

**SMALL STATE PLAYING THE ASYMMETRIC GAME:
EVOLUTION OF ALBANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND
ITS RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES IN THE
POST-COLD WAR ERA**

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INTRODUCTION

When United States (US) President George W. Bush started its eight hour short visit on 10 June 2007 to Albania neither the world public opinion nor himself despite the briefings he had previously was expecting such a vivid welcoming and embracement by the Albanians and the Albanian state¹. It was not a surprise for the Albanians and people

¹ George W. Bush became the first US president to visit Albania. For the international comments on the visit see, Loven, Jennifer, 2007, 'Bush Receives Hero's Welcome in Albania', [The Guardian \(Unlimited\)](#), 10 June 2007, Fletcher, Michael A., 2007, 'Albania Welcomes Bush with Enthusiasm, Affection', [The Washington Post](#), 11 June 2007, Lucas, Peter, 2007, 'Albania's Love Affair with America', [The Boston](#)

who are following the Albanian issues including the US diplomatic corps but perceived as a good move on the part of the Americans at least to get a positive local reaction in the times of America's public image and support for its policies were down bottom in the eyes of the world public opinion. On the part of Albanians it was the show off of the support of the world's super power to their country and the sign of the significance of Albania for the United States as they were proud to be 'probably the most pro-American country in the world'².

Albania's such a positive approach to the world's leading great power is simplistic to explain in terms of an opportunistic contemporary policy but rather it must be analysed in a broader historical perspective with references to the historical evolution of the Albanian foreign policy as a small state. In this sense Albania's foreign policy orientation and choices give a picture of a small state that has been weak and facing problems in the domestic realm as well as the foreign relations consequently seeking to develop asymmetrical relationships with regional and great powers in the forms of formal and informal alliances in order to compensate its weaknesses. This effort since the establishment of the modern Albanian state appears to be a pattern shaping the foreign policy orientation of this small Balkan state under different political regimes.

The paper argues that there is continuity in the foreign policy pattern of Albania which is shaped around the establishing asymmetrical relationships with regional and great powers to ensure support for the country by utilising the its relational power³ in the

Globe, 14 June 2007. The previous Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Besnik Mustafaj described the essence of President George W. Bush's visit to Albania as; "the most significant diplomatic activity in the history of Albania in these last 100 years". 'Interview: "My Resignation not related to Ruling Policies"', Former Minister, Albanian Daily News, 2 May 2007.

² Fatos Tarifa, the Albanian Ambassador to Washington, in his opinion piece published in the Washington Times, clearly states the pro-American sentiment in Albania with these words while expressing Albania's clear military and political support for the United States in its fight in Iraq despite being 'a small country with limited sources'. Tarifa, Fatos, 2005, 'Opinion: Albania Stands with the U.S. in Iraq', The Washington Times, republished in Albanian Daily News, 28 March 2005.

³ I adopt Susan Strange's analytical framework for power which she terms as 'relational power' and 'structural power'. Strange, Susan, 1996, The Retreat of State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 16-30. For Susan Strange definition of power is "...simply the ability of a person or group of persons so to affect outcomes that their preferences take precedence over the preferences of others". By this definition she claims that she intends to avoid the "logical trap of pinning power to the pursuit of interest" which can be related to the understanding of "power as a means". Strange, p. 17. When thinking about power Strange differentiates between relational power, power of the states as in relation to other states; and the structural power which is "the authority [of the states] – the [states'] 'power over' global outcomes". Strange, pp. 19, 25. Especially for the analysis of small states and great powers, relational and structural power differentiation is relevant for clarifying the

international arena as a small state emerging basically from developments that could have impact on the wider international relations. In this regard, paper will firstly examine the nation building and state formation processes of Albania and their respective influences on the shaping of the foreign policy preferences of the country. Secondly, the evolution of the Albania's asymmetric relations with different regional and super powers will be analysed within different historical contexts until the end of Cold-War. Thirdly, Albania's post-communist regime transition and its reshaping of foreign policy in this new era will be evaluated with reference to the crises in Albania and the Balkans. In the final section, Albania's specific relations with the United States will be assessed from the point of view of the small state-great power relationship.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ALBANIAN FOREIGN POLICY AS A SMALL STATE

Albania can be described as a weak small state in the international arena⁴. From its state formation process onwards Albania has been facing different problems in relation with consolidation and institutionalisation in the domestic realm and threats and instabilities at the regional and international levels. Albania's struggle for a viable state,

delimitation of the contextual roles and capacities of small states and great powers in the sense of using power as contextual concept to delineate, define and differentiate small states and great powers for both understanding their relations with each other and, their roles and influence at the level of the international system.

⁴ In the literature scholars use the terms 'small', 'weak' and 'power' with 'state' basically referring to similar concept differing according to the specific description of the scholars though they are not exactly the synonymous. Vital, David, 1967, The Inequality of States: A Study of Small Power in International Relations, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Handel, Michael, 1990, Weak States in the International System, (Second Edition, [1981]), Frank Cass, London, Singer, Marshall R., 1972, Weak States in a World of Powers: The Dynamics of International Relationships, The Free Press, New York, Rothstein, Robert L., 1968, Alliances and Small Powers, Columbia University Press, New York. I use the 'small state' and 'weak state' terms for Albania in this text interchangeably describing the limited physical and material features of the state as well as referring to 'relative' and 'relational' features of limited state power and capacity to use this potential. For a discussion and a critical approach on to what extent the 'small state' concept is applicable as an 'analytical tool' in understanding the international politics see Baehr, Peter R., 1975, "Small States: A Tool for Analysis", World Politics, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 459, 461. For the argument concerning distinction of the 'small state' and 'weak state' concepts see Neumann, Iver B. and Gstöhl, Sieglinde, 2004, Lilliputians in Gulliver's World: Small States in International Relations, Centre for Small State Studies Working Paper 1-2004, Reykjavik, pp. 4-5 and Neumann, Iver B. and Gstöhl, Sieglinde, 2006, 'Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver's World?', Small States in International Relations, Christine Ingebritsen et al. eds., University of Washington Press, Seattle, pp. 7-8.

security and economic prosperity basically shaped its policies. Conscious of these facts Albanian leaderships under different regimes developed their strategies taking into account the weakness of the Albanian state in order to provide foreign support from regional or great powers of the time convenient to their interests. This strategy adapted in various forms under different domestic and international circumstances resulting in different consequences.

Basically the departing from strength of the weak proposition⁵, Albanian leaderships tried to utilise country's relative and circumstantial position to provide support. Exploiting contingencies or using international conditions for aligning with regional or great powers are applied as strategies in different periods for securing support for the Albanian state. This quest for providing the necessary backing for the survival of the state resulted in sometimes positively by saving the country from an economic break down or a military threat, and sometimes negatively by sacrificing from sovereignty or being an agent of strong states or actually being under foreign occupation. Also the level of involvement of the foreign influence varied from a patron-client relationship⁶ to relatively balanced alliance relationship in accordance with the existing conditions though keeping their asymmetry feature. This characteristic trend also has an important exception as well. In fact the most talented employer of this strategy, Enver Hoxha, also became the one who realised the most drastic shift in this approach by applying a strict isolationist policy closing the country to all foreign influence and access.

In the dissolution process of Ottoman Empire Albanian nationalism emerged quite late following the various nations in the Balkans most of who had already achieved their sovereignty and independence of their states⁷. Albanians were late to disassociate themselves from the Empire and unite to develop their national identity in order to transform it into the foundations of a nation state. Unlike other Balkan nations they did

⁵ Handel, 1990, pp. 119-56. See also Albania as an example in p. 137 and end note 61, p. 162.

⁶ For the analysis of the goals and forms of patron-client relationships see, Shoemaker, Christopher C. and Spanier John, 1984, Patron-Client Relationships: Multilateral Crises in the Nuclear Age, Praeger, New York, pp. 17-44.

⁷Misha, Piro, 2002, 'Invention of Nationalism: Myth and Amnesia', in Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd J. Fischer eds. Albanian Identities: Myth and History, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 34, 40.

not have the backing of any great power patron to defend their national cause as well⁸. Nation building and state formation processes had to advance due to the Balkan War that *de facto* broke the physical linkage of Albanians with the Ottomans. In order not to be invaded and be part of other Balkan states, Albanians declared their independence in 28 November 1912. The declaration of independence did not immediately bring stability and sovereignty to Albania. From the very beginning Albania faced with the problems of vulnerability and survival leading to its weaknesses as a state.

Albania did not possess the necessary political, economic and military means to form, consolidate and protect itself. Despite the initial excitement of creating their state Albanians were politically divided and there was not a strong political leadership to lead the country while it was founding. Albania had neither the economic means nor the foreign support to create the state structures and sustain them. Albanian state had to be formed in times of political turmoil and ongoing wars in the Balkans. The Balkan Wars followed by the World War had brought chaos and conflict to the Balkans leaving newly founded Albania vulnerable to the possible invasion of regional powers. Initial attempts for ensuring formal recognition of Albania's sovereignty and borders failed which made it to face with the threats to its very survival.

There was no order in the Balkans during the wars and Albania's existence was not a priority for many of the great powers of the time. These circumstances were primarily encouraging the major regional neighbouring powers Serbia and Montenegro then Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy to realise their territorial aspirations over the Albanian populated parts of the previously Ottoman lands. Yugoslavia and Greece joined by Italy from the other side of the Adriatic have been the major regional actors directly influencing the foreign policy making of Albania ever since.

Albania's formal recognition had become an issue for the great powers and the regional actors which made them to gather the Conference of Ambassadors representing the great powers in December 1912 to work on to determine the international status, organisation and the boundaries of the Albanians claiming their sovereign state⁹. Great

⁸ During the Berlin Congress in 1878 even the the existence Albanian nation was questioned by the great powers. Pollo, S and Puto, A., 1981, The History of Albania: From Its Origins to the Present Day, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, pp. 119-20.

⁹ Vickers, Miranda, 1995, The Albanians: A Modern History, I.B. Taurus, London, p. 70.

powers firstly guaranteed the autonomy and neutrality of Albanian state¹⁰ and secured some strategic parts of its territories against foreign occupation¹¹. Then in the ongoing process of the Conference in July 1913 great powers agreed on Albania's status as an autonomous principality and put its neutrality under their guarantee¹². Great powers accordingly assigned a German William of Wied to Albania as the Prince who soon failed to rule the country and left leaving leave it in a power vacuum during the World War¹³.

In this period seven foreign armies –Serbian, Montenegrin, Italian, Greek, Austrian and Bulgarian- occupied different parts of Albanian territory during the World War and Albania became subject of a secret treaties like April 1915 Treaty of London or the post-World War Greek-Italian in July 1919 agreement for partition of Albanian lands¹⁴. The war time occupations and the secret treaties for sharing Albania that would result in leaving a small Albanian state under Italian protection could not be sustained due to opposition from the United States. Albanians attribute significant respect to the United States and in particular to the President Wilson and his Fourteen Points¹⁵ that believed by the Albanians as the basis for the securing of the existence of Albania as a state. This appreciation still has an important place in the minds of the Albanians that as will be pointed out later which constitutes an important source of the pro-Americanism in Albania in the post-communist period.

¹⁰ Pearson, Owen, 2004, Albania in the Twentieth Century: A History, Volume I: Albania and King Zog: Independence, Republic and Monarchy, 1908-1939, The Centre for Albanian Studies in Association with I. B. Tauris, London, p. 36.

¹¹ Great powers took action against Montenegrins for forcing them to withdraw from Albanian town Shkoder in April 1913 by forcing a naval blockade. For details of the international operation see Schmidl, E. A, 1999, 'The International Operation in Albania, 1913-1914', International Peacekeeping, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 1-9.

¹² Pearson, 2004, pp. 43-4.

¹³ For a detailed account of the short reign of Prince William of Weid see Heaton-Armstrong Duncan, 2005, The Six Month Kingdom: Albania 1914, I.B. Tauris, London.

¹⁴ Stavrinou, L. S., 2000 [1965], The Balkans since 1453, New York University Press, New York, pp 710-2.

¹⁵ Although Wilson's points do not contain any direct reference to the status of Albania or the Albanians unlike some other Balkan states -Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, but it could be argued that the American's emphasis on the self-determination principle and the denouncing of the secret diplomacy provided support for Albanian causes. Wilson's New Diplomacy rhetoric and emphasis on guarantees of political and territorial integrity not only for great powers but also for small states were particularly admired by the small states. MacGinty, Roger, 1997, 'War Cause and Peace Aim? Small States and the First World War', European History Quarterly, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 47, 50.

The state formation process was a long one for Albania. After the formal recognition in the international arena and delimitation of its borders¹⁶, Albania kept facing problems in relation to its domestic politics and its regime as well as economic backwardness. Consolidation of state with functioning institutions and legitimacy could not be realised due to the specific characteristics of the country. On the political scene the political elite was very weak and divided in terms of regional divergences –the north-south divide- and economic sources of legitimacy –rural land owners and urban classes. These factors caused to the retarding of the domestic political consolidation and stability. In addition to political factors, on the economic realm, due to the lack of capital and the limited scope of the economic life, economic sources that were necessary for the new state to create its vital structures and consequently maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens could not be created. Under these circumstances the overall political and economic weakness of Albania led to the existence of its vulnerability. Albania had to shape its foreign policy in relation its domestic weaknesses as well as the existence of strong neighbours competing to have influence over it. Extremely

In December 1920 Albania become member to the post-War international organisation League of Nations further confirming its *de jure* sovereignty as an independent state in the international arena¹⁷. Albania also immediately utilised the League as a ground for bringing its cause of settling its borders assistance for settling its borders. Eventually the Conference of Ambassadors finalised the delimitation of Albanian boundaries in November 1921 by retaining its 1913 arrangements in line with the League of Nation’s assessments¹⁸. This constituted completion of a very important phase in Albania’s state formation process paving the way for Albanians to concentrate on domestic consolidation of the political regime and establishment of functioning central authority and state institutions in the country.

¹⁶ The delimitation of the Albanian territories also imposed the division of Albanians in the Balkans leaving important number of them outside the newly defined borders of the Albania proper basically in Kosovo, western Macedonia, southern Montenegro and northern Greece, Chameria.

¹⁷ Pearson, 2004, pp. 157-8.

¹⁸ Pearson, 2004 pp. 175-6. In fact the Conference also recognised the Italian interests concerning Albania in case of loosing its territorial integrity providing Italy the responsibility under great powers’ authority to restore territorial frontiers of Albania which was basically giving Italy “a virtual protectorate over Albania”. Fischer, Bernd Jürgen, 1984, King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania, East European Monographs, Boulder, Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 85-6.

In the initial part of the interwar period Albania witnessed fierce political competition among different political groups. Ahmed Zogu appeared as the winning conservative landowner politician with the help of the Yugoslavs. Zogu first changed the political regime from principality to a republic and then to a monarchy. In this period as the president then the king, Zogu -later King Zog I, faced difficulties while ruling the country. As Albania at the time had limited economic sources and fragile domestic political environment it was very hard for Zogu to sustain the legitimacy of its authoritarian regime. In order to overcome the economic hardships in Albania, challenges to his rule and to be actually govern the country he was desperately in need of economic aid and loans. Although Albania had applied to League of Nations with various occasions for loans in order to establish a viable national economy its requests were refused just for the reason of its economic backwardness and not having any capacity to pay back the loans. This eventually forced Albania to turn other countries for economic support.

Albania had the option of asking the great powers and the wealthy countries in the Western Europe or the regional powers and the neighbouring countries to it for economic assistance. Great powers and other wealthy countries were either not interested or showing respect to the sphere of interest claims of regional power in this case Italy¹⁹. Albania was left to choose among its neighbours and regional powers. It was a delicate situation as the decision for developing close economic relations was very much dependent on the specific circumstances shaping the region and consequently Albania's particular relations with countries around it.

Zogu opted to develop closer economic relations with Italy for different reasons. Firstly, Italy was willing to provide loans to Albania as part of its regional policy with economically very generous conditions. Secondly, Italy had the capacity to provide the necessary economic sources to Albania and sustain it. Thirdly, Italy also has the technical capacity to provide assistance for the development of Albanian economy and infrastructure. Finally, Albania was tending to favour developing such a relation with the countries that was not directly bordering with it and which could provide security against

¹⁹ For an analysis of the mutual social construction of the asymmetrical relationship between Albania and Italy reflected in social, cultural and political environments, see Mai, Nicola, 2003, 'The Cultural Construction of Italy in Albania and Vice Versa: Migration Dynamics, Strategies of Resistance and Politics of Mutual Self-Definition across Colonialism and Post-Colonialism', *Modern Italy*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 77-93.

its neighbours. In this sense Yugoslavia and Greece were not the priority choices as Albania's relations with these countries were unstable and inconsistent due to the potential of mutual irredentist aspirations and regional rivalries which were linked to the developments in the international arena as well as in the Balkans.

Albania while establishing close economic relations with Italy through lending agreements aimed to balance it with limited concessions in economic and political spheres in order to avoid dependency and be exposed to foreign influence. But contrary to the initial intention of the Albanians, the scope and the content of the Alba-Italian economic relations exceeded far beyond the expectations leading to a totally opposite direction.

Albanian Italian close economic relations started with the Commerce and Navigation Agreement of January 1924 that granted Italy "most-favoured nation status"²⁰ later expanded with the March 1925 economic agreement founding Italian invested and controlled National Bank of Albania²¹ and institutionalised mechanism in the form of an independent development company (SVEA) to regulate and direct spending of the loans and their repayments. Due to the economic conditions of Albania which would not allow it to deal with increasing amount of debt and gradual transfer of the resources and the control of economy Albania had been effectively tied to Italy in economic terms in the forthcoming years of the interwar period²². Italians wanted to turn deepening economic relations into an advantage in the political and security areas and achieved success by signing in June 1925 three pacts including a secret military alliance later to be expanding Italian penetration with new loan agreements²³.

King Zog always wanted to protect Albanian political independence and to limit the actual penetration of Italy by trying to diversify its relations and sources of economic and political support. He unsuccessfully tried to involve the British to the developments in Albania to balance the Italians but the British were reluctant to get involved to what they see as the Italian sphere of influence²⁴.

²⁰ Pearson, 2004, p. 216.

²¹ Pearson, 2004, p. 246.

²² Fischer, 1984, p. 91.

²³ Fischer, 1984, p. 93.

²⁴ Tomes, Jason Hunter, 2004, King Zog of Albania: Europe's Self-Made Muslim King, New York University Press, New York, p. 86.

King Zog wanted to play a delicate game of balance with the Italians in order to get the financial support for the existence of his rule while doing the utmost to preserve as much of Albanian sovereignty. But Albania's inherent vulnerabilities; the internal insurgency threats, severe financial crises and diplomatic isolation was leaving a very narrow space for manoeuvre and even forcing Albanians to come to terms with the ever increasing Italian demands for concessions and control of the country²⁵. Eventually throughout the 1920s and 1930s the struggle over controlling Albania continued. Although the Italian influence and actual penetration had reached to an immense scale Albania despite closely associating with Italy never sacrificed its political independence. This is considered an ironical development as the eventual insistence of King Zog on the protection of Albanian sovereignty ultimately became the reason for losing Albania's independence as the Italians became convinced for taking full control of Albania an outright invasion was necessary²⁶.

Italians invaded and occupied Albania in April 1939 without facing any significant military resistance. This was a move to expand its influence in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean. It was almost six months before the beginning of the Second World War and there was not much of opposition or strong condemnation of the invasion in the international arena. Albanians who were previously reluctant to join the League of Nations decision to impose a blockade on Italy after its invasion of Ethiopia could not receive strong reaction from the international institutions and individual states after the Italian occupation and unification of two monarchies under the Italian King. In fact Albania withdrew from the League with Italian initiative soon after the invasion²⁷. Despite its deep penetration to the country in advance of the invasion, Italians and their collaborator local governments never became popular and legitimate in the eyes of the Albanians²⁸. This was extended to the German occupation as well which had to replace the Italian control of the country after Italian failure to succeed in the Second World War in general and accomplish their expansionist policies in the Balkans in particular.

²⁵Fischer, 1984, pp. 98, 100.

²⁶ Fischer, Bernd J., 1999, Albania at War, 1939-1945, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, p. 7.

²⁷ Fischer, 1999, p. 31.

²⁸ In addition to the Fisher's book (1999) or further information about Albania during the Second World War see, Hibbert, Reginald, 1991, Albania's National Liberation Struggle: The Bitter Victory, Pinter Publishers, London.

Loosely integrated and economically fragile country could hardly develop local resistance movements against the occupation. The Allied contribution to the local resistance was also almost insignificant. Under these circumstances Albanian Communist Party (APC) emerged as relatively the most organised and capable resistance movement among other contenders to lead the national liberation movement and then to establish the provisional government under the presidency of Enver Hoxha, the leader of the APC guerrilla movement. After the Second World War the success of the Albanian communist resistance and wartime experience appear to be significant among others in terms of its 'indigenously' by massively depending on domestic sources and making Albania an occupied state liberated neither by the Allies nor the Soviets at the same time providing the new Albanian regime and Hoxha an important source of domestic legitimacy and relative flexibility in international affairs²⁹.

The major supporter of the Albanian communist resistance movement was the Yugoslav partisans. They provided crucial aid and assistance during their resistance and later while taking the power in the country. There was a strong ideological and political bond between the partisans of the two neighbouring countries though the Yugoslavs were the dominant figure in the relations. Indeed the ideological attributes and parallel propagandistic rhetoric would be major components of the foreign policy making of the Hoxha regime in the years to come. Between the period of 1944 to 1948 Yugoslavia became Albania's major ally providing economic, technical support and backing in the international arena.

From the beginning the nature of the relation between the two parties was asymmetrical. Yugoslavia's supremacy in ideological, political and economic spheres was leaving Albania as the secondary actor in the definition of nature and depth of the relations. Although Enver Hoxha had totally been conscious of the repercussions of the Alba-Italian alliance relations in the interwar period he could not change the imbalanced nature of Albania's relations with Yugoslavia which was in favour of the latter. In fact in the initial phases of the close association of the two countries and their respective regimes there was a strong belief in the good intentions of the parties on the Albanian side. As there was reference to possibility of unification Albanians in the two countries -

²⁹ Fischer, 1999, pp. 245, 253.

particularly the Kosovo Albanians with the mainland- and Yugoslavia was providing mostly needed economic aid and diplomatic support for the Albanian causes in the United Nations and at the Paris Peace Conference, Hoxha was considering the Yugoslav intentions on Albania as supportive and respectful in terms of its sovereignty and independence³⁰.

The official foundation of the close bilateral relations was the Yugoslav-Albanian Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Assistance of July 1946 and the adjacent Economic Convention. These agreements included articles concerning bilateral military commitment against foreign aggression towards the parties and a customs union between the two countries supported with currency parity and unified prices which rose speculations about a possible Yugoslav-Albanian federation³¹. In November 1947 another step forward was taken for the integration of the economies with the Treaty on Coordination of Economic Plans, Customs Union and Equalisation of Currencies practically turning Albania into another province of Yugoslavia³².

In line with the deepening of the relations and Yugoslavia wanted to extend its growing existence in Albania not only with its economic and technical aid but also with combat troops for protecting Albania against any developments that would jeopardise Yugoslav interests in the country. This coincided with the war-time Yugoslav perception of Albania as ‘too small and too weak to stand on its own after the war’³³ and eventually led to Yugoslavia’s submission of a plan for ‘union of Albania with Yugoslavia on a federal basis’ in December 1947³⁴. Yugoslav also put pressure on Hoxha through ACP by challenging him in the domestic arena.

Hoxha had realised that the nature of the bilateral relations had been in a swing similar to the Albanian-Italian relations in the last decade culminating in dependency and a threat to the sovereignty of Albania. He was also trying to divert the scope of relations

³⁰ O’Donnell, James S., 1999, *A Coming of Age: Albania under Enver Hoxha*, East European Monographs, Boulder, Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 17-20.

³¹ Pearson, Owen, 2006, *Albania in the Twentieth Century: A History, Volume III: Albania as Dictatorship and Democracy, From Isolation to Kosovo War 1946-1998*, The Centre for Albanian Studies in Association with I. B. Tauris, London, p. 52.

³² Pearson, 2006, p. 120.

³³ O’Donnell, 1999, p. 19.

³⁴ Pearson, 2006, pp. 242-3. This unification or annexation attempt was mentioned as making Albania the ‘Seventh Republic of Yugoslavia’. O’Donnell, 1999, p. 31.

but Yugoslavia was too close and powerful to react. But the opportunity came with the deterioration of the Soviet-Yugoslav relations in June 1948 resulting in the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Communist Information Bureau-Cominform³⁵. Albania immediately used this development to distance itself from Yugoslavia by using ideological rhetoric of revisionism to attack. This move was accompanied by the expulsion of Yugoslav staff in Albania and declaring all bilateral treaties invalid except Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Aid³⁶. These attacks proved to be useful as the economic dependence on foreign aid and national security necessitates Albania to have a patron and in this sense it was essential to replace Yugoslavia without a delay causing deficiency in the economy and security of the state.

Right after the Second World War Albania and its new communist regime had to deal with a wide variety of diplomatic and political problems in the international relations. These developments forced Albania to ensure diplomatic support to defend its causes. Firstly, new Albanian regime had to be recognized at the international arena and be a part of the post-Second World War international system and the new international institutions particularly the United Nations³⁷. It also had deal with the Greek claims on its southern territories and clear off itself from any involvement and responsibility concerning claims of participation to the Italian invasion of Greece. In addition to these problems there was the issue of Greek allegations of Albanian involvement in the civil war in Greece by providing support to the Greek guerrillas against the government. Albania was in conflict with the British as well due to the Corfu Channel mining incident of October 1946 resulting in damaging of navy vessels and casualties which was taken to the International Court of Justice which then resulted against Albania³⁸. Albania was at odds with the United States as the new regime was not recognising the pre-April 1939 Italian invasion bilateral treaties and agreements. Finally, Albania between 1949 and 1952 became subject to Anglo-American subversive operations against the communist

³⁵ Pearson, 2006, p. 287.

³⁶ O'Donnell, 1999, p. 27.

³⁷ Albania could only become member to the UN as late as December 1955 after years of delay by the United States, Britain, Greece and some other countries who are opposing its membership.

³⁸ For an account of the Corfu Channel dispute see Gardiner, Leslie, 1966, The Eagle Spreads His Claws: A History of the Corfu Channel Dispute and of Albania's Relations with the West, 1945-1965, William Blackwoods & Sons LTD, Edinburg.

regime for changing³⁹ it with a friendly one⁴⁰. Enver Hoxha kept its deep suspicion against the US perceiving it as a bullying, aggressive and imperialistic enemy aiming to invade and change the regime in Albania while domestically presenting it vulnerable against Albania⁴¹.

The variety and gravity of the existing problems in the Albanian diplomatic agenda as well as its economic difficulties necessitate swift replacement of the source of support for Albania. After the breaking of alliance with Yugoslavia, Soviet Union appeared as the most appropriate option to fill the vacuum. Ideologically Hoxha was following a strictly Stalinist approach in Albania which suited to both states. Ideological harmony was also helping the Soviets to reply Yugoslav challenges to its leadership in the Balkans. Soviet Union would be a geographically distant patron –but with a capability to satisfy its security guarantees- which became a preferable feature for Albania after two threatening precedents of alignment with regional and neighbouring powers. Soviet Union also had the technical capacity and economic sources to easily help Albania. In addition, Soviet Union had global strategic interests and Albania could contribute protection of these interests by providing bases for the Soviet strategic forces and submarines in the Mediterranean while securing Albania.

Albania assured economic and technical aid without any difficulty but there was a disagreement concerning the priorities of the investments as the Albanians were asking to channel the investments in industry whereas the Soviets were had a preference for the agricultural sector. Albania became member to the Council for the Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) in February 1949 and used Soviet funding for improving its backward economy.

³⁹ All the Anglo-American operations failed due to the leak of information on their side flowing to the Albanians through the Soviets. For the details of failure of the operations see, Bethell, Nicholas, 1984, The Great Betrayal: The Untold Story of Kim Philby's Biggest Coup, Hodder and Stoughton, London.

⁴⁰ Albania was perceived to be a small but important Soviet satellite by the Americans contributing the spread of Soviet influence and propaganda in the Balkans and wider Mediterranean area and putting pressure on Yugoslavia. Dedijer, Vladimir, 1951, 'Albania, Soviet Pawn', Foreign Affairs, vol. 30, 103, 107-110.

⁴¹ Less, Thomas, 2004, 'Seeing red: America and its Allies through the Eyes of Enver Hoxha', in Andrew Hammond (ed.), The Balkans and the West: Constructing the European Other, 1945-2003, Ashgate, Aldershot, p. 65. For Enver Hoxha's personal account of his and Albania's relations with the British and the Americans during Albanian resistance in the second World War see his memoirs, Hoxha, Enver, 1982, The Anglo-American Threat to Albania, The '8 Nentori' Publishing House, Tirana.

On the security sphere Albania was feeling secure with the existence of the Soviet forces in the country against Yugoslavia and other threats including the United States and Britain whom Hoxha suspected to invade Albania. In the rapidly polarising international environment Albania had secured its interests at the regional and international levels with this alliance especially after joining the Warsaw Pact in May 1955.

However the status of the alliance proved to be susceptible to the domestic developments in the Soviet Union as the result of Stalin's death in March 1953. This changed the posture of the Albanian Soviet relations as Stalin's successor Khrushchev shifted the ideological stance and political choices of the Soviet Union. These changes directly reflected by the declining Soviet interest in Albania contrary to rising attention towards Yugoslavia. Soviets decreased the economic aid to Albania. But the most disturbing development for the Albanians was the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement and following Soviet pressure on Albania to restore its relations with Yugoslavia. Both the ideological shift and de-Stalinisation process were directly threatening the Hoxha leadership that had strong commitment to Stalinism. The rift in the ideological positions of the Albanian and the Soviet leaderships deepened steadily in the course of 1950s. The 'peaceful co-existence' policy of the Soviets for developing relations with the non-communist world led to reaction of the Hoxha⁴². As the irreconcilability of the ideological differences appeared clearer Albania began to look for other potential allies. This also coincided with period of the increasing problems between China and the Soviet Union. Soviet attempts to for making China to recognise its leadership in the communist block and the border problems between the two countries had caused rising of tension.

Albania initially began to develop relations with the Chinese for offsetting the declining Soviet economic aid by the Chinese long-term loans⁴³. The deterioration of the Albania's alliance relations with the Soviets went parallel to the development of Albania's bilateral relations with China. Soviets reluctance to totally loose Albania saved some time for Hoxha to establish and improve relations with the Chinese. The similarities in the ideological understandings eased the process and Albania appeared as a major supporter of the Chinese position within the community of the communist states while

⁴² Vucinich, Wayne S., 1963, 'The Albanian-Soviet Rift', *Current History*, vol. 44, May 1963, p. 299.

⁴³ Griffith, William E., 1963, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, p. 39.

the Chinese support for Albania became the central issue in the Soviet-Chinese rift⁴⁴. The increasing tone of ideological criticisms centred on revisionism and anti-Marxism took Soviet-Albanian alliance on the brink of collapse and finally in December 1961 Soviets broke its diplomatic relations with Albania. This led the Albania to loose its main anchor of security as its membership to the Warsaw Pact was *de facto* suspended though Albania continued to be a member until withdrawal in September 1968. The relations were down to the lowest point after April 1962 when all the Soviet technical assistants pulled out, submarine base closed and economic aid terminated by the Soviets⁴⁵.

Albania's alliance with the Soviet Union was probably the most asymmetric relation in terms of comparative power of the both sides. But the potential to pose a direct security threat to the independence and sovereignty of Albania was quite limited. Despite Soviet's attempts to support the activities of the domestic opposition in favour of Soviet Union to come to power they did not have the much of a leverage to change the ruling leadership or actually taking control of the country by a military intervention as it was the case with Hungary in 1956. Indeed it is argued that the Soviet failure to control of Albania contrary to other communist allies was reflection of the shaking Soviet's position as the only policy dictating authority in the Communist Block and the ineffectiveness of Soviet strategies of reduction of economic aid, lowering security and challenging local leadership emerged in the case of Albania⁴⁶. Breaking the alliance and the relations with the Soviet Union was followed by the deterioration of the relations with other communist regimes in the East and Central Europe. In this period Albania appeared as further alienated in the international arena. Albania was in diplomatic relation with limited number of countries. Furthermore Albania was in very bad terms and broken up relations simultaneously with both of the superpowers. This was an extraordinary situation for a small state in the period when the Cold War tension was constantly rising.

Albania despite the vast parity gap in the alliance skilfully utilised the developments in the international arena combining it with its relational power and created opportunity to shift its alliance to guarantee its security and the flow of economic aid. In the last phase of alliance hopping Albania transformed the bilateral relations with China

⁴⁴ Skendi, Stavro, 1962, 'Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 471-8.

⁴⁵ O'Donnell, 1999, p. 53.

⁴⁶ O'Donnell, 1999, pp. 58-9.

to an official alliance. Despite the nature of the relations reflected to be an alliance China and Albania had never bound by an alliance treaty rather their relations characterised by informal policy coordination processes on *ad hoc* basis⁴⁷.

Albania and China were sharing similar ideological stance of anti-revisionism, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and Marxism and had developed problematic relations with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and the West in particular the United States⁴⁸. Both countries were preserving a strong ideological approach to foreign policy. Especially their 'dual advisory' approach towards the Soviet Union and the United States was the reflection of common threat perception from these countries⁴⁹.

Albania's alliance with China was in a casual form as China was geographically distant and had limited sources to reach out Albania in times of urgent security threat. Albania conscious of limited nature of the guarantees of its alliance with China acted more freely. Despite the asymmetry, Albania did not become a totally subordinate client but was like more of a relatively equal partner that was more benefiting from economic sources and military aid of its associate in alignment. China particularly gained prestige and showed its ability to replace Soviet Union as an ally in an area traditionally that was traditionally been within Soviet sphere of interest and influence⁵⁰.

Albania was committed to support China especially in the international organisations where in most cases China was not represented. Albania became voice of China and essentially worked for China's membership to the United Nations and at the same time gaining permanent seat at the Security Council⁵¹. Chinese aid was very crucial for the Albanians as well especially to fill the big gap left after the withdrawal of the Soviet economic and technical aid⁵² although the amount and the quality of Chinese aid were not at the same level with the Soviet aid.

⁴⁷ Biberaj argues that as the commonly perceived interests of the two nations were conditioned by different factors this could be seen as the factor behind the absence of an alliance treaty. Biberaj, Elez, 1986, Albania and China: A Study of an Unequal Alliance, Westview Press, Boulder, p. 48.

⁴⁸ Biberaj, 1986, p. 45.

⁴⁹ Biberaj, 1986, pp. 62, 71.

⁵⁰ Tretiak, Daniel, 'The founding of the Sino-Albanian Entente', The China Quarterly, no. 10, April-June 1962, p. 143.

⁵¹ Pearson, 2006, p. 628.

⁵² Logoreci, Anton, 1967, 'Albania and China: The Incongruous Alliance', Current History, vol. 52, April 1967, p. 229.

Chinese-Albanian alliance began to weaken by the Chinese change of their policy towards leaving isolation in the international arena. They gradually left their central foreign policy stand with the Albanians by abandoning the 'dual adversary' policy. Firstly China established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1970. Later the major change came in July 1975 with the initiation of the Chinese-American rapprochement⁵³. Especially the Chinese move for establishing diplomatic relations with the United States came as a shock for the Albanians as Chinese had not consulted them. These were major blows to the Albania's alliance with China and the central foreign policy principles.

Parallel to the Chinese opening in the world affairs Albania's political value for China began to diminish as its major ally⁵⁴. Albania's threat perception was already in the rise after the Soviet intervention to Czechoslovakia and introduction of the Brezhnev doctrine. Gradual deterioration of the relations and emerging ideological differences with China, especially after the Mao's death in September 1976, further increased the insecurity of Albania. Albanian leadership tried to respond loosing an important ally by two policies that were conflicting in their essence. Preserving strict Stalinist political line was indispensable for Enver Hoxha's regime. At the same time Albania had run out of politically compatible potential regional or great powers for establishing alliance relationship especially after the official break-up of the relations with China in July 1978. Albania tried to compensate the loss of economic contribution of a great power ally by establishing diplomatic and limited trade relations with countries in the Western Europe and the Balkans 1971 onwards. On the other hand, Albania concentrated on self-sufficiency for limiting the scope of foreign influence in the country which was perceived as jeopardising Albania's security and the stability of the regime. Hoxha while diversifying the supply sources of the basic needs of the country wanted to minimise

⁵³ Although the US also wanted to seek ground for re-establishing relations with Albania, Hoxha regime remained firm and strict about its foreign policy line against the US. Washburn, John Nelson, 1972, 'The People's Republic of China: Shall We Now Enter an Era of Negotiation with It after Twenty-five Years of Confrontation?', International Lawyer, vol. 6, no. 4, Heuven, Marten H. A., 1975, 'Normalisation of Relations with the People's Republic of Albania: A Slow Process', International Lawyer, vol. 9, no. 2.

⁵⁴O'Donnell, 1999, p. 70.

Albania's dependency. He took the issue to the extreme by adopting economic self-reliance⁵⁵ and autarchy⁵⁶ and political isolation of the country. Firm

Self-imposed isolation of Albania closed the country to foreign influence. This was the end of the long and consecutive alliance formation trend in the Albanian foreign policy since mid-1920s. The break in this trend continued until the end of the communist party regime in Albania in early 1990s.

ALBANIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

Albania began transition of communist regime following the other precedents in the Central and Eastern Europe. Despite limited relaxation of the isolation of the country after Enver Hoxha's death in 1985 this does not prevent Albania to be the last communist regime to start its transformation in Europe. Drastic changes are experienced in Albania's regime, political and economic life as well as its social structure. The overall domestic transition process covering the rebuilding of state structures and politics within the framework of democratic principles, establishment of free market economy and introduction of new values to the Albanian society constituted the most essential part of the changes in Albania. This marked the return of Albania to the international arena after a long period of isolation. Integration into the international system and development of relations with other countries constituted the priorities for Albania's new foreign policy orientation.

Albania's weakness as a state and lack of experience with liberal democracy and market economy put an important imprint on its transition period. Albania has been through a series of crises in the post-communist era. Consequently, the Albanian experience of transition turned out to be a traumatic one. The problematic nature of the change, the failures of the transition and some of the sources of the crises can be

⁵⁵ Backer, Berit, 1982, 'Self-Reliance under Socialism: The Case of Albania', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 19, no.4, pp. 355-67.

⁵⁶ For the economic principles of Albania in this period see Articles 25-28, 'The Constitution of the People's Republic of Albania', *Review of Socialist Law*, vol. 3, 1977, pp. 233-4.

attributed to the historical experiences of the Albanian state. The survival problem, crises and perpetuation of authoritarianism appear to be continuities in the new era.

The new leaderships governing the Albanian state in the post-communist era not only inherited the authoritarian tradition but also the pragmatic approach to use the state's weakness to get support for the transition process.

Albania's foreign policy priority as part of international integration is joining in the Western political and economic structures. Albania's main policy orientation in this regard is shaped by the efforts to integrate with the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic structures. By this way Albanian leaderships aim to reach economic development and to ensure security. In order to succeed in reaching its goals, Albania developed a balanced policy which gives importance to the relations with European Union without sacrificing from the Albania's preferential relations with great powers particularly the United States. The foreign policy course reflects a balance between Albania's European and American orientations⁵⁷ constituting the two pillars of the Albanian foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.

Albanians recognize the European Union as a means of integration with the international system, a source of economic assistance for development and a potential labour market to open up after a future integration and membership. The European Union member countries constitute the most important partners in Albania's economic relations including aid, trade and foreign investment⁵⁸. The European Union is the main motivator and the facilitator of the institutionalisation by helping capacity building in Albania. The European Union plays an instrumental role in the domestic consolidation of state with various mechanisms. As the Albanian state and society do not show the necessary impetus for achieving in the consolidation of the states and not succeed in the transition processes, despite deficiencies in its conditionality policies European Union⁵⁹ has been

⁵⁷ Lani, Remzi and Schmidt, Fabian, 1998, "Albanian Foreign Policy between Geography and History", *International Spectator*, vol. 33, no. 2.

⁵⁸ Johnson, Ailish M., 2001, 'Albania's Relations with the EU: On the Road to Europe?', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 191.

⁵⁹ Hoffmann, Judith, 2005, 'Integrating Albania: the Role of the European Union in the Democratization Process', *Albanian Journal of Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 55-74. For a discussion about the European Union's political conditionality and democratization in Albania see, Elbasani, Arolda, 'Democratization Process in Albania: Manipulation or Appropriation of International Norms?', Socrates Kokkalis 6th Annual Graduate Student Workshop Paper, 2004. www.ksg.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW%206/elbasani.pdf.

perceived as the most important force to accomplish the post-communist change in the country. In this context European Union categorizes Albania within the ‘Western Balkans’ and offers the Stabilisation and Association Process as the path for integration. Albania and the European Union has signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and institutionalised the integration process on 22 May 2006.

ALBANIA’S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

The United States also constitutes another important and indispensable component of the Albanian politics since the end of the Cold War. Albanians perceive the United States which emerged as the sole superpower in the post-Cold War period as the most important country to ally themselves with to get patronage. Albania has still been a weak country and aims to develop strong bilateral relations with the United States in order to assure political and economic support. Albania in this sense continues its tendency to develop clientalist alliance relationships with regional or great powers and approaches to the United States with this attitude.

The nature of the relationship between these two countries can be described as an asymmetric power relationship. This relationship is shaped broadly by the priorities of the United States, however, Albania has been trying to accommodate her interests, and develop a foreign policy strategy within the limits of this asymmetrical relationship. Utilising the instable nature of the Balkans which have the potential to create conflicts, Albania wants to be a strategic ally of the United States. However the United States policy towards the region is multidimensional and Albania do not necessarily have a permanent distinct position. In the course of time United States has not lost its determining feature of its dominancy in the Albanian – United States relations. Albania continued to act with its limited national policy autonomy though benefiting from these contingencies by getting more support and improvement of scope of relations with the United States.

In the post-communist era, despite the previous demonising policies of communist period Albanians have a very positive approach towards the United States. Albanians, who do not trust the Europeans and the pan-European structures for the security related matters, have strong confidence in the United States on those matters. This also constitutes a source of balance in the conduction of Albania's foreign policy. Albania gives priority to be a member of NATO for ensuring its security compared with the European Union related security structures⁶⁰.

The United States has been the most important foreign actor in Albanian politics since the beginning of the transition process in Albania. After re-establishing bilateral diplomatic relations after 52 years break in March 1991⁶¹, United States' active involvement in the first non-communist party's -Democratic Party- coming to power in 1992 is a widely accepted view⁶². In this period, the Americans who developed close relations with the new regime and the Democratic Party leadership especially with the President Sali Berisha had an important impact on the Albanian politics⁶³. In the coming period especially after the devastating March 1997 pyramid investments schemes crisis⁶⁴ when the ex-communist Socialist Party came to power, despite the previous American policy of fully supporting the Democratic Party, both the Socialist Party leadership and the Americans did not stick to the past but soon developed harmonic relationships. After this point the relations between Albania and the United States can be described as moving beyond the partisan approach on both sides. Despite the Democratic Party leader Berisha's criticisms about the United States after loosing power, his attitude seemed to be more rhetorical than a real attitude shift as a result of the tense nature of the domestic politics. In fact political parties and politicians from all parts of the political spectrum

⁶⁰ Johnson, 2001, p. 181. Weakness of the European Union's security pillar is an important factor in this as well. Johnson, 2001, p. 190.

⁶¹ Seitz, Raymond G. H., 1991, 'U.S. and Albania Re-establish Diplomatic Ties after 52 Years', The New York Times, 16 March 1991.

⁶² Vickers, Miranda and Pettifer, James, 1997, Albania: From Anarchy to a Balkan Identity, New York University Press, New York, pp. 79-80.

⁶³ United States' attitude and consecutive policies towards Berisha leadership is widely criticized as continuing of unequivocal United States support to Berisha and his party by ignoring the signs of his authoritarianism, corruption and human rights abuses. Also its one-sided view of democratization and too closely tying of its foreign policy goals of stability in the Balkans and the construction of free market economy in Albania with one leader is subject of criticism. Abrahams, Fred, 1997, 'Albania', Foreign Policy in Focus, vol. 2, no. 33, May 1997, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁴ For a detailed account of the crisis see Pettifer, James and Vickers, Miranda, 2007, The Albanian Question: Reshaping the Balkans, I.B. Tauris, London, pp. 1-92.

give specific importance to portray themselves as close friend of the United States and try to give the image of American approval for them especially during the election campaign periods.

Albania seek the support of the United States to accomplish its primary foreign policy objectives of reintegration with the international system⁶⁵—mainly the Euro-Atlantic Structures, dealing with the Albanian national problem and establishing good relations with the countries in its region⁶⁶. Albania considers the material and technical assistance of the United States for its domestic transition process as essential as its support for external integration with the world. Especially at the early stages of transition, the United States provided Albania the much needed economic aid for recovery and reconstruction and political support for reintegration with the international system⁶⁷. Albania, in this sense, particularly at the initial stages of its economic transition process with its enthusiasm to implement the economic strategies of the international financial institutions was portrayed as a success story by the United States. Albania at this stage was fitting into the picture that was desirable to see by the Americans in the post-communist East-Central Europe.

In order to attract the United States attention Albania tries to play on its value within the context of the post-Cold War developments in the region. With its attempts to associate itself with the United States by a special relationship preferably an alliance⁶⁸, Albania wants primarily to ensure its security. The international circumstances created an environment for the Albanians conducive to bring the issue to the agenda. As Yugoslavia's dissolution turned into various bloody conflicts, Albania's importance as a regional actor dramatically increased. The international community's indeed basically the Western powers' strategy with regard to the conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina was shaped by containing the war and reaching to a minimum stability in the region. In this picture,

⁶⁵ Crampton, R. J., 2002, The Balkans: Since the Second World War, Longman, London, p. 301.

⁶⁶ Elez Biberaj describes establishing relations at the regional level as “negotiating *modus vivendi* with neighbouring countries”. Biberaj, Elez, 1999, Albania in Transition: The Rocky Road to Democracy, Westview Press, Oxford, p. 230.

⁶⁷ Despite the aid contribution American investments and economic activity has remained far behind the regional actors and European countries. This dimension of the Albanian-US relations could be regarded as the weakest one.

⁶⁸ Nifong, Christina, 1995, ‘Poor but Strategic Albania Tries Hard to be a US Ally’, Christian Science Monitor, vol. 87, issue 205, 18 September 1995, p. 7.

Albania had its role as not to bring the Albanian question to the international agenda and provide support for the international attempts to end the conflicts in the region without spilling over to new areas especially to the Albanian concentrated regions of the former Yugoslavia. Albanian leadership backed the preservation of the *status quo* strategy and even granted bases to the Americans for the monitoring of the international embargo imposed on Yugoslavia. United States and other Western powers were pleased to have the Albania's cooperation in this process. It was in the interest of the United States and other Western countries to keep Albania out of trouble and to prevent it to be a destabilizing factor in the region by not letting Albania to internationalize the Albanian national question especially after the signing of the Dayton agreement. The United States and other Western powers provided economic and political support to Albania in exchange for not challenging the *status quo* in the Albanian populated parts of the Balkans⁶⁹. Afterwards when the Kosovo conflict erupted due to not addressing the issue at the Dayton process, Albania became important again with its assistance to the NATO intervention. Throughout the conflict, Albania, in line with the United States' recommendation and partially due to its lack of capability, did not become involved in militarily and thus, not be a party in the conflict. Albania followed this foreign policy line of being cautious and cooperative in relation with the Albanian question related matters in the Macedonian case as well. Albania and the Albanians' sympathy and trust to the United States were boosted after the NATO intervention in Kosovo. In this process the United States was perceived as the leading country in the planning and the implementation of the intervention to save the Albanians. Compared to the previous reluctant record of the Europeans during the war in Bosnia Herzegovina and incompetence in halting the humanitarian catastrophes, American commitment in intervening conflicts led the Albanians to play on the United States to get support for

⁶⁹ Despite the rising debates about the 'Greater Albania', Albanian governments has been careful not to give a supportive official policy regarding reunification of Albanians in the Balkans which will attract the reaction of the international community. In this sense the Greater Albania idea is not only seen as unrealistic but also having the potential of negatively influencing the Euro-Atlantic integration goals. Kola, Paulin, 2003, The Search for Greater Albania, Hurst & Company, London, p. 394, Austin, Robert C., 2004, 'Greater Albania: The Albanian State and the Question of Kosovo, 1912-2001', in Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe, edited by Lampe, John R. and Mazover, Mark, CEU Press, Budapest, p. 246, International Crisis Group, "Pan-Albanianism: How Big Threat to Balkan Stability?", ICG Europe Report, no. 153, Tirana/Brussels, 25 February 2004.

their cause. The NATO's Kosovo campaign and subsequently the establishment of the protectorate in Kosovo by the United Nations strengthened the American's most trusted country image among all the Albanians in the Balkans.

United States, on the other hand, in its approach towards Albania from a broader perspective attributes an instrumental role to Albania within the context of post-Cold War stability concerns in the Balkans. The United States as a global power has its priority to maintain its leading position and its superiority by directly shaping the world order. In this framework Albania has a role to play at the regional level to the extent that United States defines its interests and prioritizes in a context that is related with the existence of Albania in that framework⁷⁰. Albania is important to the extent that it does not pose a threat to regional stability and as long as it shows progress in its transition attempt which is indeed shaped by the strategies that were introduced as part of the United States solution to the post-communist transformation problems.

Albania supported the United States led international interventions to Afghanistan and Iraq by declaring its support as well as sending troops⁷¹. In fact as in the case of Afghanistan Albanians' support for US led military intervention reaches exceptionally high percentages⁷². Albanian governments see their support as the reflection of Albania's transformation from a nation consuming security to contributing to the global security and international initiatives⁷³. Albania from the beginning give its strong support to the United States for its fight against terrorism⁷⁴ and later for US military action in Iraq by being part of the eight European states declaring their support for the US' cause against

⁷⁰ For a general analysis of the US approach towards Albania see, Philips, David L., 2005, 'Albania', American Foreign Policy Interests, vol. 27, pp. 309-30.

⁷¹ Semini, Lazzar, 'Albanian Commandos Ready for Postwar Iraq Mission', Associated Press, 26 March 2003. Loeb, Vernon, 'In Albania. Rumsfeld Praises War Support', Washington Post, 11 June 2003. Murati, Shaban, 'Why Albania Joined the 'Coalition of the Willing'', Southeast European Times, 14 May 2003. Albania has 22 troops in Afghanistan, 70 in Bosnia Herzegovina and 120 in Iraq as of late May 2007 constituting a relatively symbolic presence in accordance with its economic and military capacities. 'Albania to Beef Up Its Contingent in Afghanistan', Albanian Daily News, 28 May 2007.

⁷² In their research Goldsmith, Horiuchi and Inoguchi had to separate Albanians' massive approval of the 'US led military action in Afghanistan' (along with Israel) from other countries that were also the subjects of a 2001 poll stating the positive impact of the US led NATO intervention to Kosovo. Goldsmith Benjamin E., Horiuchi, Yasaku and Inoguchi, Takashi, 2005, 'American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion: Who Supported the War in Afghanistan', Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 49, no. 3, p. 414.

⁷³ Klein, Aaron, 2005, 'Albania ready to join "international community": Prime Minister Talks of Troops in Iraq, fighting al-Qaida and EU Membership', WorldNetDaily, 1 June 2005.

⁷⁴ 'International Contributions to the War against Terrorism', Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of Defense, Office of Public Affairs, Washington D.C., 14 June 2002.

Saddam Hussein's regime⁷⁵. Albania became one of the leading small states that are giving 'outright diplomatic support for the American-led official position on war against Iraq' and in a way helping the justification of this position in the international arena⁷⁶. In this process Albanian Prime Minister Nano wrote two consecutive letters published in the Boston Globe and the Wall Street Journal underlining the role of the US in the liberation of Europe during Second World War and in the NATO campaign to Kosovo drawing parallels with the needs to get rid of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq just like the Nazis or Slobodan Milosevic⁷⁷. In this context Albania offered its long experience of religious harmony for help that would later be more and more of an interest for the Americans as they have a Muslim majority country with sympathy to the US⁷⁸.

The United States supports Albania's membership into NATO⁷⁹. In line with supportive attitude it took an important initiative to contribute the Albanian membership preparations for NATO membership along with Croatia and Republic of Macedonia by signing the Atlantic Charter⁸⁰. 'The Charter of Partnership among Albania, Croatia, Macedonia and the USA' signed by the parties in May 2003⁸¹. This agreement is the specific sign of US support for these countries' candidacy for membership to NATO in line with the Alliance's 'Open Door Policy'⁸². The US has developed a parallel

⁷⁵Gorondi, Pablo, 2003, 'Eight European Countries Affirm Solidarity with the United States against Saddam', Associated Press Newswires, 30 January 2003. In addition to being signatory to a common article stating support for the US, Albanian Prime Minister Fatos Nano also stated his country's 'total and unconditional' support for the US in the Iraq issue with a letter to the US President George W. Bush. Semini, Llazar, 2003, 'Albania Ready to Join U.S.-led anti- Iraq Coalition', Associated Press Newswires, 30 January 2003.

⁷⁶ For an analysis of the behaviour of the Central and East European small states during the Iraq crisis of 2002-2003 see Fawn, Rick, 2006, 'Alliance Behaviour, the Absentee Liberator and the Influence of Soft Power: Post-communist State Positions over the Iraq War in 2003', Cambridge Review of International Affairs, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 465-80.

⁷⁷ Nano, Fatos, 2003, 'A Salute to Brave American Spirit', The Boston Globe, 9 February 2003 and Nano, Fatos, 2003, 'Letters to the Editor: The Silent Witnesses of the Normandy Beach', The Wall Street Journal, 13 February 2003.

⁷⁸ 'Albanian Premier Writes to President Bush on "Strong, Clear Message" in Address, BBC Monitoring European, 29 January 2003.

⁷⁹ 'U.S Urges NATO Membership for the Balkans', Transition Online, 1 July 2003.

⁸⁰ Bala, Alban, "Albania: Tirana Signs 'Article 98' Agreement, Adriatic Charter with the U.S.", RFE/RL Feature Article, 6 May 2003. Nala, Alban, 'Albania: Rumsfeld Says Looks forward to Closer Military Cooperation', RFE/RL Feature Article, 11 June 2003.

⁸¹ The Charter of Partnership among Albania, Croatia, Macedonia and the USA, 2004, B. Grafika, Skopje.

⁸² Gredešić, Ivan, 2004, 'US-Adriatic Charter Partnership: Securing the NATO Open Door Policy', Politička Misao, vol. 41, no. 5, pp. 104-22.

mechanism to help capacity building process of these countries for integrating with the Euro-Atlantic structures. The US support and assistance is very much appreciated by Albania as an important contribution to the security of the country⁸³. The Adriatic Charter signatory small states of the Balkans wanted to assure the US support for their security by creation of this mechanism and get institutional support for transforming their defence and security capacities⁸⁴. The US by responding these countries' call for backing their security concerns also strengthened its position in the Balkans and gained important support from the governments as well as the public opinions of these countries.

Albania shows its appreciation to this support by backing the United States policies in the international arena. As a sign of this Albania signed a reciprocal agreement with the United States on Article 98 of the Treaty of Rome, concerning the International Criminal Court (ICC) to make both parties' citizens bilaterally exempt from to be delivered to the ICC⁸⁵. Albania's signing of the Agreement was sharply criticized by the European Union officials who were against the United States' policy while it was vividly supported by all Albanian political parties⁸⁶.

Albania also provided an exceptional help to the United States in relation with the deportation of some detainees from Guantanamo Bay. United States was searching for a host country to resettle five ethnic-Uighur Muslim Chinese citizens who had been detained with the suspicion to have links to Al-Qaida then decided not posing a terrorist

⁸³ Tarifa, Fatos, 2005, 'The Adriatic Europe: Albania, Croatia and Macedonia', Mediterranean Quarterly, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 8-19.

⁸⁴ Albania hired Tom Ridge, the former U.S. Homeland Security chief, as consultant to advise on matters of security, NATO and investments ensuring close link to the US Administration and Washington policy circles to provide support for Albania. Koleka, Benet, 2006, 'Albania to Employ Ex-Homeland Security Chief Ridge', Reuters, 4 September 2006; 'Albanian Premier Welcomes ex-US Governor' Appointment as Government's Advisor', BBC Monitoring, 4 September 2006., 'Ridge Willing to Help Albania's Integration Process', Albanian Daily News, 23 October 2006.

⁸⁵ 'U.S., Albania Sign International Criminal Court Article 98 Agreement: Secretary of State Powell, Albania's Prime Minister Nano sign in Tirana', U.S. Department of State's Office of International Information Programs (www.usinfo.state.gov), 2 May 2003, 'Powell, Albania Sign Court Agreement', The Washington Times, 2 May 2003, 'Powell Given Hero's Welcome in Tirana', Financial Times, 2 May 2003.

⁸⁶ EU spokesperson Emma Udwin, called on Albanian members of parliament not to ratify the agreement by saying, "We would like that this agreement not enter into force and in fact we would like it not to be signed. We are disappointed with the attitude of Albania". Later Albanian Foreign Minister Ilir Meta after his correspondence with the European Commission President Romano Prodi and Commissioner Chris Patten, said that "We didn't consider the signing of such an agreement as a choice between the EU and the United States" and "[i]t was realized in the framework of bilateral co-operation with the United States, which requested such a thing. We decided to undertake this step, being aware of the importance which the American presence and engagement in Albania and in the region has for stability". Erzeni, Orest, "ICC Agreement Wins Strong Support for Albanian Political Parties", Southeast European Times, July 2, 2003.

threat and were labelled as ‘No Longer Enemy Combatants’⁸⁷. These men could not be deported to China due to possibility of facing persecution for suspected to have links to the separatist East Turkistan Islamic Movement in Xinjiang region of China. Albania provided asylum for these men and helped the US to not to keep them in its territories⁸⁸. Albania became the country to respond the US’ call for help and provide it in their time of need just as whoever asks help for supporting freedom as the Deputy Minister of the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Edith Harxhi states⁸⁹. The US Department of State also stated its appreciation what it sees as an ‘important humanitarian gesture’⁹⁰. Albania later continued to take new detainees with problematic statuses from other countries and provided asylum to them⁹¹. Considering the overall controversy over the Guantanamo Bay and the way that the US brings and treats the so called ‘Enemy Combatants’ as part of its ‘war against terror’ campaign and international reactions against all these processes what Albania did in fact saved the US from further problems in the international arena. Albania by this move showed its support to the US in general and its strategies in particular emphasizing its willingness to be a trustable ally to the US⁹².

CONCLUSION

Albania’s weakness as a small state has been the determining factor in its existence and consequently in its policy formation. Albanian political and economic weaknesses since the nation building and state formation processes have forced it to

⁸⁷ ‘Detainee Release Announced’, U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense News Release, 5 May 2006.

⁸⁸ ‘Five Chinese Citizens Applied for Asylum in Albania’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, Department of Press and Public Diplomacy, 5 May 2006. ‘Five Chinese Muslims once Held in Guantánamo Gain Asylum in Albania’, The Associated Press, 26 July 2006. Albania takes the Men No One Wants’, New York Times, 16 August 2006.

⁸⁹ Interview with Edith Harxhi, Deputy Minister, Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 May 2007, Tirana.

⁹⁰ McCormack, Sean, 2006, ‘Release of Five Ethnic Uighurs from Guantanamo’, The U.S. Department of State Press Statement, 5 May 2006.

⁹¹ The three new asylum seekers were an Algerian national, an Egyptian national and another ethnic-Uzbek. ‘Three Detainees at Guantanamo are Released to Albania’, Albanian Daily News, 20 November 2006.

⁹² In this process Albania has not hesitated to risk the deterioration of its relations with China with whom it had allied long years ago and recently having normal relations. ‘China Cancels Tirana Beijing Meetings’, Bulgarian Economic Forum, 15 May 2006.

develop policies to balance its vulnerabilities. In this sense Albania developed asymmetric relations with regional and great powers with varying intensity of alliance form. Albania could define the scope and context of the alliances in relation to the international circumstances and the intensity of its vulnerability in the particular period.

Continuity could be observed in the foreign policy formation of Albania towards providing aid and security through alliances with regional or great powers under different political regimes. This reflects a policy pattern of utilising the relative power of Albania for forming asymmetric alliances with the states that has structural power. Despite the period of isolationist policy Albania tried to assure external support for its survival and development. Albania's return to this policy after its isolation confirms the well established mentality in policy formation of the country among Albanian elite and people.

In the post-Cold War era, Albania again tried to turn its weakness and its geopolitical position into an advantage by adopting policies in line with the Western approaches developed in response to contingencies in the Balkans. By doing so Albania appeared to be balancing its traditional policy of aligning with a great power by developing extensive bilateral relations and its broad ambition to be part of the integrated Europe. Albania could accommodate both its policy goals together as they are compatible.

In this process Albania tried specifically to establish close relationship that would be closest to an alliance with the US making it an indispensable pillar of its foreign policy. Albania has succeeded getting the US backing in economic matters and most importantly for the developments concerning the Albanians in other parts of the Balkans. In return Albania provided as much of support within its capacity for the US policies in the international arena. This reflects the recent episode of the continuing foreign policy trend Albania this time being asymmetric relation with the US.

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