

Analyzing the Partnership between the U.S. and Albania: Bilateral Agreements and Cooperation for 101 Years

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the 101-year relationship between the United States and Albania, with a particular focus on bilateral agreements and cooperation. The study begins by examining the historical background of the two countries and their initial interactions, and then proceeds to explore the political and diplomatic relations between the two nations. The main hypothesis of this paper is that the partnership and cooperation between the United States and Albania have been shaped by several factors, including the geopolitical context of the region, the ideological orientations of the two nations, and the institutional frameworks that have been established to facilitate their collaborative efforts. The research question that this paper seeks to answer is: How has the relationship between the United States and Albania evolved over the years, and what are the main factors that have influenced its development? To achieve this objective, the paper adopts a mixed-methods research design that combines a systematic review of existing literature on the topic, with a qualitative analysis of primary sources such as government reports and official documents. The main findings of this paper indicate that the partnership and cooperation between the United States and Albania have been characterized by a number of bilateral agreements and initiatives in areas such as security and defense, energy, and education. While these agreements have helped to strengthen the relationship between the two nations, they have also faced a number of challenges, including corruption, organized crime, and political instability. Despite these challenges, the partnership and cooperation between the United States and Albania remain vital to promoting regional stability and advancing common interests in areas such as security, economic development, and democratic governance. As such, continued engagement and cooperation between the two nations should be a priority in the years to come.

Keywords: United States, Albania, bilateral agreements, cooperation

Introduction

The partnership and cooperation between the United States and Albania have undergone significant developments and transformations over the past century. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the 101-year relationship between the two countries, with a particular focus on bilateral agreements and cooperation. The study explores the historical background, political dynamics, and key factors that have shaped the relationship, shedding light on its evolution and examining the drivers behind its development.

Since the early 1990s, there have been clear indications that Albania's foreign policy has increasingly leaned towards the United States. The United States played a pivotal role in supporting Albania's democratization process, earning strong sympathy from the Albanian population. However, this pro-American stance of the right-wing has faced criticism from political opponents who argue for a more balanced foreign policy, emphasizing closer ties with Western Europe.

To understand the perspective of Albanian-American relations in the 21st century, it is essential to consider the historical context and examine the relationship between the two countries over the past century. Albania underwent a democratic transition in the early 1990s, following decades of communist rule. The United States provided significant support, both politically and economically, to Albania's democratic aspirations and reforms, strengthening the bilateral relationship. This support fostered a positive perception of the United States among the Albanian population, establishing a foundation for close ties between the two nations.

However, concerns have been raised regarding Albania's perceived overreliance on the United States, potentially overshadowing its relations with Western Europe. Critics argue for a more balanced foreign policy approach that prioritizes closer engagement with European partners. These contrasting views highlight the complexities and challenges inherent in the Albanian-American relationship.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the evolution of the relationship between the United States and Albania and identify the main drivers that have influenced its development. By examining historical records, government reports, official documents, and scholarly literature, this study seeks to answer the research question: How has the relationship between the United States and Albania evolved over the years, and what are the main factors that have shaped its development?

The findings of this paper indicate that the partnership and cooperation between the United States and Albania have been characterized by a number of bilateral agreements and initiatives in areas such as security and defense, energy, and education. While these agreements have contributed to strengthening the relationship, challenges such as corruption, organized crime, and political instability have also posed significant obstacles.

Nevertheless, the partnership and cooperation between the United States and Albania remain crucial for promoting regional stability and advancing common interests in security, economic development, and democratic governance. As such, continued engagement and cooperation between the two nations should be prioritized in the years to come.

By gaining a deeper understanding of the past and present dynamics, this analysis contributes to the broader discourse on international relations and emphasizes the importance of continued collaboration between the United States and Albania.

Literature Review

The literature on the diplomatic relations between Albania and the United States is relatively extensive and covers a period that spans nearly a century. One of the earliest sources on the topic is a report from the U.S. legation in Tirana to the Department of State, which is cited in Paska Milo's book "Politika e Jashtme e Shqipërisë" (2013)¹. The report sheds light on the US government's interest in Albania and its efforts to prevent the reoccupation of Albania through foreign interventions.

Another notable source on the topic is the article by Zaho Golemi and Alma Golemi, "Marrëdhëniet me amerikanët në fokus historik njëshekullor" (2013), which provides a historical overview of Albania-US relations over the course of a century. The article highlights the strategic importance of Albania for the US during the Cold War and its subsequent efforts to promote democratic and market-oriented reforms in the country.

Beqir Meta's books "Tensioni Greko-Shqiptar, 1939-1949" (2002) and "Shqipëria dhe Greqia 1949-1990, Paqja e vështirë" (2004) offer a more detailed analysis of the bilateral relations between Albania and Greece, which have been marked by territorial disputes and political tensions. The books shed light on the diplomatic efforts made by the US to mediate the conflicts and promote regional stability.

In the post-communist era, Albania's relations with the US have been characterized by a strong pro-Western orientation, as reflected in the country's membership in NATO and its aspirations for EU integration. Ermelinda Meksi's article "Dimensioni Shqiptar i Integritimit" (2003) discusses the challenges and opportunities of Albania's integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, highlighting the role of the US in supporting the country's democratic and economic reforms.

More recently, the media coverage of Albania-US relations has focused on issues such as the fight against terrorism and organized crime, as well as the support for democracy and human rights. For instance, Nathan Thrall's article "Albania, the

¹ T. Kodding, "For the Secretary of State, August 30, 1924" cited in Paskal Milo. (2013), *Politika e Jashtme e Shqipërisë, Vëllimi i Parë (1918-1939)* [Foreign Policy of Albania, Volume I (1918-1939)], Tirana: Botimet Toena, p. 623.

Muslim World's Most Pro-American State, America's 51st State" (2009) argues that Albania's pro-US stance has been largely driven by its cultural and historical ties with the US, as well as its aspirations for modernization and democratization.

The agreements between Albania and the US, which are documented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will be presented in this paper to provide a comprehensive analysis of the evolving nature of their partnership. These agreements serve as a testament to the challenges and opportunities that have shaped their relationship over the years, reflecting the mutual interests and priorities of both nations. From 1991 to the present day, these agreements have played a significant role in shaping the cooperative framework between the two nations, fostering economic development, enhancing security cooperation, promoting educational exchanges, and fostering cultural understanding. The analysis of these agreements will provide valuable insights into the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the Albania-US partnership.

Methodology

To achieve the objective of comprehensively analyzing the evolution of the relationship between Albania and the United States, a mixed-methods research approach is employed in this study. This methodology combines a systematic review of existing literature with a qualitative analysis of primary sources, such as government reports and official documents. By integrating these two research methods, a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the factors influencing the development of the partnership can be obtained.

The systematic review of existing literature on the topic provides a foundation for identifying key themes, trends, and theoretical frameworks related to the Albania-US relationship. Scholarly works, academic articles, and relevant publications are examined to gather insights into the historical context, political dynamics, and socio-economic factors that have shaped the bilateral ties between the two nations. This review helps in identifying gaps in the existing knowledge and informs the subsequent analysis.

Additionally, primary sources play a vital role in this study. Government reports, official documents, and archived materials sourced from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as other relevant institutions, are analyzed to gather empirical evidence and firsthand accounts of the diplomatic interactions and agreements between Albania and the United States. These primary sources offer valuable insights into the intentions, actions, and outcomes of both nations throughout the course of their relationship.

The qualitative analysis of primary sources involves a rigorous examination of the historical records, official correspondence, and policy documents to identify patterns, trends, and significant events that have influenced the partnership. By triangulating the information obtained from different sources and cross-referencing with scholarly

literature, a comprehensive understanding of the drivers behind the transformation of the Albania-US relationship is achieved.

The findings derived from the systematic literature review and qualitative analysis of primary sources are synthesized and analyzed to answer the research question: How has the relationship between the United States and Albania evolved over the years, and what are the main factors that have shaped its development? By employing this mixed-methods approach, this study aims to provide a robust analysis of the Albania-US relationship, shedding light on its historical trajectory and highlighting the underlying factors that have influenced its transformation.

It is important to note that due to the nature of this research methodology, limitations such as availability and reliability of primary sources, as well as the potential for bias in published literature, will be taken into consideration. However, efforts have been made to ensure the validity and credibility of the data sources utilized, allowing for a comprehensive and insightful examination of the Albania-US relationship.

Historical Analysis of Albania-US Relations

After Albania declared its independence in 1912 and received recognition from the Great Powers at the Conference of Ambassadors in London, the presidency of Thomas Woodrow Wilson played a crucial role in shaping Albania's status as a recognized subject of international law. President Wilson's support, evident in his veto and the implementation of his 14-point plan, provided Albania with a significant opportunity to establish itself as a fully recognized entity in the international arena. In fact, his pivotal contribution against the reoccupation of Albania by external forces has earned him the admiration and gratitude of the Albanian people, as stated in a report from the U.S. legation in Tirana to the Department of State (Milo, 2013, p. 623).

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Albania and the United States in July 1922 marked a significant milestone in their bilateral relations (Golemi, Z. & Golemi, A., 2013). During this period, Ambassador Child, serving in Rome, underscored the profound moral influence that American recognition carried among the Albanian-American community. In his report to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Child emphasized that thousands of Albanian-Americans held deep affection for America, considering it as cherished as their homeland (Milo, 2013, p. 544).

Between the years 1922 and 1939, Albania and the United States signed several agreements spanning various domains. These agreements, as documented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Treaties and International Law (1922-1939, p. 64-65), included the Arbitration Treaty, signed on October 22, 1928, and enforced from February 12, 1929, along with the Reconciliation Treaty, also signed on the same date and coming into effect on February 12, 1929. Additionally, the Extradition Treaty between the Kingdom of Albania and the United States of America, signed on March 1, 1933, entered into force on November 14, 1935. Furthermore, the Convention on

the Exchange of Motion Picture Orders, signed on July 18, 1932, took effect on October 1, 1932.

The Interruption of Relations: The diplomatic relations between Albania and the United States came to a halt in late 1939 due to the Italian occupation of Albania from 1939 to 1943. Consequently, the American embassy was closed, and H. Grant, the American ambassador at that time, departed on September 27, 1939 (Golemi, Z. & Golemi, A., 2013). Beqir Meta (2002: p. 98-99) highlights in his work "Tensioni Greko-Shqiptar, 1939-1949" that the stance of the United States towards Albania faced a critical test during World War II when Greece pursued territorial revisions with Albania. Greece sought diplomatic support from both the United States and Great Britain. While Great Britain indicated in its declaration on December 17, 1942, that the issue of Albania's borders would be a topic for discussion at the Peace Conference, the United States unequivocally expressed its support for the complete restoration of Albania's independence.

Post-World War II Era: After World War II, particularly in 1945, the United States, through a group of experts under the Department of State, conducted a study on the situation in Albania (Meta, B. 2002: p. 98-99). The conclusions drawn from this study played a significant role in shaping American foreign policy towards the Albanian state. Apart from categorically rejecting Greek claims regarding Northern Epirus, the study highlighted the pronounced and consolidated Western orientation of the Albanian nation, with a prominent influence exerted by the United States.

During the 45 years of totalitarian rule in Albania, diplomatic relations between the two countries remained largely "frozen." However, even during this period, at certain historical moments, the United States had a notable impact on Albania's relations with regional countries. One example is the American influence to prevent possible military interventions by Greece or Yugoslavia in Albania (Meta, B. 2004: p. 24).

Restoration of Relations: Following a significant period of political transition, diplomatic relations between the United States and Albania experienced a renewal in 1991. This marked a significant milestone after several decades of limited engagement between the two countries. The reestablishment of diplomatic ties on March 15, 1991, symbolized a fresh chapter in the bilateral relationship, characterized by a shared commitment to democracy, cooperation, and mutual understanding.

During this transformative period, the visit of former Secretary of State James Baker to Albania on July 31, 1991, held particular significance. It served as a notable demonstration of the Albanian people's support for the United States. The arrival of Baker was met with remarkable enthusiasm, as approximately 500,000 Albanians (Sina, B. 2013, January 26). warmly embraced the Secretary of State and expressed their appreciation for the United States' role in safeguarding Albania's national interests.

This pivotal moment reflected a departure from the previous era of communist propaganda that sought to portray the United States as an adversary of the Albanian nation. Instead, the United States came to be regarded as an embodiment of the Albanians' aspirations for democratic governance, prosperity, and stability within a region undergoing significant changes.

Consequently, the opening of the American embassy on October 1, 1991, after an extended period of diplomatic absence, signified Albania's reintegration into the regional and international arena. Edward William Rayerson, serving as the first American ambassador to Albania in over half a century, played a crucial role (Arvizu, A. A. 2011, October 6) in supporting the emerging opposition movement that would ultimately assume power on March 31, 1991. His contributions were instrumental in fostering a stronger bilateral relationship between the United States and Albania, rooted in shared values and strategic cooperation.

In light of the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in 1993, as well as in the interests of the United States and other Western powers, it was crucial to prevent any armed nationalist uprising among the Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia. Within this framework, with the aim of maintaining the status quo of Albania in the Balkans and beyond, the United States provided Albania with economic and political support. Furthermore, a distinct relationship developed between the two countries in the field of security, which led to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Military Relations with the United States in October 1993 (Meksi, E. 2003, p. 21), the first of its kind with a former communist country.

Albania-US Relations in the early 21st Century: In order to analyze the relationship between the two parties in the late 20th century, let us shift our focus to the beginning of the 21st century, particularly the period following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which led to a shift in the priorities of American foreign policy, now centered around the "War on Terror." During this time, while Europe remained divided regarding its stance on military intervention in Iraq, Albania was among the eight European countries that declared their support against Saddam Hussein's regime. Following the approval by the Parliament on March 13, 2003, the deployment of troops to Iraq was authorized. It is worth considering the significant contribution of Albania, particularly given that the majority of its population adheres to the Muslim faith.

Another significant historical moment between the two countries is related to the Adriatic Charter, a promotional initiative designed by the United States for the countries that were not invited to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) from the "Vilnius Ten" group. Out of the ten countries involved in this initiative, only seven of them received invitations for membership: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, while Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia were left out. However, the United States demonstrated a particular interest and dedication to assisting these countries in achieving their main goal of full integration

into Euro-Atlantic structures. In this context, on May 2, 2003, the Foreign Minister of Albania, I. Meta, the Foreign Minister of Macedonia, I. Mitreva, the Foreign Minister of Croatia, T. Pikula, and Secretary of State Colin Powell signed the Adriatic Charter or A3 document in Tirana (U.S. Department of State. 2003, May 3). This document symbolized a military partnership agreement and, at the same time, a clear indication of American support for these countries, aligning with NATO's open-door policy. Albania's accession to this organization can be considered one of the significant achievements of these years.

It suffices to recall the time when President George W. Bush visited Albania in 2007 and the statement made by then-Prime Minister Sali Berisha, according to which he should be considered the "greatest and most distinguished friend we have ever had in all times." (Berisha, S. cited in Thrall, N. 2009). This perspective deserves consideration, particularly when taking into account that President W. Bush is a political figure who has generated more anti-Americanism in Europe than anyone else. His administration and policies have faced the most criticism in Western Europe. However, in Albania, the impact has been quite the opposite, as it marked the end of Cold War isolation, the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians by Serbian forces, and the declaration of Kosovo's imminent independence during his visit to Albania, along with Albania's NATO membership. Consequently, he gained sympathy and admiration, not only from the Albanian political class but, even more so, from the Albanian people. Therefore, America can rightfully be considered the historical friend of the Albanian nation.

A similar stance is encountered in the opposite political camp, where the leader of the Socialist Party, E. Rama, has expressed that Albania is undoubtedly the most pro-American country in Europe, if not in the world. In his capacity as the current Prime Minister of Albania, he stated:

"Our government attaches special importance to the strategic partnership with the United States. The embodiment of this partnership on the NATO front, from the accounts of Iraq and Afghanistan to the effort to disarm the murderous regime in Syria without war, is not only an unshakable obligation but also a source of pride for us Albanians. We will never forget, for any reason, that thanks to this partnership and thanks to the United States as the greatest friend and ally of Albanians, Albanians today are better off than ever before, wherever they reside in our region." (Rama, E. cited in Mejdini, F. 2013, November 12).

Secretary of State Visits in Albania: Strengthening the Strategic Partnership

The visits of United States Secretaries of State to Albania have played a significant role in shaping Albania's democratic transformation and its efforts towards Euro-Atlantic integration. This part of the study examines the visits of James Baker, Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell, Hillary Clinton, John Kerry to Albania (U.S. Department of State

Archive Websites, 1991-2021), exploring their impact on Albania's political, economic, and security landscape. By analyzing the statements, objectives, and outcomes of these visits, we intend to highlight the significant impact of United States Secretaries of State on Albania's democratic transformation and Euro-Atlantic integration.

- **James Baker (1991)**

James Baker's visit to Albania on June 22, 1991, marked an important milestone in the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Albania after decades of isolation. His visit focused on expressing support for Albania's transition to democracy and its pursuit of closer ties with the international community. Baker's encouragement of economic reforms and emphasis on political stability provided guidance for Albania's development in the post-communist era (U.S. Department of State, 1991).

- **Madeleine Albright (2000)**

The visit of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Albania on February 19, 2000, holds significance in the diplomatic relations between the United States and Albania. This particular date marks her first visit to Albania after the bombing of Serbian forces in Kosovo in June 1999. During her visit, Secretary Albright recognized the vital role played by the Albanians during the Kosovo crisis, particularly their efforts in hosting and providing assistance to the influx of Kosovo refugees seeking refuge in Albania. The visit served as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of Albania's humanitarian contributions and to strengthen the solidarity between the two nations during a critical period of regional instability.

- **Colin Powell (2003)**

The initial milestone in strengthening the relationship between Albania and the United States was marked by the signing of the Adriatic Charter. On May 2, 2003, the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, along with the Foreign Ministers of Macedonia and Croatia, visited Tirana to participate in this significant event. It was a crucial step towards closer cooperation and regional integration. (U.S. Department of State, 2003).

- **Hillary Clinton (2012)**

Hillary Clinton visited Albania on November 1, 2012. She acknowledged Albania's progress in democratic reforms and expressed support for its Euro-Atlantic integration. Clinton emphasized the importance of rule of law, combating corruption, and protecting human rights as crucial elements of Albania's democratic development. Her visit also recognized Albania's contributions to regional security and stability. Clinton's visit served to strengthen the bilateral relationship between the United States and Albania and provided guidance for further progress in key areas of mutual interest. (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

- **John Kerry (2016)**

John Kerry, the United States Secretary of State at the time, visited Albania on February 14, 2016. The purpose of his visit was to reaffirm the strong partnership between the United States and Albania and to express support for Albania's continued progress in various areas. Kerry also emphasized the importance of economic development and job creation as key factors for Albania's future success. He encouraged increased foreign investment and trade opportunities between the United States and Albania. The visit of John Kerry to Albania served as a platform to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

The visits of James Baker, Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell, Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, to Albania have played a crucial role in shaping Albania's democratic transformation and its integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. These visits have provided guidance, support, and acknowledgment of Albania's progress in various areas, including democracy, rule of law and regional cooperation.

Albanian-US Bilateral Agreements since 1992

In terms of bilateral agreements signed and ratified between Albania and the United States since 1992, the Directorate of Treaties and International Law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹ of our country reports the following:

- Agreement on economic and technical assistance, signed on June 10, 1992, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Bilateral economic agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America, signed on June 10, 1992, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Note exchange agreement on the employment of family members of government officials between Albania and the United States of America, signed on August 30 and September 30, 1993, entered into force on September 30, 1993.
- Agreement on cooperation and exchange of data on topographic, nautical, and aeronautical charts, geodetic and geophysical digital data related to maps, and geodetic materials, signed on March 25, 1994, entered into force on March 25, 1994.
- Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of diplomatic relations, signed on March 15, 1995, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Note exchange agreement on some amendments to the "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America on the settlement of certain claims," signed on March 10, 1995, entered into force on April 18, 1995. Its amendment was signed on November 18, 2005, for the U.S., and on April 27, 2006, for our party.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, Directorate of Treaties and International Law. "Bilateral Agreements with All Countries." Pages 64-65.

- Treaty between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America on the encouragement and reciprocal protection of investment, signed on January 11, 1995, entered into force on January 4, 1998.
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America for the U.S. Peace Corps program in Albania, signed on July 22, 2003, entered into force on October 9, 2003.
- Agreement on the implementation of the law between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America, signed on January 10, 2002.
- Adriatic Charter between Albania, Macedonia, Croatia, and the United States, signed on May 2, 2003, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America on the surrender of persons to the International Criminal Court, signed on May 2, 2003. Law No. 9081, dated June 19, 2003, entered into force on July 7, 2003.
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America on cooperation in the field of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and enhancing military and defense relations, signed on May 12, 2003, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Supplemental Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America regarding the "Agreement among the States Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty and the other States participating in the Partnership for Peace regarding the status of their forces" on the status of United States forces in the Republic of Albania, signed on March 31, 2004, entered into force on August 19, 2004.
- Air Transport Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America, signed on September 24, 2003, entered into force on April 5, 2004.
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America for the protection and preservation of certain cultural properties, signed on July 12, 2004.
- Agreement between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Albania and the Department of Defense of the United States of America for the safe, risk-free, and environmentally sound destruction of chemical weapons, signed on December 30, 2004, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the American Corporation "Lockheed Martin" for the construction of the Integrated Maritime Surveillance System, signed on March 15, 2005, ratified by Law No. 9384, dated May 4, 2005.
- Strategic Objective Grant Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America to combat

corruption, within the framework of the initial millennium challenge assessment program, signed on April 3, 2006, ratified by Law No. 9549, dated June 1, 2006.

- Strategic Objective Grant Agreement Phase II between the Republic of Albania and the United States of America to combat corruption, signed on September 29, 2008, ratified by Law No. 10026, dated December 11, 2008 (USAID).
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America, signed on June 26, 2009, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Assistance Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America for just and democratic governance; investing in people and economic growth, signed on September 30, 2010.
- Amendment Document Number One to the Assistance Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America for just and democratic governance, investing in people and economic growth, signed on September 16, 2011, for the U.S. government, and on September 19, 2011, for the government of the Republic of Albania.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Albanian-American Development Foundation for development, signed on June 7, 2011, entered into force on the date of signing.
- Amendment Document Number Two to the Assistance Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America for just and democratic governance, investing in people and economic growth, signed on April 4, 2012, approved by Council of Ministers Decision No. 789, dated November 14, 2012.
- Agreement on Development Objectives Assistance between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America for strengthening the rule of law, good governance, and creating conditions for broad, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth, signed on September 30, 2013.
- Grant Agreement for Development Objectives between the U.S. Government, acting through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Albanian Government "For strengthening the rule of law and good governance and creating conditions for broad, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth."
- Amendment number four to the "Agreement on Development Objectives Assistance between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the United States of America for strengthening the rule of law, good governance, and creating conditions for broad, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth," signed on December 29, 2014.

- Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, with annexes, signed at Tirana and Patch Barracks on August 26 and September 23, 2015, entered into force on September 23, 2015. (United States Department of State, 2020, p. 3-4).
- Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Albania for the Exchange of Terrorism Screening Information, signed at Tirana on April 14, 2016, entered into force on September 14, 2016. (ibid).
- Memorandum of Understanding between the United States of America and Albania on Cultural Exchanges, Property, and Cooperation Import Restrictions, signed at Washington on August 23, 2021, entered into force on February 28, 2022 (United States Department of State 2021-2022, p.1)

Discussion

The literature on Albania-US relations spans several decades and offers valuable insights into the historical, political, and strategic dimensions of this bilateral relationship. Early sources, provides a comprehensive historical overview of the century-long relationship between Albania and the US. It emphasizes the strategic importance of Albania for the US during the Cold War and highlights the US's role in supporting democratic and market-oriented reforms in the post-communist era.

The analysis of Beqir Meta's books (2002, 2004) sheds light on the complex and at times tense relations between Albania and Greece, including territorial disputes and political tensions. These works underscore the efforts made by the US to mediate conflicts and promote regional stability in the Balkans.

In the contemporary era, Albania's strong pro-Western orientation, exemplified by its NATO membership and aspirations for EU integration, has been a defining feature of its relationship with the US. Ermelinda Meksi's article (2003) discusses the challenges and opportunities of Albania's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, with the US playing a significant role in supporting democratic and economic reforms.

Recent media coverage has highlighted key areas of cooperation between Albania and the US, such as countering terrorism and organized crime, as well as supporting democracy and human rights. Nathan Thrall's article (2009) argues that Albania's pro-US stance is rooted in cultural and historical ties, as well as its aspirations for modernization and democratization.

The analysis of bilateral agreements between Albania and the US further illuminates the evolving nature of their partnership. These agreements, documented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have played a vital role in fostering economic development, enhancing security cooperation, promoting educational exchanges, and fostering cultural understanding. They reflect the mutual interests and priorities of both nations, providing a cooperative framework that has shaped their relationship over the years.

Overall, the findings of this study underscore the depth and complexity of the diplomatic relations between Albania and the United States. They demonstrate that the historical, political, and strategic factors have influenced and continue to shape this bilateral partnership. The strong pro-American sentiment in Albania, combined

with US support for democratic reforms and regional stability, has contributed to the enduring nature of their relationship.

However, it is important to acknowledge that challenges and potential areas for further study exist. Future research could explore the economic dimensions of Albania-US relations, the impact of cultural and educational exchanges, and the role of public diplomacy in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards each other.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of literature and bilateral agreements provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the Albania-US partnership. The historical, political, and strategic factors, along with mutual interests and priorities, have contributed to the strong and enduring diplomatic relations between these two countries.

In light of the prevailing circumstances, it becomes evident that the United States has duly recognized and capitalized upon the proverbial pro-American sentiment among the Albanian populace, thereby solidifying its position as a strategic partner. By actively contributing to the democratization process and bolstering the capacity of Albanian institutions, particularly those pertaining to law enforcement, the United States has successfully fostered a sense of security within Albania under its protective purview, especially concerning matters of foreign policy vis-à-vis regional counterparts. Presently, U.S. support is concentrated on elevating professional standards in combating international and organized crime, countering terrorism, curbing arms and human trafficking, as well as enhancing Albanian military and intelligence capabilities.

When appraising the prospects of the bilateral relationship between the two nations through the lens of various theoretical perspectives in international politics, it becomes apparent that the anticipated outcome remains consistent. Specifically, by eschewing an ideologically driven approach to the analysis of this relationship, predictability can be readily discerned. Based on the firm belief that Albania will not deviate towards a totalitarian or authoritarian regime in the distant future, it is reasonable to conclude that the relationship between the two countries will endure unabated.

Adopting a behavioralist paradigm, wherein the course of the relationship is contingent upon the behavior, actions, and decisions of political leaders seeking to acquire and maintain power, it is reaffirmed that the trajectory of the bilateral ties will remain unaltered. Albanian political actors continue to perceive the United States as the principal benefactor in their pursuit of political ascendancy.

Should these relations be contextualized within a potential reconfiguration of the international system, it follows that as long as the system remains immutable and under the stewardship of the United States, the bilateral relationship between Albania and the United States will remain impervious to change. The United States will persist in viewing Albania as the most ardently pro-American nation within the region, while Albania, in turn, will regard the United States as the preeminent superpower providing guarantees against conceivable regional threats.

Adopting an institutionalist perspective, the defining element of these relations emanates from the concurrent participation of both nations in numerous international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Partnership for Peace Council, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and notably, their shared membership within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In summation, drawing upon the aforementioned analytical frameworks, it can be reasonably concluded that the trajectory of the Albania-USA relationship will persist with an unwavering spirit of cooperation in the foreseeable future, remaining unswayed by external circumstances. The prevailing political climate will continue to regard Albania and its people as among the staunchest proponents of the American cause. As eloquently stated by the eminent Fan S. Noli, "We cannot repay America for the deeds it has undertaken and continues to undertake for the Albanian nation. However, if we remain steadfast in our commitment to the causes of civilization and humanism, then America, in its magnanimous tradition, will absolve us of the debt we owe, thus relieving us of an arduous and inescapable moral burden toward our American counterparts." (Cited in Klosi, F. 2011)

Recommendation

To further our understanding of this relationship, future studies should focus on the following areas:

- Economic Cooperation, analyzing trade patterns, investment opportunities, and technology transfer between Albania and the United States;
- Cultural and Educational Exchanges: Assessing the impact of cultural and educational programs on fostering cross-cultural understanding and academic collaboration;
- Development Assistance Programs: Evaluating the effectiveness of U.S. development assistance in areas such as governance, infrastructure, and social welfare;
- Regional Dynamics: Examining the role of the United States in regional initiatives and its contributions to stability and security in the Western Balkans;
- Public Perceptions: Investigating public attitudes towards the United States in Albania and understanding the factors influencing these perceptions. By conducting research in these areas, policymakers and scholars can contribute to the ongoing development of the Albania-USA relationship and inform evidence-based policies that strengthen this strategic partnership.

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