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ALBANIAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE END OF THE COLD WAR  
PROBLEMS – CHALLENGES

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**ABSTRACT**

The research entitled "Albanian Foreign Policy after the Cold War Problems - Challenges" deals with the definition of Albanian foreign policy after the Cold War, and the most important transformations that the Albanian government faced, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and its quest to establish new alliances aimed at its interests, in addition to its openness to the outside world, after isolation It lasted for a long period of time, and Albania faced many challenges, perhaps the most important of which were the Greater Albania project (1945- 1990), the Kosovo issue, and the crisis of the economic pyramid in 1997.

**INTRODUCTION**

The multiplicity of Albania's foreign policy after the end of the Cold War is one of the models that highlight the turmoil that prevailed in the small countries in that period. Those governments were surrounded by difficult circumstances and enormous challenges, from poverty to expertise and capabilities, and others. These countries, including Albania, tried to keep pace with all the conditions imposed by them. It had to end the Cold War, and tried to develop strategies to maintain foreign support in political, economic and security matters, to achieve tangible steps towards the development of the Albanian society, so the event came to shed light on those policies, the conditions that Albania went through, the challenges it faced, and the influential people at that stage.

The research tried to answer some questions, including: the disclosure of the political situation in Albania after the end of the cold war, and the challenges faced by the strong Albanian policy regarding Albania's relations with the major countries and the countries of the bubble, these questions and others will be answered in the course of the research.

### *Albanian Foreign Policy After the End of The Cold War*

The global and regional strike, which prevailed after the end of the Cold War, called for small states whose policy was linked to the Soviet Union by developing their strategies to maintain foreign support in political, economic and security matters. Thus, Albania pursued a political strategy that works to develop bilateral relations with another superpower that replaced the Soviet Union, so the Democratic Party presented a new foreign policy model and a direction to integrate Albania into Western international institutions, enabling legitimacy and recognition of the existing reforms in the country.

In 1992, Albania strengthened its relations with the United States of America and European countries in order to obtain foreign aid and support its political and security affairs in international and domestic affairs. The Albanians were looking to the United States to become a strategic partner and prefer it to be an ally to ensure Albanian security and support Albanian causes in the Balkans.

Albania aspired to obtain financial aid from the United States, in addition to its political and security support, to balance the increasing pressures on it, Italy and Greece, which restricted their economic aid to Albania through their political interference in its affairs. In this context, the main opposition leader, Sally Berisha, who visited the United States twice and was able to obtain the full support of the American government and several leaders of Congress, the United States openly supported the opposition parties in Albania.

The importance of American support became apparent, as it was decisive for the overwhelming victory of the opposition in the March 22 elections. On April 9, 1992, the new Albanian parliament elected Berisha as President of the Republic, the first non-communist president of Albania since the end of World War II.

Berisha received financial support from the United States of America, with a credit of 95 million US dollars from President Bush during his visit to Washington, DC in 1992. The United States of America recognized Albania's status as the first sponsor country, and the special elections of 1992 presented an ambitious program oriented towards the West of economic reforms and much needed democracy to overcome Albania's long isolation and economic stagnation.

The United States was not only a trading partner for Albania, but its military support had a strong presence during wars and clashes, especially in the mid-nineties, it developed its military presence in Albania and carried out, using Albanian military bases, military and intelligence operations in the region. Relations between the United States and Albania also continued after the rule of Berisha. The Socialist Party mentioned the priority of partnership with the United States of America in their foreign policy in their government program for the period 2002-2005. Also, when it won the 2005 elections, the Democratic Party emphasized the fundamental importance of relations with

the United States of America in their platform. which supported Albania in its integration into the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Albania continued its attempts to integrate into civil society and its organizations. In 1991, it participated in the Organization of the Islamic Conference as an observer. At the end of 1992, Albania became a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Berisha sought to make the most of his accession to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Indeed, the Islamic Development Bank donated \$100 million to Albania in 1993. Berisha's decision to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference was strongly criticized by the opposition, with the Socialist Party and some other groups criticizing the Democratic Party in this decision because they considered membership as a departure from European and Western ideals.

Albania considered that its accession to NATO is an important issue that guarantees its stability and security. Albania was the first communist country to apply for NATO membership. However, NATO membership was not accepted until 2009, but it joined the NATO Partnership for Peace program since 1994. Albania was among the first Eastern European countries to join the Partnership for Peace programme. Albanian politicians considered joining NATO a top priority. Since 1992, Albania has engaged extensively with NATO and has maintained its position as a stabilizing agent and strong ally of the United States and the European Union in the turbulent and divided Balkans. In addition to political will, the overwhelming majority of 95% of the Albanian population supported NATO membership.

Bilateral relations between Albania and other countries are based on financial aid and grants that are granted to Albania in particular from Italy, Greece and Turkey. Italy was the main donor of aid to the Albanians for recovery and reconstruction.

Berisha tried to end Albania's isolation on the international stage. His foreign policy strategy was based on the principle of "opening up" to the outside world. Relations with Turkey began to improve since the beginning of the Democratic Party's rule. Bilateral cooperation with Turkey was developing in the fields of economy, culture and military aid. For the first time in the history of relations between Turkey and Albania, President Turkey Özal, who is the highest-ranking representative of the state, visited Albania and delivered a speech in Parliament in 1993. who worked to sign a fifteen-year economic agreement with Albania covering the areas of tourism to renovate ports and more military assistance? In addition, Ellis urged Özal "Berisha" to recognize Macedonia, believing that the normalization of relations between the latter would help stabilize the region and prevent the spread of war.

During the official visit of President Suleiman Demirel to Albania, Turkey and Albania signed the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement. Turkish financial assistance to Albania was discussed during the visit. Turkey promised 50 million dollars in humanitarian and technical aid to Albania. Turkey granted aid worth 29 million US dollars to Albania in the form of food and equipment

donations until the end of 1992. Two countries also signed a general cooperation protocol in 1992.

In 1992, coordination was established between Albanian and Turkish officials, where the Albanians pointed out that the relations are marred by major shortcomings, namely the lack of coordination in bilateral agreements and ideas that have gained a common understanding, the difficulties that impede the implementation of joint decisions, the shortcomings of the strategic framework, and the absence of a road map to improve relations between the two countries.

In 1993, Albanian Prime Minister Alexandre Meksi visited Turkey, and in the following year, President Berisha visited Turkey by plane provided by President Demere, who requested continued assistance in the security and economic fields. During this visit, many agreements related to economic, commercial and military issues were concluded. He also called for Turkey's support in Albania's NATO membership application, for a peaceful settlement of the Kosovo issue and the protection of Albania's rights. During the visit, a decision was taken to establish a joint bank to develop the capabilities of the banking system in Albania. Berisha also invited Turkish investors to Albania. During his reign, relations between Turkey and Albania also developed with the personal efforts of Berisha. He was seeking Turkey's support against Albania's problems with Greece. The opposition Socialist Party accused Berisha of taking a pro-Turkish approach to his party's foreign policy.

Albania faced many challenges, perhaps the most important of which are the Greater Albania Project (1945 - 1990), the Kosovo issue, and the pyramid crisis in 1997.

***First: The Greater Albania Project and the Albanian Question in the Balkans during the Cold War (1945 - 1990):***

The term Greater Albania is used mainly by Western researchers and politicians, and it is a concept that seeks to unify the lands that border Albania based only on claims about the current or historical presence of the Albanian population in those regions, and Greater Albania includes regions of neighboring countries, which are Albania's borders with Kosovo and Macedonia Western and southeastern Montenegro and the Epirus region of Greece, known to Albanians as Chameria, and some Albanians consider these lands as part of a larger national homeland.

About 6.5 million Albanians live in the Balkans and about half of that number reside in Albania. Other Albanians are divided between Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Greece, and small groups of Albanians live in Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. Albanians living in Turkey consider themselves Turks rather than their ethnicity.

From the declaration of independent Albania in 1912 the Albanian question arose. Although the Albanians did not historically live under a unified Albanian state the Albanians who lived within the borders of the non-Albanian states had the fear of the host countries over Albania's greater claims.

Albanians living in non-Albanian countries demanded better political and social rights and continued to demand more legal and civil rights. Although there was no strong expression of desire to create a Greater Albania, the host nations viewed the Albanian communities as a potential threat to their unity.

The Albanian minority living in Macedonia also constituted an important issue that could affect the stability and unity of Macedonia. Where the Albanians constituted the majority of the population of Macedonia concentrated in the western part of the country, and enjoyed many rights and enjoyed the Albanians, such as education in their language in the country, despite this, Macedonian officials question the separatist claims of the Albanian minority, and therefore they reject the proposals for the establishment of a federation between Macedonians and Albanians.

In the 1990s, the problems of Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia were considered a national issue by some marginal political and academic circles. In fact, the political circles did not have the same enthusiasm. The ruling party considered the Kosovo issue an external issue, and members of the ruling party declared that they did not seek the idea of a Greater Albania, these policies have continued since that time.

From the foregoing we conclude that the Albanian extreme nationalism was rooted outside the borders of Albania more than inside it. However, the extreme poverty of Kosovo today has superseded any other ideology to follow and the Macedonian Albanians did not expect any help from Tirana in their affairs. “The Albanian nation itself seems reluctant to accept the idea of a Greater Albania.” Regarding the Tirana policy, the political parties formed by the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia abandoned the idea of a Greater Albania. Instead, it sought regional integration with Albanians. Today, Albanian officials seek policies to increase brotherhood and improve good neighborly relations within their transnational borders. Thus, the Greater Albania Project is necessarily marginalized in the formal and informal courses of Albania.

### ***Second: The Kosovo Issue:***

The Kosovo issue surfaced when Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic revoked Kosovo's autonomy within Yugoslavia in 1989, and his regime's brutal human rights violations increased. Ibrahim Rugova, the ethnic Albanian leader in the Serbian province of Kosovo, has led a policy of peaceful protest against the abolition of the province's constitutional autonomy. Milosevic and members of the Serb minority in Kosovo have long objected to the fact that Muslim Albanians were demographically controlling an area sacred to Serbs, and the unrest intensified and opposition movements declared "The independent Republic of Kosovo, which has not been recognized on the international stage, The Serbian government arrested 112 of the assembly's 120 members, and more than a million Kosovar Albanians were expelled from the assembly. After that, international human rights organizations reported torture and killings in the region. As a result, it became an international issue.

These measures raised security concerns in the Balkans by Western countries and the United States of America, as the European Union was not a dedicated group at the time, and therefore did not think about interfering with the use of military force in the early stages of the Kosovo issue. However, developments in the region called for military intervention.

Tensions between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs turned into an armed conflict. Beginning in February, the Kosovo Liberty Army launched a series of attacks on Serbian police stations and government offices in western Kosovo. It was condemned by the Serbian authorities as a terrorist organization and the United States listed it as a terrorist organization until 1998. Kosovo Albanians considered the Kosovo Liberty Army an armed branch fighting for its freedom and armed clashes increased between Serbian forces and the Kosovo Liberty Army. Almost 20% of Kosovar Albanians migrated to Albania and Macedonia to escape the bloodshed in the region. That exodus again threatened security in the Balkans. The economic burdens of Albanian immigrants in the host countries have also been jeopardized. The international community was alerted regarding current developments. Armed conflicts could easily have spread in the region if a settlement between Belgrade and Kosovar Albanians had not been secured immediately.

The Yugoslav army used excessive and indiscriminate force against Kosovar Albanians, which led to civilian casualties and human flows of Albanian refugees to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Turkey, which was threatening the peace environment in the region. It also accused the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of violating human rights and international humanitarian law due to its aggression.

With regard to the issue of Kosovo, the Albanian government followed a political approach through which it supported the management of international crises under the supervision of the United Nations and NATO, which sought to solve the problem of the situation in Kosovo and create a sound environment in Kosovo for Kosovo Albanians as well as other minorities living in the region.

### ***Third: The Pyramid Crisis 1997:***

The Albanian Civil Uprising of 1997, also known as the Albanian Rebellion, the Albanian Upheaval or the Pyramid Crisis, is a period of civil unrest in Albania sparked by the failures of the hierarchies. As a result, the government fell and more than 2,000 people were killed.

After more than 40 years of communist rule, Albania began to transform the state-controlled economy into a free market economy. Despite the heavy reliance on foreign financial aid, the Albanian economy is still ill-equipped for this transformation. Besides political turmoil, people's uncertainty about their future and under these circumstances, government officials have approved a series of hierarchical investment funds. By 1997, the chains (many of which were fronts for money laundering and the illegal arms trade) could no longer

make payments. The number of investors, seduced by the promise of a get-rich-quick, rose to two-thirds of the population.

Most of the money invested in pyramid schemes was coming from soft immigrants who wanted to invest back home and people living in the southern part of the country who were often unemployed.

Despite the warnings of international institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Albanian government warned about the failed operation of pyramid schemes that indicate complete failure, nothing has been done to stop these schemes. It was not able to afford the dividend payments as the number of investors increased rapidly, so the pyramid schemes collapsed in January 1997. The Albanians, who lost \$1.2 billion, began to protest against the government for failing to protect them and to enforce an irresponsible fiscal policy that was unable to stop the scheme fraud. Demonstrations began in Fleur. It spread throughout the country and soon turned into an armed rebellion against the state. In the end, these demonstrations led to the failure of the state. And that revolution is similar to the events that occurred in 1991-1992: After the end of communism, Albania faced the collapse of the state again. About 200 people were killed during those demonstrations.

Armed clashes took place between the armed forces of the state, including members of the army, police, intelligence and rebel groups. The people destroyed government and private property, including military arms depots. They held the government fully responsible. Berisha's efforts did not succeed in containing the matter, and thanks to the support of Italy and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Berisha's proposal for foreign intervention was discussed in the United Nations Security Council and a protection force was sent Temporary and limited multinational to Albania. The United Nations allowed voluntary participation in this force. The multinational force was entitled (Operation ALBA) and consisted of soldiers from Italy, France, Spain, Romania, Greece and Turkey. This force arrived in Albania on the fifteenth of April 1997 for a period of three months to secure the flow of humanitarian aid to Albania. The riots, which took the form of an armed conflict with a great impact in Tirana, did not stop until the National Loyalty Government was able to subside the uprisings and the regime continued in the country and the parties took the decision to hold early general elections.

The 1997 elections resulted in the victory of the Socialist Party led by Fatos Nanoz and the other left-wing coalitions obtaining a two-thirds majority in Parliament. After the success of the leftists, President Berisha resigned. International observers, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, carefully monitored the elections and did not report any material violations during the election.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The changes brought about by the disintegration of the Soviet Union after the years of the Cold War were enormous, and directly affected the foreign policy

of Albania, which was forced to search for a new and strong ally. A new challenge, in addition to these challenges, the Albanian government has often had to deal with several crises, such as the Greater Albania project, minority issues, the Kosovo issue, and the economic transformation or openness to the free market, which led to violent unrest known as the pyramid crisis.

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