

## Contributor Profile: The Republic of Albania

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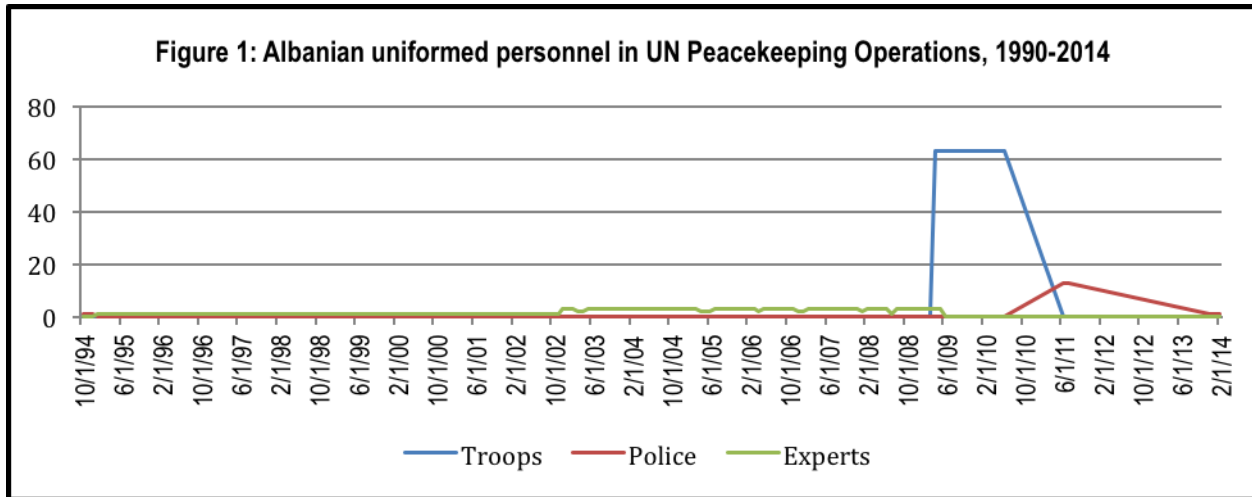
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Active armed forces <sup>1</sup>	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defense Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
14,250	23	2013: US\$182m (1.36% of GDP)	1 (31 May 2014)	1 police UNMISS	72 Afghanistan (ISAF)
World Ranking (size): <b>105<sup>th</sup></b>	TPT: 2 Medium AS532AL Cougar;	2012: US\$185m (1.49% of GDP)	Ranking: 119 <sup>th</sup>		118: Bosnia-Herzegovina (Op. Althea)
(Joint Force Comd: 8,150, Support Command: 4,300, TRADOC: 1,000, MoD and General Staff: 800)	21 Light: 1 AW109; 5 Bell 205 (AB-205); 7 Bell 206C (AB-206C); 8 Bo-105	2011: US\$195m (1.51% of GDP)			
Paramilitary: 500					
Defense Spending / Troop: US\$ <b>13,000</b> compared to a global average of US\$70,000.					

### Part 1: Recent Trends

Since the fall of the communist regime in the early 1990s, Albania has gradually increased its modest contribution to international peace operations. Albania's primary contribution to peacekeeping is provided through NATO, the EU, and the UN, as well as joint coalitions with strategic partners. The primary reason for contributing to peacekeeping has been Albania's obligation derived from its NATO membership. Albania has contributed as part of larger troop-contributing contingents, such as Germany, Italy, US, and Turkey, with the intention of increasing its international role, strengthening strategic partnerships with the United States and the European Union, and transforming its international image and position.

From 1996 to 2013, Albania contributed 6,033 troops to international peace operations. This began with the SFOR mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over the past decade, Albania has leaned more towards NATO-led military operations, especially the ISAF in Afghanistan with 211 troops under Turkish and Italian command, as well as the US-led Joint Coalition in Iraq, where Albania provided 215 troops between 2003 and 2008. As of June 2014, Albania has 72 troops as part of ISAF in Afghanistan. Between 2008 and 2010, Albania contributed to the EUFOR Chad with 189 troops under the auspices and in the framework of MINURCAT. Albania has also contributed modestly to the NATO-led KFOR mission in Kosovo and the EU's Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina under German command with 1,473 soldiers since 2005.



Albania's contribution to peacekeeping takes place within a context of the overall modernization of its defense structures. Its small army, limited economic capacity, and the prioritization of internal security reforms are the primary barriers for contributing further to peace operations. Albania currently has 8,500 active defence personnel, including civilians, from which only 2,500 are ready for combat, while the other two thirds are executive and supporting staff. Albania spends less than 1.5% of its GDP on the defense budget. Since Albania joined NATO in 2009, its main focus has been on developing military capabilities and institutional structures that would enable its participation in NATO-led military and humanitarian operations abroad. This is seen as a crucial aspect of Albania's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, which constitutes one of the most important current national priorities for the country. Albania's contribution to UN peacekeeping is a considerably lower priority, and is not viewed as being in Albania's immediate security and foreign policy interest. Only 3 military observers were sent to the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), while 63 troops and 5 military observers participated in the UN Mission in Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). Nevertheless, as Albania gets closer to the EU, it is keen to contribute more to EU-led crisis management operations in the future. Thus far, Albania has engaged only one police officer in UNMISS, despite the fact that it passed a [specific law](#) in 2011 on this matter.

## Part 2: Decision-Making Process

The deployment of Albanian armed forces to peacekeeping, humanitarian, and military missions abroad is regulated by a specific law ([Nr. 9363](#)) promulgated in 2005: "On the Means and Procedures of deployment and transferring of foreign armed forces in the territory of the Republic of Albania, and sending Albanian armed forces outside of the country." Article 6(1) of this law stipulates that the Albanian parliament shall decide on Albania's participation in international military operations, on a case by case basis, while specifying the mandate and the level of participation. Following this mandate given by the parliament, it is the Council of Ministers which takes the decisions based on the proposal of the Minister of Defence. Within the legal mandate, the Ministry of Defence is in charge of managing the participation of Albanian armed forces to military and humanitarian operations and missions undertaken by NATO, the UN and the EU. With regard to Albania's participation in NATO-led operations and humanitarian missions, the Council of Ministers has a broader scope of authority, upon consultation and approval from the parliament. Related to peacekeeping operations, the Albanian Parliament takes

the decision on sending the armed forces within seven days of the request made by the Council of Ministers. Participation in international peacekeeping operations enjoys all-party support and consensus in Albania.

### **Part 3: Rationales for Contributing**

*Political Rationales:* Albania's contribution to peacekeeping is related to the national consensus to strengthen the institutionalization of its armed and security forces, the expression of Albania's commitment to uphold NATO's military standards, and the preservation of Albania's security and stability on its path to EU membership. Albania began contributing to peacekeeping operations with a view to improving the country's image after the 1997 domestic crisis. In this regard, the prevailing political rationale for the Albanian contribution to peacekeeping operations is the government's [commitment](#) to move from receiving security to providing security through its role as the latest NATO member, as well as showing its commitment to the EU's common defense and security policy (CSDP). Related to this is the ability to strengthen the strategic partnership with the United States through contributing to the global fight against terrorism and new security threats. In addition, providing peacekeepers serves Albania's interest for building regional trust and international influence to strengthen its ties with key strategic Western partners.

*Economic Rationales:* Albanian armed forces in peacekeeping operations receive additional financial benefits as well as the military experience and training gained from serving in the field. Sending peacekeepers is also cost-effective for the Albanian government because it benefits from strengthening the capacities of its armed forces as part of joint contingents and operations with more experienced Euro-Atlantic defense forces. By committing to NATO- and EU-led peace operations Albania benefits from assistance to strengthen and modernize its security institutions and infrastructure. As part of its participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, and later with the Membership Action Plan, Albania benefitted extensively from reaching the approved level of operational capabilities, improving military logistics, and enhancing the education and training of armed forces.

*Security Rationales:* Ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and internal destabilization during the 1990s in Albania have hardened the view among Albania's military and civilian leadership that armed forces should serve to support peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and further afield. Accordingly, the security situation in the Balkans has influenced Albania's defense policy, where it intends to pre-empt potential national and transnational threats by creating a professional armed force, while benefitting from NATO's collective security. Albania considers that joining the Euro-Atlantic structures of collective security and defense has contributed to consolidating internal stability and prosperity as well as promoting regional peace. Hence, as indicated in the [2004 National Security Strategy](#), contributing to peacekeeping missions is also an indicator of Albania's internal stability. It sends a reassuring message that Albania does not pose a threat to its neighbors.

*Institutional Rationales:* Contributing to peacekeeping operations advances the modernization and reform of Albanian armed forces, which ultimately serves the strategic goal of solidifying their institutionalization as well as the overall state institutions. During the 1990s, the military in Albania was the main threat to domestic security as illustrated during the 1997 crisis. Hence, the [institutionalization of the Albanian armed forces](#) enjoys all-party consensus and is a matter of

national security. The [2004 National Security Strategy](#) explicitly states that defense reform is linked with the adjustment to a new security environment and the response to contribute to new missions, tasks, and roles for armed forces and is congruent with the standards of Euro-Atlantic collective defense structures (p.5). The 2014 [Defence Directive](#) identifies Albania's contribution to regional and international peace and stability as a holistic mission for its armed forces. Albania also considers its contribution to peacekeeping operations as an incentive to improve its human resources and recruitment policies to increase the quality of troops sent to peacekeeping operations abroad, thereby improving the overall operational capability for participating in international missions. During the 63<sup>rd</sup> UN General Assembly session in September 24th, 2008, Albania's President echoed this, [stating](#): "Albania is working to enhance the domestic capacities to greater presence aiding global peace and security by deepening the cooperation with the United Nations in the field of peacekeeping operations." Of equal importance, Albania is motivated to strengthen its peacekeeping capabilities as part of NATO's smart defense strategy, which enables Albania to continue the professional transformation of its armed forces, specializing in certain aspects of NATO-led peacekeeping, while making a relevant contribution within North Atlantic political and military structures. In 2012, Albania signed an [agreement](#) with the EU to participate in European crisis management missions. Albania's participation in the EU's crisis management operations seeks to strengthen the institutional ties between Albania and the EU and thinks it contributes to the acceleration of the accession dynamics.

*Normative Rationales:* Albania considers that its modest contribution to NATO, EU, and UN peacekeeping operations serves to advance international peace and security and to promote democracy. The [address](#) given by Albania's President to the 67<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly session on 27 September 2012 echoes neatly Albania's normative rationales, maintaining that: "With its foreign policy of peace and good relations with all other countries, its modest but important contribution in international missions of peace and human rights protection through its good neighborly policy as well as moderate and constructive role in the region, Albania has turned into a producer and direct contributor of stability and security in regional and global scales." The extensive assistance provided to Albania during its democratic transition by the Euro-Atlantic community of states and institutions has influenced Albania's political commitment to various peacekeeping operations. Hence, providing for peacekeeping is seen by the Albanian political and military elite as a way to repay the various external actors for their indispensable role in promoting stability, democracy, and prosperity in Albania. Beyond this, Albania has enshrined within its [defense policy](#) the principle of collective responsibility to peacefully resolve conflicts based on the international rule of law, and joint peacekeeping operations. Albania also considers its modest contribution to peacekeeping a matter of national pride and a reflection of its commitment to international freedom, peace, and security. This logic has been integrated into Albania's foreign and security policy, serving as an asset to contribute to the Euro-Atlantic community it recently joined.

#### **Part 4: Barriers to Contributing**

*Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management:* Although a member of the UN since 1955, Albania does not have a tradition of providing UN peacekeepers. Even after the fall of communism in 1991 and during the democratic transition, Albania was not an active contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, mainly due to internal difficulties related to institutional reforms, the modernization and transformation of armed forces, and economic

underdevelopment. Moreover, Albania's armed forces and law enforcement agencies were not capable of contributing to specific UN peace support operations. However, during the process of joining NATO and the EU, Albania has given priority to contributing to NATO- and EU-led operations, including in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Chad. In relation to UN peacekeeping, Albania has only participated in the mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) and the mission to Chad (MINURCAT).

*Alternative political or strategic priorities:* This alternative institutional preference is in line with the immediate Albanian national interests for full integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, for which there is nation-wide consensus and overwhelming public support, as well as immediate and tangible institutional and political benefits.

*Financial costs:* Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe and its support for peacekeeping operations is constrained by financial costs, despite the institutional and political support it receives from NATO and bilateral donors. The financial constraints force Albania to orient its defense budget mainly towards the domestic transformation and modernization of defense forces to be compatible with other NATO member states and to contribute to NATO-led operations. Financial constraints explain why Albania provides the lowest [total individual contribution to NATO common funding](#) (0.0763%), which is allocated to NATO's civil and military budget, and the security and investment programs. Hence, as a result of orienting the entire defense budget to reforming the military and contributing to NATO- and EU-led operations, Albania does not have the capacities to deploy on its own, nor does it have sufficient political commitment and the armed forces to contribute significantly to UN peace operations.

*Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda:* The modest contribution of Albania to peacekeeping operations is not related to the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda. On the contrary, Albania has supported UN reforms and has participated in several UN-led projects for increasing the coordination and efficiency of the UN presence at country level.

*Exceptionalism:* Exceptionalism is not a factor in Albanian contribution decisions.

*Difficult domestic politics:* Although the domestic political landscape is vibrant and often fragmented, there is strong support for Albania's Euro-Atlantic integration. Since contributing to NATO-led and EU-led peace operations is seen as strategic asset for Albania's Euro-Atlantic orientation, there is unanimous support within government and parliament, and among all political parties and civil society groups. With regard to UN peacekeeping there is neither domestic political pressure nor sufficient public interest to push Albania's government to increase its contribution to UN peace operations.

*Resistance in the military:* There is no evident resistance within the Albanian armed forces to participation in NATO and EU peace operations. However, there is evidence of hesitation when it comes to UN peacekeeping operations, mainly due to the small size of Albania's armed forces, limited budget, and lack of military capabilities to allocate to peacekeeping operations. Despite this, Albania's armed forces operate under civilian democratic control and the designated state institutions govern the decision to participate in peacekeeping operations.

*Lack of fit with legislative, procurement and operational timelines:* Albania has a clear legal and procedural system, and a functional institutional setting for participating and contributing to peace operations. Albania has specific and separate agreements with NATO and the EU. The framework for Albania's contribution to UN peacekeeping is regulated in 2007 with the UN Stand-by Arrangements System (UNSAS) Memorandum of Understanding.

*Legal obstacles:* There are no legal obstacles with regard to the deployment of Albanian armed forces abroad. Since joining NATO in 2009, Albania has institutionalized its procedures for sending troops abroad. Equally, it has a legal agreement with the EU to participate in crisis management operations.

## **Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues**

Because of the modest track record in providing UN peacekeepers and its focus on working through NATO and EU peace operations, there is no evident public and political discussion about Albania's contribution to UN peacekeeping. The main pressing factors remain the enhancement of Albania's role within NATO as one of the newest members, as well as enhancing its participation in EU-led crisis management operations to align and advance Albania's path towards EU membership. Albania is currently undertaking further reforms to uphold the obligations derived from NATO membership. As part of this process, Albania is finalizing the comprehensive modernization of its armed forces, to make them more effective and capable of contributing to NATO, EU and UN operations abroad. Modernizing Albania's armed forces entails improving the institutional command and control, enhancing the management of information, improving defensive capabilities, and the modernization of the armory. This is a response to multiple [allegations](#) of corruption, misconduct and unprofessional management within the Albanian defense sector over the past two decades. Although this is not a national issue at the moment, the rate of Albanian women participating in peacekeeping operations is very low. On another front, Albania is engaged in promoting NATO's open doors policy for the remaining countries in the Western Balkans to join the alliance. It is in Albania's interest to tackle nationalist tendencies in the region and particularly to increase the security of Albanians in Macedonia, south Serbia, and to promote the further consolidation of Kosovo's statehood. In the discourse of promoting the strategic renewal of Albania's armed forces, reference is made to Albania's indispensable commitment to increase its role and participation in international peace support operations led by the US and other strategic allies of Albania.

Another challenge for Albania is the renewal of its decade-old security and defense legal and strategic framework. Albania is seeking to adjust its security strategy to NATO's "smart defense" approach. In 2013, Albania completed a strategic defense review, which has opened up the path for renewing its security and defense policy. Although the new government has given priority to Albania's contribution to global security, it continues to prioritize NATO- and EU-led operations and there is no explicit reference to prioritizing Albania's contribution to UN peacekeeping. The [2014 Defence Directive](#) admits that Albania continues to face challenges with regard to drafting key strategic security and defense documents; developing full operational capacities; mismanaging defense resources; the poor management of defense equipment; and the inadequate evaluation and promotion within defense personnel. Despite these challenges, the 2014 Defence Directive indicates that Albania continues to show a steady commitment to contribute to NATO and EU peace operations. Albania is working to complete the second

battalion group capable of participating in NATO-led operations. Nevertheless, as Albania is seeking to reduce the number of active troops as part of the modernization of defense forces, this could have an immediate effect on Albania's ability to contribute to international peacekeeping. Faced with economic constraints, Albania has cut the defense budget while trying to increase the effectiveness of, and reduce corruption within, its security forces, while maintaining basic obligations as a NATO member.

### **Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents**

The main champions of peacekeeping in Albania are the political leaders that have proactively worked for Albania's NATO membership. In this regard, both democrats and socialists within Albania have supported participation in international peace operations. The domestic political debate is mainly focused on domestic issues, so contributing to peacekeeping is not a controversial issue. Instead, it is used rhetorically by the political spectrum to signify Albania's progress over the years and its role in exporting security. The Socialist Party of Albania, which was in government during Albania's participation in Iraq between 2003 and 2005, provided full support to this international joint military coalition. Equally, when the Democratic Party of Albania came to power in 2005, it continued the same modest contribution to peacekeeping. The incumbent government led by the Socialist Party has identified contributing to international peace and security as one of its national political priorities. Of importance, the civil society organizations and shapers of public opinion have never opposed Albania's participation in peacekeeping missions abroad. On the contrary, the death of an Albanian peacekeeper in Afghanistan did not trigger any political and public reaction to withdraw from peacekeeping operations. Instead, this became a moment of political unity where the fallen soldier was declared a hero and a symbol of national pride.

### **Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats**

Albania has limited capabilities to contribute to peace operations. So far, Albania has made available a battalion of Special Forces to peacekeeping operations that have mainly operated in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chad. Due to limited capabilities, over the past ten years Albanian peacekeepers have participated within the contingents of larger troop-contributing countries (Germany, Turkey, US, and Italy) in mainly NATO- and EU-led operations. In its largest contributions, Albania has engaged a Special Forces contingent in Afghanistan and Iraq, where they gradually operated as independent combat units. It also engaged a training team (OMLT, Medical and Special Forces training troops) and an EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) team in Afghanistan. As part of NATO "smart defense" initiative, Albania is orienting and specializing the capabilities of its armed forces to undertake special combat and supportive roles within NATO-led peace operations.

### **Part 8: Further Reading**

Law Nr. 9363 of 24.03.2005 "[On the Means and Procedures of deployment and transferring of foreign armed forces in the territory of the Republic of Albania, and sending Albanian armed forces outside of the country](#)".

"[Sectorial Strategy of Defence Ministry 2007-2013](#)" (Tirana, 2007).

"[National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania](#)" (Tirana, 2004).

"[Military Strategy of the Republic of Albania](#)" (Tirana, 2005).

Ministry of Defence, "[2014 Defence Directive](#)" (Tirana, 2014).

“[Document of Defence Policy](#)” (Tirana, 2000).

Elvin Gjevori, [Institutionalisation and the politics of memory in Albania](#) (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Dublin City University, 2014).

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**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all data are taken from the IISS, *The Military Balance, 2014* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2014).