

Security Challenges in Albania After the 1990s

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Abstract

In recent decades, security has become a concept that relates to every aspect of our lives due to its expansion and deepening and its relation to many areas of society. Security challenges faced by societies today are of different natures and forms, including weak governance structures, organized crime, corruption, and non-implementation of strategies. Albania, in particular, has faced many challenges and a negative international image due to these problems. This paper aims to provide an overview of the security challenges that Albania has encountered since the 1990s, by analyzing them separately and explaining the strategies, tools, and methods Albania uses to respond to these challenges. Additionally, the paper identifies the bilateral and multilateral agreements that Albania has signed with some Balkan countries and relevant allies in the international arena concerning common security. Through an analysis of strategies, legal frameworks, and measures taken to meet and overcome security challenges, this study attempts to answer the questions posed. The analysis is based on literature research, relevant publications in the security field of study, and laws and strategies on the evolution of security challenges in Albania.

Keywords: *security, challenges, strategy, threat, Albania.*

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I. Introduction: albania's context and national security after the '90s.

Security field in Albania has followed the same path with other countries, especially small ones. Until the fall of the communist regime, the notion of security was associated with the concept of defence or territorial integrity of the country. Thus, during this period, we cannot talk about a broad concept of security or a document that treated security as such. Like other small countries, Albania achieved and maintained its status as a sovereign state with the help and protection of great powers and international treaties. Nowadays, the security environment is different from what it was in the nineteenth century or during the 30s of the twentieth century, periods when the world's largest conflicts took place. Given that the environment of conflicts is a permanent topic in the studies of international relations, in this article I will also take into analysis the understanding of the new security environment and the challenges it faces. The new security challenges in Albania after the '90s cannot be solved only through classical or traditional methods because new challenges require non-traditional solutions.

The changes in the world order and the creation of a new international system coincided with the political regime change in Albania in 1990. After almost half a century of rule by the Communist Party, pluralism was introduced in Albania, and the first multiparty elections were held. During the transition period, the state was weak, and the problems displayed themselves mainly in the domestic domain, rather than in relation to other states. The security of the country was put to test with the break-up of Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

“Although Albania was not involved in armed conflicts or redefinition of its borders, which happened to the countries of former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, it still suffered from the backwardness caused by the policy of isolation that was pursued during the Cold War. This period is mostly characterized by the implementation of the first generation reforms: the creation of new institutions and structures as well as new lines of responsibility for the security sector. However, the first generation reform process was not completed as a result of the 1997 crisis which led to the fall of the government” (IDM: 2011:5).

The period after 1997 is more like a post-conflict period. It is the Kosovo crisis, which followed the war in Kosovo in the period 1998-1999. This period coincides with reforms focusing on strengthening security structures and democratic governance. Since the 2000s, the security sector has been consolidating, which can be seen in the strengthening and consolidation of security institutions.

Given that during the communist regime, the security sector was highly politicized and served as the main instrument for maintaining power, a deep political and institutional reform was necessary. This reform was seen as a challenge in the face of other challenges, but necessary to get undertaken, because when an efficient legal system is in place and security institutions are regulated, then there is economic growth and increase in investments. Indeed “Security from disorder, crime and violence is fundamental for reducing poverty (...) - and, more broadly, for sustainable economic, social and political development” (OECD, 2007: Section 1: Principles of Security System Reform, p.1). In order to escape from insecurity, crime and underdevelopment, states should address simultaneously the socioeconomic dimension, the justice and security dimension. The security system reform is first and foremost a political process (OECD, 2007: 28), and as such it is conditioned by the will of political parties and government to carry out the reforms (Born, 2002). Albania held its first democratic elections in March 1991, which resulted in the first pluralist parliament. This which paved the way for the depoliticization of the security sector. During the period 1997-2000, took place several important events and developments which influenced the security reform in country:

- An attempt to take over institutions by force (after the collapse of the Ponzi schemes)
- Adoption of Constitution in 1998
- The crisis of Kosovo and the refugees who fled to Albania in 1998
- In 1999, Albania received the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the Washington Summit.
- Formalization of relations with the European Union (EU) through the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) – launched in June 1999, which was the European Union’s policy towards the Western Balkans, established with the aim of eventual EU membership.

Restoring rule of law and recovering and strengthening the institutions after the crisis of 1997 became fundamental and thus made it an imperative the country’s orientation towards NATO and EU integration. The National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Military Strategy (MS) indicated that the main risks to achieve security in country, stemmed from the lack of political stability, weak economic development, and the prolongation of the transition process (Islami, 2007).

1.1 The Changing of the World Order and Albania

After the Cold War, there was a change in the world order from bipolar to unipolar, where the USA was the hegemon. Albania, which had been a part of the eastern



bloc, began to orient itself towards the West and designed and followed pro-Western policies. These policies aimed to align the country with the foreign policy of USA and its allies, which emerged victorious with the end of the Cold War. Albania was among the first countries that applied to become part of the Euro-Atlantic structures. The reasons Albania followed this path are many, but the main one was the protection and development of the country under the control of the USA. Albania had weak national power, and lacked the capacity to control its own territory, and consequently it was not successful in its foreign policy to influence the other countries in the region.

The concept of power is central to all theories of international relations, although different theories may have varying interpretations of power in specific conditions and circumstances. While power cannot fully capture the complexities of international relations, no contemporary theory of the international system can overlook the importance of state power. States frequently exercise their power and pursue their policies with the goal of enhancing state power, and even if power is not explicitly wielded, it is still a fundamental factor in international relations that cannot be disregarded. Power can take various forms and have diverse origins, including military or diplomatic might, as well as natural sources such as geography and demography, or the product of social, cultural, and economic forces. Defining the concept of power is not a straightforward task.

Assessing a nation's consolidated national power capabilities involves evaluating its rich natural resources, developed economy and industrial production, strong defense capabilities, effective governance, and diplomacy. By analyzing a nation's space and resource capacities, one can gauge the extent of its power, influence, and international relations. Security and political researchers use three factors to conceptualize the dimensions of national power: national power potentials, scope, and limits. Nevertheless, accurately assessing power is challenging, as it requires measuring and analyzing a broad range of tangible and intangible elements of national power. The changing global order has also led to changes in the actors involved, with some emerging as young actors who have rapidly ascended to the stage of regional power. In Europe and the Balkans, international factors are more prominent, given the fragility and internal problems of the Balkan countries that have been resolved over time with the assistance of various international organizations.

During periods of conflict and crisis, the UN and NATO, with the strong backing of the USA, were the primary international actors in the region. However, after a decade of conflicts, the EU emerged as the most significant international actor in the region. The EU's involvement in the region can be conceptualized as two cycles of transformation. The first cycle began after the war in Bosnia, with the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Stability Pact, which

took a regional approach to fundamental issues such as defining status and borders, transitioning to democracy and the market economy, state-building, and developing state administrative capabilities. The second cycle focuses on a more individual state approach to stabilization association, concentrating on each country's reforms in its relationship with the EU. The shift towards an individual approach, the principle of conditionality, and clear definitions of internal reforms that must be undertaken to meet EU membership criteria shaped the approach according to each country's needs and situation in the region, making the enlargement policy crucial for resolving security issues in the region (Zela, 2013: 81).

II. Methodology of the Study

This paper will focus on understanding the security challenges faced by Albania's National Security after the 1990s. It will analyze the country's capacity to address economic, political, and military security challenges and explore the strategies, tools, and methods that Albania has employed to respond to these security threats. The study will also identify and interpret bilateral and multilateral agreements that Albania has made with neighboring countries and key international allies/actors in the context of common security. The study hypothesis is that *the main security challenges faced by the National Security of Albania after the 90s are political and economic ones.*

The method used is documents analysis, which is a research method that involves examining and interpreting documents as primary sources of data to understand a particular phenomenon or topic. The research model is that of the case study - focused on Albania. The characteristics of a case study carries are:

1. Includes a single case or a small number of cases, but each of them is explored in depth.
2. Different types of data can be stored in them, and long-term data can also be included.
3. The case study has boundaries. It makes clear what is studied and what is not (Matthews & Ross, 2010: 128).

As can be seen from the above characteristics, the case study model is suitable for this study because:

- It includes a single case, which is Albania, which is studied in depth;
- Data that can be collected to study security challenges are diverse and can include primary and secondary data (including the analysis of various documents).



Thus, in this paper we will be based on primary and secondary data, which consists on the following materials.

- Primary materials such as strategic documents, which include National Security Strategy, Military Strategy, Social Protection Strategy, Environmental Strategy, etc. Official reports drafted by institutions dealing with security issues and bilateral and multilateral agreements focusing on security. The statements of various actors regarding the security challenges faced by Albania.
- Secondary materials include various books published on security issues and authors such as Collins, Buzan, Law, etc. Also, the study of media articles related to national security will be a basis for examining the security challenges that Albania has faced over the years. Military magazines are one of my research instruments regarding military security and the evolution of studies within this field. The various economic reports will be another literature source where I will be based. Through them, it will be documented the development that Albania has made over the years and the economic security challenges it has faced.

III. Albania in front of Security Challenges after the 1990's

The analysis of the security environment considers all elements of national security as a process that examines the advantages, weaknesses and opportunities the strategic environment offers and the risks that the country faces. Current security threats are more complex than in the past. "The geographical position places Albania on the map of the transit of narcotics, originating in Asia, and close to the dangers arising from instability in the Middle East and North Africa. The transfer of political conflicts, especially those based on religion, various traffics and illegal immigration remain a major challenge for the security of the country" (Military Strategy: 2015: 11). The expansion and deepening of the concept of security reflected the multi-sectoral approach to security. Today, threats are not traditional or of a military nature where the reference object is the state. Today we have threats to economic security, where the reference object is the national economy; social security, where the reference object is the individual or collective identity; political security, where the reference object is national sovereignty; and environmental security, where the reference object is the ecosystem.

III.1. Military Security Challenges

Military security is the most conventional aspect of security. Albania is a member of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance and a candidate country for integration into the EU. Both of these geopolitical actors are interested to have stability in the Balkan region, which is currently considered one of the most fragile. The risks of instability are rather the “merits” of internal developments, which are being exploited quite a bit by other geopolitical actors. The EU and NATO have repeatedly stated the need for stability to avoid crises. Regardless of the amplitude of the oscillations that the crises can cause in the region’s countries, for these two actors, in terms of security, they (the crises) shake the trust in the alliances for the country’s behaviour to solve its own issues. Both actors (EU & NATO) have been maximally engaged in solving the crisis. However, their action has been accompanied by a minimal impact on the internal actors. So, the crisis has a completely negative impact on the country’s image in reference to the major security actors and the security process itself. Albania is a ‘small’ country, which fails to rise to the level of a ‘small power’. Without real power capacities, it will continuously face security risks beyond its management capabilities and will be in constant search for the role of great powers and allies. The more delicate the Balkan region becomes, and the more limited the power capacities of Albania, the more the crisis directly affects the security dilemma.

Regrettably, the political situation in Albania has extended beyond electoral and institutional impact to include national interests at the strategic level. This has caused significant risks not only to the formation of political elites but also to the nation as a whole. During the pre-globalization era, national security was a closed and unified concept and system, created when external influences were not essential. However, in the current era, when countries are part of the competitive system of the global market or open information network, national security is a multi-level and comprehensive issue that cannot be limited to internal security alone. Additionally, “security” cannot be a narrow concept limited to Westphalian sovereignty, but instead, it must be a broad and dynamic concept. Any crisis that affects even one element of conventional security has the potential to impact the entire national security level.

As a potential challenge to Albania’s military security, conventional risk or any terrorist attack can be considered a result of NATO membership and the contribution made to global peace and security. Also, “due to the obligations stemming from Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the Republic of Albania may be involved in a conventional conflict in cases where the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of any of its allies are threatened. Developments on the

borders of the Alliance, the misuse of national minorities for political purposes and the change of borders, contrary to international law, testify to the existence of this danger” (Military Strategy, 2015: 12). A not less important challenge is the modernization of the Armed Forces (AF) in order to be on equal terms with the member countries of the Alliance as well as to be in accordance with the new strategic concept of NATO.

III.2. Challenges to Economic Security

Economic security is a crucial aspect of overall security, especially in today’s era of economic globalization and integration. It encompasses the ability to manage various risks, crises, and challenges, and effectively leverage different economic networks such as currencies, finance, trade, investments, and resource development to succeed in market competition. The concept of economic security has evolved as a result of the changing global landscape after the Cold War and extends beyond the traditional notion of security, although it is still interconnected to it since economic issues can lead to conflicts. There are different approaches to economic security, but the most common ones are micro-level and macro-level economic security.

“Micro-level economic security focuses on “localized” actors, such as individuals, family households, and local communities that are primarily interested in ensuring the security of their livelihoods. On the other hand, macro-level economic security is generally concerned with foreign economic policy and the engagement of nation-states in the international economic system.” (Collins, 2016: 263). Thus it is necessary to combine the micro-level economic security with the macro-level in order to have a more in depth analysis for the Albanian case, considering that the micro level is used for internal economic security and the macro for external economic security or in relation to regional actors.

Based on various factors, including data on imports and exports, concessions based on clientelistic relationships, bad governance, inefficient fiscal policies, and corruption at high levels, it can be argued that Albania does not currently have economic security. This conclusion is supported by the country’s experiences since the end of the Cold War and the political and economic changes that followed. Albania is presently facing an economic crisis that many perceive as a political crisis, with the two interconnected and mutually reinforcing each other. Economic instability can lead to political instability, and vice versa. Domestic and international actors alike find it challenging to operate in an environment characterized by widespread disobedience, tax evasion, and disrespect for the state. The only way to address these challenges and restore economic security is to find a solution to the crisis that is fundamentally

different from the current situation. Economic security is a critical aspect of national security, and the two are closely interlinked.

III.3. Challenges to Political Security

Political security is a concept that involves maintaining political stability and harmony within a state, with the goal of gaining support from political elites, the state administration, including the armed forces and law enforcement structures, and the general public. To achieve political security, it is necessary to have an efficient and honest political system that operates under the rule of law. Political crises, which are often rooted in leadership crises, can have a significant impact on the state and society as a whole. To promote political security, it is necessary to create solidarity among the political leadership, propose a national agenda, and set strategic goals that resonate with society. This involves implementing continuous reforms in systems and regulations, avoiding attempts to accumulate power, and dealing systematically with different types of social conflicts to prevent the possibility of political and social disturbances.

According to Buzan (1983) he emphasizes the importance of building a stable and legitimate political order as a means of achieving political security. Keohane (2002) argues that political security is not only about the protection of state sovereignty but also about the stability and predictability of the international system as a whole. He suggests that political security can be achieved through institutions that provide for collective security, such as the United Nations, and through cooperative efforts among states to resolve conflicts peacefully. For Robert J. Art (1990) political security is one of the components of the “comprehensive security”. According to him, political security involves the ability of a state to maintain political stability and control over its territory, as well as to manage political challenges and dissent within its borders. Ole Wæver (1996), one of the representatives of the Copenhagen School of security studies, has written about the role of political institutions and processes in shaping political security, and he argues that democratic institutions and practices can contribute to greater political stability and security. Thus we may safely say that without political security it is not possible to achieve security at all.

“The democratic transition and the Euro-Atlantic integration, the free movement in Schengen Area, the material goods, services, money, and information have introduced Albania into a new process, which is not just a phenomenon or a transitory trend. This international system replaced the Cold War system, of which we were also a part. The main threats Albania faces today at the internal level are



organized crime, corruption, terrorism, natural disasters, etc. On the external level, there is organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, regional conflicts, etc” (Demi, 2006: 24).

Based on the objectives of the Albanian state and the need to successfully overcome these threats, which also threaten political security, we see Albania’s security and progress related to the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Albania was among the first Eastern European countries to seek membership in NATO and the EU, trying to make parallel progress in the political, economic, military, legislative and information security fields. In order to have political security and development, Albania must have good governance and strengthening of institutions, ability and stability to run the country democratically, the rule of law, economic development, fight against organized crime, trafficking, corruption, money laundering, terrorism, and fundamental human rights and freedoms must be respected. Currently, Albania is working on strengthening the rule of law and institutions in the framework of Justice Reform, which will clean the judicial system of corruption and lack of professionalism, lighting the lights of hope for many Albanians who have been missing them. Justice. Likewise, the institutions are getting stronger every day through various reforms and the employment of young people who are excellent at completing their studies and support with modern logistical tools. Today, Albania contributes to increase security in the world and also in the region through various missions undertaken within NATO. Albania is following policies based on regional development and political and economic cooperation, intending to fulfil the conditions to become a member of the European Union as soon as possible.

III.4. Environmental Security Challenges

The concept of security can be applied to many different aspects and address various threats. Given this context, it is not surprising that the environment has also been seen as a security reference object and that environmental changes have been considered security threats. Environmental Security is an issue that does not belong to traditional security. It is one of the issues the well-known author Barry Buzan (1983) used to deepen and expand the security concept. In many developed and developing countries, natural resources and environmental services are essential for the economy and employment. Income from key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, mining, and fishing that depend on the environment can affect a country’s economy if there is environmental change. Therefore, there is a connection between environmental security and social or human security. Starting from this fact, we must also divide some

environmental security problems by doing a cross-sectoral analysis since some problems are global. Among the problems that threaten Albania are air pollution, climate change, chemical and waste management, industrial pollution, damages of the natural environment and protected areas, forests, pastures, and water resources.

The air is more polluted in urban areas and comes from “the transport sector, which is related to the large number of vehicles that do not meet the air emission standards, the quality of the fuels they use, the year of their production, as well as the use of motor vehicles without a catalytic converter favors the growth of dust and the discharge of combustion gases” (Intersectoral Environmental Strategy 2015-2020). Although legal initiatives have been taken by various governments in terms of improving air quality, referring mainly to the transport sector, there is still work to be done in this direction. In addition to the transport sector, the reduction of air quality is also significantly affected by the industrial areas, where we can mention the metallurgical plant of Elbasan and the various cement and limestone factories in the areas of Kruja. Quarries have also been another problem that the government is securing in power.

Another issue related to environmental security and seen as a security challenge is the reduction of green areas and deforestation. Despite the moratorium that the government has put on banning hunting and deforestation, this threat is still present, becoming to some extent even ridiculous since instead of trees, palaces are being “planted.” Deforestation is a problem that is linked also to other environmental problems, such as floods and landslides. It also affects oxygen level reduction and gives a negative image of mountain tourism. “The impacts of climate change present important challenges for Albania, in particular to face the impacts on energy, agriculture, health, tourism, biodiversity and the well-being of the community” (Cross-Sectoral Environmental Strategy 2014-2020). In Albania, agriculture is the most affected by climate change, followed by the tourism sector. Referring to the Intersectoral Environmental Strategy for 2014-2020, it is noticed that waste management in the country still needs to improve. A significant amount of waste circulates in the water network affecting the degradation of protected areas and reducing their regenerative abilities. Despite implementing some projects to differentiate waste in Albania, the situation remains the same. Also, waste recycling or their annihilation in landfills has yet to be adopted as a culture.

IV. Strategies, Security Agreements, and Common Security

IV.1 Strategies Employed to Respond to Security Challenges

Strategy generally involves defining goals, determining actions to achieve goals, and mobilizing resources to execute actions (Freedman: 2015). Like every country, Albania also designs strategies through which it aims to respond to various challenges. The primary strategy of Albania is the National Security Strategy, then other strategies follow. “At the foundation of the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania is the aspiration of the Albanian people and the political will to realize the common vision for a homeland that guarantees security, justice, equality, and well-being for today and future generations, a free, democratic and developed country, dedicated member of NATO and integrated in the European Union” (National Security Strategy of Republic of Albania, 2014: 3).

The following sections will present the measures taken to respond to the security challenges that Albania has encountered in the military, economic, and environmental sectors. It will also reflect the objectives the Albanian state has set for itself to respond efficiently to these challenges.

IV.2. Military Security challenges – A Strategic Response

The current defense situation in Albania has made considerable progress since it joined NATO because certain conditions must be fulfilled in advance to become part of this organization. Albania’s membership in NATO on April 1, 2009, marked a significant achievement, as it was one of the main aspirations of the National Development and Integration Strategy of 2007-2013. After the accession, the Albanian Parliament approved the National Security Strategy, from which the primary constitutional obligations derive: 1) guaranteeing the security of the country; 2) strengthening fundamental freedoms, human rights, and the rule of law; 3) protection and promotion of the interests of Albanian citizens; 4) preservation of national identity (Council of Ministers of Albania, 2014). Basically, this strategy is the aspiration of the Albanian people and the political will to realize a shared vision that guarantees: safety, security, justice, equality, and prosperity for present and future generations.

The progress mentioned above consists of creating a Professional Force, complementing the hierarchy of strategic documents in the defense field, determining a quota of 2% to the PPB of the defense budget, and as an obligation to NATO. Destruction of 180 tons of chemicals was part of Albania’s progress,

having from active participation in the operations led by NATO, the EU, and the UN and the completion of the legal framework with the most important legal acts and bylaws in the fields of defense.

IV.3. The Response To Economic Security Challenges

The financial markets have had a significant development from the point of view of the growth of financial participants in the market and the increase in the variety of products. It is noted that in recent years Albania has had an increase in the number of non-banking financial intermediaries whose primary focus of their activity is channeling savings towards investments in securities, thus increasing the level of competition in the market and making the latter even more competitive. The improvements in the primary market have resulted from the improvement and increase of opportunities for investments in different conditions, which translates into an increase in the number of higher investors, more transparent investment strategies, and opportunities for the functioning of the fair market.

The main challenges of financial policies in Albania lie in several key areas. The first and most important step is to ensure a medium-term and sustainable increase in employment and the standard of living of Albanians. This can be achieved by increasing macroeconomic stability, especially in terms of reducing public debt, putting finances on a stable basis, and removing obstacles to medium-term growth. The deficit and public debt issue is another key element that increases the need to orient the policies toward medium-term fiscal consolidation.

These reforms will have to be accompanied by: (1) *further easing of monetary policy, assuming that inflation and exchange market pressures will remain low*; (2) *appropriate monetary policies, which will ensure price stability and facilitate full employment in the economy*; (3) *full payment of outstanding government bills prior to 2013*; (4) *reducing the rate of bad loans (NPL), aiming to restore confidence in banks and revive lending to the economy*; (5) *the continuation of reforms directly related to progress towards EU accession, as a key part of the structural reforms program*; (6) *the need to address low inflationary pressures*; (7) *the need to ensure stable and healthy lending returns*; (8) *the protection of financial stability, especially in relation to the management of credit risk and the improvement of indicators of the quality of banks' assets, within the framework of taking measures to clean up the financial statements of banks and solving the problem of bad loans*; and (9) *mitigating the effects deriving from problematic developments in the Eurozone (with a direct focus on Greece and the structural adjustments imposed by banking groups, based in Europe, in the context of reducing their exposure to controlled subsidiaries outside the EU and international financial markets)* (Ministry of Finance of Republic of Albania, 2014)



IV.4. Challenges of Environmental Security - A Strategic Response

Environmental protection includes within it a number of issues that make up the central issue of environmental protection. They include issues as diverse as air quality, climate change, chemical and waste management, industrial pollution, the natural environment and protected areas, forests, grasslands, and water resources. Each sector requires a separate analysis and is separate from the others. However, in this part, we analyze an overview focusing on the main issues that each sector requires. However, the population's exposure to air pollution, measured as an increase in the annual percentage of days with pollution, remains problematic. According to the same report, "the percentage of the area of protected areas in Albania has gradually increased to 16.6% of the country's territory by 2015, of which 16.1% for land and coastal areas and 0.5% for the marine area. The percentage of these protected areas has increased over the past 14 years and exceeded the MDG target of 14%." (National Environment Agency, 2017).

V. The Capacities of the Albanian State to Face Security Challenges

An issue of fundamental importance for Albania is also the issue of the capacities it possesses. The world has evolved into a more or less uniform system of Westphalian-type states that differ among themselves mainly by the degree of power they possess, geographic location, and cultural heritage. Identifying possible risks and threats to the country's security is one of the prerequisites for their prediction and for determining the requirements and needs for the preparation of capacities to cope with them. Based on the capacities that Albania possesses, geographical, political, economic, and military factors, Albania cannot play a leading role in the region or in influencing regional policies.

The new security environment in the Balkan region is increasingly characterized by overcoming the old mindsets of confrontation between states and by the spirit of cooperation, and integration into collective security structures, as a reduction of traditional threats. Nowadays, Albania faces new challenges, threats, and dangers that we see in non-traditional forms and content. Threats today are asymmetric on terrorist, ethnic or religious grounds. Ethnic problems characterize the Balkan region. In Albania, there has been a revival of this phenomenon several times, which is more likely an artificial incentive to cause insecurity.

Some primary challenges for Albania's security system are non-military, where organized crime, terrorism, immigration, and environmental destruction prevail. All these threats have minor consequences if their source, composition, and degree

of risk are known. To face the threats today, it is required to restructure the systems of decision-making and reorganization of Albania's national security measures to collect and analyze information. With its military and economic capacities, Albania cannot face the challenges that threaten it. In the military aspect, Albania is based on guaranteeing security based on NATO and its article 5. However, we should bear in mind that by the time this article is activated, the possible aggressor has carried out his plan. In order to face the threats of an economic nature, Albania must have a productive and competitive economy, which is the opposite of what we currently have. With a public debt increasing daily, with empty state coffers, the country cannot recognize development and progress and, therefore, cannot be alert to the dangers that threaten it. In order to successfully face the dangers and threats, Albania should make considerable progress in building the rule of law, which must be separated from organized crime, corruption, and illegal actions that harm the country's development and its integration into the EU.

VI. Security Agreements with other Countries in the Region

Agreements on security indicate that the concept of security and cooperation has evolved. Albania has signed several agreements on security with the region's countries and beyond. The signing of these agreements comes as a result of the interdependence of security, taking into account regional and global security. Likewise, through these agreements, Albania aims to develop all components of national security.

Some of the agreements and initiatives in which Albania is a part are:

- The process of engagement of Southeast Europe countries in cooperation in the field of regional security and defense (SEDM) at the Ministerial level;
- The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSCE) consists of twelve member states with full rights and thirteen other states with observer status. The organization has an economic profile;
- The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) consists of eight member countries which are Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia. The aim of this initiative is to encourage and deepen regional cooperation, seeing this as a contribution to the European integration of member countries;
- The Adriatic Charter (A3), which has become the initiative (A5) after the inclusion on it also of Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina;
- The Stabilization Association Process (SAP), a specific EU process for the countries of the Western Balkans, to enable the countries to join the

European family as quickly as possible. Each country must individually sign the Stabilization Association Agreement (SAA) as a final preparatory stage for negotiating candidacy for EU integration. (Official Journal of the Republic of Albania, July 14, 2014);

- The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, initiated in 1999 by Germany, is considered the most important initiative for the long-term regulation of relations between states in this region. The Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, after 2008, was transformed into the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Its activity focuses on five main directions: economic and social development, infrastructure and energy, justice and internal affairs, the field of security, parliamentary cooperation, and human capital;
- Southeast European countries cooperation initiative (SECI), suggested by the USA in 1996, with the aim of cross-border regional cooperation, cooperation in the justice sector, in the fight against phenomena such as terrorism, organized crime, human trafficking illegal drugs and weapons;
- The Central European Initiative (CEI), within the EU integration process. The purpose of this initiative consists in the cooperation of the countries of the region in the political and economic fields as well as in good neighborly relations;
- The process of cooperation between the countries of Southeast Europe (SEECF) in terms of peace, strengthening of security, stability of good neighborly relations, economic-political-social development, justice, the fight against organized crime, drugs, and illegal traffic of weapons and terrorism (Fita, 2011: 36);
- The Multinational Peacekeeping Force of Southeast Europe (SEEBRIG) consists of seven member countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Romania, the Republic of North Macedonia, and Turkey. Also, five countries have an observer role in this initiative: the USA, Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Croatia. The purpose of this initiative is to contribute to regional security and stability, mutual trust, strengthening of good neighborly relations between the countries of Southeast Europe in the context of the SEDM process, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EACP), and the spirit of the Partnership for Peace (PfP);
- Center for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC);
- The Regional Initiative for Migration, Asylum, and Refugees (MARRI), aims to contribute to the free and regular movement of people in the interest of security and prosperity related to migration, asylum, integrated border management, visa policies, and consular cooperation, return of refugees, etc. Six member states participating in this initiative: Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, and Montenegro;

- The International Balkan Fund (WBF) was created by the Foreign Ministers of the Balkan countries. The WBF consists of these members Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, and Montenegro and aims to promote cooperation between members, strengthen regional relations and cohesion, as well as to encourage and promote integration in the Union European (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania).

VII. Conclusions / Recommendations

Current security threats are more complex than in the past. The expansion and deepening of the security concept reflected the multi-sectoral approach to security. Nowadays, the threats are not traditional or of a military nature where the reference object is the state, but there are different dimensions of threats. Albania is a 'small' country, which does not rise to the level of a 'small power'; in the absence of real power capacities, it will continuously face security risks beyond its management capabilities and in search of the role of the great powers and allies. Like every country, Albania also designs strategies through which it aims to respond to various challenges. Albania's primary strategy is the National Security Strategy, which other strategies follow. Corruption, low management efficiency, inefficient bureaucratic models, etc., influence the birth and evolution of social crises and are seen as potential social security challenges.

It is the direct responsibility of the elites to evaluate the social risks and build programs that find compliance with the elites and the public. The elites are responsible for the political crises, which, more than any other source, is rooted in the leadership crisis. Political security is related to and includes elements of political harmony, with the aim that the current policies of the state and the general strategy (grand strategy) should gain the support of all political elites and state administration, including the armed forces and law enforcement bodies. The prerequisite for an efficient and honest political system is that it operates under the rule of law.

Based on the objectives of the Albanian state and the need to successfully overcome political security threats, we see Albania's security and progress as linked to the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Albania must follow policies based on regional development and political and economic cooperation to fulfill the conditions to become a member of the European Union. As far as economic security is concerned, the only way to avoid risks to economic security is to find a solution to the crisis, which is all else different from the current situation. The development of a stable and prosperous economy, the attraction of foreign direct investments, the



promotion of internal investments, and the promotion of strategic projects should be at the center of attention of the government elite for Albania's economic security to be strong, in the face of the challenges presented to him.

In order to successfully face the security challenges, the role of the implementing actors of the National Security Strategy must be reviewed once again, as this role is essential to turn it and other strategies into an action tool and not just a document that remains on paper. However, a better adaptation of the central role of each institution should be made for the realization of specific aspects of the strategies depending on the threats, risks, or chances and opportunities that can be created based on these strategies. Priority should be given to the development and strengthening of the power capacities of the Albanian state, which is achieved through the common will and the passing of the personal interests of the leading political elites. Albania must work hard to build a legal state, which must be separated from organized crime, corruption, and illegal actions that harm the country's development and its integration into the EU. Based on threats such as organized crime, and corruption, it is recommended to conduct a vetting process for every employee of the public administration, employment based on meritocracy, and continuous training for them in order to have an administration public clean, professional, and at the same level as the developed countries. So, Albania should be insured against these threats. Membership in various security alliances should be seen and used in the context of internal benefit, not just external. Also, this cooperation is necessary to increase security and prevent illegal activities in Albania and the region. It is necessary to design and implement efficient policies to improve the economic situation, strengthen state institutions, and inform the public to increase the trustworthiness of society in the state.

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