

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN DISCORD

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Painful Departure

Since the independence of Albania, nearly a century ago, the legal sanction afforded to its armed forces was based upon an awareness that military service meets one of the vital needs of society. The defence of the motherland has traditionally been an honour call, for Albanian adults put defence matters first. Their basic legitimacy derived from being defenders of such values as country and family. Each member of the services was asked to be loyal to the fatherland's interests: to keep up its honour and dignity; to be well acquainted with the military traditions of the nation, army and service.¹ As soon as a person joins the armed forces, he takes an oath "...to always be a loyal soldier for the people... ready to give his life for the defence of the sublime interests of the Fatherland."

It is noteworthy that, throughout the country's history, a stable figure of more than 90% of all eligible conscripts have reported willingly for recruitment on their due day, without any need for threat or warning. The departure of future conscripts from their families and friends was well celebrated.

The sources of legitimacy for serving in the army were rooted in the ancient normative values of the Albanian tribal communities, which traditionally have had war-like chieftains in command. Historically, Albanians in combat were often depicted by western scholars as bellicose warriors, showing strong loyalty to their Motherland. Such a deep-rooted cultural ethic of service to country, based fundamentally on patriotic sentiments and a conviction that to serve in the military was to serve the country, has been an element of great importance in the decision process of the majority of youngsters who joined the military.

This institutional format of the Albanian military continued also in the military organization that emerged after WW2. For more than four decades of communist rule in the country, members of the Albanian Army have had a single orientation. Regarding the possibility of combat, the only scenario in question was employment in an East-West confrontation. The self-image of the Albanian soldier was that of a "soldier against western imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism." This was the rationale of the Albanian military, and defence of the communist system and home territory was the ideological system in which the soldier was embedded. Thus a soldier entering the army did it under this principal condition: he knew what the possible scenario for employment would look like, and exactly what values he was supposed to defend.

After the overthrow of communism, Albania shared all the problems of other East European countries with reference to the future roles and functions of its armed forces. The loss of the ideology they served destroyed morale and motivation in the former People's Army, which for a long time had been preparing to defend the country, but had been defending the rule of the communist party instead. The focus of the interest of the average officer shrank rapidly, from defending his political system to defending his family's standard of living. Conscription came to a virtual stop, leaving

units with insufficient soldiers even to maintain equipment, let alone be trained for war. In fact, the Albanian Army rapidly developed into a predominantly officer force concerned only with its own survival, and protecting hundreds and thousands of logistic depots spread all over the country, based on their possible use in the old war scenarios.

Under the current climate of external relief, and with the rapid drawdown of military forces in Europe, different segments of Albanian society may be overlooking the importance of national security issues. People now come and go, looking for jobs in Greece and Italy, and border guards do not shoot at them as before. Even the current dangerous situation in Kosova and Macedonia is being considered more and more temporary, and about to be resolved successfully in the near future. Moreover, the Albanians have become accustomed to see foreign soldiers in their soil, and to perceive them as a security, while not too long ago, any foreigner would be regarded as an enemy, and one could suffer a long prison term even for unwittingly coming across any. Thus, a kind of demonizing of the former enemy military rapidly took place.

The Government began to reform military service in 1991. This process was regarded as necessary for several reasons: primarily, because of the new legal and constitutional conditions resulting from the approval of the New Constitutional Law of Albania; secondly, due to the need to have a reduced, but more effective force and more operational armed forces; and thirdly, because of the need to achieve better technical planning, so that the service be more in accord with the needs of the country. Furthermore, national military service was still regulated by an outdated law, in force since the communist period.²

The aims of this reform were: first, to establish a basis to achieve the adaptation of national service to the principles set out in the Constitutional Law of 1991; second, to set a sufficiently large manpower complement, by developing an effective state centralized control of this; third, to reduce to an unavoidable minimum the obligation imposed on the citizens by this period of military service, and the repercussions for public finances, but always without adversely affecting the interests of national defence; fourth, to establish an efficient recruitment system, which would take into account the rights and duties of the citizens; fifth, to make compatible the reduction of the number of compulsory servicemen and their length of the service in the ranks, with increased operational capacity of the units, by beginning to introduce gradually some professional forces.

Note that the measures to reform the army were to be taken under a different climate of public opinion. Historically, the public image of the armed services has been good for decades. People have generally had a favourable opinion of the military and have regarded it as an effective organization. Traditionally, Albanian society has recognized and respected its soldier for his special commitment to place himself willingly in life-threatening situations on society's behalf.

But, although the Albanian military remains generally institutional, developments indicative of a different societal regard can be listed. There are people in the countryside that, because of economic constraints, do not favour compulsory military service, the main reasons being loss of incomes and job. In families with many children, the first son is likely to refrain from call-up or to postpone it, until family matters get better. There are town boys who try to avoid military service, if they are about to find a job in or out of the country. If not, they enter service, hoping for better days to come in the future, and to get out of the way an unavoidable burden like

compulsory military service, instead of "killing" the time in vain. Because of equal pay for equal military ranks and civilian jobs, quite a few town boys apply and enrol in military academies. On the contrary, a great many countrymen rush in to graduate, intentionally to get out of their rural areas, to secure a steady and relatively undemanding job, and to live a permanent city life.

There are people, mainly university graduates, without military experience, but keeping key positions in the state hierarchy today. Most of them look down on the military and feel that it has become less important, and military service less meaningful. They argue that, in peacetime, there is not much for the army to do. The communist government spent lots of money building concrete bunkers, which never did their job, but led the people to extreme poverty instead. They trained for decades in a warless society by never firing a shot against any enemy target. Moreover, with the end of the Cold War era, the military is perceived as a lot less important, they argued. Such an opinion is strongest amidst young people in general, and the students and intelligentsia, in particular.

Due to various social trends in Albanian society and the difficult economic situation, it is not difficult to notice a distinct conflict evolving between this segment of the population and the military. The concept of compulsory military service, a characteristic feature of the Albanian armed services since their founding, has become subject to questions and doubts. There are political factions that demand that the present one year period of military service be even further reduced. A growing number of people claim that, as a result of the new quiet prevailing in the region, there is no justification for compulsory military service in time of peace.

Although the peacetime strength of the army has been reduced slightly since 1992, a knowledgeable observer cannot fail to notice the quality erosion within the army. There was the new problem of recruiting enough regulars. In order to keep up with an adequate peacetime strength, conscripts often had their period of service extended for 1-2 months more than normal. The existing demographic and migration problem,³ the limited financial resources and the defence missions of the army, imply that a number of units were at understrength formation in peacetime.

The ongoing transition from a centralized economy to a market one deepened the crack of doubt regarding the legitimacy of military service even further, shaking in fact the very fundamental base and the organizational efficiency of the Albanian military. The traditional perception of military service as a calling, or vocation, to the nation by its citizens, legitimated by broad national values, has given way to clear signs of a subjective definition of military service as an occupation in the labour market. Suffice it to say that today, a military officer can well compare his pay with that of the executive positions in the civil and economic service.⁴

The special features of military service call for a restriction of some basic rights, set out in the Law on the Status of Military Service, adopted by the Parliament since 1991, but not yet entirely put into effect. So, the military is not allowed to take part in political parties, organizations and societies, as well as in labour unions; to go on strike or petition collectively; to follow religious services unless during free time and never in military uniform; to do business or to be engaged in civil jobs and professions. Moreover, the military does a unique job, under a 24-hour responsibility. He lives it day in and day out, for seven days a week and 365 days a year. Despite this, according to the government pay table, he is given the same amount of pay as his civilian counterpart.⁵

Albania's Present Civil-Military Context

During the first half of 1997 Albania experienced one of her bitterest crises in her modern history. The developments which led to this crisis were characterized by strong economic, political and social causes. Many people, mainly those who had worked abroad, deposited the money they earned in financially fraudulent pyramid schemes. But, as might be expected, this money soon disappeared. Hundreds of thousands of people, all over the country, not only requested the money back, but they wanted the Government to provide compensation, which, for obvious reasons, was quite impossible.

The military, an inseparable segment of the larger Albanian society, shared the same dissatisfaction. Army reform had been regarded as a failure, because it produced a big redundancy in the officer corps, accompanied by an inattentive attitude on the part of the Government, in relation to the economic treatment of post active duty military. The redundant officers were given very low financial means, not enough to live on. In a way, there were conceived two greedy mini-institutions within the Albanian army. One, active military, having already a secure pay, and the other, reserve and redundant military, failing to be incorporated socially and economically into the broader society. Part of this contingent took command of the mobs, in attacking the army barracks, beginning with the naval base of Vlora, and spreading to other regions. Besides, most of the civilians, being reservists, had easy access to the military barracks, as it was they, in fact, who had the keys to the weapons arsenals.

The internal military confrontations were cloaked by a very visible political cover. The rebel forces were strongly encouraged and led by the left opposition. It was they who served as the military element which made the government surrender and come to the opposition terms for early parliamentary elections. On the other side, the existing officer corps became a subject of constant attacks by the left-wing press. Since long before the unrest began, this sort of press more than once called on the military "not to obey the orders of their superiors," thus creating serious breaches of morale within their ranks.

There is a general belief in the officer corps, presently, that the Albanian armed forces crumbled because of road-worthy partisan politics. The politicians, in general, are blamed for orchestrating all the mess within the army. It was not by coincidence, they argued, that the military installations were attacked by well organized mobs, as if by one command, at the same day and hour, and in the most sensitive points, though in different regions. This scenario was first applied in the south of the country, by Socialist-backed mobs. Their concerted actions were regarded as "pure implementation of the Leninist theory of seizing state power by force of arms".⁶ The same scenarios were performed by the Democrats in the north as a counterbalance. Soon after taking political power, the Socialist Government dismissed en bloc the whole of the general rank officers, though they had been almost entirely educated at western military schools and academies. They were replaced with former army officers, redundant soon after the overthrow of communism.

There seem to be many underlying reasons for what has happened to the Albanian society of today. After nearly five decades of communist rule, the roots of its political system could not be radically changed. The new political leadership could not introduce the right patterns of democratic rule and market economy in the country, thus leading to a growing dissatisfaction of the people. The former communist opposition kept almost intact its militant structure and experienced membership of the past, against the new feeble democratic institutions. The society was divided into two

ideological mainstreams rather than according to the economic interests of its segments. This dichotomy caused emphatic political polarization in Albania, each group expressing and performing antagonistic political attitudes. Moreover, Albania still lacked educated politicians throughout the political spectrum. It is difficult to find a politician with sufficient western education in political studies in general, or in security or strategic studies in particular. There are many teachers, physicians, theatre artists and archaeologists in both Democratic and Socialist parties, but not true educated politicians. That is why today's Albanian politics is frequently called "street-worthy politics" and "childish policy-making."⁷

Though law and order has started to improve a little, the internal security in many parts of the country is still questionable, and political tensions high. Thousands of weapons are held illegally by irresponsible civilians, despite intensive police operations and efforts to collect them. Clearly, the government has regained some command over many regions, nevertheless its effective control is limited to urban areas and daylight times. There are still large areas, both in the north and the south, that are subject to extensive gang violence, and people have organized self-defence. The police are slowly reappearing, having some local effect, though there is still no recognizable national command infrastructure to coordinate country-wide operations.

Politically, the situation is disappointing, too. The recent long over-due spirit of cooperation between the main political parties, forged temporarily in the framework of the transitional government of national reconciliation, prior to the early elections, has already evaporated. A socialist parliamentarian shot four bullets at a prominent Democratic legislator and heavily injured him, just inside the Parliament's halls. The Democratic Party boycotted the Parliament, and resorted to street demonstrations requesting the resignation of the socialist government. Moreover, the dissolution of the citizens' salvation committees remains a big hurdle, hardly to be overcome.⁸ The possibilities for the two main political opposing forces in Albania to come to a joint solution of the crisis seem very dim.

Security instability in Albania is due to continue, as politicians and local leaders wrestle for personal power in what is really an internal security vacuum. Under these circumstances, people have lost confidence in them. Illegal refugee movements are frequent, particularly from the Albanian coast of the Adriatic Sea to Italy and via land to Greece. These flows of people are generally controlled by criminal elements, prompting both the Italian and Greek governments to take harsh measures and turn them back in their hundreds and thousands. Criminal activity and civil unrest seem to go hand in hand. The reconstitution of military and police forces, though considered to be of urgent importance, is really slowing down because of manpower and other resource limitations. Broadly speaking, there is little chance of stability returning soon, and of national institutions regaining lost popular support and confidence.

The perplexing situation in the country is being accompanied by a discord in civil-military relations, reflected but cursorily in the mode of present civilian control over the military and the latter's very low social status. These issues have been discussed at length during the last several years and still continue, under the general notion of military reform, which, due to strong underlying problems outside the military institution, has been called a failure.

Fetish of Civil Control over the Military

The principle of civil control over the military has been talked about very much in Albania during the last few years. Nevertheless, despite efforts, this principle was understood and applied narrowly and one-sidedly, only as a necessity to keep the military vigilantly watched by civilian leadership, and to avoid any possible attempt by them to challenge democratically elected civilian institutions. This point was one of the most serious defects of the policy and the very military reform executed. In fact, the question was not so much in the sense of the concept of civilian control in the armed forces, rather than of the people in charge of exercising it.

Practically, quite a lot of medium and high ranking military officers were sent to study, at the numerous western defence colleges,⁹ this concept of civilian control over the military. But almost nothing of that kind was done as regards political decision-makers, who would really have exercised the control over the military. Thus, the politicians lacked the necessary education in the fields of security and defence issues. They could not and did not work out the basic official documents on security and defence policy of the country. Moreover, both the government and the opposition were unable to come to a joint understanding of the security and defence concerns of the country. The related documents produced were one-sided and did not have a bipartisan consensus. Under these circumstances, the uniformed officers lacked the political guidance to do their own specific job, that was to structure, train and operate the army.

Being incompetent to deal with defence policy and planning, the politicians were often interfering in military business and professionalism, doing more harm than good. Instead of paving the way for the implementation of military reform, this kind of military control complicated the process itself by infusing pain into it. The mode of military reform applied brought about considerable difficulties in military life in general, as well as in downsizing and redeployment of forces, conversion of defence industry, adequate assignment of military personnel according to professional ability, and last but not least, assuring an acceptable quality of life for the servicemen. All in all, the military were not sufficiently heard even for their own profession.¹⁰

Lack of proper education of civilian leaders on security and defence policies led them to confusion about understanding and interpretation of the country's geopolitics in general, and its external and internal risks and threats in particular.¹¹ Consequently, the military found it almost impossible to do the necessary defence planning. So in spite of declarations made that neighbour countries do not present any threats against Albania, its military requests were still set forth, based on situations predicted within the context of a Balkan war. Observing a possible spill-over of the Balkan conflict to the south of the peninsula, the preparations for defence were rather perceived by Albanian policy planners as a total war situation in the country, thus needing a partial or total mobilization of the population. Less emphasis was placed on facing the possible crisis and tension situations with neighbouring countries, which might have surprised the Albanians. Capable active forces would have been more necessary in such scenarios. But these forces, with rapid deployment capabilities, were not taken into consideration.

The perception of regional war in the Balkans seems to be common to all its states, which still retain big military capabilities and resources in comparison with their population and budget. The historical fears have made the Balkan countries strongly suspicious towards each other. Almost all countries presume that any one of the neighbours, though it may not be an adversary today, might well become one

tomorrow. It always happens that interests of countries differ from each other, and the perception is that it is difficult to exclude a possibility that they might not become antagonistic any time in the future.

That is not to mean that Albania should exclude a total war. As long as Albania's potential adversaries possess considerable military power, it stands to reason that measures should be taken to cope with the worst situation possible. The general rule in preparing a country for defence is the consideration of the military potential surrounding it, rather than political aims declared. It takes years to change the military potential, whereas the political intentions could be diverted within days. But the matter is that the new multifaceted-faceted Albanian society, sometimes inter-antagonistic, cannot rely any more on a massive army, divergently motivated and absorbing huge amounts of expenditure. The policy should have been focused more on smaller forces, but better trained and equipped with necessary modern armaments, something that the Albanian armed forces have been far from enjoying.

Not only today, but even in the future, Albania cannot nurture any hope of possessing adequate military potential, able to threaten the security of none of its neighbour countries. Comparing the recent paralysis of the Albanian defence forces with the potential of neighbouring countries, as regards their respective ability to mobilize considerable manpower as well as economic and technological resources, the inequation deepens further. During the first half of the present decade, the red tape inertia of the state institutions and the insufficient civilian control over the military, made the situation in the Albanian armed forces, and the latter's relations with society worse, rather than better. Even the enormous capital invested in the military structure by Russians and Chinese long ago is getting too old to be of any effective use in the battlefield.

Currently, the Albanian military has slipped from a former massive force, well-armed and trained, typically a people's army, into a military organization that can be compared with those found in the poorest countries of the world. Fortunately, no external threats have emerged in the horizon, but in case the situation evolves in the opposite direction, the country might have to face them with those few forces badly equipped and motivated. The internal political backlash destroyed their structure and cohesion, so that they are not a reliable element of security and defence, both externally and internally. The government is now depending on foreign armed forces for the country's security and defence.

The Partnership for Peace Initiative and Albania's intention to be integrated into NATO structures did create a favourable climate of security for Albania. However, NATO does not accept every country into its organization, without the country first modernizing the national armed forces and without making them interoperable with its allies. Under the present and foreseeable circumstances, Albania's admission into NATO seems likely to happen long after the beginning of the next century. Nevertheless, it will still enjoy an inductive security support from this organization, as long as the Albanian question in the region is not yet resolved.

Presently, it is imperative for Albania to identify the best military options in compliance with the requirements of its national security; present and predicted economic conditions; lack of material means and resources; changes in the international arena, which might strongly affect the country in its relations with other states of the region. Closely linked with these options, there are many relevant factors that could be taken into consideration, such as: financial factors, draft and

mobilization system issues and defence industry conversion, which though Albania is unable to solve effectively right now, cannot be skipped or overlooked. As these questions need time to be sufficiently met, the Albanian defence leadership has turned to other countries for urgent military assistance. But the priorities of military cooperation have shifted now to Greece and Italy, instead of to the United States, Germany and Turkey, which for a long time have been closer to Albania's defence needs, in respect to both technical and educational assistance.¹²

Defence Planning and Financial Resources

For several years, Albanian military reform was being implemented through building concepts and establishments, as well as military functions and structures, aiming jealously at those of western models, without sufficient budgetary support. The Parliament of the country never discussed defence policy, defence structures and the relevant defence budget, by identifying the pertinent quantity of military personnel to maintain and train. Consequently, the Albanian military went on working out still communist-type formats of defence budgets, by keeping old structures and armament arsenals, fit for a massive army, as well as a gigantic defence industry. Their maintenance swallowed up considerable financial resources, which were unavailable for the main components that make up an army, that is training, combat readiness, quality of life of the military personnel and technological modernization. In respect to defence expenditures, the Albanian military stands far behind those of comparable countries. Although Albania maintained an army 1.5-2 times bigger than that of western countries, in proportion with their population, its government paid the military personnel, on average, 40-60 times less.¹³

The minimal expenditures on the Albanian military have been under strong pressure for continuous reduction, not only by the government, but by society at large too. Thus, the military has to resist against two strong opposing social forces, trying greedily still to reduce defence budgets. The diminishing of public notions of a possible war has set new priorities. Defence expenditures, burden of exercises and public industry, have actually become subjects of public concern and emotional debate. After a long time of peace, a warless society has emerged now in the country, looking at the military with a different eye for the expenditures allocated to it. The claim is that the expenditures for defence have been economically destabilizing and they might have been much better used for social purposes.

According to the statistics, the defence budget of 1976-1982 encompassed 10-12% of the state's total expenditures, or 3% of GDP. Out of this sum, 37% was allocated for building an immense number of pill-boxes, equal to 3.8% of the overall state expenditure. The paranoid strategy was that through intensive permanent fortification, the country would resist successfully any foreign aggression, both from neighbouring countries and NATO and Warsaw Treaty taken together. Suffice it to say that, at a time when the need of the population for housing was a pressing question, more than 350,000 fortified concrete elements were planted all over the country, within the period of 1976-1982 alone. The cost of just a single such element was equal to that of a flat for a small family. On the other hand, too many financial resources were spent to keep a relatively big military industry, which could not compete in the world market. In fact, it had gone bankrupt. The Policani military combine, built during 1962-1966, with more than 3,000 workers, had almost closed down since 1992, and the small town with the same name, whose existence was totally linked with this combine, faces a quite uncertain future. The difficult situation led to social dissatisfaction and violent unrest in that town during 1993.

Albanian society and its political elite changed too much after the overthrow of communism. The societal regard of the military suffered a drastic decline in comparison with the past. The new political forces coming to power cut the military expenditures year by year, whereas those of other segments, such as health services and education, have always been on the rise, as below:

Budget as Part of the overall State Budget (%)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Military</u>	<u>Health</u>	<u>Education</u>
1993	6.1	6.2	6.3
1994	5.4	6.7	9.0
1995	5.8	7.7	9.3
1996	4.2	8.2	10.8

It is wonderful to note the favorable attitude of the government towards education and health care, two of the most human branches of society, and related closely to the people's well-being. Nevertheless, taking into account the hectic situation in the Balkan region, such a disproportionate distribution of national expenditures makes the security and defence segments of the state feel uneasy. But, from a social point of view, it cannot help leaving a sour taste as far as their societal regard is concerned. This all has led up to a heated debate amongst the military, who consider the disbalance as a sign of indifference by the civilian community towards them.

The relatively small part of military expenditures within the overall state budget has led to a disproportional division of the defence budget too. The latest Albanian military budget has allocated 98.4% of its expenditures for payments, food and clothing of the personnel; 1.6% for investment, and nothing at all for the training of reserve and territorial forces, or for joint exercises. By comparison, Greece, Italy and Turkey have spent for training troops 12, 17.5 and 34.2% respectively.¹⁴ It is enough for a competent military analyst to assume without hesitation that, under such financial circumstances, the capability of armed forces to implement missions set by defence policy might be very doubtful, if not impossible.

The transformation of the Albanian armed forces towards either "modernization" or "westernization" seems still to be hampered by an inadequate budget; lack of the most rudimentary infrastructure, mostly prominently manifested in appalling conscript living conditions; a dedicated, but inadequately prepared officer corps, who are confronted with immense change of societal regard; essentially no NCO corps and ill-motivated conscripts. Problems related to morale, such as pay, benefits, housing and food for all ranks, remain a big shortcoming of Albania's defence establishment. It was, and of course still is, believed that the Albanian armed forces, as they were configured, trained and deployed, could not defend the nation, if they had been required to do so.¹⁵

Traditionally and institutionally, the Albanian military tended to perform multi-strategic and operational roles; with existing forces, it is only able to accomplish a small number of them. In this sense, the Albanian military is not yet adjusted to the post cold war realities. It has been these institutional interests in retaining as many missions as possible since the communist past, that have denied the formulation of

the policy of personnel quantity, armaments, and other necessary equipment. So, in spite of the budget curtailment, in every passing year the quantity of personnel and armaments would remain almost at the same levels. With insufficient financial resources, the level of training lowered, armaments and equipment became obsolete and quality of life worsened.

In fact, both the requirements for defence budget and structures, as well as the size of forces and their management, have hardly been the product of a political threat assessment. In reality, it has been the size of personnel and armament that have justified the existence of threats. The incapability of the senior security and defence decision-makers to identify an official defence policy, made in parliament, has led to defence resources being managed ineffectively, ignoring living conditions and training and technological developments. Decisions for maintaining the military were not so much imposed by a far-sighted political leadership, with clear vision on how to secure and defend Albania as a result of lack of attention.

The present reconstitution of the military appears to have begun, but is progressing only slowly. Within the army, many officers but few conscripts have returned to duty, due to a still criminal situation prevailing. The numbers are not enough to line up effective units, particularly with the current lack of armaments, equipment, garrisoning and sometimes food and clothing. Several air defence sites, and early warning radars in the central and southern regions are manned, but may not be operational yet. A lot of armaments and munitions remain in civilian hands or in either unguarded or lightly protected depots. The new security panorama compels an entire overhaul of the defence planning in Albania. But it is a must for the relevant decision-makers first to learn how to plan defence.

Present Realities

It is predicted that, for at least several years to come, the main concerns, interest and requirements of the external security of Albania, will still be defined based on deep changes in the international and regional situation since 1990, and the internal catastrophic events of 1997. That means that the reference framework for the security and defence policy of Albania should be best based on its present realities and future needs.

Now history has it, that Albania separated more than five decades ago from the total isolation imposed by the communist regime, which thought that the country was a coveted object of the strategy of the European main military blocs, and it belonged to neither East nor West. The internal political changes of 1991-92 brought about political, economic and military rapprochement to the West and the region alike. Albania began missing its adversaries, and today considers itself more secure from external threats. International borders, for the most part, have become symbolic, as long as thousands of Albanian immigrants cross the borders in quest of jobs and a better life in the West, mainly in Italy and Greece. However, political pluralism in the country has made values and national ideology, as well as the perceptions of different segments of the populace to external security, much more fragmentary and sometimes entirely opposite. The delay in the solution of Albanian national issues has made the Albanians perceive an immediate threat to their security from their northern and northeastern borders, behind which a compact Albanian population lives under apartheid and subjugation.

Another aspect of the present realities is that today Albania is experiencing its hardest

times ever. The severe economic, political and social crisis led to the revolts of numerous segments of the population, followed by mass destruction of public property, government institutions and military installations. Logistic arsenals were attacked and looted, infrastructure was ruined and conscripts ran away from the barracks. The population, possessing an immense quantity of weapons and munitions, in point of fact creates a premise for external security. No potential aggressor would be that reckless or happy to become entangled in a conflict with an armed people, who in case of defence of their territories, would undoubtedly unite. On the other hand, weapons in the hands of uncontrollable segments of the population are a strong premise for violence and chaos. And often force has been used for political gains during Albanian history.

Presently, Albania is still suffering from economic, political and social shocks, which have encroached heavily upon its internal security. The process precipitated into armed gangs and organized crime. The disintegration of the former government and military structures was followed by an armed population striving for a kind of security, which the state itself was not able to afford. Actually, the future of the country is unquestionably linked to the influence of international political and economic institutions, which are militarily present too.

The drastic fall in production, the financial crisis, the budget deficit increase and citizens' loss of money in the pyramid schemes, have made the country entirely dependent politically and economically on the international community. A stream of European countries and international institutions are now committed to help Albania soon recover and get out of crisis, intentionally to include it in the process of western integration. For several years, Albania has participated in many military events within the framework of the United Nations, NATO's Partnership for Peace and OSCE. It has been very active in implementing the international requirements, by seriously contributing to the establishment of a sound security climate in the region. It was for this reason that the misfortune which plagued Albania lately, was much felt by the international community, too. The NATO Council responded immediately and decided to send expert teams to assess the situation, and to provide necessary assistance. Different NATO member states have offered help to alleviate the emergency in Albania.¹⁶ This solidarity is regarded as a hopeful support for the Albanians in the creation of a sound security climate, not only internally, but also in respect to a final solution of the Albanians' future in Kosova and Macedonia.

The hope of the Albanians for a better future is based also on their own promising qualities and the capacities of their country. Albania has manpower and natural resources, a key geopolitical and geoeconomic position, desire and willingness to bring life back to normal in the soonest possible time. All of these components can provide for the country a new starting line, at a higher level, to develop its human and material resources in the right direction.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is evident that there is a quite unsatisfactory societal regard for the military in Albania today. The social importance and status of the Albanian military as an institution is losing ground. Now, there are more and more people who think that the armed forces are neither the only nor the most important means to embody the nation's will of self-assertion. On the other hand, society as a whole in the present Albania is unable to grant the military a better social and material status, or higher moral values than civil services. This explains, from a sociological point of view, the

recent reluctance of the military to respond powerfully to its traditional duties for the country. This behaviour was clearly developed as a result of a deadly polarized division of the political spectrum in respect to national policy and strategy. The political spectrum itself was regarded as straightforwardly responsible for continuing to aggravate the country's internal situation, and leading to the present discord of civil-military relations.

ENDNOTES

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1. Regulation of Discipline of the Armed Forces, MOD ed; 1992, p8.
 2. See 'The Albanian Army in Transition', paper presented by the author at the V Biennial Conference of ERGOMAS, Zurich, 3-6 October 1996.
 3. New Europe Magazine, 8-14 September 1996: around 300,000 Albanians have recently emigrated to Greece, Italy and Germany. It is said that 17% of the construction force in Greece are Albanians.
 4. Law 'On the Status of the Military', No 7496, 7 July 1991.
 5. Law 'On Military Service', No 7683, 9 March 1993.
 6. Maj-Gen A Vincani and former deputy chief of defence of the Albanian Army; interview in Voice of America, 9 September 1997.
 7. Talks of General Nauman, NATO CHIMS, with General Copani, Albanian CHOD, on 24 April 1997, in NATO HQ, Brussels.
 8. NATO Information Paper, The Situation in Albania, 14 May 1997, p1.
 9. Report by the Department of Personnel, Albanian MOD, October 1996, unpublished; more than 40% of the Albanian officer corps have been trained in western military academies and schools, during the last five years.
 10. See A Copani; The Future of an Army, in the 'Army and Time' newspaper, Tirana, 18 June 1997.
 11. Security and Defence policy of Albania, MOD ed, Tirane, 1995.
 12. A Copani, The New Dimensions of Albania's Security Issues, NATO Review, March 1996, pp24-28.
 13. Data calculated from 'International Military and Defence Encyclopedia', Brassey's ed, New York, 1994.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Dennison C Lane, Commentary on the Albanian Armed Forces (unpublished), paper courteously made available by the author, January 1997.
 16. On 18 August 1997, a NATO expert team came to Albania; on 13 September 1997,

the Government of Albania and NATO signed a 16+1 agreement.