

Albania's Integration Process to NATO: Resolving Internal Security Problems as Balkan Peninsula Countries

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ABSTRACT

As a Balkan peninsula country regionally threatened by the instability of security, Albania made an effort to upgrade its state's security alliances in the region. In June 1992, Albania started to apply for membership in NATO. This step recognizes Albania as the first former Balkan state to become the most significant Trans-Atlantic security alliance. Afterward, Albania took the role of NATO's representative to uphold peace and stability. Inexact period, former Balkan states had suffered from arm conflict, terrorism movement, and security instability. Through Albania, NATO successfully had its representative to further respond to security problems in the region. However, internal stability problems in Albania became other challenges as its state joined NATO membership. Albania also utilizes NATO's transfer of knowledge to improve its country's capacity, especially in several key cooperation aspects.

Keywords: Albania, NATO, security cooperation

Introduction

Albania is located northwest of Montenegro, northeast of Kosovo, east of Macedonia, southeast and south of Greece, and West and southwest of the Adriatic and Ionian seas. It is a peninsula that adhered communist state until 1989 and emerged as a democratic state (Britannica, 2019). It changes foreign policy direction to approach NATO to strengthen security aspects.



Figure 1. Map of Albania, which located between the Balkanian States and Italy

Albania started its application to The Council of the North Atlantic Cooperation (NACC) in June 1992. The first step was followed within the same year with an official visit by Mr. Sali Berisha, President of Albania, to NATO Headquarters to discuss with Mr. Manfred Warner, Secretary-General of the Alliance. On 19 March 1993, Mr. Manfred Warner, NATO Secretary-General, visited Albania. Within the same year, members of the North Atlantic Assembly accepted Albania. One year after, NATO issued an invitation Document of the Partnership of Peace. President Sali Berisha followed and signed on, officially rendering Albania a member of this initiative (PfP). The Albanian Parliament ratified the primary document of PfP. On 3 June 1994, The North Atlantic Association was founded in Albania. Albania submitted the Albania presentation document in PfP to NATO on September 22, 1994, in which Albania declared its capabilities and framework of cooperation as a partner country. The first Individual Partnership Program (IPP) between Albania and NATO was approved on January 25, 1995.

In the same year, on 9 June, Albania was officially involved in the Planning and Review Process of the Partnership for Peace (PARP). This process forms a condition to acquire and apply the experience of NATO in the field of defense planning. On this occasion, Albania started to share issues of a broader spectrum, including the defense policy, development of the democratic control on the armed forces, over the forces which Albania put at the disposal of NATO/PfP, and individual financial plans. On 7 July and 11 October 1996, two NATO-Albanian dialogue sessions were conducted at NATO Headquarters. In Sintra, Portugal, Albania participated in the first meeting of the new body that replaced the NACC, called the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). In this meeting, Albania also expressed its willingness to reconstruct the Albanian army under contemporary concepts and standards.

Two years later, Albania expressed its concerns about the wicked situation in Kosovo. NATO Defense Ministers agreed to carry out a series of concrete actions, including a NATO air exercise over Albania and Macedonia and the establishment of a NATO/PfP office in Tirana, Albania's capital. Its air campaign against Serbia to put an end to the Milosevic regime's criminal ethnic cleansing campaign is a watershed moment in Albania-NATO relations. Albania offered its airport facilities to aid NATO's operation in Kosovo during the Kosovo crisis. Albania acted in effect as if it were a NATO member. Albania, along with eight other countries, was accepted as a candidate for NATO membership following the Washington Summit on April 23-24, 1999. Albania sent its first mission to Afghanistan in August 2002. Albania sends a mission to Iraq the following year.



Figure 2. NATO and Albania Flags as a symbol of the Integration Process

At the Istanbul Summit 2003, the main issue was redesigning NATO/EAPC/PfP. The head of state appreciated Albania for its significant reforms, constructive role in maintaining regional stability, and NATO support. At Istanbul Summit, Joint Statement was held by NATO to present to the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Croatia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In May 2003, Albania, Macedonia, and Croatia signed the Adriatic Charter 3 with the United States to prepare these countries for entry into NATO. Albania continued to consult with NATO during the annual meetings of the MAP (Membership Action Plan), PARP (Planning and Review Process of the Partnership for Peace), and NATO/EAPC from 2004 to 2008. Albania committed to achieving 43 partnership objectives in order for Albania's Armed Forces to continue to operate alongside NATO. Albania was invited to NATO membership at the Bucharest Summit on 2 April 2008, and on 2 April 2009, Albania became a full member of NATO.

1. NATO and Berisha

The start period of democracy in Albania was when President Dr. Sali Berisha 1992 was elected by the first democratic national election. He replaced President Ramiz Alia. Berisha immediately liberalized and opened Albania to Europe after its isolation. In December 1992, Albania became the first Eastern European state to request membership in NATO and directly activated in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP). NATO offered military assistance and training, which hopefully facilitated the shifting from Communist state to Democratic politics. Albania launched the first army peacekeeping, engineered by U.S. and landmine operations. NATO also includes civilian control over armed forces and defensive doctrine for its troops.

Albania was a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NACC). On December 20, 1991, the Allies established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) as a forum for dialogue and cooperation with NATO's former Warsaw Pact adversaries. The NACC was a physical manifestation of the "hand of friendship" extended by Allied leaders at the July 1990 summit meeting in London, when they proposed a new cooperative relationship with all countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Cold War's end (NATO, 2017). On 13 March 1993, the NATO Secretary-General spoke in front of the Albanian parliament, which stated the consolidation of democracy in Albania. Berisha's effort to promote cooperation was

honored by the U.S. in 1995. Berisha instituted various reforms advocated by the West, although the realization was still poor. Enemy of Berisha in Albania forced him by any issues such as ethnicity of the Greek minority about human rights. The U.S. supported Albanian-American Enterprise Fund during Berisha's period, which provided \$30 million in loans to Albanian businesses.



Figure 3. President Albania Sali Berisha played an essential role in the early process of the country to NATO membership (Balkan Insight, 2016)

Albania was strategically located in Southern Europe. The former Yugoslav republics were at war, and Albania's importance to NATO grew. Berisha provided aircraft maintenance for NATO military operations in Bosnia. Berisha has decided on a regional foreign policy to support stability, while remaining neutral in the deeper conflicts in Yugoslavia's former states. When Macedonia gained independence, approximately 300.000 Macedonian-Albanians were called to take over the newly formed state. Berisha, on the other hand, lagged behind. Many critics arose as a result of Berisha's use of violence to implement regional stability.

During the Berisha years, NATO ignored human rights violations in order to advance other regional security interests. Nonetheless, it was unwilling to intervene in the internal crisis because its member-states' interests were diametrically opposed. Despite the fact that NATO had an active PfP in Albania, it was unable to instill democratic discipline in the Albanian military (Hendrickson, 1999).

2. Fatos Nano and NATO

Fatos Nano was Albania's Prime Minister from 1997 to 1998. The Clinton administration reintroduced democracy in the United States. He dispatched 50 officials, led by John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, to oversee the June 29 election, which resulted in the formation of Albania's new parliament and the end of Berisha's regime. Fatos Nano, Albania's new Prime Minister, announced immediately that the country would reestablish closer ties with NATO and the European Union. Albania's relations with NATO improved further under Nano's administration.



Figure 4. Prime Minister Fatos Nano reestablish relations with NATO (Quote tab, n. d.)

Assistance in reorganizing military commands, a comprehensive evaluation of Albania's military needs, and the graduate reestablishment of military support infrastructure are all part of PfP projects. According to NATO reports, Albania's cooperation was an excellent and unique example of a successful PfP operation. Meanwhile, the external security problem arose as a result of the development of issues in Kosovo, and violence between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Slobodan Milosevic's troops increased. NATO published a study on various military options for peacekeeping operations in late May 1998, ranging from humanitarian aid delivery to securing all-mountain passages between Kosovo and Albania. NATO established a PfP-specialized 'cell' in Albania to monitor border conditions with Kosovo, as well as to facilitate humanitarian aid for the thousands of refugees who fled to Albania.

NATO had widely publicized its activities in Albania regarding what occurred on June 15, 1998, during the Determined Falcon Operation. To avoid further violence against Kosovo's Albanians, 83 aircraft flew over the Albanian and Macedonian borders with Yugoslavia. In mid-August 1998, NATO held a PfP training operation, 'Cooperative Spirit,' to prepare for peacekeeping, with 14 NATO member states participating and receiving training in crisis management and peacekeeping operations. The operation continues to suffer from Albania's internal weakness and NATO's lack of commitment to Albanian stability.

NATO's presence in Albania was strengthened after Muslim extremist groups threatened the US Embassy in Tirana. The U.S., through NATO, sent 150 troops to keep the U.S. embassy in Tirana to be safe. However, one of NATO's significant leaders had a minor role in securing Nano's government's more profound control.

In short, when Fatos Nano took office, NATO reinforced its efforts to democratize and train Albania's military, but changing external political concerns soon formed a need for a more substantive level of cooperation. While the democratic stability of Albania was certainly urged, it remained a secondary concern for NATO and, more importantly, the United States, whose main priorities were the safety of its citizens in Albania and the Kosovo crisis (Hendrickson, 1999).

3. Majko and NATO

Co-operative Spirit failed, and Prime Minister Fatos Nano was forced to resign. From his base in northern Albania, Berisha harshly criticized the new government and backed the KLA belligerent. He used Kosovo to oppose Nano, and supporters of Berisha attacked the government building and set fire to Nano's office. Finally, a student protester, Pandeli Majko, succeeded and became the Prime Minister of Albania after Fatos Nano. In Majko era, NATO did not perform to much. However, a NATO member, Italy had taken the role to secure Majko's regime by sending troops to Albania. Majko also visited Greece and took a loan of about \$69.7 million from the country.

Recent efforts and policy decisions point to a consistent pattern of Western assistance. The Italians have taken the lead in providing political and military assistance to Albania. However, NATO, and especially the United States, have determined that Albanian stability is desirable but not critical to the alliance. Without other pressing security interests, the US has reduced its involvement in Albania during the Bosnian conflict to a much more limited role of protecting its Tirana embassy (Hendrickson, 1999).



Figure 5. Prime Minister Pandeli Majko faced crucial internal problems in Albania and was less attracted to the NATO process (Ina News, 2018)

4. Background of Albania's integration into NATO

Albania was the first ex-socialist country to apply for NATO membership in the early 1990s. Since then, Albania's political and intellectual elites have repeatedly pledged to carry out the necessary reforms in order to gain membership. Albania was a participant in the Partnership for Peace program and is now a NATO partner country.

With significant progress in democratization, market economy reforms, and security sector reforms, it is becoming increasingly clear to Albanian society that being a NATO member implies responsibilities and contribution, not just being a beneficiary of regional security. Furthermore, the integration process has entered a new critical phase, necessitating the involvement of numerous state and civil society actors, as well as public participation. However, while political actors appear to be adamant about joining NATO, little is known about the public's perceptions of NATO integration, its level of

knowledge about NATO, and Albania's responsibilities as a prospective member. The most recent opinion poll on NATO integration was conducted in the mid-1990s.

As a result, a public opinion survey on Albanians' perceptions of the NATO integration process was conducted in 2007. The NATO Public Diplomacy Division in Brussels sponsored the opinion poll, which aimed to map and assess Albanian public perceptions of NATO.

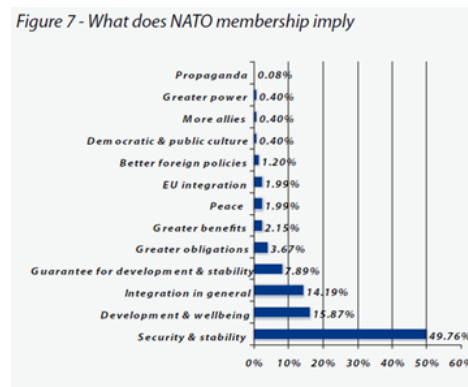


Chart 1. The implication hoped by Albanian people on Albania's integration into NATO (Vurmo and Enis, 2007)

The figure was first regarding Albanian people's expectations for Albania joining NATO. The most significant objective poll with 49.76 % is security and stability, and the least is propaganda objective. It is related when Albania's peace and security become a priority regarding Albanian internal condition.

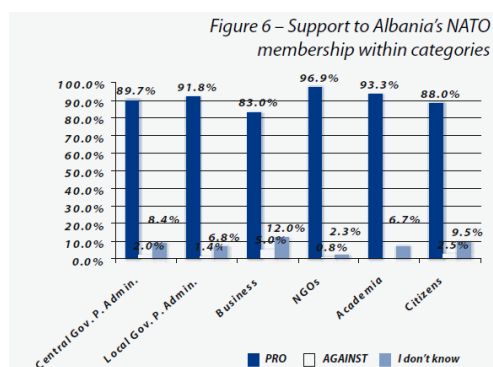


Chart 2. Albanian people support Albania's NATO membership within categories (Vurmo and Enis, 2007)

Based on the data above, Albanian people in any background agree with Albania's concern to join NATO members. Surprisingly, all percentage is above 80%, which means Albanians are deeply concerned about supporting their country to become a NATO member. Although there are contra opinion and abstain, it took a minor part than pro opinion. It is customary in any circumstances in a survey towards a choice.

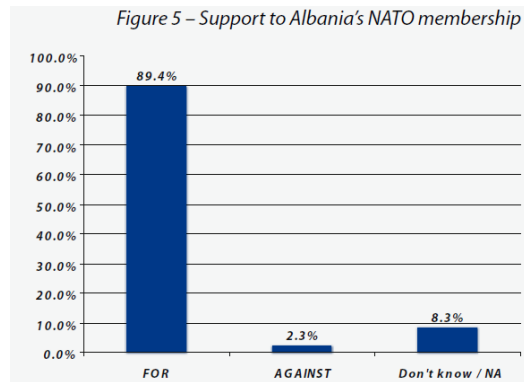


Chart 3. Albanian people's opinion in the general poll regarding Albania's NATO membership (Vurmo and Enis, 2007)

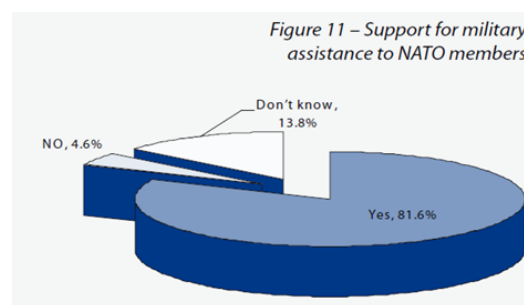


Chart 4. Albanian people's opinion towards Albania's military support to other NATO members in the future (Vurmo and Enis, 2007)

According to the survey, the Albanian public views NATO favorably. Specifically, 88.8 percent of them have a favorable or very favorable opinion of NATO. Respondents have relatively high expectations for Albania's membership in NATO; the vast majority believe that NATO membership guarantees national security and that achieving this goal will also accelerate our bid for E.U. membership. The vast majority of respondents (89.4 percent) support Albania's NATO membership. The civil society-NGOs appear to be the most supportive category of respondents about Albania's NATO membership, with nearly 97 percent, while the business category appears to be the least supportive, with 83 percent of respondents voting FOR in a referendum. However, when asked whether Albania requires collective military defense, their views diverge significantly (which at present may best be provided by NATO). 41 percent of respondents believe the country requires collective military defense, while 36.9 percent disagree.

5. NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP)

Albania entered the PfP Framework with NATO during the early registration process. The Partnership for Peace (PfP), also known as The Partnership for Peace, is a program of practical bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO. It enables partners to develop an individual relationship with NATO by determining their collaboration priorities. PfP's objectives are clear. According

to the Framework Document for the program, 11 participating states will strive to do the following (Inan and Yusuf, 1999):

- Make national defense planning and budgeting more transparent.
- Maintain democratic control over defense forces.
- Develop cooperative military relations with NATO for joint planning, training, and exercises to strengthen their ability to carry out peacekeeping, search and rescue, and humanitarian missions, as well as any others that may be agreed upon later.
- Maintain the capability and readiness to participate in operations under the authority of the UN or the OSCE.
- Long-term development of forces capable of cooperating with those of the alliance.



Figure 6. Countries joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme, including Albania (Bihnato, 2014)

6. The Establishment Of The Pfp

NATO has become more and more important to the post-communist nations of Central and Eastern Europe after the uprisings of 1989–1990. The alliance is regarded as a vital component of the "new Europe's" security framework. The post-communist policies of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe aimed a "return to Europe," with the "return" standing for embrace of Western institutions, values, and democratic norms. Practically speaking, these nations have sought security through NATO membership and economic integration with the economies of West Europe through EU membership.

At the July 5–6 London Summit, NATO extended its first "hand of friendship" to the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. NATO made the decision to "intensify... [NATO's] program of military interactions at all levels" 5 with countries in Central and Eastern Europe at its summit in Copenhagen on June 6-7, 1991. At its conference in Copenhagen, NATO paid particular attention to the recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe. The security of NATO members is inextricably tied to the security of all

other European nations, according to the Declaration on Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, the alliance has a direct and material interest in the consolidation and maintenance of democratic societies across the continent as well as their freedom from force or intimidation.

For instance, the Central and East European governments' request for "institutionalized collaboration" with NATO was prompted by the failed Soviet takeover in August 1991. NATO has previously treated all former Warsaw Pact nations equally. The 21 August North Atlantic Council Ministerial Statement distinguished the Soviet Union from the other Warsaw Pact nations when it halted communication "until a clarification in the country" during the August 1991 coup attempt in the then-Soviet Union (Inan and Yusuf,1999).

7. Key Areas of Cooperation between Albania and NATO

There are five critical areas of cooperation regarding Albania's integration into NATO: 1. Security Cooperation, 2. Defense and Security Sector Reform, 3. Civil emergency Planning 4. Science and Environment, 5. Public Diplomacy (NATO, 2014).



Figure 7. NATO Military Committee Conference in Tirana Albania (Tirana Times, 2017)

In 1999, Albania played a crucial part in assisting Allied efforts to put an end to the humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo and achieve peace following the air campaign. NATO established its regional military headquarters in Tirana, Albania, in 2002. NATO Headquarters Tirana backed the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR). From 2001 to 2003, Albania supported the Allies' stability efforts in the formerly Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Albania contributed 135 personnel to the Turkish and Italian contingent of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). In August 2005, Albania joined ISAF under the Czech delegation and joined peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Albania forces also selected military units, medical, and engineers to exercise and train with NATO under the PfP agreement. It also cooperated with NATO to implement counter-terrorism.

Regarding security and defense reform, NATO's support to Albania on wide-ranging and ongoing democratic and institutional reform is outlined in its Annual

National Programme. NATO has sent experts from its allies to Albania in the steps of security and defense reform. NATO HQ Tirana becomes a consultation body for an ongoing reform process.

Civil emergency and disaster management have become another Albania's cooperation with NATO. Through Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the forms of Senior Civil Emergency Planning Committee contributed concrete input to developing these issues.

Over 20 collaborative scientific and environmental initiatives in Albania have received funding thanks to the science for Peace and Security (SPS) Program. The development of computer sciences, networking, and religious tolerance are all strengthened by this framework.

NATO places a strong emphasis on expanding its activities, encouraging knowledge of members' rights and obligations, and cultivating a realistic impression of the organization in the public diplomacy sector. It aims to enhance and keep links with civil society actors and supports programs in the country. NATO HQ Tirana also conducted seminars and conferences "NATO's week" in university in 2007.



Figure 8. Albanian soldier brings up together flag of NATO and Albania (NATO, n.d.)

Conclusions

NATO is a premier security organization, and it is not open to all as quickly as other organizations. Moreover, NATO consists of powerful military power such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, Turkey, and powerful allies.

Albania has spent 17 years of its process to be officially accepted as a member of NATO. It also passed through many processes from becoming an observer, sending troops under other members' contingent, and providing many resources and initiatives for Albania within NATO's journey, especially in Balkan regions.

The critical cooperation mainly is on the security alliance aspect. However, Albania also benefits from cooperation in other factors such as reforming security and

democracy institutions, sciences, public diplomacy, and civil emergency and disaster management.

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