Regional Security, Problems and Influencing Factors: A Case Study of Albania

Aderaldo MEMA

PhD (c), European University of Tirana

aderaldo.mema@yahoo.com, amema10@uet.edu.al

Abstract

The new national, regional and global security environment and its trends are expressed in a synthesized way in the National Security Strategy. Our region is increasingly characterized, on the one hand, by overcoming the old mindsets of confrontation between states and the perceptible reduction of traditional threats, by the promotion of a new spirit of cooperation and the values of integration in the collective security structures and on the other hand, it is facing a new nature of challenges, dangers and threats with non-traditional, asymmetric forms and contents, on terrorist, ethnic or other grounds, initiated by nationalist-extremist elements and groups.

Receiving the long-awaited invitation to the Bucharest Summit in April 2008, as well as the final moment for NATO accession at the NATO Summit in Stratsburg and Kehl, marks a qualitative stage in the complete process of Albania in the Euro-Atlantic structures. In this new perspective, the security and defense of our country will suffer qualitative effects; from the concept of individual security and protection, it will finally be passed "de jure" to the concept of collective security and protection, accompanied by all the relevant benefits and contributions. Likewise, the new states of Kosovo and Montenegro have given our region a new favorable panorama of regional security.

Going forward, our assessments of the security environment, expected risks and threats, and the spectrum of FARSH combat and non-combat missions will be significantly influenced by the collective security assessments articulated in the Alliance's Strategic Concept (CSC), Policy of European Security and Defense (ESDP) and the Charter of the United Nations. In this new perspective, in full accordance with the constitutional obligations, FARSH to adopt a new defense planning system, in harmony with the standards and planning processes of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance.

Keywords: Influencing factors, Regional security, NATO, National security

INTRODUCTION

Today, even the name Balkans is rarely used, not in the geographical sense of the region but in the geopolitical sense. In the political vocabulary of international regional and global actors such as NATO or the EU or major state actors USA, Germany, Great Britain and France, when they refer to the past of our region, they refer to it as the Balkans and when they refer to the future as Southeast Europe. And this is not without purpose.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation therefore resulted in a new international environment in Southeast Europe very different from the previous decades. If we can summarize the new characteristics of this environment that appeared and surfaced, they are: First, countries with weak economies and weak democratic institutions. Second, the creation of states that depended on the international community for their survival. Thirdly, the coexistence, in the post-cold war environment, of stabilization tendencies and the perspective for cooperation on the one hand, and the problems of destabilizing tendencies on the other. I want to focus on the last characteristic to emphasize the interesting fact that after the fall of communism, in our region, two different, opposite trends were observed that resulted in different speeds regarding the development and well-being of the countries of this region, and therefore of the change in the regional security situation.

The tendency to unite and join the powerful security organizations of NATO and the EU, and regional cooperation to solve common problems and the other tendency to revive the old nationalisms, ethnic divisions and religious divisions that in the past had caused a lot of blood. , war and sacrifice. These developments have brought us today a different geopolitical panorama of this region. Countries in NATO and the EU, countries on the verge of joining NATO and the EU and neutral countries. This situation and this panorama will be part of the further analysis during the assessment of future regional security threats and risks and their impact on the shaping of national security and defense policies and the relevant institutions set up to guarantee them.

All these characteristics mentioned above that have brought great geopolitical changes and various security consequences, surprisingly have not brought changes in the geostrategic importance of our region, in terms of the interests of the great powers, whether state or international actors. They

remain almost as important as they were. Creating a self-functioning and self-supporting stability in the Balkans.

Methodology

The methodology is included in this article for data and information analysis related to regional security in Albania: 1. *References from reliable sources*: In the article, there are well-known and reliable sources in the European Commission, Transparency International, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Agency for Cyber Security and Infrastructure (CISA) for various industry information issues and documentation. This money reveals data and facts in an objective and verifiable manner.

2. *Analysis of statistical data*: Methodology of various statistics and data provided by the referred sources as a way to conclude the level of technology in Albania. The composition of statistics and data contribute to the improvement of the current situation and their tendency in the country. 3. *Comparative analysis*: The text of the article uses comparative and comparative analysis between Albania and other countries to evaluate the positioning of Albania in the regional and international context. This defines the challenges and opportunities for security in Albania in relation to other countries in the region.

1.1 Main Security Problems in Albania Organized Crime and Corruption

Organized crime and corruption are important obstacles to the progress of security and the rule of law in Albania. Drug and arms trafficking, together with money laundering, are serious problems that require a joint regional and international fight (European Commission, 2020). Statistics: According to the European Commission report (2020), Albania remains a source, transit and destination country for drug and human trafficking. Data from Transparency International (2020) shows that Albania ranks 104 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index, having a corruption score of 35 out of 100.

Migration and Asylum Seekers Albania is a transit country for migrants and asylum seekers seeking to reach EU countries. This creates great pressures on the management capacities of these flows and public security (International Organization for Migration, 2021). Statistics: According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Albania has seen a 20% increase in asylum seekers from 2019 to 2021, with around 12,000 asylum seekers registered in 2021.

Terrorism and Extremism The extremist group and the recruitment of individuals for foreign wars remain serious threats to national and regional security. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Albania has taken measures to combat radicalization and strengthen cooperation with international partners (United Nations Development Programme, 2019). Statistics: Data from UNDP (2019) show that around 150 Albanian citizens have traveled to Syria and Iraq to fight alongside extremist groups since 2012.

Cyber threats With the advancement of technology, cyber threats have increased significantly. Attacks on critical infrastructure and sensitive data require strong defenses and close regional and global cooperation (Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, 2022). Statistics: According to the Cyber Security and Infrastructure Agency (2022), Albania suffered over 50 recorded cyber attacks against critical sectors in 2021, an increase of 30% compared to 2020.

1.2 Factors Influencing Regional Security

Relations with Neighbors Albania has complex relations with its neighbors, including Greece, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Previous conflicts, ethnic minority issues and territorial issues still affect regional stability (Bieber, 2018). Analysis: Despite significant improvements in bilateral relations, there are still challenges related to minority rights and unresolved historical issues.

Relations with Greece, for example, have improved after the Ionian Sea agreement, but other issues such as the recognition of ethnic minorities and property ownership remain unresolved. Integration in the EU and NATO Membership in NATO and aspirations to join the EU have brought benefits to national and regional security. Assistance in building defense capacities and legal and

institutional reforms are some of the main benefits (European Union, 2021). Analysis: Integration into these structures has helped Albania improve its defense capacities and strengthen the rule of law and democratic governance. According to the EU, Albania has made significant progress in judicial reforms and the fight against corruption, although challenges still remain.

Internal Policies and Institutional Reform Internal institutional reforms, including those in the judiciary and police, are key to strengthening the rule of law and reducing corruption. Political stability and effective governance are critical to the country's security (Transparency International, 2020). Analysis: Albania has undertaken extensive reforms in the justice system, which have improved transparency and accountability, but corruption remains a constant challenge.

The reform of the justice system has resulted in the investigation and prosecution of several high officials for corruption, but the full impact of these reforms is expected to be seen in the coming years. International and Regional Cooperation Cooperation with international organizations such as OSCE, UN and regional organizations is essential for facing common threats and promoting stability.

Albania has been active in various initiatives to strengthen security in the Western Balkans (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2021). Analysis: This cooperation has helped improve coordination and information sharing to address common threats. Initiatives such as the Berlin Process and the Cooperation Platform for the Security of the Western Balkans have contributed to strengthening regional stability and security.

II. **Responsibility and role of Albania as a member of NATO in the framework of cooperative security**

The role of Albania in this regional level is very important for two main reasons: first, the regional distribution of the Albanian population and the geopolitical position of Albania, as a gateway between the Adriatic Sea and the Balkan Peninsula, and secondly, the very positive model of religious coexistence that Albanian society has historically developed, constantly promoting respect for groups different religious and ethnic groups.

Currently, the full support and participation in the world coalition against terrorism and the step-by-step materialization of human security objectives remain today one of the very important elements of Albanian society and politics for its geopolitical positioning of full integration into NATO and the European Union . One of the clear messages of this study is that NATO's security environment will continue to evolve. It will be subject to a set of unpredictable and dynamic political, social, technological and military developments.

This evolution will not happen in a vacuum. On the other hand, these developments will present NATO with new opportunities: to positively influence ideas, values and events in a globalized world, while at the same time maintaining and improving the ability and flexibility to respond to challenges. unpredictable and complex. Under these conditions, the Alliance considers the consequences of these challenges while working to reach a consensus on how to redefine many of the assumptions and strategies on which NATO has operated over the past decade.

These consequences highlight dozens of key issues, which need to be taken into account in the ongoing strategic dialogue, and the project of forecasting risks, threats and the future security environment focuses on several strategic issues such as: The need for clear and pragmatic discussions and debates regarding NATO's future roles, missions and directions. · The Alliance will have collective defense at its core, however, the nature of the challenges that would lead to an Article 5 response will continue to evolve. · Developing new concepts to deal with hybrid threats, which will increasingly dominate the operational environment is a must.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The level of security is constantly challenged, although security institutions have managed to maintain control. The main challenge of public security remains the fragility of the state as a whole. It is extremely important, namely it is necessary, to strengthen the state in all its dimensions. In this respect, I believe that we should wait to see what these new security policies will be and to what extent the implementation of theirs.

Clearly, political and institutional stability is the basic prerequisite for security. Increasing community cooperation with the police, removing weapons from the hands of citizens, fighting narcotics, especially among the young generation, as well as a comprehensive strategy for public safety, are actions that must be undertaken in partnership between the central and local levels of power.

Albania's role in regional security is significant due to its geopolitical position and the historical coexistence of various religious and ethnic groups. Its full support and participation in the global coalition against terrorism and the gradual realization of human security objectives are crucial for its geopolitical integration into NATO and the EU. The evolving security environment requires NATO to adapt and transform from a primarily defense-based military alliance into a comprehensive political and military security community.

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