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Europeanization Process and Bilateral Relations in the Balkans: Turkey and Albania

Abstract

The amicable relations between Turkey and Albania were taken further after the Cold War, mostly in the context of Europeanization efforts. The aspiration to become part of the European structures drove Albania even closer to Turkey. Throughout the last two decades, Turkey offered its support to Albania in political, economic and military fields on the road to European integration, which in turn had a favorable impact on regional stability. The cooperative nature of relations is likely to continue to manifest itself in bilateral exchanges as far as efforts of integration are concerned.

Key Words: Turkey, Albania, EU, Europeanization.

*“We embrace the Albanian nation, regard them as our brothers, and do not see them distant from us. We would definitely like it to become strong as a state and nation, to progress, and to assume a position in the Balkans which it deserves; particularly as a strong, sovereign and secure state.” Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 1934.*¹

1. Introduction

The longstanding relations between the peoples of Turkey and Albania date back to the Ottoman times, which continued to exist in the Republican era. Turkey had presence in Albania even under Communism although relations remained limited due to being on opposite camps. After the Cold War, the country that had the highest profile in Albania was Turkey.²

This paper argues that the most important characteristic of post-Cold War relations was that, despite the existing close ties, what drove Albania and Turkey even closer were Albania's inclination to become part of the European structures and its relevant appeals to Turkey in the said process. Viewed through the larger lens, Turkish

¹ For the original version of the citation, see Şimşir (2001: 14).

² Vickers and Pettifer (1997: 221).

– Albanian relations is a befitting case for seeing how European integration efforts not only stood as a final goal for both, but also functioned as a means to add onto regional stability subsequently.

As the empirical data display, a large part of post-Cold War relations took place in the context of either the EU or NATO bids of Albania. Turkey does not have any intention of acting as an accelerator or a facilitator of/in Albania's EU process but of offering its experience on this challenging road. The conjuncture in the Balkans - including Albania - and the EU are still unfolding, which make it difficult to make long term estimates. Within this framework this paper will unfold in sections providing historical data on relations, theoretical approaches, Turkish and Albanian experiences regarding the EU, post-Cold War relations in political, economic and military fields, to conclude by confirming the "natural allies" nature of relations, strengthened by Europeanization efforts.

2. A Brief Historical Background of Turkish – Albanian Relations

The relations between Turkey and Albania began in the 14th century, when the Ottoman domination of the Balkans began. As the Ottoman forces proceeded towards Albania, they would face resistance by strong feudal lords, the strongest of whom was Balša II. Only after the latter's defeat were the feudal lords, who accepted obedience to the Ottoman rule, recognized as vassal administrators. Having fallen into a decline in authority following the Battle of Ankara (1402), the Ottomans would now see Venice seize control in the area. In 1404, Mehmet I restored authority within the Ottoman State, occupied Albania, put an end to vassal system and re-introduced Ottoman control in the area. One of the most successful opponents against the Ottomans was Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeg between 1443 – 1468. The Ottoman campaigns were hindered by the forces of Skenderbeg, whose death in 1468 would gradually put an end to resistance movements. Subsequently, the Ottomans conquered Albania and made it a part of the Empire. The Albanian population began converting to Islam and assumed administrative, military and political positions in state service, including offices of grand viziers, viziers, and *pashaliks*. Nearly thirty grand viziers in the Ottoman court were of Albanian origin, which included the famous Köprülü family. During the *Tanzimat* era, there were uprisings among the Albanians against reforms.³

After years of unrest and local uprisings in the Empire, amidst the Balkan War in 1912, the Albanian nationalists united under the leadership of İsmail Kemal and

³ Akman (2006: 153 – 156); Özgür (2007a: 314 – 335); Özgür (2007b: 337 – 347); and Atmaca (2007:350- 372).

declared independence on 28 November 1912 in Avlonia. The following day, the first Albanian government would be established. The independence of Albania was recognized at the London Conference of 1913. However, all this would not bring a quick peace as the country fell into domestic turmoil because of the refusal by the northern Albanians to recognize the government in Avlonia. During World War I, Albania witnessed occupation by the Serbs, Greeks, Italians and French. In the ensuing years, as both the Ottoman state and Albania found themselves in a situation whereby they had to ward off foreign occupation and domestic unrest, diplomatic relations between the two states could not be established. After the proclamation of the Republic in Turkey in 1923, former Prime Minister Ahmet Zogu sent a telegraph to Mustafa Kemal, which was followed by a Treaty of Friendship, and the Treaty of Residence and Citizenship between Turkey and Albania the same year. These treaties were followed by the opening of the Turkish Consulate in Avlonia in July 1925 and the Turkish Embassy in Tirana in 1926. Yet, the quick blow in relations came when Ahmet Zogu declared his kingdom in 1928 – a time when the leaders of the national liberation movement in Turkey were sensitive about the newly established Turkish Republic - which would be exacerbated by aggressive news reports portraying Zogu as a prospective example before Mustafa Kemal. While such reports might have been flattery for Albanians, they were absolutely not for Turks who saw the Republic as a delicate victory. Following this, the Turkish ambassador to Tirana Tahir Lütfi Bey was withdrawn, to leave his office vacant for six years. Similarly, Albania closed its embassy in Ankara - on grounds of budgetary matters. At the height of this hostility, Mustafa Kemal was able to reverse the tide in 1931 at the 2nd Balkan Conference in Istanbul by giving conciliatory messages to all Balkan states, including Albania. This friendly period did not last either. When Italy occupied Albania in 1939, Turkish embassy was closed - to remain closed for the following 20 years – although relations survived at the consulate level. By 1943, the Germans replaced the Italians in Albania. The Turkish Consulate continued to function even during the Nazi occupation. The leader of one of the resistance movements in Albania, Enver Hoxha, took over control of Tirana in November 1944 and closed the Turkish Consulate the following year, which was not closed even during the Nazi occupation.

By mid-1950s, now as representatives of a Communist state, Albanian officials expressed their inclination to restore relations. With the opening of the Turkish embassy in 1958, relations resumed but were not taken further at least until 1965, due mainly to the fact that Turkey had to deal with the domestic reverberations of the 1960 coup. The only concrete outcome of efforts of rapprochement during these years was the health agreement signed between the two states in 1964. By 1965, there were positive developments in bilateral relations for two reasons. As a country that had territory-related problems with Greece, Albania voted in favor of Turkey

regarding the Cyprus issue at the United Nations (UN) this year, a move welcomed by Ankara. Moreover, since Albania had been isolated since 1961 due to cold relations with the Soviet Union and felt threatened by its immediate neighbors Greece and Yugoslavia, it looked to Turkey for support to which Turkey subsequently reciprocated with an official visit in Tirana in 1966. In general, relations after 1966 displayed a dim picture which was to be revived with the end of the communist regime in Albania.⁴

On the eve of the fall of Communism, Albania's relations with Turkey improved to the extent of causing one Albanian journalist to describe the state of affairs as "something of a renaissance"⁵, making reference to the agreement on air transport and others on cooperation and exchange, which were not welcome by Greece. By 1988, the official visit in Tirana by former Foreign Minister Mesut Yılmaz was regarded as a milestone in bilateral relations as being the first high level contact since the Communist era. It is also noteworthy that although Enver Hoxha was generally marked as the figure to have developed friendly relations with Turkey, it was Ramiz Alia who was given more credit for having given an impetus to bilateral ties. The unproblematic relations were confirmed during this visit.⁶

3. Theoretical Framework: (Neo)Functionalism, Integration Theory, Federalism and Intergovernmentalism

As two countries that had pre-cognizance of each other due to common history, Albania and Turkey entered a new period after 1992. Thinking hypothetically, although relations between the two states could still develop, they would not have assumed a natural allies relationship if it were not for the European integration efforts of Albania which drove it closer to Turkey. In this sense, the examination of European integration and its implications on our case study by briefly touching upon the relevant theoretical framework will be instrumental in our comprehension of the subject matter. By definition, "Europeanization" can be described, in its simplest form, as the process of becoming integrated into European structures, institutions, and systems. How this was (and is) brought to pass since the post-war era in the European Union (EU) poses itself as a question, the answer of which was offered in the streams of thought concerning global governance.

In this context, functionalism, as the most important approach to international institutions in the twentieth century since globalization issues are mostly based on functionalist ideas, is the first to mention. "Functionalism looks to the

⁴ Şimşir (2001:14 – 50).

⁵ Zanga (1984).

⁶ Zanga (1988)

creation of a new world order in which sovereign state takes a back seat"⁷ and submits its powers to institutions which will carry out the necessary functions. Functionalism asserts that a peace system could be built from the bottom up through a kind of cooperation that reduces sovereignty capacities of states.⁸ As the powers of state are transferred to institutions, the state will exercise less functions and cooperation will be obtained with each organization carrying out its own function.

On the other hand, integration theory focuses on the creation of new states on the regional basis, which could lead to the establishment of a world state. In this sense, the most referred to regional political and economic entity comes to fore as the EU, which is thought to act as a possible prelude to a single world state.⁹ As the EU has gone through stages until it evolved to what it is today, integrationists conceive it to be a befitting test case for their arguments concerning a prospective evolution into a single world state. Furthermore, federalism views the EU as an evolving federation which already displays federal features. The end-result is intended to be a federal Europe. Federalist arguments regarding the EU cite the court, common market, common currency, common polices, etc.¹⁰ Apart from these approaches, intergovernmentalism takes the view that states in organizations are the main actors, that the integration process is driven by interstate relations and predicts the EU to evolve into an intergovernmentalist organization in the future.¹¹

These theoretical reflections indeed came into the picture in Europe out of a common aspiration which was to build a federal Europe, with necessary institutions, one that would be free of wars. What we are currently witnessing today in the Balkans could be viewed as something similar, as an action replay of post-war times, to that aspiration in essence. Temporal and spatial conditions in the region have changed remarkably in the past two decades; yet the aspiration for seeking peace, stability and welfare in the larger European network remains. The regional states are inclined to see their future in the European institutions and the latter already named its price: conditionalities that have to be fulfilled for full membership. Although Turkey has been longer engaged in the EU bid than Albania, both countries are fully exposed to the challenges and positive prospects concerning membership. How this European zeal took to the stage in the relations between Turkey and Albania in the post-Cold War era follows after a brief chronicle of the relations of both countries with the EU.

⁷ Brown (1997: 133).

⁸ For the argument which is summarized as "form follows function" and "peace in parts", see Brown (1997: 130).

⁹ Brown (1997: 133 – 134).

¹⁰ Bogdani and Loughlin (2007: 15).

¹¹ Bogdani and Loughlin (2007: 16 – 17); and Brown (1997: 136).

4. Turkey and Albania: An Eu History

The debut of Albania's relations with the EU was the Agreement on Trade and Cooperation in 1992, signed with a view to fostering economy and democratization in Albania. This agreement and other trade-related ones signed after this agreement aim at helping Albania carve a space for its exports in the larger European market.¹² By 1995, Albania officially applied for the opening of negotiations for a possible full membership with the EU. The following year, although the Council of Ministers asked the Commission to prepare a proposal for further strengthening relations with Albania, this would be hindered by untoward political and economic crises in the ensuing years.¹³ The EU granted Albania certain preferential tariffs for promoting economic cooperation in 1998. The talks for accession had been initiated in 2003 and were finalized with the Stabilization and Association Act (SAA) in 2006. Apart from the agreements, the EU also extended assistance in form of aids and grants to Albania as a "Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Reconstruction of Their Economies" (PHARE) partner state since 1992. This program is directed at public administration and institutional reform, local community development, infrastructure development and agricultural development.¹⁴ As is the case with other countries, the road to a possible accession is an onerous process, from which Albania is also having its share since 1992.

Turkey officially applied to the European Economic Community (EEC), which was the predecessor of the EU, in 1959 and relations began with the Association Agreement (Ankara Agreement) in 1963. The Ankara Agreement arranged Turkey's relations with the EEC in three consecutive periods: preparatory (1964 – 1970), transition (1973 – 1995) and completion (1996 -) phases. The first period ended in 1970. The Additional Protocol setting forth the rules of transition period became effective in 1973 and highlighted the lifting of customs duties, financial liabilities and quotas as well as the related schedule and rules. The document envisaged Turkey to fulfill the requirements of the Customs Union in 22 years. By 1978, Turkey suspended its obligations in the framework of Article 60 of the Additional Protocol, to be followed by the complete freezing of relations when Greece was accepted as a full member in 1981. The first official contact with the EEC took place in 1986. Turkey applied for full membership in 1987 and since then has taken many efforts for achieving this final goal. After the completion of the transition phase, the Customs Union Decision was

¹² Abazi, (2008: 245).

¹³ Bogdani and Loughlin (2007: 116).

¹⁴ Abazi (2008: 245 – 247).

adopted during which Turkey eliminated customs duties for EU industrial goods and refined food products. Turkey was not mentioned at the 1997 Luxembourg Summit as one of the prospective candidates; however this was reversed at the 1999 Helsinki Summit which gave relations an impetus. The EU - Turkey Accession Partnership was adopted and Turkey's National Program for the Adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire* was submitted to the EU Commission in 2001. In 2004, the European Council decided to open membership talks with Turkey, which materialized in 2005.¹⁵ Turkey's relationship with the EU is a complicated one with many headings and sub-headings, which gets altered with the incoming and outgoing political figures on both sides, and changing conjunctures. Turkey's Europeanization experience is the most peculiar one in terms of its duration and character. Temporally speaking, there is no other country that has waited for half a century for the completion of full membership procedures. As for the characteristics of this *sui generis* candidacy, there is no other state that has faced such a loaded package of requirements. Still, Ankara's resolve for the realization of full membership is likely to continue.

5. Turkey and Albania in The Post-Cold War Era

5.1. Mutual Considerations

There is no single accurate estimate or calculation as to the future form of EU. But it is no prophecy to argue that the EU will continue to evolve as it has done to date. It is not known whether it will end up as a federal, intergovernmental or single world state as relevant theories suggest, however its posture as the main means of Europeanization and as an aspired political body are seen in many ways, including its deepening effect on bilateral relations in the Balkans and our concern relates to how it was reflected on Turkish – Albanian relations in the post-Cold War era.

As the most isolated communist state of the 1970s, Albania found itself in an even weaker and more fragile environment in the aftermath of the Cold War. The pressing foreign policy issues for Albania were the Kosovo issue, the Albanian minority in Macedonia, the territorial problem with Greece related to Northern Epirus, and the issue of illegal Albanian minority in Greece. It also had to deal with serious economic problems. Given the hostile relations between Yugoslavia and Greece at the time and what former President Sali Berisha called "blood relations" referring to many Albanian migrants in Turkey, Turkey was a natural ally for Albania.¹⁶ On the other hand, by

¹⁵ Ülger (2003: 213 – 215); Canbolat (2004: 209); and Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey, http://www.avrupa.info.tr/AB_ve_Turkiye/Tarihcesi.html

¹⁶ Uzgel (2001a: 54); and Xhudo (1996: 50).

chance or calculation, Turkey's political and military cooperation with Albania followed a pattern similar to the one pursued by the U.S. in the same era and the fact that U.S. and Turkish strategic interests overlapped in Albania facilitated the improvement of bilateral relations.¹⁷

Nevertheless, it can be argued that bilateral relations were shaped to a great extent with Albania's main foreign policy goal of Europeanization and Turkey's due reciprocation. From the Albanian viewpoint, first and foremost, the reasons for appealing to Turkey on its road to the EU mainly rested on the shared history between the two states. The close relations also include what former President Sali Berisha described as "blood relations"¹⁸ referring to the Albanians who migrated to Turkey over the years. There is a strong Balkan émigré population in Turkey which includes the Albanians and is influential in Turkey's policies towards the region.

Second, Turkey has more experience in the EU advent. As a country which has gained much experience in political, economic, military, technical, social, educational and other fields in integration process, Turkey has from the beginning offered its support to Albania. Turkey and Albania view EU membership as a common final goal and in this connection Turkey showed its willingness to proceed together to achieve this common objective. For instance, the Government Program (2001) explicitly stated the need to prioritize relations with the EU in relations with Albania, (and the U.S.) as a support for democracy in Albania.¹⁹ Furthermore, given its pre-cognizance of the region and its past with the regional states, Turkey can also be instrumental in offering the EU support in its policies towards the Balkans, including Albania.

Third, as a member of NATO, Turkey was an important actor in the Balkans and a valued natural ally for Albania. Membership in NATO is the second most important foreign policy goal for Albania. In fact, Albania was the first former Warsaw Pact member to apply for membership in NATO in 1992. Albania's proximity to conflicts in the Balkans, exacerbated by its weak military posture, prompted it to look for protectors in its vicinity and "Turkey offered it the best chance to gain such protection given that Turkey is part of NATO and has one of the ... modern militaries in the area."²⁰

Fourth, the unproblematic relations until then between the two states were another push for seeing Turkey as a partner in the efforts of integration. Although relations remained in certain margins due to ideological borders during the Cold War,

¹⁷ Uzgel (2001a: 55).

¹⁸ Xhudo (1997: 50).

¹⁹ Yilmaz (2001: 115).

²⁰ Xhudo (1997: 50). Albania was the first former Communist state to receive arms from the U.S. and granted the use of its harbors to the U.S. Navy; see Uzgel (2001a: 54).

the post-Cold War era proved a time for gearing up the traditional friendship, which was confirmed most recently at the official farewell of the outgoing Turkish ambassador to Tirana.²¹

Fifth, the recent memory of urgent economic aid had been a positive test case for both countries after the collapse of Communism in Albania, which was much appreciated by Albania. To give two examples, in 1990, Albania asked for electricity supply of 150 million kW from *Türkiye Elektrik Kurumu* (TEK - Turkish Electricity Institution) when President Turgut Özal and his counterpart Ramiz Alia had contacts in late September.²² Turkey also took efforts to support Albania in its transition from the outdated closed economy to liberal market economy. The humanitarian aid extended by Turkey to Albania in 1991 and 1992 amounted to \$ 21,9 million which ranked second after Italian aid.²³

In reciprocating Albania's appeal, Turkey's overall considerations were shaped mainly by historical ties and common heritage. In Balkans policy of Turkey, one of the anchorage groups in the region has come to be Albanians (along with the Bosnians) since the Ottoman times. Currently, Albania is still viewed as the barometer of Turkey's Balkan policy – alongside with Bosnia which is viewed as the barometer of Turkey in the region. If Turkey fails to provide support to Albania for its stability and security in the Balkans, it cannot be as influential as it would aspire to be in the Balkans.²⁴

Second, Turkey also takes into account that it is not just a Balkan country but belongs to the other immediate regions of the Middle East, Caucasus and the Eastern Mediterranean, which are in an interdependence relationship with each other. In order for Turkey to devise an influential policy towards the Balkans, it will need to observe global and regional balances. The most important aspect that differentiates Turkey from the rest of the regional countries is that it simultaneously belongs to these regions; no other Balkan state has a policy maneuver space as large. There is interdependence between these regions which, if explored efficiently, would be beneficial for Turkey.²⁵

Third, Turkey is aware of the necessity of closely following the balances within the Balkans for conducting an active and effective diplomacy in the region, and that includes Albania. In this respect, Turkey's priority in the Balkans should be to help

²¹ "Premier Berisha Receives H. E. Suphan Erkula, Outgoing Turkish Ambassador in Tirana", *Republika e Shqipërisë, Këshilli i Ministrave, Departementi i Enformacionit*.

²² 25 September 1990, *Milliyet*; and 29 September 1990, *Güneş*.

²³ *Xhudo* (1997: 50).

²⁴ Davutoğlu (2008: 316 – 318).

²⁵ Davutoğlu (2008: 318).

Albania consolidate its security and to implement a comprehensive cooperation scheme. Although from the official viewpoint Greece is not seen as a rival of Turkey in the Balkans, the reverberations of the pyramid scheme crisis in 1997 said otherwise, which produced a maneuver space for Greece to move ahead as an influential actor. Likewise, Albanian officials looked to Greece for help in the initial days of the Kosovo crisis, which was self-explanatory in that sense.²⁶ If Albania is going to continue to be viewed as the barometer for Turkey's Balkan policy, Turkey should pursue policies which mind balances.

Fourth, Turkey attaches importance to devising comprehensive policies, and being part of these policies towards the region as a whole, aware of the contradictions and risks. In such a framework, Turkey is aware of the significance of undertaking active roles in regional platforms.²⁷ Projects which could bolster relations with Albania in various fields can be proposed as part of future policies.

Fifth, being part of policies towards the region, Turkey acknowledges the important role of the strategic means that it has access to, i. e., NATO.²⁸ NATO also regards the military cooperation between Turkey and Albania as a stabilizing factor in the volatile region of the Balkans.²⁹ This was why, for instance, as early as 1990, the two states inked a military cooperation agreement and Turkey became the first country to send a full time military attaché to Tirana.³⁰

These mutual concerns are by no means exhaustive or listed in order of importance. However, they can provide a background in seeing how they have found a space in bilateral relations embedded in Europeanization efforts of Albania. How they materialized in practice shall be seen in political/diplomatic, economic and military fields, respectively.

5.2. Politics And Diplomacy

The abovementioned appeal made by Albania in 1990 did not merely concern economic venue; it also extended to urgent diplomatic and humanitarian support in respect of which Turkey supported Albania's bid for European organizations, extended diplomatic, military, police, and judicial assistance, and accepted Albanian students in Turkish universities.³¹

²⁶ Davutoğlu (2008: 319 – 320).

²⁷ Davutoğlu (2008: 320).

²⁸ Davutoğlu (2008: 321 – 322).

²⁹ Uzgel (2001a: 55).

³⁰ Vickers and Pettifer (1997: 217).

³¹ Kut (2002: 102).

Turkey also played an important role in Albania's entrance into the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). As a secular country, Albania became a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1992 despite opposition from certain factions in the country.³² The OIC membership of Albania made the country the only other European country apart from Turkey. The opponents of this membership maintained that this membership would distance Albania from Europe. However, the Berisha government saw it as a positive development for Albania because it was a secular country like Turkey. It has been argued that among the reasons for joining the OIC was also seeing it as a source for economic support.³³

Turkey and Albania signed the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation during Demirel's visit in Albania in June 1992³⁴ and Turkey stated that it would extend a \$ 50 million humanitarian and technical aid to Albania.³⁵ The two states also signed the public safety cooperation protocol in early August 1992.³⁶ Such an improvement in bilateral relations made former Greek Foreign Minister Andonis Samaras define Albania as part of the alleged "Muslim Axis" led by Turkey in the same year.³⁷ It is well known that this active approach towards the region during Özal's term of office caused Greece fear Turkey, thinking that it might want to play the "Muslim card" in the region. However, it was simply an indication of Turkey's willingness for being part of the conjuncture in the region.

In 1992, Özal gave a speech at the Albanian parliament in which he gave recommendations. Özal advised the Albanian officials to draw up a 15-year plan, to focus on tourism and service sectors, and to improve relations with Macedonia.³⁸ In the same year, Albanian officials stated that they would like to build a more systematized cooperation with Turkey and described the main shortcomings in the relations: inadequate levels of coordination concerning the issues envisaged in bilateral agreements; 1) lack of a sound coordination of the implementation of decisions jointly taken, 2) ignoring follow-up of the implementation of decisions taken, 3) lack of tactical studies between the two countries.³⁹ Despite such conditions, efforts continued to improve relations. In 1993, former Albanian Prime Minister Alexander Meksi paid an official visit to Turkey. The following year, Sali Berisha visited Turkey

³² Uzgel (2001b: 503).

³³ Xhudo (1997: 52).

³⁴ 1 June 1992, *Hürriyet*; and 1 June 1992, *Sabah*.

³⁵ Demirtaş-Coşkun (2001: 87).

³⁶ 7 August 1992, *Cumhuriyet*.

³⁷ Kut (2002: 102).

³⁸ 20 February 1993, *Hürriyet*.

³⁹ Yılmaz (2001: 108).

and asked for support in the economic and security fields as well as support for Albania's NATO bid and for peaceful solution of the problems in Kosovo.⁴⁰

However, relations lost momentum by 1995 when Greece began translating its hostile approach into a friendly one in respect of regional states. Greece and Albania settled their bilateral disputes concerning the rights of the Greek minority in Albania and the situation of illegal Albanian workers in Greece. Greece lifted its veto concerning the EU aid to Albania and the beginning of mutual visits between the two states added on to the positive atmosphere. Moreover, Greece succeeded in pulling Albania to its side by extending economic aid in 1997.⁴¹

In 1997, a financial crisis swayed the country into chaos and serious internal conflict. In face of thousands of demonstrators filling the streets and demanding the compensation of their money siphoned by the bankers, Albania asked for international support to quell the riots. The Berisha government faced the most difficult period of its six years in power by then as it had to deal with criticism from both the victims and the opposition.⁴²

Although Turkey participated in the international force with 800 troops within the UN framework with Resolution 1101, it was seen that it ranked after Italy and France which contributed with 2,500 and 1,000 troops, respectively.⁴³ The almost inherent discord in relations with Greece was observed once again when Greece objected to the location of deployment of Turkish troops in Albania. Greece did not want the Turkish troops to be deployed in the south of the country where Greek minority lived. Former Greek Defense Minister Chohalopoulos stated that they were not of the opinion that Turkey was directly affected by the developments in Albania and that the situation in Albania must not constitute a reason for Turkey's hegemonic tendencies. The Greek Defense Minister did not refrain from saying that any change in the status quo in respect of Turkey's relations with its neighbors would be an element of bargain in Turkey's entrance in the EU.⁴⁴ However, almost a year later, in February 1998, during former President Recep Mevdani's visit in Ankara, it was stated that relations between Albania and Turkey were of an exemplary nature. President Demirel expressed his content to see Albania strengthen its democracy after the difficult experience in 1997.⁴⁵ It was to be observed in the ensuing years that Albania was

⁴⁰ Yılmaz (2001: 109).

⁴¹ Yılmaz (2001: 112).

⁴² "Başkan'ın Büyük Savaşı", 3 February 1997, *Milliyet*. Albania's faced a serious crisis due to what was called the pyramid schemes after the collapse of communism; see Elbert (2006).

⁴³ "Arnavutluk'la İlgili Son Haberler (2)", 27 May 1997, *Türkiye*.

⁴⁴ "Mehmetçik'e İtiraz" 7 April 1997, *Milliyet*.

⁴⁵ "Türkiye – Arnavutluk Sorunsuz İki Ülke" 13 February 1998, *Siyah Beyaz*; and "Balkanlardaki Örnek İşbirliği" 13 February 1998, *Milliyet*.

closer to Greece than to Turkey. However, the crisis to draw Albania closer to Turkey broke out in Kosovo in March 1998 when Milosevic's latent Greater Serbia designs came to the surface once again, concerning which the two states acted on parallel policy lines.

Post-Kosovo relations continued particularly with a view to ensuring economic and military cooperation. President Demirel paid an official visit to Albania and Macedonia in April 1999. Central to the agenda of this visit were the Kosovo problem, stability in Albania, and the situation of the refugees.⁴⁶ In 2000, Turkish and Albanian presidents and prime ministers with those other regional states participated in the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP) Heads of State and Government Summit. In early 2000, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit paid an official visit to Albania. Shortly afterwards, President Demirel went to Albania to discuss issues on Kosovo and other regional and international issues of mutual concern. The third high-level visit in the same year took place by Albanian Prime Minister Ilir Meta's visit which was primarily on economic field.⁴⁷

In September 2005, Turkey and Albania signed an agreement on Turkish Armed Forces' assistance to the Albanian Army concerning the allocation of military equipment of \$ 2,5 million to contribute to the restructuring of the Albanian military and integration into NATO. Turkey also assists Albania in the field of logistics and police training.⁴⁸

The coalition government formed by Sali Berisha secured the highest number of votes in the July 2005 elections and received the vote of confidence in early September 2005. Both Turkey and Albania are cognizant of friendly bilateral relations.

⁴⁶ Yılmaz (2001: 112).

⁴⁷ Yılmaz (2001: 112 – 114); at the turn of the century, Albania was among the most important foreign policy titles in Ankara, seen clearly in the 2001 Government Program: 1) following a policy to support democracy and market economy in Albania; 2) solution and internationalization of the 'Albanian issue' on grounds of respect for commitment arising from international documents; 3) prioritizing relations with the U.S.A. and Western European states with respect to Albania; 4) following the process of integration in Europe as well as integrating into European political and economic organizations; 5) prioritizing relations with Germany and Italy; 6) making every effort to stop the policy of pressure and cruelty on the Albanian minority in former Yugoslavia to help them enjoy the right to legitimate political will; 7) recognizing Macedonia on the condition of respect for the rights and free movement of Albanians in Macedonia; and 8) making efforts to help Kosovo to be recognized and working for the peaceful solution of the problem.

⁴⁸ "Ankara Hosts Albanian Chief of Staff for Second Time in 2005", 14 December 2005, *Turkish Daily News*.

Turkey is likely to increase its investments and continue to extend military assistance to Albania.

5.3. Economy

Turkey's economic relations with Albania began with the Agreement on Trade and the Agreement on Economic, Commercial, Industrial and Technical Cooperation through the end of the Cold War, as late as 1988, since the country was isolated for a long time during the Cold War under Enver Hoxha's regime. The legal framework of economic relations in the post-Cold War era was based on the Agreement on Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments (1996) and the Agreement for the Prevention of Double Taxation (1998). The first round of talks concerning Free Trade Agreement was held in 2003. Turkey's exports to Albania were \$ 160 million in 2004 while its imports were \$ 15,528 million. Main items in Turkish exports include iron – steel, aluminum, cereal, flour, electrical items, salt, sulfur, cement, rubber, cacao, and iron – steel products while its imports include the same items.⁴⁹

In accordance with Law no. 7638 adopted in 1992, foreign companies in Albania were granted the rights given to Albanian companies, in the scope of which they could rent facilities and properties for 99 years. Among the investments of Turkish businessmen are shoe factory, shops, restaurants, and dental clinics. *Kürüm Iron – Steel Joint Stock Company* rented the iron and steel enterprises in Elbasan Valley for a 20-year period and started production. In the mining sector, *Ber-Öner* received the right to explore and operate mine reserves in copper-dense regions in Albania. *Everest* has made an investment of \$ 2 million for polyethylene packing production. The companies operating in the construction sector are *Tepe Construction Joint Stock Company*, *Be-Ha-Şe*, *Enka*, *Tümaş Joint Stock Company*, *GİNTAŞ*, *Mak-Yol*, *MNG*, which have undertaken projects on highway construction, building restoration, military facility construction, and mass housing. As for banking, a *Ziraat Bank* branch was planned to open in Tirana with an investment of \$ 3 million. However, the project had to be suspended due to the crisis in 1997 and the political instability that followed. *Kentbank* bought shares of the privatized Albanian National Commercial Bank in 2000. The Albanian Central Bank and Turkish Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (*BDDK*) concluded Bilateral Cooperation Agreement with a view to reaching accurate information regarding the transaction of banks and finance institutions in their country, to build an institutional framework which would facilitate cooperation in cross-border supervision, and to share institutional experience and

⁴⁹ "Türkiye – Arnavutluk Ticari ve Ekonomik İlişkileri"; and "Arnavutluk'ta Ekonomik Gelişmeler".

technological training. Other possibilities of investment include telecommunication, medicine, energy, oil, natural gas, tobacco, tourism, mining, chemical industry, food processing, packaging, cement industry, insurance, and transportation.⁵⁰

By and large, economic relations with Albania displayed an improving trend until 1997. After 1997, Albania's relations with Greece improved when the Socialist Party intensified relations with the country.⁵¹ Most recently, Albanian authorities decided to sell 76 % of Albanian state phone company *Albtelecom Sh.A* to the Turkish consortium made up of *Türk Telekom* and *Çalık Enerji Telekomünikasyon A.Ş.*⁵²

As is the case with other Balkan states, there are certain problems in bilateral economic relations with Albania. Letter of credit procedures are delayed due to lack of cash in local banks, problems in money transfer between cities, and complications in the state-owned bank procedures. Second, Turkish companies expect the existing customs legislation to be amended as soon as possible. Third, Turkish companies which export goods by land transportation reach Albania late and thus lose price advantages, due to lack of infrastructure in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania. Fourth, lack of electricity has negative impact upon foreign investors. Foreign companies are obliged to pay customs duties. This creates unjust competition and makes the marketing of Turkish products more difficult. Finally, the lack of any efforts to compensate for the loss of Turkish companies resulting from the domestic turmoil in 1997 is yet another factor that hinders improvement in economic cooperation.⁵³

5.3. Military

Bilateral military relations between Turkey and Albania began in early 1990s. Albania started defense cooperation almost simultaneously with Turkey and with the U.S.A. The first significant meeting at the ministerial level took place in Ankara in July 1992 during which the parties signed a Defense Cooperation Pact. As Minister of Defense Nevzat Ayaz stated, the agreement focused on enhancing cooperation in military education and technology. During his visit to Turkey, Albanian Defense Minister Safet Zhulali was allowed to visit Turkish military facilities such as factories, command centers and bases, to which at the time only NATO members were allowed access. In turn, Turkish naval vessel Fevzi Çakmak visited the Albanian Port of Durres in August 1992, the first such visit by a Turkish naval vessel to Albania since the days of the

⁵⁰ "Türkiye – Arnavutluk Ticari ve Ekonomik İlişkileri"; and "Türkiye – Arnavutluk Ekonomik, Ticari, Sanayi ve Teknik İşbirliği Karma Komisyonu Altıncı Dönem Toplantısı Protokolü".

⁵¹ Ünal (1998).

⁵² "Turkish Consortium Acquires Albanian Albtelecom", 28 May 2005, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁵³ "Türkiye – Arnavutluk Ticari ve Ekonomik İlişkileri".

Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ The two states concluded the Defense Technology and Military Training Cooperation⁵⁵ and Albania also asked for arms aid October 1993.⁵⁶

In July 1996, a Turkish contingent of 40 soldiers left for Albania to take part in the Peaceful Eagle 96 military exercise conducted under the auspices of NATO's PfP program. Along with the Turkish contingent, headed by Lieutenant Colonel İhsan Balabanlı, troops from Albania, the U.S.A., Italy, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania took part in the military exercise. The use of light weapons, first aid training, mine sweeping, reconnaissance and security drills were practiced.⁵⁷ A month later, a delegation of Albanian military offices headed by Major General Armando Vincani, the Deputy Chief of General Staff, came to Turkey for a meeting to exchange views on military issues,⁵⁸ after which it was stated that Turkey and Albania would hold a joint military exercise in the Adriatic Sea off the coast of Albania in August. The Chief of General Staff stated that three Albanian warships, including a minesweeper and two torpedo ships and Turkish *Turgut Reis*, one of the best frigates in the Turkish Navy, were scheduled to participate in the exercise. The training included naval operations, on board fire fighting techniques and rescue operations, which were monitored by foreign attachés in Albania and officers from NATO.⁵⁹

In early 1997, a crisis broke out in the country when a series of fraudulent investment schemes collapsed resulting in thousands of citizens' loss of their savings. By April 1997, the parliament approved sending troops to Albania while Albanian Deputy Foreign Minister Albert Rakipi was engaged in talks during his two-day visit in Ankara. During the unrest, militants armed with weapons looted military barracks, estimated at some 200,000 guns, seized control of much of southern Albania. Turkey feared that as the rebels refused to hand over the guns, the weaponry could be carried over to Macedonia and Bulgaria. Therefore, it followed the developments closely and conducted an intensive diplomacy in cooperation with Italy.⁶⁰ After the Turkish troops' duration of 3-month stay ended in late July, the Turkish soldiers returned to Turkey.⁶¹

During Albanian Defense Minister Luan Haydarağa's visit to Ankara, the Haydarağa and his counterpart İsmet Sezgin signed an agreement for a \$5 million

⁵⁴ Dakovic and Miseljic (2001).

⁵⁵ Demirtaş – Coşkun (2001: 87).

⁵⁶ 6 October 1993, *Cumhuriyet*.

⁵⁷ "Turkish Troops Take Part in Military Exercise", 15 July 1996, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁵⁸ "Albanian Military Delegation in Turkey", 21 August 1996, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁵⁹ "Turkey and Albania to Hold Joint Naval Exercise", 24 August 1996, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁶⁰ "Turkish Parliament Approves Troops For Albania", 11 April 1997, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁶¹ "Turkish Troops in Albania Will Return Home", 26 July 1997, *Turkish Daily News*.

Turkish grant to Albania.⁶² For the second time, two weeks after the Albanian Defense Minister's visit, Turkish parliament unanimously authorized the deployment of Turkish troops to Albania when the conflict in Kosovo escalated. It was left to the Cabinet to decide the needs, size, location, and time of the deployment. The move would also allow the deployment of soldiers for possible international peace-keeping missions in Albania. A small group of soldiers went to the southern Albanian town of Vlora to protect a Turkish technical team engaged in repairing a military shipyard, port, and army barracks. There were also voices in the parliament suggesting Turkey should also send Red Crescent aid for Kosovar Albanian refugees.⁶³

By August 1998, an amphibious Turkish division was scheduled to set out for Albania to take part in a NATO exercise which would also be attended by the members of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). The Chief of Staff related statement mentioned eleven NATO states; Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, the U.S.A. and Britain and three PfP countries, Albania, Russia, Lithuania in the Cooperative Assembly 98 exercises. The maneuvers were carried out in Albanian and Macedonian territories and were based on a scenario to end regional conflicts peacefully. Land, air, and naval forces of the participating countries were involved in search-and-rescue (SAR) missions, medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), and airdrop operations. Apart from the amphibious division, Turkey sent four F-16s, a transport plane, a frigate, and logistic support.⁶⁴ The following year, part of a 126-strong Turkish military unit left for Tirana, along with a number of vehicles and assorted equipment, in mid-May to join a special NATO force deployed in Albania to take part in the distribution of humanitarian aid to the Kosovar refugees who fled former Yugoslavia.⁶⁵

In 2002, former National Defense Minister Sabahattin Çakmakoglu met his Albanian counterpart Luan Rama in Tirana. Çakmakoglu stated that Turkey would contribute to the modernization of Albania in the military field.⁶⁶ The harvest of this visit was reaped during the visit of Chief of Staff General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu to Albania where he met several dignitaries and officials, both political and military. During the visit, Kıvrıkoğlu was received by Albanian president Recep Mejdani who said relations between the two states fostered stability and peace in the region and drew attention to the restoration of Kucova airport. Kıvrıkoğlu signed a logistic application protocol with Rama. The protocol establishes the provision of \$2,5 million assistance to help

⁶² "Albanian Defense Minister in Turkey", 11 July 1998, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁶³ "Parliament Approves Sending Troops to Albania", 25 July 1998, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁶⁴ "Turkey to Take Part in NATO Exercise in Albania", 8 August 1998, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁶⁵ "First Group of Turkish Soldiers Leaves For Albania", 17 May 1999, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁶⁶ "Çakmakoglu Visits Albania", 22 June 2002, *Turkish Daily News*.

the Albanian Army reach NATO standards. Kıvrıkoğlu also discussed with Albanian Chief of General Staff Pillumb Kazimi who Kazimi stated that Albania would send units to assist the Turkish Army's mission in Afghanistan.⁶⁷

Turkish Armed Forces offer Albanian military personnel education and training activities in military colleges, Gülhane Military Medical Academy, military academies, military high schools, branch schools, and language schools.⁶⁸ Turkey also trained Albanian Special Forces Battalion. Turkish ammunition company Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation (*Makina ve Kimya Endüstrisi Kurumu*) bought out and modernized the biggest ammunition plant in Albania. Turkey also supplied radar systems for the surveillance of the Albanian air space and of telecommunication equipment.⁶⁹

On 1 April 2009, Albania eventually achieved one of its most important foreign policy goals towards becoming integrated in Euro-Atlantic structures and became a member of NATO. The military cooperation recorded to this date between the two states would be unthinkable two decades ago. However, it can be argued that the reinforcement of relations owes much to military cooperation, due mostly to inspiring mutual confidence in a particularly conflict-ridden region as the Balkans.

6. Concluding Remarks

Turkey and Albania have traditionally had friendly relations. These amicable relations were taken further after the Cold War; this time in the context of Europeanization efforts. The future characteristic to be assumed by the EU remains unknown for the time being; be that as it may, there is common belief that regional states see their future in the still evolving EU. Turkey has reiterated its support in many ways for Albania to this end. Albania became a member of the OIC backed by Turkey, received Turkish aid in cash and in kind, was given policy recommendations from Turkish officials in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, acted on parallel policy lines during the Kosovo crisis. With a view to helping Albania embark into liberal market economy, the basis of economic relations were established in early 1990s with legal arrangements which were taken further through investments in infrastructure construction, banking, finance, telecommunication, and other fields although relations in this venue still need further attention by both sides. The cooperative nature of military relations manifest itself in the frequent high-level visits, offering military education to Albanian military personnel, carrying out joint exercises, extending

⁶⁷ "Kıvrıkoğlu Visit Fosters Military Ties With Albania", 6 July 2002, *Turkish Daily News*.

⁶⁸ "Participation of PfP Courses".

⁶⁹ Mustafa Aksaç, *Turkey's Military Efforts for Peace in the Balkans*, pp.100-103.

military assistance to Albania at times of crises, modernization of Albanian army; all of which were directed at helping Albania become a member of NATO which eventually materialized this year.

The overall impact of these policies and practices was not only to reinforce individual ties but also to add onto regional stability in the larger network of the Balkans. As such, Europeanization in the region has a dual effect, which turns out to be beneficial at both levels. The first tangible outcome in this sense was Albania's membership of NATO last April. Turkey is likely to continue to lend support for Albania in its EU bid, also, if requested, to the EU in their enlargement process in the Balkans as an actor cognizant of the region. The directions the future relations are likely to take, provided that the regional states – including Albania – become full members of the EU before Turkey, is yet another question that deserves investigation in its own right. However, we can at least argue that it will depend on changing and interdependent political and economic conjunctures in Turkey, the Balkans and the EU.

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