

III National Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations

1. Civil-Military Relations in Albania: Phases of Evolution

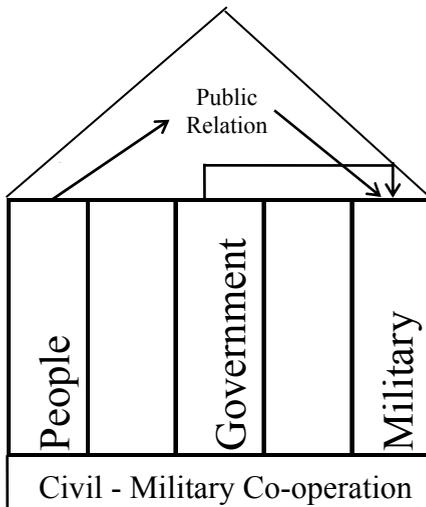
The change of the social-economic system that led to the end of totalitarian socialism and the transition to the pluralist system was accompanied by profound changes in the political, economic and social fields.

The transition process proved that the more rigid, conservative and fanatic a system is, the more acute, powerful and deep the changes in that country will be. And Albania is one such an example.

Certainly those changes were mirrored even in the national security policy. From the beginning of those changes in Albania, the western orientation of the national policy, as a synthesised expression of the all-nation willingness and the return to the previous tradition of the Albanian state, was manifested. Albania has transferred itself from isolation to a country, open for co-operation. Membership in NATO and in other international organisations and institutions was defined as the priority of the country's foreign policy.

The army constituted one of the most powerful and conservative ideological structures of the communist system. Henceforth, it has to undergo radical changes during the transformation of the system, serving at the same time as a mirror, and to some extent - as a guarantee for future changes. New relations had to be established in full understanding between the political class, the state and the people. The state as one of the most important organisms of society can exist only in the conditions of an equilibrium between the democratic institutions (one of the pillars of which is the army), the political class and the people. In the case when one of these three components may threaten the pact of understanding, the equilibrium may be shaken and the existence of the state could face a serious risk.

Following is the figure of this equilibrium:



Fortunately whenever this equilibrium has been shaken in Albania because of the degeneration of the politics, the spiritual ties between the army and the people have never been severed. This has helped to avoid the tragedy of confrontation between them. But regardless of this the damage has been considerable.

The most significant and critical proof of this statement has been the events of March 1997, during which the confrontation between the army and the people was avoided. While the refusal by the army to get confronted with the people saved the army's dignity, its incapability to protect itself from the destruction in March 1997 will remain an object of a deeper study. Civil-military relations during the transition period have undergone such a test several times and always under some pressure, but never have the military forces been a provocative factor of the complicated situations.

Even in the cases when they made a mistake, this has happened mostly because of the influence of the policy to them. A clear example of this is the destruction of the army within 24 hours in the year 1997.

The transition processes in the civil-military relations in Albania are characterised by several peculiarities and the most important one seems to be the destruction of the army seven years after the beginning of its reformation. The gravest situation within the military establishment that demonstrated the most serious damage in the army and in the relations between the army and the people (society) took place in 1997. This happened when the change of the social-economic system was not yet completed, and when the revolt of the people had to be careful to preserve the democratic process in the country and not to affect the pluralist character and the market economy of the state. This took place when the army was formally depoliticised since 1991, and pretended to have occupied its legal position in the framework of a democratic state, when the country's forces were part of the PfP and normally they were considered to be in a much better state than in 1991-1992.

Why did this tragedy in the Albanian army not happen when it was more expected and possible - in 1991-1992? At that period the transition of the social-economic system from centralised to market economy was taking place alongside with the transition from a one-party to a multi-party system, and the army was part of the communist party ideology and organisation, which were closely connected with the Party-state structures. We shall try to analyse this almost unique phenomenon in the context of civil-military relations during the transition period of the Albanian army.

The civil-military relations in Albania have passed the following stages from the start of the democratic process in this country:

First phase

It encompasses the period from the beginning of the de-politicisation of the army till the completion of the big structural changes, the establishment of regular relations with NATO and its member countries and joining the PfP (1992-1996).

It was clear to everyone that the system was undergoing changes, that new political, economic and social relations were being established in

the Albanian society. The Party of Labour (Communist) was a failure and the armed forces were subjected to profound structural and doctrinal changes.

In spite of the imbalances in the relations of the government, the people (society) and the Albanian military, the latter got orientated well. From the very beginning they supported the democratic processes, protected the military property, avoided the confrontation with the people and guaranteed combat readiness, regardless of the difficulties. They abandoned the Party which they belonged to (more than 80% of them belonged to the Communist Party) with maturity, farsightedness and as real patriots, and welcomed the reformation processes. It is generally accepted that the military are conservative towards political and social issues. However, this was not noticed with the military in the years of the great changes. At that period the Albanian case challenged the suppositions of some theoreticians on the symbiosis Party-state as the model of the armies of the countries of Eastern Europe. The Albanian army did not make any effort to prevent the Marxist-Leninist regime from toppling down in the period of the crisis.

An important and critical moment was the realisation of one of the demands of the reform - the reduction of the army. The way, criteria, seriousness and principles, through which this element of the reform was to be performed, were important factors for the future of the army and Albanian society.

The basic criterion to be followed for the selection of military was professionalism. The respect of this demand can establish an optimal equilibrium in the civil-military relations. It is a well-known fact that it is more difficult to manipulate the professional military by politics or for him to interfere in politics.

A main condition to maintain the civil-military relations is the civilians with political functions must not encourage or lead the military towards political-party activity. It is vital for the existence of the army to avoid political commitment and militant political spirit among the military. Otherwise, this may cause damage not only to the army, but also to the political system and to the whole society and state.

Though there is a law in Albania, which prohibits the involvement of the military in party and political activities, the politicians themselves were the first to disrespect this law – a fact, which influenced badly the army.

Unfortunately, the selection of the military that were kept in the army was made on the basis of personal sympathies and party and political convictions. The National Information Service also played its role in those selections and appointments.

A prey to the behaviour of serving politics fell mostly the military without background, who were ambitious and career-seekers and for whom it was impossible to realise their ambitions with skills and in conformity with the degrees of rising in the career. The terms of the experience, professional skill, seniority and education, which are the fundamentals of hierarchy, were ignored. Those who were the first to be removed from the leading positions of the army were the experienced military that, as Samuel Huntington says, are transformed into “sterile servants of the state”. However, this contingent was replaced with the “servile servants of the policy”.

To justify the personnel policy the Ministry of Defence (MoD) undertook the so-called tests, which were not considered in future promotions.

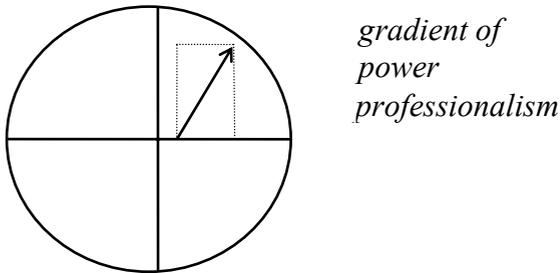
In contrast, "generals of the party" were promoted and received new stars, no matter their professionalism and their personality. The young captains and those about thirty years of age became brigade and division commanders. After three to six months they were promoted as Lieutenant Colonels. In the beginning of 1995 the majority of them became brigadiers, generals ...

This group of military, who artificially were preferred by politicians, enjoyed also economic privileges, which separated them from the rest of the military. So first this elite was corrupted and then it was put to the service of politics.

The political power elite, generally with low culture, that was being created in the Albanian society artificially and urgently, tried to create a military elite to be put at its service. In this way the necessary equilibrium between the ideology of society, power and professionalism of the military was shaken. It appeared that the more professional a military was - the less he had to be involved in the army. Those relations can be presented through the diagram below:

The diagram of the varied values between ideology – professionalism – power:

Ideology and culture of society



Professionalism reduces at the same time the ideological factor and the curve of the power of the military in political life. Otherwise, the involvement of the military in the political and party life leads them towards professional incompetence and raises excessively the power of the military in the political-social life.

As can be seen in the graph, the power is a variable gradient of professionalism and ideology (gradient = sine/cosine). This function clearly shows that professionalism is in a contrary position with the ideology and vice-versa. Becoming aware about the mathematical functioning of this mechanism, it becomes easier to define the low level of the military power as compared to the other parts of society. It becomes clear that the main negative factor in those relations is the ideology, the commitment and militancy of the military in the party political activities.

The engagement of the military in the political activities of the parties in power has a largely negative effect. The participation of the military in power is detrimental to the professional values, which consequently lead to the degrading of power itself.

Furthermore, there was not a personnel board to sign for middle and low ranks. After a large group of military officers was dismissed without taking into consideration their professionalism and career, unacceptable differentiation was created in the treatment, appointment, promotion and payment, thus undermining the necessary cohesion for an army and destroying the internal relations of the armed forces.

The officers of the army core could never play their role. The all-out denigration and material deprivation of the army core created a gap between them and the elite. The loss of the contacts between the military elite and the army units and sub-units (the base or core of the army) harmed the vertical direction, so necessary for the functioning of the army. The detachment of the leadership from the base led to the loss of direction and to falling into chaos.

Objective civil control, according to Samuel Huntington, not only reduces the power of the army into the lowest possible level, but also raises to the maximum the possibility for the social security of the military.

What does social security for the military mean and how can we achieve it? It is the duty of the civil authorities to guarantee by law security conditions for the personnel and a reasonable welfare, payment, pension and shelter. Thus, by having guaranteed living conditions they will be always motivated in their duty. Otherwise, they will concentrate on their daily existential problems and neglect their duty and military prestige. The overwhelming majority of the military live in similar conditions as common people in the transition period, daily confronted by many difficulties.

The assessment of the military by society defines substantially the prestige of the former. For many years now, starting from the communist regime, the prestige and the authority of the military have been seriously

undermined as a result of the changes in the grading system, punishment of main army officers and the planned killing of some of them. This has seriously hit the functioning of the hierarchy and the prestige of the army. This led in the 1990s to moral and psychological deterioration of the Albanian army.

The years of the transition further worsened the situation. One part of society thought in a naïve way that the army was no more necessary and that there will no more be threat of any war. No ideas of any other roles of the armed forces existed for this part of society. Albania experienced the mistake that had occurred in other countries of Eastern Europe, in which was spread the thinking that "*the more democratic a country is, the less respect there is for the army*". The military profession got denigrated; indifference towards the military further lowered their prestige. The slogan "In democratic societies civilian institutions exert the control over the military" was misused in nominating civilians to military assignments, or in putting them in uniform without military education. Many of them were sent to receive education in foreign countries and after carrying out short-term courses were appointed to positions in the MoD.

In general, the lack of civilian competence on the issues of the armed forces harmed the institution and compromised the control civilians exercised over the military.

The civil-military relations developed naturally, first on the basis of the respective expertise of civilian and military leaders, second, thanks to their personal and non-official relations, and third, with the confidence created between them in their common work.

The treatment of civilians and military was different: the absolute trust towards civilians was only because of the fact that they used to come from the party structures in power. The distrust of the majority of the officers threatened the personal relations and obstructed the creation or confidence between them. In many cases the military were unjustly accused of belonging to the pro-Communist political spectrum. Civilian authoritarianism was often replacing civilian democratic control.

In the framework of the reform of the armed forces a document of the policy of security and defence was compiled for the first time. The duties and competences of different power-holders in the field of defence and their relations were defined.

On one side the adoption of the document was a success. It legally divided the questions of security and defence of the country between the president, parliament and the government (Prime Minister and Defence Minister). On the other side, however, by using the authority of the President the parliament was almost completely subjugated and the government was ignored. The deterioration of the relations between them was even more worsened because the Presidential power was beginning to resemble the power, enjoyed by the ex-first Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania during the communist regime. Such a similarity could be witnessed also in the MoD, in which democratic civil control has been replaced by civil authoritarianism, while the functions of the General Staff have been turned into secretarial ones.

The laws, sub-legal acts and instructions approved in the framework of the juridical reform were not in conformity with one another and ran counter to one another, causing a juridical disorder and discordances. The status of the military as a guarantee of his rights could not be applied as a result of contradictions with other legal acts. This caused the loss of confidence of the military towards the political elite and negatively influenced the attitude of the military towards their duty.

The law on the use of arms also did not give an adequate legal protection to the military, diminishing their safety. As a result of that, when some military units have been attacked, they preferred to abandon the weapons than to defend by using them.

These deficiencies of the legal regulation of the activity of the armed forces led to the inefficiency of the laws from the very beginning of their introduction. Henceforth, some sectors of the military deviated from their normal activity.

The assessment and control of the budget of the army by the Parliament assumed a superficial, formal and irresponsible character.

A very restricted budget for a period of 5-6 years and a full underestimation of the military caused a serious damage to the training and discipline of the army. The result was further discouraging of the military and lowering the effectiveness of the army.

At the beginning, the military reform appeared to be a success for the democratic regime. However, due to the lack of adequate leadership and of wrongly perceiving the national mission of the armed forces, the military reform was presented with two faces: one for the foreigners, and another – for the military personnel.

The official propaganda introduced the military reform as a success. In reality, however, there were some achievements, related to the openness and contacts of the Albanian army with the military of the countries of our neighbours and with the NATO members. This led to many military agreements and to joint military exercise with the USA and other NATO members during 1994-1996.

As a consequence the country's national security was improved. Albania has never been so close with its western allies before, never the people of this country felt more confident of their security.

The participation in the PfP programme was another achievement, which allowed Albania not only to tighten ties with the USA and with the West European countries, but also to increase the level of training in the army as well as its readiness, logistic support and its interoperability and standard performance, compatible with NATO members.

The dominant idea, introduced by the political leadership was becoming full member of NATO. The large majority of the military personnel as well as the Albanian people were inspired by the idea of becoming a full member of NATO. However, this action was undertaken as a party affair, not as a national task. The main requirements for membership were to be provided by the armed forces. It has been often forgotten, however, that the primary condition for participation in NATO as a full member was having a functioning democratic society and state.

These issues were not deeply considered and studied, which hindered the creation of clear-cut concepts of the military reform, the realisation of doctrinal and structural changes, including on the leading command structures and the dislocation of the army.

The commitment of NATO and of the armed forces of the PfP countries in those years have been extremely important, particularly in the technical consultancy, education and qualification of the staff. But the effect has not been sufficient, since those processes included only a limited number of military of the MoD and of any other central institution who “were qualified” in a repeated manner in different countries, and leaving aside the military officers of the other operative units, thus creating a monopoly in the right for qualification.

Second Phase

The situation of the Albanian army on the brink of the events of March 1997 was very grave. The system of civil-military relations was one of the influential factors on this situation.

The moral and psychological state of the army did not motivate the servicemen for their role and duties. The dignity of the military officers was offended and provoked by the attitude of the political power holders. The military were also affected by the degradation of professionalism in their field of activity, by the removal of good professionals from their positions and the upgrading to higher positions of less professional officers. The latter could not guarantee an adequate security, because there was lack of 80% of the officers on the level of platoons and companies. The troops for securing the protection of the military sites were also insufficient.

The army, actually, could not trust its military leadership and the government of the country, because of the politically and economically compromised elite. The army was itself in a grave economic situation. It did not have the necessary internal cohesion and the motivation for its duties. It did not trust the political power and did not believe in the future of its country. In this situation the army was very weak and it

could not resist the troubles that took place in 1997 and cope with the problems, created by the political and military leaders.

In this situation the people became aware that they had lost not only their "freedom" - after the loathing process of ballots during the general elections in June 1996 by the officials, elections which were never recognised by any international structure. Six months later the Albanians felt another loss – the "pyramid schemes" failed and the majority of the people not only did not “get rich fast”, but also lost their family savings.

In this stage, each careful analyst may have thought that the moment of breaking the “Clausewitz paradoxical trinity” was close. Now not only the people, but also the military were detached from the government. The threat was not addressed directly against the army. It was an internal threat, focused on the government and its structures. The involvement of the military elite in the policy of the party made the military organisation more vulnerable. Though the army suffered serious consequences, this one was not of any conflict between the people and the armed forces.

A decision was taken to use military forces in operations for restoring order in the Southern urban areas, whose population was accused of holding communist riots against democracy. However, nobody accepted to fight against their brothers and sisters only because they were demanding the government to resign.

Although the government used state media in misinforming the people for a possible aggression by Serbia and Greece nobody accepted such false propaganda. The majority of the military leadership did not obey blindly the orders of the President to conduct military operations against the population of the southern provinces.

Hardly understanding can be reached when the politicians do not accept the professional and moral expertise of the military. In such cases the military has nothing to do but to resign on the basis of the principle of the military honour. In Albania many officers, including the chief of general staff, left the army.

In the conditions when the majority of the military did not obey the political leadership, the chairman of the National Information Service was appointed to lead the Armed Forces. After being promoted to a four-stars general, he directly took over the command of the army. Then the selection of the military that had passed the test of loyalty towards the party took place. They have been then appointed to command the mixed troops, consisting of paramilitary units and armed forces. These newly founded fighting formations were used against the people.

The military had to choose between two options - either to implement the order of the politicians and of the degenerated elite of the army and attack their own people with tanks, artillery and chemical weapons, taken for the first time out of the stores, or abandon the military units and join the ranks of the protesting people. Being part of the people and closely related with them the military abandoned the military units and did not take action against them. Huntington correctly points out that the anti-government fights encourage the civil-military relations in a different manner from those, incited by conflicts between the states. The internal conflicts interfere in the objective factor.

The deformation of the reform in the armed forces, interferences in politics by the military and the serious damage of civil-military relations in a society with serious problems in its democratic development, followed by the destruction of the army, constitute a specific and, perhaps, unique experience.

Third Phase: Rebuilding of the Albanian Army, Re-establishment of Civil-Military Relations

After the considerable drama of the destruction of the Albanian Army, the society and the military were really shocked.

The rebuilding of the army began immediately. The forces that got powerfully mobilised in it were:

1. The army
2. The people
3. NATO and partner countries

Suffice it to mention that this considerable damage encouraged and realised powerful ties between them.

Good relations were immediately established between the society and military. The lack of the army in those situations made the Albanian society aware about the damage it had suffered and about the fact that there could not build the state without the rebuilding of the army.

The willingness and the commitment for re-constructing the armed forces reflected a general positivism of civil-military relations in Albania. Officers and subordinates used to protect together the military sites and work together as constructing workers or carpenters after the working day was over for re-building the military barracks. The families of the newly recruited soldiers used to provide voluntarily different necessary equipment for their barracks. The contrast was complete. A few months ago crowds of people attacked and destroyed the abandoned military units and now the people, together with the military were re-building voluntarily and free of charge.

In such a situation good civil-military relations were developed. The political parties also tried to be careful in their attitudes to the armed forces, despite the various conflicts in other social areas.

The re-construction of the army was orientated to finding new conceptual and legal solutions that would create a new direction of leadership, of relations among the military themselves and of a smoother functioning of the military hierarchy.

The new situation for the civil-military relations enabled the realisation of large-scale consultancies with the state, politicians, diplomats, historians, etc., concerning major issues of the policy of security and defence, of improving the civil democratic control.

The assistance by NATO and its partner countries was immediate and systematic. Just for six months twelve teams of NATO experts of different fields came to Albania. In the Ministry of Defence, apart from the NATO mission, there are other permanent missions of some Alliance member countries.

In the framework of the PfP Albania acquired a special status. Apart from the various aid programmes many possibilities for education and specialisation in NATO member countries were offered to the Albanian military and civilian experts.

Documents of the National Security and Defence and the Law on the Army, were drafted. The new structure of the army was also approved.

The rebuilding and regeneration of the army was intensified. One year after its destruction the Albanian army was confronted with the grave situation, caused by the military conflict in Kosovo. The threat for the security of the country during the conflict in Kosovo definitely improved the civil-military relations. It is widely known that a growing external threat improves the civil control. Another phenomenon was experienced here like in other countries at different times: the civil institutions can turn more cohesive because of the "rally around the flag" as a result of the outside threat.

Actually, Albania is a very active, supportive and enthusiastic partner of PfP. Particular focus on military interoperability in certain appropriate fields is reflected in its Individual Partnership Programme (IPP), Planning and Review Process (PARP). The implementation of Albania's IPP of 1999 was successful, despite the Kosovo crisis. But nevertheless, more remains to be done regarding Albanian self-sufficiency in IPP. More can and should be done in improving the democratic control over the military in Albania too.