

# *Corruption as a Threat to National Security in Albania: An Analysis of 2018-2020*

---

---

***Aderaldo MEMA PhD (c)***

ORCID ID: 0009-0008-1912-8510

LAW DEPARTMENT, FACULTY OF LAW,  
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,  
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA, ALBANIA  
aderaldo.mema@yahoo.com

---

***Prishila HYSA PhD (c)***

ORCID ID: 0009-0002-8281-2653

LAW DEPARTMENT, FACULTY OF LAW,  
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,  
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA, ALBANIA  
shila.hysa@hotmail.com

## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the impact of corruption on Albania's national security during the period 2018-2020, aiming to understand how corruption undermines democratic institutions, social stability, and the country's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The purpose of this study is to examine the direct correlation between corruption levels and national security outcomes, such as political instability, organized crime, and the efficiency of law enforcement. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative data from reports and documents with quantitative analysis of corruption indices, political stability indicators, and security metrics. The study finds that high levels of corruption have significantly weakened*

*Albania's institutional frameworks, hindered judicial reforms, and contributed to a decline in public trust in the government. Furthermore, the persistent corruption has delayed Albania's progress toward European Union integration, which has national security implications. The originality of this paper lies in its comprehensive analysis of how corruption directly affects Albania's security and stability, presenting empirical evidence that links governance issues to broader national security concerns. The paper contributes to existing literature by proposing actionable policy recommendations aimed at reducing corruption, improving institutional transparency, and enhancing the country's security capacity in Albania's context. The findings emphasize the importance of judicial reform, civic engagement, and international cooperation in addressing corruption and strengthening Albania's national security.*

**Keywords:** *Corruption, National Security, Albania, Justice Reform, Transparency, Euro – Atlantic Integration*

## **Introduction**

Corruption has existed since the dawn of humanity and the formation of the state, its origins so ancient that its roots reach deep into history. Corruption is a global phenomenon that deeply affects the economic, political, and social development of countries. It remains one of the most significant threats to Albania's national security, affecting political stability, economic development, and the credibility of public institutions. Defined by Transparency International as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain”, corruption in Albania is pervasive across public administration, justice, and law enforcement. In Albania, during the period 2018-2020, corruption-related challenges escalated, threatening national security and the process of integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. As the country progresses toward Euro-Atlantic integration, addressing corruption is critical not just for maintaining internal stability, but also for complying with international standards. This article examines how corruption undermines national security by weakening institutional frameworks, facilitating organized crime, and perpetuating social inequalities. It integrates insights from empirical data and key studies to provide actionable recommendations and proposes concrete measures to address this challenge.

## **Literature Review on corruption**

Corruption has long been identified as a significant threat to national security, particularly in transitional democracies like Albania, where political, economic, and social systems continue to evolve. The relationship between corruption and

national security has been extensively explored in academic and policy circles, as corruption can undermine state stability, hamper economic development, and erode public trust in government institutions. This literature review examines key studies and frameworks that shed light on the impact of corruption on Albania's national security, with a focus on the period between 2018 and 2020.

The word "corruption" is derived from the Latin "*corruptio*," meaning "decay" or "decay." In antiquity, it was used to describe moral and spiritual degeneration (Johnston, 2005).

Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle saw corruption as a threat to justice and public welfare. Aristotle, in his work *Politics*, views corruption as a phenomenon where leaders use their power for personal gain, while ignoring the interests of citizens (Aristotle, 1998). According to him "*it (corruption: note of the authors) is not only a mutilation of the law, but has a serious impact on the state, and at the critical moment it is able to lead to destruction or obedience.*" In Aristotle's view corruption was the exploitation of public office for personal gain, directly linking it to the degradation of justice and social welfare.

Sun Tzu, in *The Art of War* (Tzu, 2005), highlights the role of integrity in leadership, warning that corruption within state structures undermines stability and strategic advantage.

During the Middle Ages, corruption was associated with sin and moral deviation. It was often described as abusing God-given power, including phenomena like the sale of indulgences by the church (Tierney, 1988). Religious and tradition-based laws saw corruption as a deviation from divine rules, condemning it as sin and as a danger to the organized structures of society.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke discussed corruption in the context of the social contract, linking it to the failure of governments to protect the rights and interests of citizens. Hobbes correlates corruption with the breakdown or failure of the social contract. He suggests that corruption can arise when rules act in ways that deviate from their duty to protect the common good, thus undermining the security and order that the social contract provides (Hobbes, 2009). In Locke's view, corruption occurs when those in power betray the natural rights of individuals (Locke, 1988).

In the European Renaissance, Niccolò Machiavelli, the Florentine renaissance politician of the 16th century, in his work "*The prince*" dealt with corruption in the context of politics, describing it as weakening institutions due to greed and mismanagement of power. According to him, corruption was an obstacle to the sustainability of the state. He defined corruption as "*state evil, at the core of which lies the exploitation of public opportunities for private interests*" (Machiavelli, 2005).

With the development of the modern state and bureaucracies in the 19th century, corruption began to be understood as abuse of public office for private gain. That perspective still prevails today (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

In the 20th century, organizations like the United Nations and Transparency International have offered standardized definitions of corruption. Transparency International defines corruption as “abuse of trusted power for private gain” (Transparency International, 2020).

In the 21st century, the definition of corruption has become more complex, including several dimensions:

1. **Economical:** Corruption is seen as a factor that undermines economic development, increases inequality and discourages investment.
2. **Political:** Includes phenomena such as nepotism, clientelism, and manipulation of democratic processes for personal or group gain.
3. **Social:** Causes the loss of trust of citizens in institutions and weakening of social cohesion.
4. **Global:** In the era of globalization, corruption is seen as an international threat, including organized crime and money laundering.

In the Albanian context, corruption has gone from a moral and customary concept during the Ottoman period, to a legal and institutional problem after Independence. In the transitional years following the fall of the communist regime, corruption has taken on new dimensions, becoming a widespread phenomenon in the public and private sectors.

Judicial reforms and the establishment of institutions such as SPAK (Special Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime Structure) and the National Bureau of Investigation (BKH) aim to strengthen control over corruption. However, according to the *Albanian Security Barometer Survey* (Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance , 2020) public perception of institutional effectiveness remains low, signaling the need to enhance trust in security institutions. Drawing on data from the *Albanian Security Barometer Survey* (Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance , 2020) emphasize that public trust in security institutions and judicial reforms remains a major challenge. They argue that weaknesses in the judiciary and oversight institutions create opportunities for corruption and dysfunction. For instance, the lack of a quorum in the Constitutional Court during the justice reform period led to a “constitutional immunity” for certain laws and governmental decisions. This situation, combined with flaws in justice reform and political influence over key structures, undermines democratic functioning and negatively impacts national security, allowing corruption to infiltrate state structures.

At an international level, studies on the role of accountability in security (Transparency International, 2020) confirm the importance of independent oversight of security institutions to prevent corruption and ensure the protection of human rights. Similarly, the UNODC Report highlights that a lack of

accountability reinforces susceptibility to organized crime and weakens the rule of law (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime , 2019).

As reflected above, the definition of corruption has evolved continuously, reflecting historical developments and societal changes. From a moral and spiritual phenomenon to antiquity, it has evolved beyond traditional military threats and has become a major institutional and global problem in the modern age.

Albania, a former communist state, has been grappling with the transition to democracy and market economy since the early 1990s. Corruption remains one of the most persistent challenges, affecting all levels of government and society. Corruption weakens the state's capacity to address internal and external security challenges. Thus, for countries like Albania, where institutions are still developing, the destabilizing effects of corruption are magnified.

## The development of “National Security” concept

**National security** is a complex concept that has evolved over time, reflecting changes in the needs and threats that countries face. From ancient territorial defense to more comprehensive concepts of economic, environmental and cyber security nowadays, the definition of the term “national security” has gone through several important stages of development.

In antiquity, national security was defined primarily as the ability of a state to defend its territory from invasions and external threats. Security in this period was related to the physical sovereignty and stability of the ruler. **Sun Tzu**, in his work *The Art of War*, describes security as a strategy to maintain the stability and power of the state through war or diplomacy (Tzu, 2005). Thucydides in “*History of the Peloponnesse War*” argued that military power and alliances were fundamental to protecting the interests of the state (Thucydides, 1972).

In the Middle Ages, national security was primarily related to the preservation of feudal order and the protection of the state from external threats, such as foreign invasions or internal uprisings. The church and religion played a major role. Security was considered a protection of divine order, and threats to the state were often described as threats to religion. The architecture of the fortresses and fortifications reflected the physical focus of national security at the time.

With the Peace Treaties of Westphalia (Croxtton, 1999) the concept of the sovereign state was consolidated, and national security began to be defined as protecting state sovereignty from external interference. In his work “*Leviathan*”, Hobbes states that a strong government is vital to ensuring security from external and internal threats (Hobbes, 2009).

## *National Security as a Comprehensive Concept*

After World War II, the term “national security” took on a more strategic and globalized meaning. With the establishment of the United Nations and organizations like NATO, national security expanded to include international alliances. During the Cold War, national security was primarily associated with preventing nuclear threats and expanding communist influence. Military power, especially nuclear arsenals, became the mainstay of national security policy.

After World War II, economics and technology were also seen as key elements of national security, being included in states’ strategic plans. National security today encompasses a wide range of elements, beyond military protection, including:

- Economic Security: the ability to guarantee financial stability and control over strategic resources;
- Environmental Security: climate change and natural disasters are known as threats to national stability;
- Health Security: The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of public health as part of national security.
- Cybersecurity has become essential to the protection of critical infrastructure and national data (Clarke & Knake, 2010).

National security is closely linked to international security, making cooperation in organizations like NATO and the EU essential.

- In Albania, the concept of national security has developed according to various historical phases:
- During the Ottoman period: Security was related to the protection of local autonomy from the empire (Duka, 2007).
- After independence (1912): The focus was on preserving borders and strengthening the fragile state.
- During the communist regime: National security focused on preventing “imperialist threats” and maintaining internal stability through totalitarian control.
- After the ‘90s: National security took on a democratic and international dimension, focusing on integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, the fight against organized crime and corruption, as well as the modernization of the military. The evolution of the concept of “national security” reflects the historical and technological changes, as well as the different priorities of societies. From territorial protection in the early ages to

today's comprehensive concepts, the term has taken on an even wider significance. In an increasingly globalized world, national security requires a multidimensional, defining approach that includes military, economic, environmental and social aspects.

## **Research Question, Hypothesis and Methodology Approach**

This study will examine how corruption affects Albania's national security during 2018-2020 using a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The hypothesis is that corruption weakens democratic institutions and the state's ability to safeguard national security. A case study design will be employed, focusing on Albania's political, economic, and security landscape during this transitional development period for the country.

Data collection will primarily involve documentary analysis of key reports, such as the European Commission's Progress Reports, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, and Albanian government documents. These sources will provide insights into Albania's anti-corruption efforts, democratic institutions, and national security challenges.

For quantitative data, publicly available data from reputable sources like Transparency International, the World Bank, and Albanian government reports will be used. These data will be analyzed using correlation analysis to identify patterns between corruption levels and national security indicators such as political instability, crime rates, and defense spending.

The qualitative data from these documents will be examined using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes regarding the impact of corruption on Albania's democratic institutions and security. The results from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses will be triangulated to ensure validity and provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

This methodology will avoid interviews, focusing instead on secondary data sources. Ethical considerations will include the responsible handling of data and respecting the confidentiality of sensitive materials. Potential limitations include access restrictions to certain government documents and the challenge of establishing direct causality between corruption and national security outcomes, as many factors contribute to national security outcomes. However, the study will focus on identifying correlations and drawing informed conclusions.

By analyzing a range of data sources, including government reports and statistical indicators, the study aims to provide a comprehensive answer to the research question while testing the hypothesis that corruption weakens democratic institutions and the state's ability to safeguard national security.



## *The link between corruption and national security*

Corruption and national security are closely interrelated, reflecting the way corruption undermines institutional stability and state integrity, creating significant risks to national security. Corruption undermines the capacity of the state to ensure security in several key aspects, including border protection, the fight against organized crime and terrorism, and the maintenance of social and economic stability. Widespread corruption in the public sector weakens the ability of institutions to enforce the law and protect citizens, increasing vulnerability to internal and external threats (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Moreover, it creates opportunities for organized crime and terrorist groups to penetrate state structures or take advantage of institutional gaps (Johnston, 2005).

Economically, corruption destroys a country's financial stability by channeling resources to private interests rather than being used for national development and strategic needs. (Transparency International, 2020) highlights that countries with high levels of corruption often face deep poverty and economic inequality, which are destabilizing social security factors. An economically weakened state is most vulnerable to geopolitical pressures and foreign interference, reducing its ability to maintain its sovereignty and strategic independence (Bayley, 2005).

In the context of Albania, corruption has affected the ability of institutions to protect national security through lack of transparency and weakening of public trust. Organizations such as the European Commission have reported that corruption remains one of the main challenges in the field of rule of law and good governance in Albania, negatively affecting its Euro-Atlantic integration and regional stability (European Commission, 2020). Corruption in law enforcement and the justice system is particularly dangerous, as these institutions are essential for preventing security threats, including cross-border crime and terrorism (UNODC, 2019).

National security is not limited to territorial protection, but also includes the political, economic and social stability of a country. Corruption, undermining state institutions and their integrity, directly affects the following elements:

1. **Weakening the Rule of Law:** Corruption in the justice system hinders the implementation of the law and punishment of crimes. During 2018-2020, reports by international organizations such as (Transparency International, 2020) and (GRECO, 2014) have highlighted that Albania faces widespread corruption in the judiciary and public administration.
2. **Political Stability Risk:** Corruption has contributed to political polarization and the decline of citizens' trust in public institutions. Massive anti-government protests reflect the public's discontent at perception of high-level corruption.



3. **Organized Crime Financing:** Corruption facilitates the activities of criminal groups by providing access to public contracts, customs, and building permits. This mutual cooperation between criminal groups and corrupt officials threatens the economic and social security of the country.
4. **International Security Risk:** Albania, as a candidate country for the European Union and a NATO member, is obligated to ensure high standards of governance. Corruption in the defense or security sector could weaken its role as a reliable international partner.

### *2018-2020 period in Albania: An analytical overview*

Albanian anti-corruption legislation is based on international acts and adapts to the economic, social, political reality of our country. It extends its power to private enterprises, including public servants, judges, prosecutors and elected to local or central functions, where it also provides for heavy sacrifices.

During this period, some key elements highlight the impact of corruption on national security in Albania:

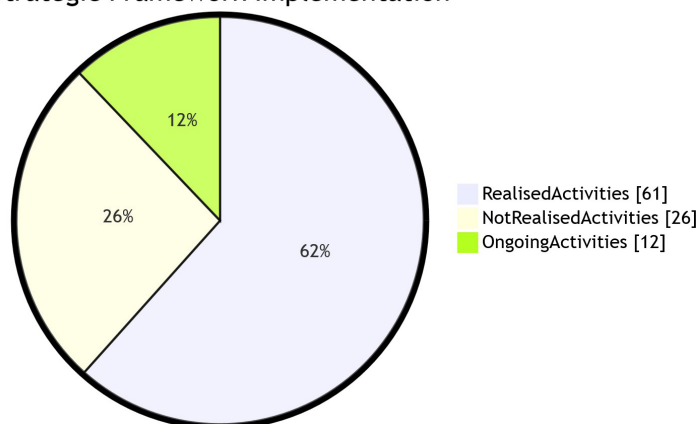
1. **International Reports:** Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranked Albania among the most corrupt countries in Europe. In 2020, Albania achieved a score of just 36 points, showing little progress compared to previous years.
2. **Justice Reform:** Despite the changes coming from the justice reform, the slowdown of the vetting process and resistance from powerful structures have limited its impact. In 2018-20, only a limited number of judges and prosecutors were discharged for violations or corruption.
3. **Public contracts and PPPs:** Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are often used as tools to favor companies linked to vested interests. Insufficient scrutiny has led to allegations of misuse of public funds and illegal profits.
4. **Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:** The pandemic has further exposed vulnerabilities in the health system, including lack of transparency in emergency procurement and mismanagement of public funds.

Corruption is classified in relation to organization and extension, as low-level or simple (horizontal) corruption, where this form is extended massively to the lower layers offering different services. High-level or vertical corruption extends to high spheres of power and decision-making, being linked to organized crime and carrying high risk.

Today, with the creation of special anti-corruption structures, the law enforcement authorities have some real independence to fight this phenomenon. The criminological characteristics of corruption have many features as all the activities of the development of human society are vulnerable to this phenomenon.

**GRAHP 1:**

**Strategic Framework Implementation**



This graph illustrates the distribution of corruption cases in Albania across different categories during 2018-2020. The data represents the breakdown of corruption cases by type, including passive corruption, active corruption, and abuse of office. The visual representation helps understand the predominant forms of corruption during this period

Crimes related to corruption have their own diverse characteristics and are related to both the state and the economic or public sphere. Usually, the state employees who perform this activity are assisted by a circle of people and later they are rewarded by being compensated for their assistance.

This way a vicious circle is created without beginning and ending, creating a criminal subordination with illegal benefits as a result of corrupt actions. E.g. illegal appointments in the administrations, hierarchical career rise, undeserved dubious rewards normally arising from taxpayers which also raise great debate in public opinion, being a sensitive element for the majority of the population.

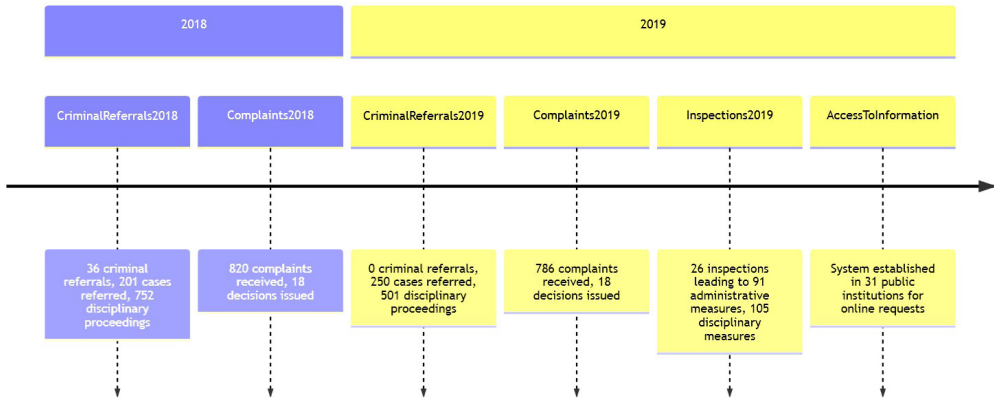
Among the characteristics of corrupt actions, the two beneficiaries act with mutual approval, benefiting from measurable goods, privileges, favors and making concrete actions to conceal their criminal activity. The essential distinguishing features of corruptive actions are unjust decisions, violations of the law or unacceptable moral normal. The criminological characteristics are relative criminological stability, high latent coefficient, etc.

The analysis of criminal offences involving corruption, trends and changes are evident during 2020 when new institutions are functioning specifically to combat this phenomenon directly related to organized crime.

In 2020, the special prosecution (SPAK) sent 70 criminal proceedings to trial. 260 people were charged, of whom 95 defendants were accused with corruption-related offenses.

**GRAPH 2:**

**Timeline of Anti-Corruption Measures**



*This diagram presents the distribution of the 70 criminal proceedings sent to trial by SPAK in 2020. It shows that out of 260 total defendants, 95 were specifically charged with corruption-related offences. The visual representation demonstrates the proportion of corruption cases among total criminal proceedings handled by SPAK.*

The data noted a decrease in criminal offences in the field of corruption in 2019 with 9.88% of the number of registered proceedings for these offences, compared to 2018. The specific weight that this group of criminal offences occupies for 2019, compared to the total number of criminal proceedings registered on a country scale, is 0.50% while for 2018 this indicator has been 0.55%. The year 2020 has also brought a drastic reduction in criminal offences of corruption<sup>1</sup>, compared to 2019.

As for specific criminal offences that are included in the corruption groups, their tendencies appeared in the graph below. In the analysis, some of the criminal offences that have a significant impact on public opinion regarding corruption, such as that of public officials, illegal influence, or corruption of judges and prosecutors<sup>2</sup>

Corruption is shown in the graphic 3.

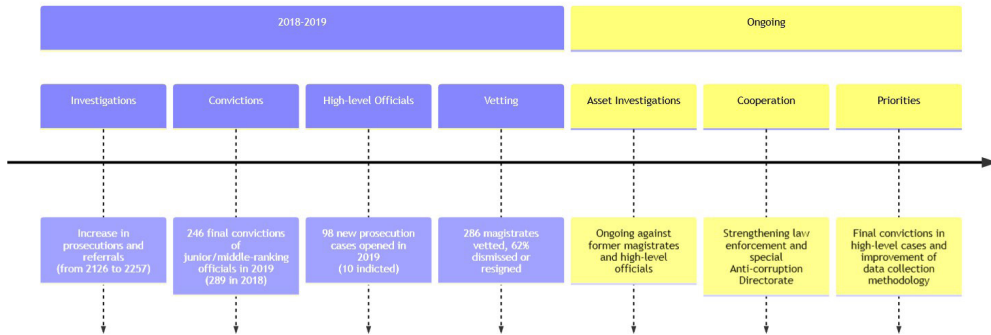
To identify corruption, different research methods are used, the most accurate among these are the methods used by the (Transparency International, 2020).

According to Transparency International report for 2020 (Transparency International, 2020), our country was rated 36 points and ranked 104th in the 180 countries. Compared to 2019, the country has grown by one point and two places among 180 states.

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Activity of the Special Prosecution During 2020, [www.spak.gov.al](http://www.spak.gov.al)

<sup>2</sup> The data were obtained from the General Prosecution Report for the three years 2018-2019-2020, <https://www.pp.gov.al/>.

**GRAPH 3:**  
Timeline of Anti-Corruption Efforts



This graph displays the trends in corruption-related criminal offenses from 2018 to 2020. It shows the decline in registered corruption proceedings, from 0.55% of total criminal proceedings in 2018 to 0.50% in 2019, with a further reduction in 2020. The visualization helps track the year-over-year changes in corruption cases.

**GRAHP 4:**



This diagram presents Albania's ranking in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. It shows Albania's score of 36 points and 104th position among 180 countries in 2020, representing a slight improvement of one point and two positions compared to 2019. The visual helps track Albania's international standing regarding corruption perception.

## Results

The analysis of corruption's impact on Albania's national security from 2018 to 2020 reveals several key outcomes, which are interconnected and have deep implications for the country's institutional stability and security landscape. The findings can be categorized into three primary areas: the weakening of democratic institutions, a significant decline in public trust, and setbacks in Albania's Euro-Atlantic integration process.

1. **Democratic Institutions:** One of the most profound effects of corruption during the period under review has been the weakening of Albania's democratic institutions, particularly in the areas of justice and public administration. The dysfunctionality of independent institutions, such as the judiciary, is evident in the failure to implement reforms and hold officials accountable. Despite legal frameworks like the justice reform and anti-corruption measures, progress has been slow. These institutional weaknesses have hindered the country's ability to provide effective governance and uphold the rule of law, critical components for ensuring national security (European Commission, 2020) (GRECO, 2014).
2. **Public Trust:** Public trust in the government and public institutions has significantly deteriorated. Reports from Transparency International spanning 2018 to 2020 have consistently highlighted the escalating dissatisfaction among Albanian citizens regarding the transparency of governmental processes and the efficacy of anti-corruption initiatives. The absence of accountability within political and administrative entities has weakened the relationship between the state and the public. As citizens become increasingly disenchanted with the lack of meaningful advancements, their trust in state institutions, particularly in law enforcement and the judiciary, is profoundly affected. This erosion of public trust not only jeopardizes the nation's stability but also hampers its ability to mobilize collective national responses to security challenges, both domestic and international.
3. **Euro-Atlantic Integration:** Corruption remains a significant obstacle to Albania's aspirations of integration into the European Union. Throughout 2018-2020, Albania was repeatedly criticized by the European Commission for failing to meet critical governance standards, particularly in the areas of judicial independence, anti-corruption efforts, and public sector transparency. For Albania, this delay represents more than just a political setback; it is also a national security issue, as it limits the country's ability to strengthen its defense capabilities, secure foreign investments, and align with broader regional security strategies (European Commission, 2020).

These results underscore the multifaceted and widespread nature of corruption in Albania, demonstrating how it directly undermines the core functions of state institutions, erodes public trust, and stalls the country's progress towards full integration into Euro-Atlantic structures.

## Discussion

The analysis shows that corruption poses a direct threat to national security by weakening institutional stability and hindering progress toward integration into the EU.

Albanian corruption from 2018 to 2020, as highlighted, clearly shows that corruption not only cripples public institutions, but also encourages organized criminal activities and diminishes trust in public administration. This part of the study builds on these findings by adding further analysis on the effects and solutions of corruption in Albania.

The problem of Albanian crime crosses all borders: internal and external, supervisory and judicial. There is a definite correlation, for example, between a lack of crime-controlled institutions and an increase in the rate of crime. This study shows that corruption of police and judicial powers has aided organized crime, making it extremely difficult to effectively police transnational prostitution and drug terrorism. These findings are aligned with broader theories of how corruption can weaken the state and create vulnerabilities in national security frameworks, by reducing the state's ability to protect itself from external threats. Corruption exposes the state to external abuse of its sovereignty and is therefore a security problem. In support of this proposition, it can be noted that many internal problems receive external attention, which further complicates their solution at the local level.

### 1. National Security

This paper shows the correlation between corruption and its effects on national Albania's national security by destabilizing democratic institutions, hindering the country's ability to combat organized crime, and jeopardizing the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies. A corrupt judiciary, for instance, fails to provide the necessary legal framework to prosecute crimes effectively, leaving the country vulnerable to criminal networks. The inability to ensure the rule of law and provide consistent governance feeds the cycle of instability, making it easier for corruption to flourish and organized crime to operate unchecked.

Moreover, the economic consequences of corruption further exacerbate security challenges. Public funds that should have been directed towards

critical sectors like defense, infrastructure, and law enforcement are siphoned off for private gain, leaving the state ill-equipped to deal with emerging security threats. This presents a major national security risk, as an economically weakened state is more susceptible to internal unrest and external pressures, particularly in the context of geopolitical competition.

## 2. Impact on Public Trust and Social Stability

Corruption's erosion of public trust is a critical issue for Albania's social and political stability. The declining confidence in state institutions hinders cooperation with the state in addressing security threats. One of the most pressing consequences of this declining trust is the risk of political instability, which can lead to further fragmentation of the political landscape, creating openings for extremist groups or organized criminal networks to exploit the situation for their own benefit, ultimately undermining national security.

## 3. Delaying Euro-Atlantic Integration

The delay in Albania's progress toward integration into the EU is another direct consequence of the corruption epidemic. This institution demand rigorous adherence to democratic principles and anti-corruption standards, which Albania has struggled to meet. As the study suggests, corruption not only weakens institutional capacity but also harms the country's international reputation, preventing it from fully aligning with the democratic values and standards upheld by the EU. Albania's inability to combat corruption threatens its role as a reliable partner to the EU.

## Recommendations and Conclusions

To address the identified challenges, a multi-faceted approach is needed. First, continued and accelerated justice reform is essential. The vetting process must be strengthened, and greater transparency is needed in both judicial and law enforcement procedures. Justice reforms, supported by international partners, are essential to address these challenges. Second, Albania should continue to work with international partners to implement a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy that includes strict oversight of public contracts, transparent procurement processes, and the strengthening of civil society to monitor government activities.

Third, public education and engagement are crucial. The government should actively involve citizens in decision-making processes to restore public trust. Educating citizens and involving them in decision-making processes can enhance transparency and accountability, making it harder for corruption to thrive. Additionally, supporting an independent media and bolstering civil society organizations will be key in ensuring long-term progress in the fight against corruption.



Finally, Albania must align its national security strategies with its integration goals. This means prioritizing reforms that not only address corruption but also contribute to strengthening the country's institutional framework, defense capabilities, and overall governance structures. Doing so will better position Albania to meet the standards required for full integration into the EU, ultimately enhancing its national security.

Corruption is a major threat to Albania's national security, weakening institutions, economics and political stability. The years 2018-20 have shown that efforts to fight it are insufficient and require greater engagement from all stakeholders. If not addressed decisively, the consequences of corruption will continue to undermine Albania's efforts to build a modern and stable state.

## Bibliography

- Aristotle. (1998). *Politics*. (C. Reeve, Trans.) Cambridge : Hackett Publishing Company.
- Bayley, D. H. (2005). *Changing the Guard: Developing Democratic Police Abroad* . Oxford University Press.
- Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance . (2020). *Albanian Security Barometer National Survey*. Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance .
- Clarke, R. A., & Knake, R. K. (2010). *Cyberwar: The next threat to national security and what to do about it* . Harper Collins .
- Croxton, D. (1999). *The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the Origins of Sovereignty*. *The International History Review*.
- Duka, V. (2007). *Histori e Shqipërisë 1912-2000*. Kristalina-KH.
- European Commission. (2020). *Albania 2020 Report*. European Commission. Retrieved from [https://commission.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/index_en)
- GRECO. (2014). *Fourth Evaluation Round* . Strasbourg: GRECO.
- Hobbes, T. (2009). *Leviathan*. Oxford University Press, Reissue Edition. Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/Leviathan-Oxford-Worlds-Classics-Thomas/dp/0199537283/ref=monarch\\_sidesheet\\_title](https://www.amazon.com/Leviathan-Oxford-Worlds-Classics-Thomas/dp/0199537283/ref=monarch_sidesheet_title)
- Johnston, M. (2005). *Syndromes of Corruption: Wealth, Power and Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511490965>
- Locke, J. (1988). *Two Treatises of Government*. (P. Laslett, Ed.) Cambridge University Press; 3rd edition. Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/Locke-Treatises-Government-Cambridge-Political/dp/0521357306/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?crid=2W8V6XV2A0005&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.K6NvW9pSsXKDX657y83eyHW8mCqC2CynauXLVSWvNt6JWpqlk6Hqbp6i87pii gc47FP7cYYg1gBiEe\\_fyS5r0m9ZwTsrRyGBL54bLR4zDn-CEmLrOoI3IKAvnaYA](https://www.amazon.com/Locke-Treatises-Government-Cambridge-Political/dp/0521357306/ref=sr_1_5?crid=2W8V6XV2A0005&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.K6NvW9pSsXKDX657y83eyHW8mCqC2CynauXLVSWvNt6JWpqlk6Hqbp6i87pii gc47FP7cYYg1gBiEe_fyS5r0m9ZwTsrRyGBL54bLR4zDn-CEmLrOoI3IKAvnaYA)
- Machiavelli, N. (2005). *The Prince*. (P. Bondanella, Ed., & P. Bondanella, Trans.) Oxford University Press; First Edition. Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/Prince-Oxford-Worlds-Classics/dp/0199535698/ref=sr\\_1\\_10?crid=92XM8S1EJ3HH&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.FGqMKPgCrAKesiL1dQqilFITRbdUm9ekvppNkAsgh8xtKhRjtdsVMhjiD64M5Rir sHsOwXGSNjtHjGy\\_uTFDNxlRXL\\_9wjkJYkKZ-iyBzmM-rYjh6pV97D2Zg483u3pZ2-CC7xsMIwlg](https://www.amazon.com/Prince-Oxford-Worlds-Classics/dp/0199535698/ref=sr_1_10?crid=92XM8S1EJ3HH&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.FGqMKPgCrAKesiL1dQqilFITRbdUm9ekvppNkAsgh8xtKhRjtdsVMhjiD64M5Rir sHsOwXGSNjtHjGy_uTFDNxlRXL_9wjkJYkKZ-iyBzmM-rYjh6pV97D2Zg483u3pZ2-CC7xsMIwlg)

- Rose-Ackerman, S., & Palifka, B. J. (2016). *Corruption and government: Causes, consequences and reform*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Corruption-Government-Causes-Consequences-Reform-ebook/dp/B01CJUV5K2#:~:text=The%20book%20analyzes%20the%20research%20explosion%20that%20accompanied,anti-corruption%20policy%20a%20key%20place%20on%20its%20agenda.>
- Thucydides. (1972). *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Penguin Classics; Revised Edition. Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/History-Peloponnesian-War-Thucydides/dp/0140440399/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=3TULT9TMJ1VFE&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.UX0\\_sFQKDAepzFFHpdA1P8hFJZ-VAQ3UN9830NiEM9rybbZz9wGexmSxpWRe3q0JQPRTKAEA5W7h6BuHGURfbBSIH0TgQYRgpCtffdrkdWn4WTVweBE9U\\_K7M5qPuH\\_3BHQVR](https://www.amazon.com/History-Peloponnesian-War-Thucydides/dp/0140440399/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3TULT9TMJ1VFE&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.UX0_sFQKDAepzFFHpdA1P8hFJZ-VAQ3UN9830NiEM9rybbZz9wGexmSxpWRe3q0JQPRTKAEA5W7h6BuHGURfbBSIH0TgQYRgpCtffdrkdWn4WTVweBE9U_K7M5qPuH_3BHQVR)
- Tierney, B. (1988). *The crisis of church & state, 1050-1300*. University of Toronto Press. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Crisis-Church-State-1050-1300-documents/dp/0802067018>
- Transparency International . (2018). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2018*. Transparency International .
- Transparency International. (2020). *Corruption Perceptions Index*. Transparency International. Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/>
- Tzu, S. (2005). *The Art of War*. (T. Cleary, Trans.) Boston : Shambhala . Retrieved from [https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590302257/ref=pd\\_lpo\\_sbs\\_dp\\_ss\\_1?pf\\_rd\\_p=1944687462&pf\\_rd\\_s=lpo-top-stripe-1&pf\\_rd\\_t=201&pf\\_rd\\_i=1936276011&pf\\_rd\\_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf\\_rd\\_r=131HNPPTW69M9AN7M43H](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590302257/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_dp_ss_1?pf_rd_p=1944687462&pf_rd_s=lpo-top-stripe-1&pf_rd_t=201&pf_rd_i=1936276011&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_r=131HNPPTW69M9AN7M43H)
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2022). *Human Development report 2021/2022: Uncertain times, unsettled lives*. UNDP. Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime . (2019). *World Drug Report 2019*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime .
- UNODC . (2019). *Results-Based Annual Report*. UNODC .