An Institutional Perspective on Security Issues: The Case of Albania

Enika Abazi

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DEFENCE AND SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE AND REFORM IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE: INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES

ALBANIA

A SELF ASSESSMENT STUDY

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AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON SECURITY ISSUES

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National Security and the International Perspective

At the present time in Carnovale's words "vital security interests are no longer national interests, and national security interests are no longer vital"[1]. Vital national interests are challenged by a wide range of problems that go beyond the military ones that have almost become anachronistic in the face of economic and environmental problems, terrorism, migration, civil unrest, resurgent nationalistic splits and fear of further escalation of tension across borders. These challenges require an adequate, complex and instrumental approach. A single state cannot provide sustainable and satisfactory solutions to all contemporary challenges. The institutional approach is the most appropriate in providing the solution to the new challenges, especially to those related to security and defence issues. The purpose of international institutions and their role is to "provide an acceptable balance between the sovereign equality and independence of states on the one hand and the reality of an interdependent world and the international law commitment to human dignity on the other"[2]. To these considerations should be added the assumption that institutions could attenuate the burden of difficulties that amount from the transition processes – most of the Balkan countries are part of it – that aim at transforming centralised regimes into democratic ones.

With the end of the Cold War, the challenges of formulating European defence and security policies have changed considerably. For over five decades, the East-West conflict substantially structured the strategies, defence-planning priorities and military needs of Europe. This contributed to European security, but today the European internal context carries instability and challenges to the formulation of security policies. In this unfamiliar and uncertain new environment, security policies cannot be based any more on the outdated assumptions of the past decades. The new environment is not

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[1] M. Carnovale, *Vital and National Security Interests after the End of the Cold War*, M. Carnovale (eds.), *European Security and International Institutions after the Cold War*, (New York: St.Martini's Press, 1995), p. 1

sufficiently shaped and the national consensus about the content over security concerns in the Post- Cold War Era is not clear-cut. This presents difficulties in establishing a shaped and appropriate multilateral security system for post-Cold War Europe. Nevertheless, the institutional approach is the most appropriate one to address the new challenges. This analysis has a direct implication for building security for the Balkans since such institutions are seen as a constituent part of its security architecture.

The Balkan Context and the Role of International Institutions

Historically, the Balkan Peninsula is considered the powder keg of Europe and apparently it has not changed much over time. Being geographically between Europe and Asia, with a powerful position in the Mediterranean Sea, the Balkans has been a point where interests have clashed continuously in the course of history. This pattern has influenced state creation in the Balkans by drawing the state borders according to the geopolitics of the moment and not ethnic considerations. All Balkan countries have territorial claims against their neighbours and ethnic minority problems. The Balkan countries are very sensitive about those problems and those issues could very easily be a cause for war as has been the case with the Balkan wars in the past and recently it was the cause of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosova and Macedonia.[3]

Beside historically shaped insecurities, the end of the Cold War has raised in the Balkans two serious problems related to security issues. The first problem is linked to the economic crisis, which started with the process of modernisation at the beginning of 1980s and provoked the revival of neighbour-blaming and ethnic nationalism.

The second problem relates to questions of political legitimacy. Legitimacy is based mostly on a leader with a charismatic personality. On the one hand, this legacy could lead to authoritarianism and on the other hand the correlation between economic and ethnic problems and charismatic leaders could violently affect the legitimacy of the regime and the process of democratisation.[4]

[2] R. Higgins, *Intervention and International Law*, H. Bull (ed.), *Intervention in World Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p. 30.

[3] P. A. Goble, 'A New Age of Nationalism', in S. Bruce (ed.) *The Access Guide to Ethnic Conflicts in Europe and Former Soviet Union,* (Washington, DC: Access, 1994), p. 168; J. Bugajski, *Ethnic Politics in Eastern Europe: A Guide to Nationality Policies*, (New York: OME Sharpe Armonk, 1994) pp. xi-xxvi; R. J. Art, 'Why Western Europe Needs the United States and NATO', *Political Science Quarterly,* No. 111 (Spring 1996), pp. 1-40.

[4] J. R Lampe, 'Southeastern Europe and the Legacy of Insecurity', in P. S. Shoup & G. W. Hoffman (ed.) *Problems of Balkan Security, (Southeastern Europe in the 1990s)* (Washington, DC: The Wilson Centre Press, 1990) pp. 9-30.

Under such circumstances international institutions could play an important role in managing these transitional problems that closely relate to security issues in the Balkans. At an early stage and in the short term, institutions could intervene through political dialogue and mediation before tensions explode; producing a political solution suitable for the parties would avoid running the risk of a costly military confrontation that carries the danger of regional escalation. In the long term, institutions, especially the European ones, could extend the process of political, economical and security integration to the Balkan countries. The Western experience is a good example of managing and pacifying the old rivalries between states. On the other hand, the institutions could guarantee the democratic transition by providing the right institutional checks and balances over the process and aid and assistance in support of democratic moves until the legitimising process creates the democratic culture that is missing in most Balkan countries.

The Regional Context

Albania is shaped and affected in all dimensions by Balkan historical developments. To begin with, Albanians in countries neighbouring the Albanian state in number equal the internal population of Albania proper. The external population has been subjected to discriminatory policies by the host countries, which until recently ensured that Albania's relations with the neighbours remained tense. The intervention of the international community in cases of the violation of human rights of Albanians in Kosova and Macedonia released the tension, thawing the insecurities in short term. Nevertheless the situation is one of perpetual transition, since nothing is settled conclusively, preserving the potential for the replication of insecurities in the future. Apart from that, Albania, having emerged from the most destructive communist dictatorship remains the poorest country in the Balkans, unable to provide for its own security due to its economic backwardness. Under such circumstances, the Albanian question in the Balkans represents a sensitive issue with important implications for Albania proper and the stability of the region as well.

NATO's Expansion and the Balkan Context

The end of the Cold War has opened the debate about the expansion of NATO. The new members coming from the former Warsaw Pact into the alliance, and the second wave of enlargement that took place at the Prague summit in November 2002, dispersed the doubts about the future of NATO and its expansion toward the East. Nevertheless there

remain concerns about NATO's expansion in the Western Balkans, since it remains the most unstable area in Europe.

Though none of the Balkan countries had initially been forecast to join in the first wave of NATO enlargement, at the Prague summit three of them, Slovenia[5], Bulgaria and Romania did join the North Atlantic club. However a sort of security guarantee should be provided to the newly democratic countries of the Western Balkans. This is for two reasons: first, to avoid a new dividing line in Europe and the Balkans after NATO's second expansion in Central-Eastern Europe; second, lest insecurity push the Western Balkan countries to search for other alliances or security alternatives, which could give rise to a new struggle for power and influence in the Balkans and be highly destabilising even for Europe itself.[6] The arms trade deals and aid allegedly offered for the air defence capabilities of Iraq by Serbia and Republika Srpska[7] are an example of a larger politico-military integration between some countries of the Western Balkans such as Serbia and Macedonia with Ukraine and Iraq. Alliances of this kind indicate a strategy of challenge towards NATO expansion and a counter to Alliance actions in the Balkans[8], increasing insecurities and fears for a return to the animosities of the past.

Justifications for furthering enlargement of NATO in the Western Balkans are directly related to commonly perceived security problems facing the US and its European partners in the Balkans. The security concerns are related primarily to the growth of nationalism and rebellious tendencies in the Western Balkans. These tendencies became evident in the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, followed by the civil unrest in Albania and Serbia during 1997 and the events in Kosovo and Macedonia quite recently. A turbulent region at Western Europe's door does not match either European or the US interests. The only appropriate instrument to deal with the instability is NATO, as was proved by the intervention in Bosnia and recently in Kosova. But for a permanent solution, only extension of NATO membership in the Western Balkans could stabilise the region, provide the right framework for the continuation of the process of democratisation and economic reform towards a market

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[5] Slovenia does not consider itself a Balkan country. Due to the fact that for a long time it has been in the Yugoslav Federation since its creation and other variants of it before the Second World War, Slovenia in one way or another has been part of many Balkan processes and this could serve as an argument that would put it in the Balkan countries basket more than another part of Europe.

[6] R. D. Asmus and F. S. Larrabee, 'NATO and the Have-Nots', *Foreign Affairs,* December 1996, Vol. 75, No. 6, pp. 1-7.

[7] Washington Post 23 October 2002, *RFE/RL Newsline,* October 2002 Vol. 6, No. 200, p. 23; See also on the same issue *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 6 November 2002.

[8] Diplomaticus, 'Integrimi I Helmetave ne Kiev-Beograd-Shkup-Bagdat' (The Integration of Helmets in Kiev-Belgrade-Skopje-Baghdad), *Gazeta Shqiptare* (21 October 2002), p. 6.

economy and democratic system. From a larger perspective, NATO expansion would contribute to "preserving the strategic balance within Europe"[9] by removing fears of a return to the policies of coalitions and rivalries of the past.

Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen the southern wing of NATO, which appears to be weak either because of the tensions between Turkey and Greece, or because of the situation in the Middle East. The extension of conflict in the Western Balkans would further deepen the division, providing the alliance with very delicate dilemmas, since the two 'problematic' members would most probably align themselves with different sides in the case of a conflict in the Balkans.

Third, there is a dangerous environment close to the Balkans, which may affect it, namely Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism related to it. There are fears of its expansion in the Balkans. In the Balkans there is a large Muslim presence, made up of Turkish, Albanian and Bosnian communities. An explosion of a war in the Balkans could favour the expansion of fundamentalism and involvement of regressive forces in its support. These fears are increased by the presence of volunteers from fundamentalist organisations coming from the Muslim countries of the Middle East to support the Bosnian Muslim community during the Bosnian war and the presence of dubious humanitarian Muslim organisations in the Balkans. An explosion of war in the Balkans might be a good opportunity for transforming the conflict into a clash between different civilisations based on religious affiliations.

This situation could be dangerous not only for the Balkans but for Europe also. The events of 11 September 2001 and its aftermath proved that the danger of terrorism is real and its networks could encompass Western Balkans that is not only in a period of transition but also plagued by criminal networks of illegal smuggling of drugs, human trafficking and arms. The reality of conflicts in the Western Balkans among other considerations revealed, as Kaldor[10] observes, that fighting took place between multiple armed factions with different political objectives and fractured lines of command. As the Bosnian case witnessed, conflict was not bound by geography, fighters of a 'holy war' did join the Bosnian cause and later were found to support international terrorist networks. Financial and propagandistic forces that supported the war transcend state borders. New

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[9] Meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Final Communiqué, Copenhagen, 6-7 June 1991

[10] M. Kaldor, 'Cosmopolitanism and Organised Violence', *Paper prepared for Conference on Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, Warwick, 27-29 April 2000; M. Kaldor, 'Introduction', in M. Kaldor and V. Basker (eds.), *New Wars: Restructuring the Global Military Sector,* (London: Pinter, 1997) pp. 3-33. See also S. Kalathil, 'Nationalism in Net', *The Asian Wall Street Journal,* 22 February 2002.

information channels such as the Internet have made terrorism and nationalism indiscernible in many respects, multiplying the sources of insecurity, especially for countries in a difficult and problematic transition to democracy.

In such circumstances, in Shea's words NATO 'either takes them [the Balkan countries] in, and tries to deal with their problems, or the latter will grow and affect NATO anyway, sooner or later... if you are not perpetually going forward, you'll fall off.'[11] Accordingly, it is also important to see the reverse side of the coin, and to envisage a situation where NATO interests, dilemmas and factors influence its enlargement into the Western Balkans, and by implication the chances of Albanian membership in the organisation.

After the end of the Cold War three factors negatively affected NATO's enlargement in the Western Balkans. First, there was a divergence in the perception of national interest and political priorities between the United States and its European allies in the Balkans. The four years of crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the crisis of 1997 in Albania illustrated this. Washington's reluctance to send ground troops to Bosnia-Herzegovina and the EU and WEU involvement in the Albanian crisis could serve as examples. Furthermore, the divergence among the Alliance members over the bombing campaign in Yugoslavia reinforces this idea. Again at the Prague summit in November 2002, divergences of interests, compromises and balancing actions among the Alliance members resulted in decisions that favoured membership for Bulgaria and Romania, while it was decided that ex-Yugoslavia, minus Slovenia, plus Albania, be treated as a compact entity defined geopolitically as the Western Balkans. In this neo-appellation a dividing line in the Balkans is crystallising that for the moment has shelved the divergences of major members of the alliance in this area. These divergences once initiated the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia and opened the way to the wars of the 1990s.[12]

Second, Russia has opposed and would continue to oppose extended NATO enlargement in the Balkans. In the Balkans, Russia began to act as protector of the Serbs. The motive is not only 'Pan-Slavism' and the alleged bond of kinship with the Serbs; it is also related to other interests such as oil pipelines.[13] Emerging from the shock of defeat after the end of the Cold War, Russia is trying to re-stabilise its zone of

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[11] J. Shea, 'Should NATO Be Enlarged to the East?', in M. Carnovale (ed.) *European Security and International Institutions after the end of the Cold War,* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 87.

[12] See the unilateral recognition of Croatian and Slovenian independence by Germany, which sped up the process of dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990-1991. See also International Herald Tribune, 22 November 2002.

[13] On the idea see Norman Stone, 'Two Cheers for Colonel Tony Benn', *The Times,* 26 March 1999.

influence in the Balkans and find a role that would be acceptable for its status as an ex-great power. In order not to upset Russia,[14] NATO will at least delay any enlargement in the Western Balkans.

Third, after the three new Balkan members, further NATO enlargement in the Balkans is going to affect NATO cohesion. In a way this is not a strong argument since the alliance has always been based not on numbers but on a sharing of common democratic values.[15] Nevertheless, the newcomers are not able to bear all the costs of such membership; the old members have to provide for it. Following this logic, NATO enlargement in the Western Balkans looks very distant from a cold financial logic[16]. Furthermore one cannot ignore the fact that the Western Balkan countries are still far from representing consolidated democracies.

NATO and Albania

Focusing on the Albanian case, there is logic behind the idea that Albania should be an exception and win early membership of NATO. Membership of NATO would contribute to the security of the region and avoid the outbreak of interstate conflict in the Balkans. The main reasons for this are detailed below.

First, Albania has almost a compact ethnic population, 98 percent being Albanians, and with no territorial claims from its neighbours. Therefore, a stable and pro-Western Albania would be an important asset in the creation of a stable pro-Western centre in the Balkans.

Second, the Albanian question in the Balkans has reached boiling point. Kosova's undecided status and its resolute demand for independence represents a new challenge for the future geopolitical configuration of the Balkans. This situation could be more challenging if the process of building multiculturalism in Macedonia, based on the Ohrid Agreement should fail. In the long run, the Albanian national question may cause a major threat to the security and stability of the Balkans. Thus, anchoring Albania to the West

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[14] R. Murphy, 'OSCE hopes Russia Will Keep Trying in Kosovo', *REUTERS,* 6 April 1999; C. Giacomo, 'Albright Seeks Common Ground with Russia on Kosovo', *REUTERS,* 12 April 1999; B. Schweid, 'Trying to Mend Fences with Russia', *Associated Press,* 13 April 1999.

[15] Shea, 'Should NATO be enlarged to the East?', p. 86.

[16] Military Expenses of Albania for the year 2003 represent only one per cent of GDP, while the requirement for new members of NATO is at least two per cent of the GDP. R. Mejdani, 'Buxheti, Kushti qe nuk Plotesojme per NATO-n', 'Budget, the Condition we fail for NATO membership', *Gazeta Shqiptare,* 28 November 2002, pp. 12-13.

would constitute an intelligent move from a geo-political and strategic point of view and would help defuse one of the most explosive threats to regional stability.[17] In this case NATO enlargement would contribute to maintaining the security of the region and would create the environment for negotiable solutions in the Western Balkans.

Third, the threat of a possible aggression against Albania has increased due to the fact that Albania has a very weak defensive system which deteriorated with the serious damage caused by the civil riots of 1997 and the conflict in Kosova, which saw a continuous violation of the Albanian borders by the Serb army and more recently by the Macedonian army. Accordingly, a modernisation of the Albanian defence system would be of primary importance. It is difficult for the Albanian government alone to carry out this process, so NATO's support in achieving this purpose would be of great importance. That could be realised at a first stage through an active PfP programme that would lead to future membership in NATO.

NATO Expansion from the Albanian Perspective

Having emerged in a democratic transformation process from an isolated period and an alliance vacuum, Albania is eager to promote itself among the other European countries and cope with its deficiencies while guaranteeing its sovereignty and independence. NATO membership takes top priority in Albanian government policy, whichever political force is in power, as a guarantee of the democratic nature of the transition process. Meanwhile it provides much-needed security coverage. Based on this logic, the Albanian Government was the first among Central-East European countries to ask for NATO membership[18]. Albania was among the first countries to join the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC)[19] in June 1992, and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in February 1994. These steps are considered important moves towards integration into the new architecture of Euro-Atlantic security architecture. Furthermore, PfP provides the essential assistance that serves to strengthen Albanian security and also contributes to the strengthening of security and stability in the region: enhancing confidence and security -building measures (CSBM) among the Balkan countries; by involving them in common exercises, exchange of information, meetings of the military staff and personnel at every level.

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[17] F. S. Larrabee, 'US Policy in the Balkans: From Containment to Strategic Reengagement', in F.S. Larrabee (ed.) *Crisis in the Balkans, Views from the Participants,* (London: Western Press, 1997) p. 285.

[18] *Jane's Defence Weekly Interview*, 24: 11, 16 September 1995.

[19] Today the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).

In this framework Albania has been actively supporting and participating in NATO operations and initiatives in the search for a peaceful solution to the Balkan crisis and a secure future for the region. The Albanian navy has closely cooperated with NATO and WEU's missions in monitoring the UN resolutions on Yugoslavia, under the 'Sharp Guard' operation. Furthermore Albania offered to the Alliance its air and naval capabilities in support of the 'Safe Haven and Deny Flight' operation over Bosnia and recently in support of the NATO operation 'Allied Force' in Yugoslavia. The Albanian armed forces have participated in other national and multilateral exercises in the framework of bilateral, regional and NATO-PfP activities, such as 'Cornerstone 2001' in Albania, 'Seven Stars', 'Dynamic Response' and the 'SEEBRIG CAX'. Albania is contributing in SFOR with a company, a participation that has contributed both to the improvement of the experience and expertise of Albanian staff and its readiness to be not only a consumer of security but a provider as well[20]. All this aims to show "reliability, the most precious asset of an ally"[21], which would improve the chances for early membership of Albania in NATO.

The PfP programme based on the defence Planning and Review Process (PARP) aims: to restructure and harmonise Albanian military structures and capabilities in conformity with NATO standards; to put decision-making structures and procedures under civilian control and compile the legal framework for it; to train and exercise military structures on peacekeeping, humanitarian and search and rescue missions, thus preparing Albania's future membership into the Alliance. For this purpose, a large number of joint exercises have been held between NATO and Albanian military forces.[22]

The Year 1997 and its Consequences

1997 was a momentous year for Albania. A general violent outburst spread all over the country due to the frustration caused by the loss of life savings by hundred of thousands of Albanians in the 'pyramid' investments schemes. The event was followed by a total disintegration of the military structures and capabilities. As a result conscripts abandoned military units and their officers, military installations became prey to criminal elements, arms and ammunition were stolen. This situation led to new elections and the

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[20] *Action Plan for Membership of Republic of Albania in NATO*, Albanian Ministry of Defense, (Tirana: 2001); and G. Robertson, *NATO-Albania Relations, Strong and Growing Stronger*, at the US Embassy in Italy Website at: http://www.usembassy.it/file2001_05/alia/a1051815.htm (18 May 2001).

[21] A. Copani, 'The New Dimensions of Albania's Security Posture', *NATO Review*, Vol. 44, 2 March 1996, pp. 24-28.

[22] Cobani, 'The New Dimensions of Albania's Security Posture'.

establishment of a new socialist government. The new elections solved the problem politically and the multinational force that was mandated by the UN Security Council provided the necessary humanitarian assistance and created order by its presence, but the problem of the disintegration of military structures was not solved. Under such circumstances the PfP programme took the main role in developing a programme of assistance for rebuilding the Albanian Armed Forces. Continuing on the same line as the PfP programme, the new practice was named as Individual Partnership Programme (IPP).

The programme consisted of two pillars. The first pillar involved NATO as an organisation in a programme of assistance. The assistance was concentrated in three areas:

– The development of the national defence concept and its legal framework, providing for democratic control of forces and civil-military relations;
– The structural reorganisation and adjustment of military command and armed forces increasing their operational abilities and efficiency by developing an essential Command, Control, Communication and Information (C3I) system;
– The resolution of technical issues related to the storage and safety of ammunitions and armaments.

Another aim of the first pillar was to keep Albania tied to the main PfP activities in the framework of the Partnership Work Programme.

The second pillar aimed at channelling bilateral assistance from allies and partner countries. The scope was to assess the necessities and priorities and coordinate bilateral actions, avoiding overlaps. For this purpose a special forum of coordination named Clearing House on Albania (CHA) was created and a NATO office was established in Tirana, the only one in the partner countries.[23]

The Clearing House programme was another project that aimed at the collection of dispersed weapons. The project was financed by UNDP and operationalised by the Albanian police forces. Up to February 2002 one third of looted weapons from governments arsenals in 1997 were collected, of which 100,000 were destroyed. In February 2002 the programme shifted from the collection of small arms to controlling them. Besides the collection of arms, the two-year programme aimed at creating a

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[23] On the assistance programme after the crisis of 1997 see, G. Katsirdakis, 'Albania: A Case Study in the Practical Implementation of Partnership for Peace', *NATO Review,* Vol. 46, No. 2, Summer 1998, pp. 22-26.

national public awareness and advocacy strategy focusing on the socio-economic impact of light weapons. This is a policy that is based on the UNDP priorities for development and human security[24].

Albanian Preparation: PfP and MAP

Following these lines of cooperation, a new Individual Partnership for Peace programme was signed between Albania and NATO for the year 1999. The programme aims to strengthen the Albanian army and Albania's cooperation with NATO as an organisation and with its members and partners.

Preparing seriously for membership in NATO, the National Membership Action Plan (MAP) was issued by the Albanian Ministry of Defence in October 2001[25]. The overall objectives of MAP cover a large spectrum and aim at the transformation of Albanian society and at enabling it to handle by itself all internal and external challenges to security. The MAP objectives aim at:

– Continuation of reforms that would enhance the development of a market economy and rule of law, while fighting against corruption. Improving respect for human and minority rights, while supporting efforts for strengthening democratic institutions and increasing the efficiency of governance.

– Strengthening of civilian control over military structures and command while continuing the military reform that aims at the harmonisation of legislation with that of the North Atlantic Alliance. Increasing compliance and participation in international efforts to fight terrorism and organised crime in relation to the participation of Albania in the antiterrorism coalition of states.

In April 2000 Albania accepted a very demanding Partnership Goal package, comprising 53 Partnership goals, of which 31 are MAP-related. This ambitious reform amounts to a comprehensive transformation of the Albanian Armed Forces. Its implementation is supposed to be part of the new Albanian Armed Forces Structure and Implementation Plans during the period 2002-2010[26].

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[24] *Albania Moves to Tighten Controls on Small Arms*, UNDP, Tirana, available at: http://www.undp.org/dpa/frontpagearchive/2002/february/6feb02/

[25] See *Action Plan for Membership of Republic of Albania in NATO*, *op. cit.* note 20.

[26] *Ibid.*

WEU in Albania

The WEU is the only European organisation empowered to carry out independent military operations. WEU is a totally intergovernmental organisation addressing the needs of its members and requests coming from the EU. Looking at WEU role solely after the end of the Cold War, it is related to 'humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and task of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking, otherwise known as 'Petersberg Tasks'. Furthermore, WEU will be ready 'to support, on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with its own procedures, the effective implementation of conflict prevention and crisis management measures, including peacemaking activities of the CSCE[27] or the United Nations Security Council'.[28]

Dealing with the new challenges in Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, WEU paid attention to the new democracies of Central-East Europe. In this framework, a Forum of Consultations was established at Petersberg in June 1992, involving the WEU members and eight countries of Central Europe. In May 1994, the Kirchberg Declaration constituted a new development in cooperation with the countries of Central-East Europe. A new status – that of association – was established with the countries that possess a European Association Agreement, opening up possibilities for more intensive cooperation with them.[29]

Albania does not yet have an Association Agreement with the EU. As a result Albania does not have partner status and as such formalised cooperation with the WEU. Nevertheless, the WEU is present in Albania under the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty where it is declared that 'the Union requests the Western European Union (WEU), which is an integral part of the development of the European Union, to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications'.[30] Although the EU Foreign Ministers, at their meeting at Apeldoorn, on 15-16 March 1997, did not decide to send a military force to Albania as a response to the request of the Albanian government, they agreed to dispatch a military and police 'advisory force' to help the newly-elected government restore order after the collapse of the pyramid investment schemes. Accordingly, a fact-finding mission from the WEU Planning Cell was

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[27] Today OSCE.

[28] *Petersberg Declaration*, European Union Council of Ministers (Bonn, 19 June 1992).

[29] *Kirchberg Declaration*, European Union Council of Ministers (Luxembourg, 19 June 1992).

[30] Article J.4 (2) of Maastricht Treaty (10 December 1991).

sent to Albania to monitor the situation. Based on the results provided by the fact-finding mission, the WEU Council decided on 2 May 1997 to establish a Multinational Advisory Police Force (MAPE) in Albania, in order to provide advice and training to the Albanian police. 'The main missions of MAPE were to:

– Advise the central echelon on law and order, frontier policing and the reconstruction of the Police Academy;
– Organise training programmes.[31]

The mission became operational after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between WEU and Albanian authorities on 24 June 1997. The Mandate of MAPE was extended and strengthened two times by the WEU Council. The mandate has been extended until April 1999 and the number of officials has increased from 60 to 100. Furthermore, the WEU Multinational Advisory Police Element in Albania is considered a contribution to stability in the region, so further areas of cooperation are foreseen for the future. The MAPE advisory role will be extended including advice on police monitoring and controlling the border area. In order to improve Albania's ability to monitor and control its borders, further training and provisions of equipment are foreseen for Albanian police. Moreover, WEU is examining if further contributions could be made in accordance with NATO assistance programmes in the field of military training and restructuring of the Albanian armed forces.[32]

The EU Approach in Projecting Security in the Balkans

The European Community[33] created after the end of the Second World War with the aim of preventing wars between Europeans, has succeeded in creating a community of security, democratic stability and economic prosperity. The world today is no longer a stable place; it is shaken and confused as it is by the end of the Cold War and by different 'internal crises of identity, rights or power'[34]. After the end of the Cold War the European Union remains the most important regional power in Europe, representing a fortress of prosperity and security and as such an attractive reference for the other countries of Europe. In this context, as a community of common democratic values, the EU has the duty to extend order to other European countries. More specifically, 'the EU

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[31] Report, Document 1589, Assembly of the Western European Union (5 November 1997).

[32] Rhodes Declaration ,WEU Ministerial Council (12 May 1998).

[33] Today European Union.

[34] J. Santer, 'The European Union's Security and Defence Policy, How to Avoid Missing the 1996 Rendez-Vous', *NATO Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6, November 1995, pp. 3-9.

attaches great importance to cooperation both with and among the countries in the [Balkan] region. European stability and prosperity cannot be dissociated from developments in the countries in South-East Europe. Their political stability and economic well-being will be assured. The EU will continue to stand firmly beside them, both politically and in terms of economic and financial assistance.'[35]

The EU has no direct economic interests in the Balkans; first because the Balkans does not represent a large and competitive market, and secondly because the presence of the EU there is very limited, since the levels of the EU exports-imports and direct investments with the countries of the region are at insignificant levels. On the contrary, for all Balkan countries the EU represents the main partner in trade and direct investment, a fact that shows the importance that the EU has for the region.

Nevertheless, considering its political and security interests, the EU cannot neglect the Balkans. First, the EU has a moral obligation to address Balkan issues. Second, due to the geographic proximity, the Balkan's security is an important issue for the security of the EU as a whole and for particular states explicitly. Nowadays there is no fear of invasion coming from the south; the main concern is of another nature, being related to the invasion of economic refugees. The Balkans crisis and tension 'has brought the Balkans back on the mental map of most west Europeans', because the Balkans constitute the EU's immediate neighbour. Historically the EU members have perceived their interests in the region differently and nowadays this historical background is shaping in many cases their behaviour toward the Balkan states. [36]

Meanwhile abandonment of the Balkans would create a dividing line in Europe between prosperous and poor countries that may break the existing balance of alignment and increase animosity in Europe and the risks for a return to Europe's history of conflict. Accordingly an integrated policy toward the Balkans is the most appropriate policy that would tie the Balkan countries to Western values. Integration would offer a stable framework for new democracies to develop and prosper. The European approach toward insecurity in the Balkans is a regional policy – considering the region as a whole – aiming at the modernisation and development of respective economies, societies, and political cultures, and bringing them up to contemporary European standards.[37]

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[35] Statement by the EU Presidency (Luxembourg, 8 April 1999).

[36] L. Tsoukalis, 'The European Union and the Balkans', in *The Volatile Powder Keg, Balkan Security After the Cold War* (Washington DC: The American University Press, 1994) pp. 220-223.

[37] P. More, 'Planning for the Future of the Balkans', *RFE/RL,* Vol. 3, No. 90 (10 May 1999).

Influenced by the Wilsonian consideration that democracies do not fight each other, the EU approach to building security in Europe beyond its own borders is mostly oriented toward the promotion and encouragement of democracy based on a sustainable market economy and well-developed democratic and civil society as part of it. In fulfilling this goal, the PHARE[38] was established as an important instrument of assistance, aiming 'to promote socio-economic development and support the reform process in Central European Countries (CECs); to increase the effectiveness of the cooperation process; and to promote EU-CES partnership'.[39] Meanwhile the PHARE provides and supports a range of different instruments to aid the reform process in the non-candidate countries, as is the case of Albania. This support consists mainly of know-how, investment support, and investment in infrastructure.

In support of civil society, the PHARE has developed the PHARE Partnership Programme (PPP). The idea behind this Programme was the development of civil society in ex-communist countries as an important part of consolidating democracy. In this framework the empowerment of citizens influences the political life of the country and decision-making process. Generally the conditions citizens live in are considered an important step toward a consolidated democratic political culture. In this regard the NGO development is regarded as an essential indicator that could make a significant contribution to the creation of a democratic political culture.

The PPP was established in 1993 to support the role of Non-Profit Organisations/Non-Governmental Organisations (NPOs/NGOs). The PPP help in building up the EU-Balkans countries partnership and networks between decentralised NGOs as an important mechanism for the transfer of know-how and experience from the EU to help both the reform and integration process. The philosophy behind these efforts is that financial assistance has to build moral support and legitimacy as a learning process from the Western experiences.

In their dealing with the Balkan countries that lack an association agreement, such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FRY, and FYROM, the EU has established a strategy based on conditionality. On this basis, the EU has agreed to establish, in the

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[38] PHARE originally stood for 'Poland and Hungary Aid for the Reconstruction of the Economy'. Later it was extended to other Central-Eastern European countries. At present fourteen countries are included under this Programme: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia.

framework of the regional approach, political and economic conditions as the basis for a coherent and transparent policy towards the development of bilateral relations in the field of trade, financial assistance and economic cooperation as well as of contractual relations allowing for a necessary degree of flexibility. This EU strategy is supposed to serve as an incentive, and not an obstacle, to the countries affected by these conditions. While the exact level of relations with each of the countries varies, certain general conditions apply to all of them as part of a pre-settled regional policy.[40] Accordingly 'the interest of the EU in the [Balkan] region will be pursued through two channels, first in the framework of the EU as a whole actor and secondly, bilaterally through bilateral agreements on economic, trade, transport, and political issues and technical assistance and aid.'[41]

The EU in Albania

The EU role in Albania supports the transformation of a centralised economic and political system to a decentralised market economy and pluralistic society that offers equal opportunities to every one and a liberal democracy based on individual rights, constitutionalism and rule of law. This endeavour aims at the least to achieve compliance with EU requirements for a future integration into the EU. The EU assesses its support in the light of Albania's commitment to the above principles and their implementation in line with the EU regional approach.[42]

Since 1992, Albania has adopted a clear pro-Western foreign policy and aims to upgrade its links with the EU. This policy remains constantly the main concern of all political spectrums in Albania and all governments in power since 1992.

The first act laying down a path for cooperation between the EU and Albania has been the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation, in force since December 1992, with a perspective of association between the EU and Albania foreseen in its preamble. Anyhow this agreement does not have a preferential character. A joint Declaration on Political Dialogue followed the signature of the Agreement.

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[39] 'The Report on the Evaluation of PHARE Partnership Programme', *European Commission, DG IA* (December 1998).

[40] 'Council Conclusions on the Application of Conditionality with a View to Developing a Coherent EU-Strategy for the Relations with Countries in the South-East Region', *2003rd Council Meeting* (Luxembourg, 29/30 April 1997).

[41] Tsoukalis, 'The European Union and the Balkans', September 2002, p. 221

[42] '1.4.63. Council Conclusions on Albania', EU Bulletin, 3-1997, also available at http://europa.eu.int/abc/doc/off/bull/en/9703/p104063.htm

In 1993 an Agreement on Trade in Textile Products between the EU and Albania entered into force. The agreement creates space in the European market for Albanian textile exports, aiming at the development of the textile industry and related investments. Since early 1992, Albania has been a PHARE partner country. Between 1991 and 1997, Albania received ECU (Euro) 450.6 million in PHARE support, including E30.3 million for infrastructure development and E74.5 million in critical aid. At present, PHARE resources are concentrated in four main areas of interest: public administration and institutional reform, local community development, large-scale infrastructure development, agriculture. Only in 1997, did the PHARE commit E34 million in national and E20 million in cross-border cooperation programmes. In addition, special assistance worth E14.9 million was foreseen for budgetary support to public administration reform. Support was also given to the OSCE in organising the June-July 1997 elections, amounting to E1.5 million. [43]

During the 1997 crisis in Albania, caused by the collapse of pyramid investment schemes, PHARE support was interrupted. Nevertheless, humanitarian aid through ECHO continued in order to cover the most urgent needs of the poorest sections of the population. This aid amounted to E17 million and consisted of food and medicine supplies. The European Commission also continued to finance some activities promoting democracy, security and economic stability, including support to the OSCE for organising elections.

New developments in Kosovo and the issue of the Albanian question in the Balkans have opened a new approach toward Albania and its integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The integration of Albania into Euro-Atlantic structures is considered an important element in the context of the proposed Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. 'In order to draw Albania closer to this goal, every effort will be made to implement and actively use all existing assistance and cooperation instruments and to examine all possibilities of further enhancement'.[44] In the first stage the assistance consisted in the extension of the regime of General System of Preferences (GSP) in trade between Albania and the EU, aiming at closer economic cooperation between the two parties. The system of these preferences was upgraded in 1999 with the entering into force of a New Trade Regime between the EU and Albania. Under the dispositions of this new agreement specified

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[43] Source: Department of Economic Development and Aid Coordination (Tirana, Albania).

[44] Joint Statement Following the Political Dialogue Meeting at Ministerial Level Between the European Union Troika and Albania, *Press/99/121* (Luxembourg, 27 April 1999).

quotas of Albanian industrial and textile goods are permitted to access the entire EU market duty-free. The second stage of enhanced relations, which would allow an upgrading of contractual relations between the EU and Albania, would be the signing of the Association Agreements. The Association Agreement represents a more difficulties step since Albania is not yet ready for such an association with the Union. On the other hand the EU is concerned with the ten candidates for membership[45]. The EU does not want to upset the process by hasty preferential treatment for newcomers as in the cases of Albania and Macedonia, which were not considered in the first round. Nevertheless a formula is under discussion as a response to the emergence of the security issues in the Balkans. Perhaps a technical association could be provided instead of a full association agreement that would mean the prospect of free trade and the reduction of custom duties.[46]

The consultation meetings between Albania and the EU Task Force (CTF4) gathered in their fourth meeting in November 2002. The opening of negotiations for the signing of the Association Agreement with the EU was postponed. This postponing of associations aims at bringing economic, legal and social standards of Albania up to those of the most advanced European countries, opening the way to a developed market economy and well established democracy. Nevertheless this agreement, more than for its economic and social implications, is an act of political significance; it has political and security implications that would lead to solutions benefiting peace, stability and security in the country and the building of regional integration as a way to a peaceful Balkans integrated in Euro-Atlantic institutions and structures.

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War, corresponding to the end of the Communist era, has opened a new era for Albania. She is eager to integrate itself into the international arena, build alliances that would help her to recover from the backwardness inherited from the isolationism of the previous regime, and settle her security dilemmas. Meanwhile, Albania is not undermining the good relationship and cooperation with neighbour countries. In her foreign policy toward her neighbours, Albania aims to establish good relations and

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[45] On 12-13 December 1997, in Luxembourg, the European Council endorsed the Accession Partnership as a new instrument, which would be the key feature of the enhanced pre-accession strategy. Ten countries were selected for the first round of accession: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

[46] Breffni O'Rourke, 'Albania/Macedonia: EU to Develop Ties to Guard against Instability', *RFE-RL Research Report*, 22 April 1999 available at
http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1999/04/F.RU.990422130024.html

maintain a balanced position toward the ethnic Albanians living in neighbouring countries and mostly in accordance with the international community policy. This approach aims to elicit the praise of the Western states and organisations for its policy and conduct in the belief that in return Albania would be compensated with aid and assistance, which are very important to the economic and political survival of the country.

In the Balkans, and particularly for Albania, the role of institutions is of great importance. This role consist of mediating and assisting both the consolidation of fragile internal ethnic equilibrium, as is the case of Macedonia, and the settlement of tense inter-state relations, as may be the case in Bosnia and Kosova. More than that, they provide the security guarantees necessary for economic development and cooperation as one of the pre-conditions to stability and security in the region. Meanwhile, the institutions support the development of democratic values and civil society as an important part of the whole security architecture of the Balkan countries. Furthermore, membership of these institutions, to which all Balkan countries are looking forward, elicits complex requirements that move between conditionality and necessities. Reforms and modernisation processes that are requirements for membership are a necessity for Balkan countries and Albania as well; they are the passports for entering the club of democratic and developed countries. On the other hand conditionality is a guide that keeps the transition process towards integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions on the right track which in turn implies stability as a necessary condition for development.

Finally, looking at practical implications, some possible scenarios can be summarised for the Balkans' and Albania's future. In this Balkan framework, theoretically, there are three options for the future:

– Total war, all against all. As a result, an unstable region will threaten all the Balkan countries but the continent also. This option does not have any realistic future. The Balkans are part of Europe, according to a number of different perspectives. The Balkans are within the European geographical unit, they share with the continent a common historical cultural heritage and memories, and they have been historically part of European political life. The EU represents the allure of democratic values, economic performance and the rule of law and the Balkan's countries, as part of Europe cannot remain rejected. Also it is in Europe's interest to have a stable neighbourhood. Furthermore, five of the Balkan countries are/will be members of NATO and one is a member of the EU, so the instability could easily be transferred to Europe.

– Division into different alignments would put the Balkan's countries on the side of different major powers. This could result in turning the Balkan's lands into a theatre of clashes between Europe and the US, both testing their power and dividing it into zones of influence. It is probable that the EU and the US share more interests in common than divisions, so there is little possibility that this option would gain ground.

– Integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Integration would resolve all inherited problems, rivalries and ethnic problems by making borders insignificant and creating the environment for cooperation and development. This is the most discussed version and a Stabilising Plan along these lines is foreseen for the Balkans after the recent events in Kosova and Macedonia.

The last version looks the most suitable and probable. It involves, besides security, the concept of a new dimension of security in the Post-Cold War era, free economic market and civil society developments, since integration into these organisations presumes compliance with a set of democratic values and practices and economic standards.

Assessing options for the future of Albania, three likely policies emerge:

– Leave Albania alone in its efforts. This will lead the country to anarchy and social confrontations. At present it is difficult to think that the same isolation could be equally repeated without affecting the neighbourhood. A destabilised Albania would threaten the region and the EU neighbour members such as Italy and Greece. The threat has firstly an economic character related to the flow of refugees to neighbouring countries. At the same time it assumes a political dimension by threatening the internal political equilibrium of neighbouring countries by breaking the fragile ethnic equilibrium.

– The other option is to integrate Albania into international structures. This option involves two approaches – multilateral and bilateral. According to the multilateral approach, the region's countries have to find a common language of trust, cooperation and political dialogue that would lead towards regional integration as a first step and a further integration into the European family as a second step. Albania would be part of this regional integration trend. According to the bilateral approach, Albania could join individually the Euro-Atlantic structures that would assign to it the role of stabiliser in the region.

Both the last options are suitable for settling Albanian security dilemmas and contributing to Balkan stability and peace. Priority will be accorded to the version that best suits institutional interests for stability in the region. Integration would be a political process rather than one based on standardised indicators for membership of these institutions, because Albania like many the Balkan's countries, is still far from compliance with the settled pre-conditions for membership. Nevertheless the regional two-step approach has gained ground recently in the belief that an integrated and peaceful Balkans as a whole will be the best solution for the security of the region's states. The European experience after the Second World War influences the decision and choices.