NATOs), the Alliance will be able to withstand a major crisis:

NATO's outdated structure will remain in place for now – and it will continue to squander scarce resources on sustaining itself and to evade questions over its usefulness . . . I am merely trying to explain the process that is underway. The purpose of NATO, to protect the security of the Euro-American world, will not go away .

. . NATO was created with a single mission in mind: to prevent or defeat a Soviet invasion of Western Europe that could, if successful, lead to Soviet domination of the European Peninsula and achieve what neither Hitler nor Napoleon could accomplish. It would also bond Soviet natural resources and manpower to Western Europe's industry and technology and thus, again as Napoleon and Hitler dreamt, change the global balance of power. Given that Europe and the United States had already lived through two world wars, the worst-case scenario appeared to be quite plausible. Possibilities had turned into realities throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so ignoring the possible was not an option. (Friedman, 2019).

As "NATO was built for an extraordinary situation, in which a third world war was reasonably possible, NATO would only function in a united Europe in a "single geopolitical unit, a single political commitment and a single military structure" (Friedman, 2019). If one of these dimensions does not work, then Europe falls into chaos and NATO will not be able to stabilize it. Therefore, Friedman's statement that "NATO is an anachronism that has survived longer than its mission" is prominent.

What is it going to happen in case of an Iranian aggression against Albania (a real current crisis)? Would France and Germany intervene against Iran? What would be the position of Hungary, a NATO ally already in very good relations with Russia? Will Turkey maintain neutrality? Will Greece be destabilized? These questions and others find answers to the divisions mentioned above. It seems that the second NATO, the political one, will take the decision towards the first NATO, the military one.

In this context, Prime Minister Rama is politically correct, as he refers to NATO in the above statement. But he might think of US – not NATO as a whole unit.

Even US, a friendly country to Albania, has its own deep problems. Zakaria (2020), in a article in the Post, warns that the US - because of Trump's decisions - no longer has a clear foreign policy, emphasizing that:

Trump does not have a foreign policy. He has a series of impulses — isolationism, unilateralism, bellicosity — some of them contradictory. One might surge at any particular moment triggered usually by Trump's sense that he might look weak or foolish. The US is known for its reliability and careful planning, but "this reputation is being abused across the globe (Ibid.)

Taking into consideration the current state of American foreign policy, Zakaria (2021) delves on his argument about unclear US foreign policy under Biden administration, underlining that "after almost eight months of watching policies, rhetoric and crises, many foreign observers have been surprised — even shocked — to discover that, in area after area, Biden's foreign policy is a faithful



continuation of Donald Trump's and a repudiation of Barack Obama's". He concludes that "if Biden continues his current course, though, historians might one day look back on him as the president who normalized Donald Trump's foreign policy."

All this shows us that US is not that focused on protecting other states and is being unable to find its own path in foreign policy. Such situating leads us to presume that a country like Albania needs to choose another course in its own foreign policy.

#### **IV. Coronavirus - the bedrock for a new global order**

There is more and more talk of a new global order following the coronavirus pandemic. A new global order has always emerged after a long and bloody war. The Westphalian system, which guaranteed peace in Europe for about 150 years, was established after a 30-year war. The Congress of Vienna established another balance of power that relatively pacified Europe until the First World War. This is what also happened after the First World War, after the Second World War and after the Cold War. This is what happened after the 9/11 attacks, and this is what is happening now, both times, in unconventional ways.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the start of the war in the Persian Gulf in 1991, President Bush (the first) declared that "a new world is being born, a world quite different from what we know." (Bush, 1990). These words are like the words we, the witnesses to the coronavirus pandemic, articulate almost daily. Although Bush meant American hegemony in a new era, a new configuration occurred around the world.

We have witnessed a new order that arose after 9/11. A similar insecurity gripped the world. After the terrorist attacks, there was talk of a new geopolitical era. Again, despite the motives of the terrorists and subsequently the American reaction to the implementation of specific geopolitical strategies, this event transformed the world.

As in the coronavirus era, it was the time when the West faced a new and invisible enemy: terrorism had neither an army nor a nation. It was an abstract enemy. Bockstette (2008), a researcher at the Marshall Center, puts it this way: "Terrorism is defined as political violence in an asymmetrical conflict that is designed to induce terror and psychic fear (sometimes indiscriminate) through the violent victimization and destruction of noncombatant targets (sometimes iconic symbols)."

It should be noted that the 9/11 attacks changed the relationship of societies with governments, mainly Western ones, having as reference the field of security and defense. Basic questions were raised open for discussion, as they are today, in

the time of the coronavirus: What level of security should a government provide to its citizens? How can democracies cope in the event of such crises? Will the endless war lead to tyranny? Is a collective or individual response needed across countries?

Today, the world is facing another invisible enemy. With so many deaths, science seems incapable of dealing - at least currently - with this pandemic. With the idea that the pandemic will be defeated, it is to be noted that great transformations are taking place in human behavior, in the social structure, as well as in the relations between states. This change will be even deeper.

According to Morgenthau (1978), “it stands to reason that not all foreign policies have always followed so rational, objective, and unemotional course” (p. 4 - 15). Despite the humanitarian side of the consequences caused by the coronavirus, it is worth mentioning some phenomena that will affect the reconfiguration of a new order, during this phase of the pandemic.

The virus shed light on current US policy, where the leadership tends to revive the economy despite lost human lives. There is a growing profile of China, which has elevated its image around the world: from being a “victim” of the virus, it is now offering aid to the most powerful Western countries. The virus raised the barriers between European countries, reaffirming the European Union’s deep weakness in decision-making processes. Italy and Spain have failed in terms of pandemic response strategies. Other countries such as South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore have shown skills in fighting the virus, which demonstrates their effectiveness. Even a country like Iran, unable to deal with the virus, could undergo regime change. Small states will be even more easily influenced by large and regional powers. It is important to note that a new global order is being formed on some foundations created by this pandemic.

In these conditions, “COVID-19 has exposed the fragility of nation states and indeed the existing world order. It hasn’t brought about anything new. It exposed the weakness of all states, seeing themselves as post-industrial, walking backwards into the future, unable to seemingly affect that future and just looking at the rubble of their past” (Wintermeyer, 2020). This situation leads to changes in foreign policy of nation-states.

## **V. Rama, 2021 political campaign and foreign policy**

### *Being protagonist in the campaign and foreign policy*

One of the main elements of the electoral campaign of the Socialist Party for the elections of April 25 was the protagonism of its chairman and at the same time the prime minister, Mr. Rama - a technique that has been used by him in previous



campaigns. It should also be noted that Mr. Rama - compared to previous prime ministers - has shown unprecedented foreign policy skills. This ability has its source primarily in his understanding of the role that Albania can and should have in the arena of international relations.

During the campaign, Mr. Rama often sent messages to the electorate from foreign countries. The role played by Turkey and the United Arab Emirates during the campaign can be noted (roles that translate into the strong Rama-Erdogan bond and the significant investment of the Emirates).

### *Foreign policy with alternatives*

Bremmer (2020) uses the term “pivot state” to describe a state that is able to build profitable relationships with one or more major powers and - at the same time - not become dependent on any of them. This capability helps to avoid influence - in terms of security and economy - from a single state (p. 3). This term is mainly used in the literature for medium power, but its application cannot be limited. Beyond the use of the term, Mr. Rama (in this case, the embodiment of a protagonist in the electoral campaign and the strategy of the Albanian foreign policy) simply understood that Albania does not have only one or two alternatives in foreign policy.

Albania has historically had very good relations with Turkey, which has been seen with suspicion from the West. But the doses of friendship have increased. Over the last eight years, we have witnessed a deepening of Turkey’s role in Albania - moreover during the election campaigns - mainly through a personal diplomacy of the respective heads of state. Turkey openly showed its support for Mr. Rama - among others in the cases of building a hospital in Fier for two months and sending air traffic controllers in a time of crisis for the government. These were two very clear messages for the Albanian electorate.

Another alternative has been made possible by significant investments for Albania: the investment in the port of Durres by a powerful UAE company. In an interview with CNN, Arab investor Mohamed Alabbar advertised Albania and echoed its achievements. He even called Albania “New Europe”, with indicators that attract large investments. According to Alabbar, Albania is distinguished for “impressive economic growth, labor force, government that works day and night to become part of real Europe”. (Of course, these statements are taken with reservations by anyone familiar with the situation in Albania.)

In addition to applying these two lines of foreign policy in the exercise of his duty, Mr. Rama used them successfully during the campaign. There are other lines that are not very visible but are harmonized with the current Albanian foreign policy, such as a separation with Russia, a controlled distancing with China or a hostile attitude towards Iran.

## VI. American withdrawal and exposure of Albania

### *Failure in foreign policy?*

Many analysts are mentioning the failure of American foreign policy. The last two decades are coming to an end with the capitulation in Afghanistan. The war in Iraq - as well as in Afghanistan - not only took a lot of financial resources - but ended in a moral catastrophe for the world superpower. The military intervention in Libya resulted in the overthrow of a dictator but created a chaos that destabilizes North Africa. In Syria, the US left behind the Kurds who sacrificed in the fight against ISIS. President Trump's tenure changed regional and global balances, legitimized autocracies, and severely damaged the liberal international order created by America itself. The abandonment of Ukraine is a typical example of another misguided planning. It is widely acknowledged that these successive failures have occurred because of the lack of a clear American strategy.

From the Albanian point of view, it is noticed an American foreign policy without a clear orientation that normally damages Washington's position in the global arena, but at the same time exposes its close allies to many risks - including Albania. The projection of this American foreign policy must be seriously considered by Albanian policymakers.

The global environment has changed since the Cold War. Several other powerful poles have emerged in the international system, therefore reducing American strength. However, US military power still provides an umbrella of security in Europe, which is essential to European prosperity. With these changes, there is a transatlantic unity in dealing with China and Russia, but the previous consensus is no longer effective.

As part of the withdrawals, after the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and then from Afghanistan (countries at war), the US plans to withdraw troops from countries in peace (from Germany, Japan and South Korea). These countries have prospered economically from American military defense. But times have changed.

The departure of American troops from Germany sent a strong signal. This maneuver was justified by the Americans as a result of a sophisticated strategic planning, but was essentially the concretization of an earlier warning. Quite simply, the US no longer has the financial capacity to afford high military spending. The move undermines NATO, Europe's security and America's own ability to influence.

In these circumstances - especially with the catastrophic scenario of the US withdrawal from NATO - the European Union must take more responsibility for

its own security. But is it possible for Europeans to defend themselves without America, given that their security infrastructure has American foundations? The International Institute for Strategic Studies analyzed the following scenario.

A high-level group of senior experts and government officials from France, Germany, Poland, the UK and the US addressed a fictional scenario that involves a US withdrawal from NATO, followed by multiple crises in Europe”, answering the following questions: “How will Europeans organize their security and defense if the US withdraws from NATO? To what extent will future European security be based on mutual solidarity, ad-hoc coalitions or a bilateralisation of relations with the US? Which interests would the respective European governments regard as vital and non-negotiable? What role would the US play in European security after the withdrawal?” (Fix, 2019).

The main message was that transatlantic relations were seriously threatened in the event of NATO’s abandonment by the US. In the event of this imagined crisis in the Western Balkans (a Russian-backed coup), most NATO member states (NATO without the US) would be reluctant to apply the principle of collective defense under Article 5 of NATO. They would try to enforce Article 4 - consultations in case of security breaches and impose sanctions on Russia. In short, Europe would be unprepared and incapable of facing this threat.

This scenario served to reach some conclusions. From the German perspective, the US withdrawal from NATO posed an existential threat to security. The French thought that NATO could not exist without the US and offered a new structure for the EU collective security. The UK would become a crucial player in Europe’s security and determine the future architecture of Europe’s security (embodiment of a historical cycle). Poles did not believe in Europe’s capacity to organize collective defense and were inclined to make bilateral agreements with the US. For the Americans, aid to European security had to stop and Europe had to prepare to manage its own crises. This is the chaotic situation that Europe may face in the event of US withdrawal from NATO (Ibid).

### *Albania’s exposure*

A small country like Albania, currently with strong ties to the US, would be subject to significant consequences in the event of US withdrawal.

Firstly, the American departure means the weakening of the European Union and the fall of Albania under other influences. Russia will feel free to penetrate the Balkans. Turkey will consider itself the master of the Balkans. China will aggressively use economic diplomacy. The main European countries will compete for the Albanian geopolitical space. But in the current crises these countries (mainly Italy and Austria) will be very reserved. This withdrawal would help advance other powers into the Balkans.

Secondly, the withdrawal from Europe will reduce the military capabilities in the Albanian geopolitical space, which translates into a reduction of political and economic influence. Without the US presence in NATO, common interests in the field of security will fade. Moreover, the imposing American diplomacy in Albania - so necessary for the discipline of the Albanian political class - will be weakened further. This will also lead to non-implementation of reforms and reduction of US-funded projects.

Thirdly, the American departure from Europe will increase divisions between major European countries. These divisions will lead to a decline of their influence in Albania - which would create room for other powers. The European Union cannot replace NATO, as it has no common military structure or foreign policy.

## **VII. Conclusion: The new order and Albania as a pivot state**

Many countries have succeeded in the new order as they follow Bremmer's maxim "The future belongs to those who show flexibility." In the new global order, connecting with multiple partners is essential.

In "Each State for Its Own: Winners and Losers in a G-Zero World," no state (not even the United States) has the capacity to set an international agenda. In this new decentralized order, a state must have the ability to have alternatives. The small area does not always limit the geopolitical options of a state, which is reflected - for example - by Singapore. (This case does not reflect Albania at all, but it serves as an example to understand the idea of the pivot state).

In today's fragmented world, where no major power sets the international agenda, winners and losers will be determined by the ability to find and utilize the right alternatives. It seems that the Albanian Prime Minister has understood this dimension and is applying it in foreign policy. At this point, the question arises as to whether this foreign policy is well-thought in the form of a genuine strategy or works according to the needs of the moment. Therefore, it would be in the best interest of the future of the country for the chosen strategy to be subjected to in-depth analysis of the geopolitical implications of being involved in certain alliances.

This analysis aimed to draw attention to the importance of Albania's partnership with the US, but the possible US withdrawal must be considered. What is a possible solution in case of American withdrawal from the region? One would be to project Albania as a pivot state.

In fact, Albania has begun to be outlined as a pivot state, although it is at the beginning of this process. Bremmer (2020) uses this term to describe a state that can build profitable relationships with many other great powers, without



relying too heavily on any of them and not creating dependence on any of them. This defense capability allows a central state to avoid another country's influence in the areas of security and the economy. In today's volatile world where the international system is seriously threatened, the pivot states will be more protected, as they will know how to create the right balances with the great powers. Otherwise, Albania will join the ranks of states on the opposite side of this spectrum - the "shadow states" that are forced to accept the influence of a single power.

Prime Minister Rama's initiatives to have healthy relations with the US, to guide the country towards membership in the European Union, to strengthen ties with Turkey or to open the door to large investments from the UAE create momentum for this move towards a pivot state. This coveted position - according to the format suggested by Bremmer - seems very difficult to achieve. However, the analysis of these issues emphasizes the need for a national medium-term and long-term strategy, which foresees realistic scenarios for the future.

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