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A Review of Albania's National Security Strategy and Policy

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Summary

Effective design and coordination of national security policies is becoming increasingly important given the increasing complexity of interstate relations, increased competition in advanced technologies, and a dynamic and increasingly multipolar geopolitical environment. Despite the necessity to reconceptualize Albania's national security policies and defining its role in international politics, the Albanian political leadership and the officials responsible for drafting these policies still continue to consider them within rather narrow institutional bounds.

Albania's national security policy in the last 30 years has been oriented towards Euro-Atlantic integration, but without clearly defining the national interests that would be fulfilled through these integration processes. This approach has produced national security strategies and policies that are not clear, coherent, or appropriate to address national needs and threats. This discussion paper aims to critically examine national security strategies adopted in 2000, 2004, 2014. A review of these strategies and of national security policies reveals technical shortcomings in the formulation of national security objectives to advance national interests and prevent of threats to the country. Of concern is also the lack of a clear and effective institutional architecture for governing national security policies.

The paper further examines five case studies – the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Singapore – to identify effective approaches to design and coordinate national security policies regardless of the country's size, power, geographical location, or history. Case studies also serve to note their differences and similarities so that they are understood as products of different historical, institutional, and political contexts.

Combining the findings from the review of national security strategies of 2000, 2004, 2014, as well as those from the review of case studies, the proposed recommendations aim to encourage Albanian policymakers to re-evaluate their approach to national security policies. It would be appropriate for the government to prepare a study on the national security architecture of the country to review in detail the mandates, capacities, internal coordination and accountability mechanisms, as well as the inter-institutional capacities and coordination mechanisms of each of the institutions involved in this architecture. The government can undertake an extensive and open consultative process by engaging academics and research institutions to discuss the vital Albanian national security interests. These processes would help guide the reform of the national security architecture, ensure public support for government measures, and strengthen inter-ministerial and inter-institutional cooperation.

1. Introduction

The devastating earthquake of November 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic caused much distress not only to the country's healthcare system but also to its finances and economy. The emergency measures taken by the Albanian government to respond to the pandemic were enacted in a highly polarized political climate – since the opposition had withdrawn from the Assembly in February 2019 and boycotted the local elections in June 2019 – and in the absence of the Constitutional Court and the High Court as most judges either resigned or were dismissed due to the re-evaluation process (so-called 'vetting')¹. The people's security and constitutional order had been severely undermined, whilst the pandemic highlighted the lack of preparedness as the government rushed to respond to the crisis through normative acts – executive decrees with the power of law that do not require parliamentary approval for 45 days.

These domestic challenges have been compounded by profound geopolitical developments, which have received little attention from the Albanian government. A more assertive Russia has increased her presence in the Balkans through energy and security ties²; US-China tensions are continuously increasing as China continues to rise and expand in the Indo-Pacific and in the Eurasian landmass; and transatlantic relations continue to be strained as the national interests of its members are diverging in certain areas of security cooperation.³ In light of these developments, it is important to pose some fundamental questions about Albania's national security strategy and policy.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to critically examine Albania's national security strategies and the institutional approach to national security policymaking. It examines the three national security strategies (NSS's) adopted in 2000, 2004, and 2014 to identify similarities in their structure and the main national security objectives and threat perceptions. NSS 2014 is examined in more detail since it is the standing national security strategy and the information on its design and implementation procedures could be more easily accessed. The paper further discusses five case studies of national security policy formulation and

¹ The re-evaluation of judges and prosecutors is one of the key measures to reform the judiciary as part of the EU accession-related rule of law reforms of the Republic of Albania. For more on the reform, see "Reforma në drejtësi", <http://www.reformanedrejttesi.al/>.

² See Paul Stronski and Annie Himes, "Russia's game in the Balkans", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Stronski_Himes_Balkans_formatted.pdf, and Ernest A. Reid, "Third Rome or Potemkin Village: Analysing the Extent of Russia's Power in Serbia", *Nationalities Papers* 49 (4): 728-737, <https://bit.ly/3AewBat>.

³ The French reaction to the AUKUS agreement between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States is a case in point. See Heather A. Conley and Michael J. Green, "Don't Underestimate the AUKUS Rift With France" *Foreign Policy*, 22 September 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/22/aukus-france-biden-europe-allies/>.

coordination to highlight some of the approaches to national security policy design that could be considered by Albanian policymakers.

The case studies include the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Israel, and Singapore. These countries were chosen due to their different size, geopolitical power, and geographic location. The US is located in the Western Hemisphere, but is a global superpower; the UK is located in Europe, but has been an imperial power and continues to exert influence in its former colonies as part of the British Commonwealth; Germany is the most important power in the European Union; Israel is located in the Middle East – a highly complex and challenging region to navigate – and its survival has been largely due to its military and technological superiority, as well as mastery of the regional and great power politics; Singapore, the smallest in size from all the rest, is located in Asia, and – as a postcolonial state with meagre natural resources – has had to craft a national security policy that builds the country's self-reliance whilst expanding its network of friends and allies.

The reason for choosing such a diverse group of countries is to identify effective approaches to national security policy formulation and coordination that transcend size, power, geographic location, or historical antecedents of the state. Although a broader and more detailed examination of each case would be required to gain sufficient understanding of the historical processes, institutional traditions, and political cultures that have influenced particular practices in national security policy formulation and coordination, the purpose of this exercise and of the paper is to stimulate further discussion on the topic rather than provide specific policy recommendations for Albanian policymakers.

The paper concludes with some general recommendations to improve the current policymaking process, which is critical to address the complex national security challenges that Albania currently faces and will likely face in the future.

2. What is Albania's national security doctrine?

2.1. The shift of national security approaches

After the fall of Communism in 1991, Albania has completely shifted its approach to security and international relations. It has transitioned from an approach of dogmatic self-reliance – during almost the last two decades of the Cold War – to one of excessive external reliance. This shift has been arguably due to the failure of the first approach, which brought economic misery and failed to meet the aspirations of the Albanian people for freedom and dignity. In the first case, self-reliance was the inevitable default option since the state did not have a strategic approach to international relations and security. The state's major concern was self-preservation – i.e. the security of the regime of Enver Hoxha and the Albanian Labor Party – rather than national development and prosperity. In the second case, excessive external reliance has become the default option because the state has been weak in mustering national energies towards a common purpose. This has been largely due to political instability, corruption, and overall bad governance. Under these structural conditions, state institutions face fundamental challenges to craft a coherent national security strategy that informs and coordinates national security policy, and they inevitably fail. Failure is manifested through national security strategies that are either incoherent, not fit for purpose, or formal, i.e. without an impact on actual national security policy.

The challenges of crafting a coherent national security policy arose immediately after the first post-Communist government was elected in 1992. The country faced profound political, economic, military, and security challenges. Government institutions were in dire need of reform; the country faced the daunting task of transitioning from a centrally-planned to a free market economy; the military – highly ideological and an instrument of the Albanian Labor Party – had to be reorganized; and the disintegration of Yugoslavia was bound to affect the security of Albanians outside the country's borders as well as of the country itself. The foremost national security imperative of the Albanian government at the time – which largely remains the same today – was the country's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – in order to benefit from the Alliance's security umbrella – and the European Union – to develop institutionally and benefit economically.

The declaration of these national security imperatives, however, has not been rooted in clear and specific national security objectives that serve the Albanian national interest. The approach of the country's policymakers has been to fulfill the criteria requested by the EU and NATO to progress in the accession path, without clear priorities of their own or the political commitment

to undertake radical reforms to build professional and effective institutions. For example, although Albania is a member of NATO, oversight of the defense sector is ineffective⁴, which is antithetical to NATO standards for an effective democratic control of the armed forces. Similarly, the EU accession process has not led to greater political stability and fundamental improvements in governance and the rule of law. Parliamentary boycotts, a common tool (over)used by opposition parties throughout the last 30 years to pressure the government for political concessions, reached their zenith in February 2019 when the opposition withdrew from the Assembly; this was followed by the opposition's boycott of the local elections in June 2019. Additionally, high-level corruption, i.e. grand corruption, has worsened over the last 10 years.⁵

2.2. The challenge of identifying national interests

The contradiction between the stated national security imperatives – becoming part of NATO and the EU – and the lack of political commitment to undertake radical institutional reforms to achieve them suggests that there is a vacuum in the country's national security policy. This vacuum has been created by an issue that still persists – namely, *the lack of an articulated rationale for Euro-Atlantic integration*. To put it in simpler terms, Albanian policymakers have failed to clearly and thoroughly answer the following question: **What are Albania's national security interests and how can they be advanced through NATO and the EU accession?** Indeed, Albanian policymakers have cited the country's needs for security, economic development, and institutional reform as objectives to be met through the Euro-Atlantic integration processes.⁶ The EU has even been called a "religion"⁷. But they have failed to define clear national security interests to be met through Euro-Atlantic integration. This has led to

⁴ See Alban Dafa, *(Un) Democratic Control of the Albanian Armed Forces: Centralisation of Defence Policy and Ineffective Oversight* (Tiranë: Institute for Democracy and Mediation, 2021), <https://idmalbania.org/un-democratic-control-of-the-albanian-armed-forces/>.

⁵ Gjergji Vurmo, Rovena Sulstarova, and Alban Dafa, *Deconstructing State Capture in Albania: An Examination of Grand Corruption Cases and Tailor-Made Laws from 2008 to 2020* (Transparency International and the Institute for Democracy and Mediation: n.p., 2021), https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/2021_Report_DeconstructingStateCaptureAlbania_English.pdf.

⁶ Sali Berisha, "Shqiptarët i mbeten përjetë mirënjohës NATO-s" in *Agjenda shqiptare për sigurinë rajonale (An Albanian agenda for regional security)* (Tiranë: Institute for Democracy and Mediation, 2006), https://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Axhende-Shqiptare-per-Sigurine-Rajonale-IDM_NATO_2006.pdf (Albanian); Council of Ministers, "Kryeministri Fatos Nano ka pritur sot në një takim Sekretarin e Përgjithshëm të NATO-s Lordin Xhorxh Robertson sëbashku me Këshillin e Ambasadorëve të NATO-s", 17 July 2003, <http://arkiva.km.gov.al/?fq=brenda&m=news&lid=2996> (Albanian); Socialist Party of Albania, "Takimi Rama-Sequi: Integrimi europian, prioritet kombëtar", 9 September 2013, <https://www.ps.al/te-reja/takimi-rama-sequi-integrimi-europian-prioritet-kombetar> (Albanian).

⁷ Giorgia Orlandi, "'Europe is a religion and nobody can betray this religion in Albania,' said Albania's Prime Minister", *Euronews*, 13 May 2021, <https://www.euronews.com/2021/05/10/europe-is-a-religion-and-nobody-can-betray-this-religion-in-albania-said-albania-s-prime-m>.

ambiguous national security approaches which permeate the country's national security strategies.

There have been three national security strategies published: 2000, 2004, and 2014. All of them outline the country's national interests, threats, national security objectives⁸, and the *strategic concept of security*, i.e. the strategic approach to meet national security objectives. Although not identical, there is a common thread that runs throughout the strategic approach in the three different documents. This approach roughly maintains that participation in international efforts to achieve regional and European security – EU, NATO, and other regional initiatives such as the Adriatic Charter for example – will ensure the country's security and address its threats. Under the section on the strategic concept, the 2000 NSS asserts that “internal security is based on Albanian state institutions, whilst external security is based on NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations”⁹.

The intention to become part of the NATO and the EU is more explicitly asserted in the strategic concept of the 2004 NSS, and a direct link was articulated between Euro-Atlantic integration and institutional reforms by asserting that “the integration efforts towards collective security will be accompanied by the consolidation of reforms in the country's security and defense system, so that they can be adapted to the organization and functioning of the collective structures”¹⁰. Similarly the strategic concept of the 2014 NSS maintains that “NATO membership, continuous proximity to the EU and the active participation in other systems of international security provide a credible assurance to address external threats”¹¹.

The key issue with this approach is that it assumes that NATO and EU accession will lead to positive security outcomes, but it does not outline exactly how this ought to happen. Except for a brief note on Euro-Atlantic integration institutional reforms that are expected to lead to improved governance, Albanian policymakers and these documents do not clearly discuss the impact of the Euro-Atlantic integration on Albania's national security. Furthermore, the approach towards institutional reforms is rather misguided. The reforms are considered in the framework of fulfilling Euro-Atlantic integration criteria rather than as imperatives to radically improve governance. The inevitable outcomes of this approach are national security objectives that are either unclear, repetitive, or not supported by clear directives on how to achieve them.

⁸ In the 2014 NSS they are called ‘strategic imperatives’ rather than national objectives.

⁹ Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania 2000, approved by Law no. 8572, date 27.01.2000. (Albanian)

¹⁰ National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania 2004, approved by Law no. 9322, date 25.11.2004. (Albanian)

¹¹ National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania 2014, approved by Law no. 103/2014. (Albanian)

2.3. The disconnect between national objectives and threats

Listed in the table below are the national security objectives as included in the respective national security strategies. *National security objectives are set to advance national interests and counter security threats.* Nevertheless, all national security strategies published to date include objectives that are not necessarily tied to the national security interests to be advanced or the threats to be addressed. For example, it is unclear the reason for including the approximation of the Albanian legislation to the EU *acquis* in the NSS 2000 and NSS 2004 since the country signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement¹² with the EU in 2006 and became a candidate country only in 2014. Furthermore, it is unclear the reason for which this is considered a national security objective since it does not refer to particular aspects of the EU *acquis* that would advance Albania's national security interests or address a particular threat to national security. Similarly, the necessity to strengthen the rule of law and public institutions features in all three national security strategies. While strengthening the rule of law was indeed a key national security objective in the early 2000s as Albania was recovering after the state collapsed in 1997, continuing to present the need to improve governance and the rule of law as key national security objectives would suggest that the domestic conditions are similar to those in the early 2000s. If this is the case and the threat from lawlessness is considered to be so great that it still undermines national security, it follows that the need to strengthen rule of law and other public institutions was not considered seriously enough to build the necessary capacities to address corruption and organized crime – the threats associated with these national security objectives – from 2000 until 2014.

¹² The Agreement marked the beginning of the EU accession path.

Table 1. National Security Objectives

NSS 2000	NSS 2004	NSS 2014
1. Internal peace and security by <i>strengthening the rule of law</i>	1. Peace and security at home by <i>strengthening rule of law institutions</i>	1. <i>Improvement of rule of law and good governance</i>
2. Regional peace and cooperation	2. Regional cooperation through dialogue and Euro-Atlantic integration	2. <i>Strengthen public institutions</i>
3. Economic development	3. Consolidation of democratic society and human rights.	3. Foster sustainable economic development
4. EU and NATO membership	4. Consolidation of security instruments and institutions.	4. The development of quality education
5. <i>Approximation of Albanian legislation with EU aquis</i>	5. Strengthen the economy	5. Strengthen the security and defense sector
6. Achievement of human rights standards	6. Euro-Atlantic integration	6. Strengthen social cohesion and national identity
7. Resolution of the Albanian question in the region	7. <i>Approximation of Albanian legislation with EU aquis</i>	7. Strengthen the regional and international role of Albania
8. Environmental protection	8. Resolution of the Albanian question in the region through Euro-Atlantic integration	8. Increase the pace of the EU accession process
9. Restructuring and rebuilding the Armed Forces	9. Environmental and natural resources protection	9. Other objectives: a. prevention of environmental degradation through effective management of natural resources b. approval of a cyber security strategy to establish high standards for information security. c. ensure effective healthcare delivery through a comprehensive reform of the system. d. ensure food security through an integrated system for the control of food production.
10. Development of concepts, institutions, and instruments of national security that would ensure a successful transition towards democracy and free market economy.	10. Consolidation of the Armed Forces	
	11. Fight against terrorism through greater cooperation between the Albanian State Police, State Intelligence Service, and the Armed Forces	
	12. Fight against corruption and organized crime	

Additionally, in the 2014 NSS there is a profound disconnect between the security threats identified and national security objectives outlined to address them. The 2014 NSS classifies national security threats in three levels or tiers. Tier 1 threats include the following:

1. **Corruption and organized crime;**
2. Energy crisis that could threaten the nation's economy and well-being;
3. Lack of appropriate local governance that may facilitate various forms of trafficking;
4. **Cyberattacks by state and non-state actors;**
5. **Environmental degradation.**

Out of these five threats, three are addressed through a national security objective (strategic imperative) or sub-objective. Nevertheless, except for a discussion of the actions necessary to address corruption and organized crime – mainly through public administration and rule of law reforms – there is essentially no discussion of the actions necessary to address cyberattacks and environmental degradation. As noted in the table above, the NSS foresees addressing the cyber threats only through the approval of a cybersecurity strategy, whilst it does not discuss or hint at any actions to be taken to prevent environmental degradation. Tier 2 and tier 3 threats – such as the potential for a terrorist attack against Albania, global pandemics, the potential for the activation of a regional source of tension with national security implications for Albania, and subversive espionage activities against the country – are merely listed as threats; they are not discussed in terms of their likelihood and impact to national security, and they are not tied to a strategic imperative (national security objective) or sub-objective, which would suggest that they are not considered serious enough to be addressed through additional measures.

3. Structure and securitization

3.1. Structure

A national security strategy should have clearly defined national security interests and objectives. They ought to guide the assessment of national security threats by mapping the threat environment and assessing the way it shapes the advancement of the national security interests and objectives. Through a comprehensive analysis of the resources needed to achieve national security interests and objectives, the NSS should outline the necessary approaches to counter the threats to national security interests and achieve national security objectives. Although the 2014 NSS is the most comprehensive document of the three national strategies that have been published, it is important to discuss some structural shortcomings that influence its clarity and effectiveness.

The 2014 NSS includes an **introduction**, which sketches the vision for a free, democratic, and prosperous society, and the **strategic concept**, which defines the goal of the NSS and lists the national interests and briefly discusses the strategic environment. The **strategic imperatives** cover most of the NSS. There are eight strategic imperatives – which include several objectives within each of them – and four separate objectives that are not part of one of the eight strategic imperatives. A short section defines the **institutional responsibilities** for the implementation of the strategy. A few concluding remarks and three annexes complete the document. The annexes discuss the need for a **new approach on the functioning of the security architecture** to coordinate national security strategy, the **threat assessment** for the strategy, and the **categorization of threats**. The final annex includes a matrix in which specific institutions are assigned their **implementation tasks**.

There are two key issues with its structure: (i) strategic imperatives and the threat assessment (and threats) are loosely connected to each other and (ii) the annexes either provide few information or the information that is provided does not improve the overall clarity of the NSS. The threat assessment is included as one of the annexes of the NSS rather than as one of the parts of the main document. It is divided into four sections: the strategic environment, the domestic environment, the regional environment, and the global environment.

The description of the **strategic environment** – the first part in the threat assessment – is rather vague. It has also not considered three key geostrategic developments and their potential impact on the regional environment and Albania's national security: (i) the Belt and Road

Initiative, (ii) rising China-US tensions, and (iii) the assertiveness of Russia in its “near abroad”¹³. The description of the **domestic environment** identifies some important threats such as organized crime and energy security, climate change and environmental degradation, pandemics, and migration due to the wars in the Middle East, but they are discussed rather briefly and without elaborating their implications for the national security of Albania.

The threat assessment further discusses rather briefly the **regional environment** and the **global environment**, but such descriptions do not seem to directly inform the strategic imperatives and sub-objectives.

While the threat assessment provides some information on the threat perceptions of the country’s policymakers, the annexes on the need for a **new approach for the functioning of the security architecture** and on the **task implementation plan** offer little clarity on the new institutional architecture to be established to implement the NSS and the concrete tasks that institutions are to complete. The annex on the security architecture merely asserts that the new architecture will entail a proactive and integrated institutional approach whereby institutions will overcome duplication of competencies and fragmentation. It also indicates that a new legal package will be necessary to restructure the national security architecture. Despite these claims, however, there are no specific measures foreseen to make the changes. Furthermore, the various objectives of the NSS for which government institutions are responsible include mainly administrative measures, which at best refer to the need for completion of strategies and action plans, without providing clear directives on the approaches to be taken and ends to be met. Due to their lack of clarity they cannot be measured and they have not been securitized.

3.2. Securitization

Securitization is a process that involves three stages. First, an existential threat is identified in relation to a “referent object”. The referent object is something that is valuable or important for national security. That covers a broad range of issues – from sovereignty and wellbeing, which are related to hard instruments of national power (e.g. military, economic, diplomatic power), to demography and ideology, which are related to issues of national identity, culture, and the way of life. Second, the threat is considered to be securitized when it has been accepted by the public. Third, once the threat has been declared and accepted through public discourse, special measures and resources are mobilized to address it.¹⁴ Securitization is an

¹³ For an overview of the causes of Russia’s foreign policy assertiveness, see Elias Götz, “Putin, the State, and War: The Causes of Russia’s Near Abroad Assertion Revisited”, *International Studies Review* 19 (2017): 228-253, <https://asset-pdf.scinapse.io/prod/2349922552/2349922552.pdf>.

¹⁴ See Berry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework of Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

essential process to differentiate between policy issues that can be addressed through the regular administrative processes and policy issues that present a threat to national security, which need to be addressed by mobilizing additional resources and measures – beyond the regular administrative processes – to address them.¹⁵ Consequently, it is imperative that national security objectives are designed to address those threats rather than indicate administrative measures that have little or no consequences in addressing threats or advance national interests.

In the case of the NSS 2014, there are marginal indications of securitization for most of the strategic imperatives. The NSS posits that the first strategic imperative – **improvement of the rule of law and good governance** – is to be achieved through: (i) the modernization and strengthening of the judiciary through comprehensive and measurable reforms based on the Albanian constitution and the best European practices; (ii) designing and implementing a cross-sectoral anti-corruption strategy; (iii) increased cooperation between public institutions and civil society to develop educational programs to fight corruption; (iv) expansion and promotion of digital services; (v) strengthen the control and administration of the territory; (vi) implementation of new measures to prevent fiscal evasion and informality.

The first three are key objectives whilst the second three are defined as supporting objectives or sub-objectives. Assuming that the first key objective is designed to address the threat of corruption and organized crime by addressing the shortcomings in the judiciary, it is not clear what is meant by a modernized and strengthened judiciary, and – most importantly – the nature of the reforms that are to be implemented to ensure that the judiciary is modernized and strengthened. A better approach would have been to discuss the specific shortcomings in the judiciary and provide an outline of the nature of the reforms. The rest of the objectives and sub-objectives refer to purely administrative practices that are too broad and do not refer to specific measures that are designed to counter particular threats to corruption or organized crime.

Similarly, for the fifth strategic imperative – **strengthening the security and defense sector** – there are slight indications of securitization. The following are the **key objectives** to fulfil this strategic imperative: (i) design and implement a new military strategy in accordance with the national needs and NATO commitments; (ii) amend the existing legal framework to enable the full implementation of the national commitments to the Alliance; (iii) reform the national policing system so that the State Police is the only authority with policing powers; (iv) establish

¹⁵ For example, the Albanian government's response to COVID-19 was securitized, albeit late. The pandemic was considered an existential threat not only to public health but also to the nation's economy. Consequently, extraordinary measures were taken to curtail civil liberties in the interest of public health and several financial packages to aid Albanian businesses and workers were approved. See <https://coronavirus.al/>.

the necessary mechanisms to ensure cooperation and coordination between the main national security actors. **Supporting objectives** include: (i) amending the legislation that regulates strategic leadership and authority of the Armed Forces; (ii) expanding the range of engagements of the Armed Forces during peacetime to serve the citizens and assist local authorities in civil emergencies and territorial control; (iii) strengthening and modernizing the State Police by improving investigation and intelligence gathering capabilities – as well as operational, logistic, and infrastructure capacities; (iv) strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation through international organizations focused on fighting organized crime, corruption, illegal trafficking, and terrorism; (v) approving a new strategy on civil emergency response and establishing the National Civil Emergencies and Crisis Management Center; (vi) standardizing legislation that regulates the activities of intelligence agencies and standards of recruitment, training and professionalization; and (vii) establishing a secure classified network of communication.

The main issues with the design of both the key and supporting objectives are the following:

1. Proposing to amend defense and security legislation without explaining the obstacles of the standing legislation preventing defense and security institutions from meeting their objectives could lead to legal interventions that have not been thoroughly examined and could therefore undermine the effectiveness of these institutions.
2. Strengthening and improving security and defense institutions through more efficient administrative practices (organization, recruitment, professionalism, leadership) should be an intrinsic institutional goal to improve effectiveness. These are not securitizing measures. They could be considered as such if institutions that are critical for national security are failing to fulfill their mission. For example, after the terrorist attack of September 11th, the national security architecture of the United States was reorganized because of the intelligence sharing failure that led to the attack on the Twin Towers.

Although there have been cases of intelligence leaks to Albanian criminals that have compromised law enforcement operations, the NSS does not mention these issues explicitly. If it did, it would then be logical to require that the organization, recruitment, and professional standards of intelligence and law enforcement agencies be revised. Therefore, it is not clear whether these measures have been included as merely general administrative revisions of processes or as clear and targeted interventions that seek to prevent intelligence leaks and address other internal issues related to the effectiveness of intelligence agencies.

3. The expansion of the range of engagements of Armed Forces during peacetime and the establishment of the National Civil Emergencies and Crisis Management Center could be considered securitizing measures if they were further elaborated by outlining how these measures would improve civil emergency response and crisis management.

Another important strategic imperative purports to **strengthen the regional and international role of Albania**. This strategic imperative is discussed only through a diplomatic lens. Although a state's regional and international standing is certainly dependent on diplomacy and foreign relations, it is dependent also on other instruments of power such as defense capabilities, economic and financial power, intelligence capabilities, and a sound technological base. Soft powers such as cultural appeal and a well-connected leadership and foreign policy elite may help, but they cannot be a substitute for hard power. In the last 30 years, however, there are no indications that Albania's foreign policy elite or political leadership enjoys sufficient esteem in the international arena to suggest that there is such mastery of foreign affairs to compensate for the country's lack of hard power.

The NSS maintains that Albania's regional and international role will be strengthened by: (i) increasing engagement to resolve outstanding regional issues through dialogue and trust in the interest of reconciliation, peace and Euro-Atlantic integration; (ii) ensuring and safeguarding the rights of Albanians in the region and supporting their constructive contribution for the consolidation of the multiethnic societies in which they live; (iii) strengthening interstate cooperation to lift trade barriers to enable regional free trade as a precondition to European and Euro-Atlantic integration; (iv) orient foreign policy also towards the new centers of global development and decision-making to expand economic and trade partners and to attract foreign investments and increase exchanges. Although these are important strategic goals, they lack clarity and the NSS does not discuss the expected impact of these measures on advancing national interests. For example, the NSS does not outline the ways and means of engagements to resolve outstanding regional issues, the ways and means to ensure and safeguard the rights of Albanians in the region, or the ways and means to strengthen interstate cooperation. And it does not indicate the new centers of global development and decision-making towards which foreign policy should be oriented. Furthermore, it does not outline priorities for economic sectors and partnerships that should advance national interests.

The strategic imperatives focused on **economic development, quality education, and strengthening social cohesion and national identity** include objectives that do not identify clear means to achieve them or clear national interests. For example, the NSS claims that it will "stimulate strategic projects" to link an Albanian port on the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea through road, rail, energy, and telecommunications connections, but it does not explain how it will stimulate such projects or specifically mention the ports on the Adriatic and Black Sea to

be connected. The NSS further claims that it seeks to improve the competitive capacities of Albania through an “innovative economy” and attract foreign and direct investments, but it does not outline the capacities that it seeks to improve nor the type of foreign and direct investments it seeks to attract.

The other two strategic imperatives – on (i) education and (ii) social cohesion and national identity – mention measures that refer to new strategies or programs to improve the quality of education and strengthen social cohesion without addressing specifically what the objectives of the strategies ought to be and how they ought to be achieved. In the first case, the NSS refers to “a long-term and comprehensive strategy for all levels of education and for scientific research...that integrates economic development with vocational education to stimulate innovation and the application of new technologies to create a qualified workforce”¹⁶ without explaining what it specifically means. In the second case, the NSS mentions “the development of a national program to cultivate the Albanian language and culture”¹⁷, providing property rights to citizens settled in new urban areas, and “finalize the economic and moral compensation process of the citizens who were persecuted during the Communist dictatorship”¹⁸. While these are positive measures, there are of an administrative nature that have no practical effects on national security policy.

Strategic imperatives thus lack clear priorities and do not outline comprehensive ways and means to achieve them.

¹⁶ National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania, 6283.

¹⁷ National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania, 6285.

¹⁸ Ibid.

4. National security policy coordination

In December 2013, Prime Minister Rama issued the order to convene the Inter-ministerial Working Group (IWG) to Draft the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania by 15 May 2014.¹⁹ The IWG was led by the deputy minister of foreign affairs and included representatives from line ministries at the deputy minister level. Except for the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, all ministries were part of the IWG, which included also high-level representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, State Intelligence Service, and National Security Agency (Directorate for the Security of Classified Information). Representatives from the Office of the President and from the Assembly were invited to attend the IWG meetings.

Undoubtedly, the IWG faced a significant challenge – to produce a national security strategy in less than six months – made even more difficult by the small number of experts assigned to the IWG secretariat. The secretariat included one expert representative from each of the following ministries: Foreign Affairs, Defense, Internal Affairs, and Justice.²⁰ The ad-hoc nature of national security policymaking in Albania renders the task of discussion of priorities, threats, objectives and the ways and means to achieve them even more difficult.

In addition to the shortcomings in planning the drafting process, NSS 2014 suffers also from inadequate implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Section III of the document maintains that the NSS ought to be “implemented by the national security system, whose authorities are defined by the Constitution and the laws of the land”²¹. The main institutional responsibilities for the implementation of the NSS fall on the “the Council of Ministers, subordinate institutions and line ministries”²². Furthermore, the NSS maintains that “to fulfill the national security tasks, the Prime Minister is supported by the **Committee for National Security Policies (Komiteti i Politikave të Sigurimit Kombëtar)**”²³. The Committee is a consultative political-level body whose organization, functioning, and membership are determined through a Council of Ministers decision. Reports on the implementation of the NSS must be submitted by the Prime Minister to the Assembly and to the President of the Republic.

¹⁹ Order of the Prime Minister no. 229, date 02/12/2013, amended by Order of Prime Minister no. 247, date 26.12.2013.

²⁰ Despite this stipulation in the Order of the Prime Minister, the members of the secretariats were civil servants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Interview with the head of the secretariat, 2 September 2021.

²¹ National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania, 6287.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

There is, however, a fundamental flaw in the national security governance structure of the Republic of Albania. The country has no national security council at the executive level to coordinate national security policy. The National Security Council, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania (Article 168/3) is merely a consultative body chaired by the President of the Republic, but it has no decision-making power. Furthermore, the Committee for National Security Policies is not a statutory body, and no records of its structure, membership, or decisions were found.²⁴ A freedom of information request was sent also to the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs to gain access to the minutes of the meetings of the IWG and to the unclassified documents, but the Ministry maintained that the file on the drafting process of the NSS did not include documentation of the minutes.²⁵

In addition to the lack of accountability for national security policy coordination at the executive level, the Assembly has not demanded accountability from the executive for the implementation of the NSS. Although the Prime Minister must report annually to the Assembly on the implementation of the NSS, according to the Assembly no such reports have been submitted.²⁶ Despite the lack of annual reports from the Albanian government, the Assembly has not discussed this issue either in a plenary session or in the parliamentary Committee on National Security.

National security policy is of critical importance, and inter-institutional coordination and information flow are essential for its successful implementation. It requires permanent structures to coordinate its implementation and parliamentary accountability to ensure that it is being implemented in accordance with the priorities approved by the Assembly.

²⁴ Freedom of Information requests were sent to the Center for Official Publications (Qendra e Botimeve Zyrtare) and to the Prime Minister's Office requesting such documents, but neither institution was able to find and provide them.

²⁵ Reply received via email on 27 July 2021. The lack of records of IWG meetings was also confirmed by the head of the secretariat.

²⁶ Written reply received by the Assembly on 23 June 2021 in response to a freedom of information request.

5. Case studies

The case studies chosen feature key differences and similarities. The single most important feature that they have in common is a national security policy coordination structure led by the chief executive official of the country (president, prime minister, or chancellor). The functions of these structures and their organization, however, differ from country to country.

Table 2. National security policy governance.

	Drafts NSS	Publishes NSS	NSC established	Role of legislature in drafting and implementing NSS	Parliamentary approval needed for NSS
United States	Yes	Yes	Yes	According to the Goldwater-Nichols Act 1986, the Administration must provide annual national security reports to the Congress.	No
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes	Yes	The UK Parliament is consulted during the drafting process and there is strong parliamentary oversight at place.	No, but Parliament is closely involved in the drafting process
Germany	Yes	Yes	No – the Federal Security Council with a limited mandate mainly to approve arms exports	Parliamentary oversight of national security policy.	No
Israel	No	No	Yes	Not applicable	Not applicable
Singapore	Yes	No	Yes – staff level	No role – limited parliamentary oversight.	No

Out of the five cases, the **US** National Security Council (NSC) is the most firmly established as a decision-making body. The NSC is a product of the National Security Act of 1947, which also established the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Department of Defense (DoD). The NSC is chaired by the President of the United States of America and its members include the Vice President, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – the principal military advisor to the President – Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Director of the CIA, Director of National Intelligence, and other agency and department representatives. The NSC staff, which is responsible for the day-to-day operations is led by the national security adviser. The members of the staff work closely with representatives of government department and agencies in crafting national security policy. The US national security strategy, as well as other security policy initiatives that require interagency coordination, are developed through an interagency coordination process in the *Policy Coordination committees* (PCC). PCCs are interagency working groups and their purpose is to discuss policy differences and draft coherent national security policies, which are then forwarded to the *Deputies Committee (DC)*.²⁷ The members of this committee include deputy heads of departments and agencies, and their main task is to review the policy proposals before they are forwarded to the *Principals Committee (PC)* for approval. The PC includes the all the key members of the NSC except for the President.²⁸

According to the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the President is to submit annually a national report on national security to the Congress. The Act defines the general structure of the report, which must include:

- (1) The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.
- (2) The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States.
- (3) The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of the national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1).
- (4) The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy.

²⁷ See Richard Doyle, “The U.S. National Security Strategy: Policy, Process, Problems”, *Public Administration Review* 64 (4): 624-629.

²⁸ See Charles P. Ries, “How Did the National Security System Evolve?” in *Improving Decisionmaking in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE192/RAND_PE192.pdf.

- (5) Such other information as may be necessary to help inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States.²⁹

Each US administration has indeed submitted a national security strategy to the Congress each year since 1987 until 1999. Since then the practice has been to submit one every four years. Although Congress does not need to approve the national security strategy, deliberation of national security policy and congressional oversight of national security policy is part of a long-standing governance tradition in the US.

The UK National Security Council was established in 2010. It is chaired by the prime minister and its members include several cabinet ministers: Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Secretary of State for the Home Department, Minister for the Cabinet Office, Secretary of State for Defense, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Secretary of State for International Trade, and the Attorney General. Its mandate is “To consider matters relating to national security, foreign policy, defence, international relations and development, resilience, energy and resource security”³⁰. The decisions of the UK National Security Council are binding. The NSC is assisted by the National Security Secretariat, which is led by the National Security Adviser and some of its key tasks include: coordinating and developing foreign and defence policy across government; developing effective protective security policies and capabilities for the government; improving the UK’s resilience to respond to and recover from emergencies, and maintaining facilities for the effective co-ordination of government response to crises; and providing strategic leadership for cyber security in the UK, in line with the National Cyber Security Strategy. The Secretariat cooperates closely with the Joint Intelligence Organization to provide a full picture of the policy issues and options for the National Security Council.³¹

The UK published in 2021 the *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Foreign, and Development Policy (Integrated Review)*. This document not only replace the *2015 Security and Defence Review*, but it sought to position UK national security policy after Brexit. The *Integrated Review* is simply organized. For each of the four policy components, the document discusses the key directions. The UK Parliament does not formally approve the national security strategy, but it followed the drafting process of the *Integrated Review* closely. The Parliament held several hearings to discuss the document and the drafting process with government

²⁹ Goldwater-Nicholas Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law no. 99-433, Section 603, 100 Stat. 992. https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/dod_reforms/Goldwater-NicholsDoDRoordAct1986.pdf.

³⁰ Cabinet Office, “List of Cabinet Committees and their membership”, last updated 19 September 2021, accessed on 21 September 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-cabinet-committees-system-and-list-of-cabinet-committees>.

³¹ National Security and Intelligence, “About us”, accessed on 21 September 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-security/about>.

stakeholders, security experts, and academics. It even had correspondence with the governments of Australia, France, Germany, and Japan on their experiences on conducting their strategic reviews.³²

Germany does not have a national security council; it has a Federal Security Council with decision-making power restricted mainly to arms exports. The Federal Security Council – which is chaired by the Chancellor and includes the Minister of Defense, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister for International Trade and Development. Foreign and security policy fall under Federal Foreign Office and the occupants of that department – who have been typically junior government coalition partners in the last 20 years – have not been in favor of the establishment of a national security council which could transfer part of the policymaking power on foreign and security policy to the Chancellery.³³

The key proponents for the establishment of a national security council – or upgrading the Federal Security Council – have been from the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union) faction. More recently, however, the FDP (Free Democratic Party) and the Greens have also been in favor.³⁴

Germany published its latest national security strategy – the 2016 *White Paper on German National Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* – ten years after having published the previous one.³⁵ Half of the document presents the strategic posture of the Federal Republic, its main objectives, threat perceptions, and priorities of engagement; the other half discusses the future of the German armed forces and their role in the country's security and defense policy.

The Bundestag was not involved in the drafting process of the document, but national security policy is intensely discussed in the legislature and the 2008 CDU/CSU resolution on a German national security strategy³⁶ was arguably a blueprint for the *White Paper*. Despite not having a central-level body to coordinate national security policy, there are several working groups

³² House of Commons Defence Committee, "In Search of Strategy – the 2020 Integrated Review", 12 August 2020, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5801/cmselect/cmdfence/165/165.pdf>.

³³ See Sarah Brockmeier, "The path to a German national security council", *Global Public Policy Institute*, 21 May 2021, <https://www.gppi.net/2021/05/21/the-path-to-a-german-national-security-council>.

³⁴ Brockmeier, "The path to a German national security council".

³⁵ The Federal Government, "White Paper on German National Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr", July 2016, <https://issat.dcaf.ch/download/111704/2027268/2016%20White%20Paper.pdf>.

³⁶ CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group, "A new strategy for Germany", May 2008, https://www.cducsu.de/sites/default/files/Sicherheitsstrategie_Resolution_080506_Engl.pdf.

within the German government structure that are established to discuss and align priorities, although some commentators maintain that they are not as efficient as they could be.³⁷

Israel differs from the previous three countries in one fundamental way: it has no written national security strategy. Nevertheless, Israeli national security policy has been guided by a set of key principles that make up the country's *national security doctrine*. These principles have been the product of geography, foreign relations, and regional military balance. They have been organized in the so-called security triad: (i) deterrence in order to prevent war; (ii) adequate intelligence warning of war; (iii) decisive victory in an attack to bring a swift and crushing end to war. In 2006, the Committee on the Formulation of the National Security Doctrine was established to review Israel's national security doctrine and examine whether its assumptions and principles continued to be valid.³⁸ The Committee added a fourth component to the security triad – *defense of the home front*, which included additional measures for the protection of population centers and critical infrastructure.³⁹

Israel's national security doctrine has been mainly based on defense policy, but defense requirements influence greatly other areas such as foreign policy, industrial policy, and the need for technological superiority to maintain the qualitative edge of the military and of the country.⁴⁰ Although Israel has a formal "security cabinet" at the central-government level called the Ministerial Committee for National Security Affairs, traditionally national security policy decisions have been taken through discussions within informal groups of officials convened by the prime minister.⁴¹ The National Security Council was established in 1999 to assist in national security policy formulation, but was found to be inadequate for such tasks after the 2006 Lebanon war.⁴² Its responsibilities were then formalized and codified in law in 2008.⁴³ Key responsibilities of the Council include: produce national security policy options for the prime minister, Ministerial Committee for National Security Affairs, or any other ministerial committee; coordinate inter-organizational and inter-ministerial staff work on foreign affairs and security issues; operate the National Crisis Administration Center in the Prime Minister's

³⁷ Gerrit Kurtz, "More than a bureaucratic compulsory exercise: Departmental jointness in civil conflict management" (German), *PeaceLab*, 28 April 2021, <https://peacelab.blog/2021/04/mehr-als-eine-buerokratische-pflichtuebung-ressortgemeinschaft-in-der-zivilen-konfliktbearbeitung/>. (German)

³⁸ Dan Meridor and Ron Eldadi, *Israel's National Security Doctrine: The Report of the Committee on the Formulation of the National Security Doctrine (Meridor Committee), Ten Years Later* (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2019), https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Memo187_11.pdf.

³⁹ Meridor and Eldadi, *Israel's National Security Doctrine*, 25-26.

⁴⁰ Meridor and Eldadi, 41-45.

⁴¹ See Joshua Krasna, *A Guide for the Perplexed: The Israeli National Security Constellation and its Effect on Policymaking* (Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2018), <https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/KrasnaFINAL2018.pdf>.

⁴² Krasna, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, 38. See also Meridor and Eldadi, 45-46.

⁴³ See National Security Council, "National Security Council Law, 2008", accessed on 21 September 2021, <https://www.nsc.gov.il/English/About-the-Staff/Pages/nsclaw.aspx>.

Office; examine the security concept of the State of Israel and recommend updates to it; and examine security initiatives of importance in the political-security field.⁴⁴

Singapore differs from the rest of the cases as it does not publish national security strategies. There is only one such document that has been published, and it is almost exclusively focused on fighting terrorism.⁴⁵ The document was published in 2004 – almost three years after the 9/11 attacks in New York – and reads more as a public communication of government measures and a call for the public to be alert and united rather than as a comprehensive document that outlines the country’s national security or counter-terrorism strategy. Nevertheless, it indicates key Singaporean strategic priorities and interests that are to be defended, as well as threat perceptions.

The 9/11 attacks in the United States and a string of attacks due to the rising Islamic militancy in Southeast Asia⁴⁶, dictated a profound strategic rethink since Singapore’s domestic stability is critically dependent on domestic inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony.⁴⁷ In addition to these domestic vulnerabilities, Singapore is also highly dependent on international trade and peace in the Indo-Pacific region. Its lack of strategic depth, given its small size and resulting concentration of production and defense assets, presents a formidable challenge to the country’s strategic planners. To advance its national security interests and defend them against potential threats, the country’s approach to national security is often summed up in the principle of “total defense”. Total defense means integrating both soft and hard power elements – military, civil, economic, social and psychological – within a national security framework.⁴⁸

Despite this integrated approach to national security, the evolving and complex nature of threats has forced Singapore to consider a *network approach* to deal with threats. This means strong inter-institutional coordination to ensure the maximum impact of the use of the country’s limited resources, promote a shared understanding of security concerns among all security policymakers and practitioners, leverage the strengths of different agencies rather than duplicate resources, and nurture a culture of collaboration.⁴⁹ This approach has required

⁴⁴ National Security Council, “National Security Council Law, 2008”.

⁴⁵ National Security Coordination Centre, *The Fight against Terror: Singapore’s National Security Strategy* (Singapore, 2004), <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/156810/Singapore-2004.pdf>.

⁴⁶ These include the Bali bombings in 2002 and the activities of the Jemaah Islamiyah group. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, “MFA Press Statement on the Request for Addition of Jemaah Islamiyah to the List of Terrorists Maintained by the UN”, 23 October 2002, accessed on 23 September 2021, <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2002/10/MFA-Press-Statement-on-the-Request-for-Addition-of-Jemaah-Islamiyah-to-the-List-of-Terrorists-Maintain>.

⁴⁷ See Alex Phua Thong Teck, “What are the past, present, and future challenges of Singapore’s national Security”, https://www.mindef.gov.sg/oms/safti/pointer/documents/pdf/v46n2_past_present_and_future_challenges-min.pdf.

⁴⁸ See National Security Coordination Centre, *The Fight against Terror*, 59-61 and Ron Mathews and Collin Koh, “Singapore’s Defence-Industrial Ecosystem” in Jean Belin and Keith Hartley, eds, *The Economics of Global Defence Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2020), <https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1826/14687/Singapore%27s%20Defence-Industrial%20Ecosystem-2019.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

⁴⁹ See National Security Coordination Centre, 32, 36.

a reorganization of the national security coordination mechanisms and a strong emphasis on threat assessment and prevention capabilities. Singapore has institutionalized interagency cooperation through the National Security Coordination Secretariat (NSCS). The NSCS is responsible for national security planning and coordination and is located under the Prime Minister's Office. In 2003, in cooperation with the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Singapore created a Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning (RAHS) program to assist its national security apparatus to mitigate risks and prevent threats.⁵⁰

These five cases demonstrate the variety of structures, processes, and approaches to formulate and govern national security policy. The changes reflect different historical trajectories, institutional traditions, and internal political dynamics. Despite the differences, there are a few key general trends that are worth emphasizing:

1. Strong institutional coordination is increasingly being recognized as essential for a successful implementation of national security policy.
2. As the nature of threats changes becomes more complex, crafting a coherent response to address them requires an integrated and interconnected approach.
3. A periodic review of assumptions, threat perceptions, and approaches is needed to constantly update the strategic posture to the changing environment.
4. Cooperation with and learning from the experiences of other countries in designing national security governance structures or national security strategies not only broadens the understanding of the national security perspectives of other countries but also provides insights into their perceptions of the strategic environment and their strategic posture.

⁵⁰ Charles P. Ries, "How Did the National Security System Evolve?" in *Improving Decisionmaking in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE192/RAND_PE192.pdf.

6. Recommendations

Albanian policymakers have not changed their general approach towards national security policy and governance despite the shortcomings identified. Important conceptual and institutional obstacles prevent the formulation of a coherent national security policy. Defense and foreign policy – key domains within national security policy – are considered rather narrowly within the Euro-Atlantic integration process, without defining clear objectives for capitalizing on Albania’s NATO membership and the EU accession process to advance the country’s interests. Furthermore, other important policy areas – such as economy and finance, energy and infrastructure, technology and industry – have yet to be understood and discussed through a national security lens.

As the strategic environment becomes more complex by transitioning towards multipolarity and as competition among nations increases, the Council of Ministers and the Assembly must seriously reconsider their traditional approaches to deal with current and future national security challenges. The Assembly must increase its institutional capacities to conduct effective oversight, demand greater accountability, and become more involved in the policymaking process. The government should commission a study of the country’s national security architecture to thoroughly review the legal mandate, capacities, internal coordination and accountability mechanisms, and inter-institutional coordination capacities and mechanisms of each of the institutions in the architecture. The government should further consider initiating a broad and open consultative process involving academia and think tanks to discuss vital Albanian national security interests.

The prime minister could establish a temporary task force to conduct the study and coordinate the public discussions on Albania’s national security interests. The purpose of these processes would be to inform the reform of the national security architecture, ensure that government measures are supported by the public, and strengthen inter-ministerial and inter-departmental cooperation.

Studying the experiences of different countries to deal with national security governance and policy challenges would be greatly beneficial for Albanian policymakers. The main objective of this process should be to critically examine the successes and failures of the approaches and institutional practices of other countries to learn from them, rather than to copy an institutional structure onto the Albanian context. While it may be tempting to adopt a successful institutional structure, it is important to be aware that success of institutional structures tends to be context-specific. Furthermore, the structures themselves are the product of specific historical, political, and organizational contexts, and not necessarily suited to different contexts.

Although it is required that NSS 2014 be reviewed after five years, the government should not rush to draft a new national security strategy based on the same process that was adopted to draft NSS 2014. It would be prudent to finish the review process and establish a national security architecture with clear responsibilities, lines of accountability, and cooperation mechanisms before working on a new strategy. A new national security architecture would better serve the drafting, coordination, and implementation of a new national security strategy.



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