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**AN ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES-ALBANIAN  
SECURITY RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE WAR ON  
TERRORISM**

by

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**AN ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES-ALBANIAN SECURITY RELATIONS IN  
LIGHT OF THE WAR ON TERRORISM**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores U.S.-Albanian relations, focusing on the security cooperation between both nations in the war on terrorism. Since its inception as an independent state, regardless of the ideological fashions, modern Albania's relations with the United States of America have remained a constant in the shifting pattern of Albanian politics. These relations have been complex in their development and their complexity can only be understood in the historical context of the international situation in general and that of Albania in particular. Their most important feature is that after the First World War, Albania survived as an independent state largely due to the support given to her by the United States. Certainly Albanian-U.S. relations have had their ups and downs, with the most unfortunate period being the post-World War Two period, where both governments failed to arrive at satisfactory arrangements for the establishment of diplomatic relations and hence put Albania under communist domination for half a century. After the collapse of communism, a revitalization of U.S.-Albanian relations took place. In the last twelve years, every Albanian government's decision to prioritize the strengthening of Albania's security relations with the United States has been unequivocal and fundamentally sound. In fact Albania is becoming an increasingly important ally for the United States in the Balkans. Although Albania is a small and rather poor country by U.S. standards, the security partnership between the two countries reached a zenith during the crisis of Kosovo. Kosovo's crisis underscored Albania's utility as a staging area for NATO's operations in the Balkans. Albania allowed the United States/NATO to use its territory and air space for the Kosovo operation and also during crises in Bosnia, an allowance that even some NATO allies couldn't make. After September 11, the Bush administration has made clear that it puts greater emphasis upon coalitions than upon alliances. The close relation between United States and Albania was further fostered after the September 11 terrorist attack in New York and Washington, D.C., as Albania unequivocally offered to cooperate with the United States on the war on terrorism. At a time when the United States is increasingly focused on security outside of Europe, Albania is trying to successfully engage itself on the war against terrorism by freezing terrorist assets,

shutting down suspect Islamic NGOs, expelling Islamic extremists, and providing military and diplomatic support for the U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This has not only led to unparalleled bilateral cooperation in terms of defense, through which Albania is undertaking the most far-reaching reform in the history of its armed forces, but also to the prospects for Albania of economic and diplomatic payoffs that were previously beyond Albania's reach. U.S.-Albanian relations have had their ups and down, but widespread positive sentiment toward the United States has been constant in Albanian public opinion. This paper is far from a full study of Albanian-U.S. relations, even though their ups and downs may help determine the complexity and various manifestations of affection toward the United States, but what matters most is that in the new trend of cooperation on the global war on terrorism, Albania, as a perceived Muslim majority country, may prove in the future to be more important to the United States through her contribution to the war on terrorism than through her military capabilities.



## **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Ministry of Defense or the Albanian Government.

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The Author must not overlook his source of inspiration, his loving children Kevin and Oistin, to whom this work is dedicated.

## I. INTRODUCTION

America is almost as dear as their motherland and upon whom no other country has such a hold on their imagination and affection.

C. Telford Erickson, 1922I.

Recent Gallup polls<sup>1</sup> indicate that Albania remains by far the most pro-American nation in Europe, with more than ninety-five percent of the population supporting the U.S. international security policy. In a time when widespread criticism prevails among European public opinion regarding the United States' intervention in Iraq, it is fair for skeptics to ask whether this reverse trend of Albanian pro-Americanism is part of the shifting pattern of Albanian politics vis-à-vis greater national powers, or simply a brief gestation expressed by Albanians in the period of radical transformation from communism to the new world of freedom. In fact, a sense of betrayal by greater national powers and the complex relations Albania shares with her neighbors have largely determined the Albanian quest for a more powerful protector, but the skeptics of pro-Americanism refer to Albanian politics and overlook the fact that Albanian public opinion has remained pro-American even when the United States has been vilified by Communist propaganda and when diplomatic relations between the two countries have been severed.

The origins of Albanian affection toward the United States are varied, but one of the most significant reasons for such affection remains the contrast between the American and European approaches toward Albanian independence. For a long period of time, in the Albanian imagination, Europe has reflected Albanian fears of dismemberment, while the United States has reflected Albanian hope for independence. Furthermore, in this imagination, the suffering that has been caused by Albania's neighbors has been blamed first and foremost on the indifference of Europe toward the Albanian question.

Even in the period after the Cold War, it is often difficult to differentiate between Albanian pro-Americanism as an expression of affection toward the United States, or as a

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<sup>1</sup> Gallup International website at: <http://www.gallup-international.com/>

critique of anti-Albanian excesses in Western Europe that are truly worthy of criticism. In the last fifteen years, when Balkan history became again a blooded rerun of its past, positive feelings toward the United States have risen even higher in Albania, and the credibility of the United States in the eyes of Albanians remains particularly sound. Albanians have considered the United States as an impartial actor in the complicated politics of the Balkans and have fully supported the United States during the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo. The close relation between the United States and Albania was further fostered after the September 11 terrorist attack in New York and Washington, D.C., as Albania unequivocally offered to cooperate with the United States on the war on terrorism. Albania also supported the U.S. operation in Iraq by sending troops there, a decision that put her at odds with some prominent members of the European Union. In the last twelve years, politics in Albania have reflected the public affection toward the United States by supporting the United States in almost every decision taken with regard to regional security affairs. Every Albanian governmental decision to prioritize the strengthening of Albania's security relations with the United States has been unequivocal and fundamentally sound.

**A. THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS THE INDEPENDENCE OF ALBANIA**

Since the day modern Albania emerged as an independent state, regardless of the ideological fashions, Albania's relations with the United States of America have remained a constant in the shifting pattern of Albanian politics. Whether on good terms or bad, these relations have been the focus of Albanian foreign policy. Since the First World War these relations have been complex both in nature and in the way they have been developed, but the most important feature of these relations is that Albania has survived as an independent state largely due to the support given to her by the United States. The complexity of U.S.-Albanian relations can only be understood in the historical context of the international situation in general and that of Albania in particular.

The United States of America emerged from the First World War as the leading power in international affairs. President Woodrow Wilson entered world politics with a new doctrine of American international engagement that opposed traditional American isolationism. He recognized that international peace was of paramount American interest,

because a major war in any part of the world would endanger American well-being. The American President introduced his concept of the modern world in his famous “peace without victory” speech<sup>2</sup> delivered before Congress on January 22, 1917, in which he harshly criticized European imperialism and the balance-of-power politics that, in his rationalization, had caused the war. In his speech Wilson laid out a plan of fourteen points that he believed would prevent future wars. According to President Wilson’s vision of the world, the new order would be based on the right of self-determination without great power interference, which would guarantee freedom and equal status for all nations. Wilson envisioned a new collective security for the free community of nations by creating the League of Nations, abolishing all secret alliances, and setting on the road to independence the colonies and the national states that made up the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. President Wilson's plan resulted in a major shift in the international political situation that was definitely in favor of Albania’s independence, and, most importantly, it was against the constant plans of partition by her neighbors.

Located in a strategic position in Southeastern Europe, for centuries, Albania has had a history of foreign domination and continuous efforts to secure her partition.<sup>3</sup> The fight for control over the area inhabited by the Albanian people has always been motivated by open territorial disputes. The Balkans have been the traditional powder keg of European politics and, unfortunately, Albania has not been an exception to this rule. On the contrary, Albania has been an apple of discord among her more powerful neighbors, more often than commonly realized.<sup>4</sup> The process of the infamous “Balkanization,” the development of long running national and ethnic disputes, like so much else in the modern history of that region, began with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. In the mid-nineteenth century, the desperate internal crisis of the

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<sup>2</sup> For more on President Wilson's speech and his vision of the new world order, see Thomas J. Knock. *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press. Reprint edition 1995.

<sup>3</sup> For the history of Albania see: Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto. *The History of Albania: From Its Origins to the Present Day*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981; Joseph Swire, *Albania: The Rise of a Kingdom*. Reprint ed. New York: Arno, 1971. Anton Logoreci. *The Albanians: Europe's Forgotten Survivors*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Lendvai. *Eagles in Cobwebs: Nationalism and Communism in the Balkans*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969.



Ottoman Empire had an immense effect on all of the nations living under its rule. The Balkan nations launched a national revolution and gradually they started to catch up with the European states. Like other nationalities of the region, Albanians understood the weakness of the crumbling Ottoman Empire, and in the late nineteenth century resorted to arms,<sup>5</sup> but due to complex domestic and international factors they were unable to catch up with the neighboring nation-states.<sup>6</sup>

Although a Constituent Assembly meeting in the south port of Vlorë on November 28, 1912, declared Albania an independent state and set up a provisional government, the fate of Albania was decided in an ambassadorial conference held in London in December of that year, after the First Balkan War. Surrounded by tensions and pressures from all Balkan neighboring countries that wanted to take as much as possible from the weak Albania, the Conference of Ambassadors concluded with the Treaty of London in May 1913. Presided over by Britain's foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, the Treaty left out of Albania large parts of her territory. Kosovo and western Macedonia were given to Serbia<sup>7</sup> and a part of southern Albania was given to Greece. As Grey admitted in a speech to the British Parliament, the essential goal for the Conference's decisions was preserving the agreement among the Great Powers themselves.<sup>8</sup> In spite of the fact that the conference of the Great Powers' ambassadors proclaimed the existence of a free and independent Albania as a basic condition for the maintenance of peace in the Balkan Peninsula<sup>9</sup>, large parts of what was left of Albania were still occupied by her

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<sup>5</sup> On the Albanian revolt see Stavro Skendi. *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912*, Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press, 1967.

<sup>6</sup> All the countries of the Balkans were under Ottoman rule for almost five centuries. Greece declared its independence in 1829; Serbia in 1878; Montenegro in 1878; Bulgaria in 1908; Romania in 1878; Albania in 1912.

<sup>7</sup> One of Serbia's primary aims during the Balkan wars was to gain an Adriatic port, preferably Durrës. Austria-Hungary and Italy opposed giving Serbia an outlet to the Adriatic, which they feared would become a Russian port. They instead supported the creation of an autonomous Albania. Russia backed Serbia's and Montenegro's claims to Albanian-inhabited lands. Britain and Germany remained neutral.

<sup>8</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons (1908-1928) 51:817*. Quoted by T. Zavalani in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*. Edited by Peter F. Sugar and Ivo John Lederer. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1994, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Gianni Amadeo. *L'Albania dall' indipendenza all' unione con l'Italia*. Milano 1940, p. 147.

more powerful neighbors, and the final and exact boundary lines were still not defined.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the birth of a modern state of Albania was delayed for almost fifteen years.<sup>11</sup>

The outbreak of the First World War found the new Albanian state without any agreed-upon frontiers and occupied first by its neighbors and later by Austria in the north, France in the southeast, and Italy in the south.<sup>12</sup> The rival claims of Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia dominated the endless disputes about Albania's future at the Versailles Peace Conference.<sup>13</sup> The situation was biased in favor of Italy, which in the secret Treaty of London in 1915<sup>14</sup> had secured the promise of a mandate over central Albania, including the annexation of the two strategically situated Adriatic ports of Vlora (Valona) and Sazani (Sasseno). Italy was even promised by the Triple Entente powers that she would be rewarded the protectorate over Albania in exchange for entering the war against Austria-Hungary. Under the secret treaty, Serbia and Montenegro, too, were promised much of northern Albania. The Greeks, on the other hand, concluded a deal with the

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<sup>10</sup> The Conference of London, by the Treaty of May 30, 1913, left the boundaries of Albania for settlement by the European powers. These were actually described by decisions of the Conference of Ambassadors in London on May 22 and August 11, 1913. The delimitation of the southern Albanian boundary was completed on the scene in December 1913.

<sup>11</sup> Following the London Treaty, the Great Powers further decided on recognizing an independent state of Albania ruled by a constitutional monarchy and under the protection of the Great Powers. After myriad negotiations, the Great Powers agreed to appoint Prince Wilhelm of Wied, a thirty-five-year-old German army captain, to head the new state. Prince Wied arrived in Albania in March 1914 but he was faced with local power struggles, miserable economic conditions, and foreign provocations. As result, a general insurrection mounted in the summer of 1914 forced the Prince to leave the country only six months after his arrival. See Puto and Pollo. *History of Albania*

<sup>12</sup> Between 1913-1916 armies of Italy, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, France, and Austria were deployed in Albanian territory. For more on the situation in Albania during this period see: Ivan T. Berend. *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe Before World War II*. Barkley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1998.

<sup>13</sup> The Conference was held between January and July 1919. For more on Versailles Treaty see: *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference 1919. Vol. I,II,III,IV,V*; United States Government Printing Office, 1942-1946; Margaret Macmillan. *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*. London, U.K: Random House, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Held in April 1915.

Italians for dividing Albania between Greece and Italy, claiming the need to protect the Orthodox Albanians “many of whom did not speak the Greek language, they only spoke Albanian.”<sup>15</sup>

In January 1920, at the Paris Peace Conference, negotiators from France, Britain, and Greece, in the absence of a U.S. negotiator, agreed to divide Albania among Yugoslavia, Italy, and Greece as a diplomatic maneuver aimed at finding a compromise solution to the territorial conflict between Italy and Yugoslavia. That was contrary to the determination of President Wilson expressed on May 6, 1919, in a meeting with British Prime Minister Lloyd George and France’s Clemenceau: “Albania ought to be independent.”<sup>16</sup> Albania’s fate seemed to have been sealed, as the Great Powers were more than willing to close a tough chapter of complex disputes and satisfy all the pretenders. Albanians strongly rejected the secret partition plans and cautioned the Great Powers against the dismemberment of the country, warning that if the dismemberment were to be confirmed, “the only hope of peace [for Albanians] would be emigration or death”.<sup>17</sup>

An Albanian National Assembly, known as the Congress of Lushnja, held in January 1920, called for the unity of all Albanians regardless of religion or ideological affiliation. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, the Congress appointed a four-man Regency Council. Each member represented one of the four major religions of the country, Muslim, Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Bektashi. A bicameral parliament was also created, appointing members of its own ranks to an upper chamber, the Senate. An elected lower chamber, the Chamber of Deputies, had one deputy for every 12,000 people in Albania and, not unexpectedly, one deputy for the large Albanian-American

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<sup>15</sup> The quote is from Greek Prime Minister Venizelos’ address at the Paris Peace Conference on Greek territory claims. For more on Venizelos address see: <sup>15</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference 1919. Vol.III*; United States Government Printing Office, 1943. p .857-865.

<sup>16</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference 1919. Vol.V*; United States Government Printing Office, 1946. p. 483.

<sup>17</sup> Secretary’s Notes of Conversation Held in M. Pichon’s Room at the Quai d’Orsay, Paris, on Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1919, at 3 p.m. Addendum. Albanian Claims: Statement by Touran Pasha. *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference 1919. Vol.IV*; United States Government Printing Office, 1943. p.111-116.

community in the United States. In its inaugural message the Regency Council expressed “heartfelt thanks to President Wilson for his defense of the rights of Albanians. They remain convinced that the great American Republic will continue to support their rightful national claims.”<sup>18</sup>

The rising resistance of the Albanians in the country itself and the deteriorated situation among the neighbors reinforced President Woodrow Wilson’s determination to resist the dismemberment of the country and to recognize the independence of Albania.<sup>19</sup> In March 1920, President Woodrow Wilson intervened to block the Paris agreement by noting “with satisfaction that the British and French governments have not lost sight of the interests and future well-being of the Albanian people. The American government can well understand that the division of Albania into three parts, as stipulated in Anglo-French agreement, would be acceptable to the Yugoslav government, but it is as strongly opposed to anything that would harm the Albanians in order to please Yugoslavs, as it is opposed to injuring Yugoslavs to the advantage of the Italians.”<sup>20</sup> The United States underscored its support for Albania’s independence and in December 1920 the League of Nations recognized Albania’s sovereignty by admitting it as a full member. Thereafter, a new era started for the relations of Albania with the United States. Preserving the independence of Albania has since been the constant U.S. policy, despite ups and downs in the relations between the two countries. Within the framework of the independent Albania, the task of creating a nation-state proved to be difficult not only due to the inherited tribal social structure of the country, but more importantly, because it took a further six years until its neighbors were forced to recognize the final and exact boundary lines.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> T. Zavalani in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*. Edited by Peter F. Sugar and Ivo John Lederer. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1994, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Lendvai. *Eagles in Cobwebs: Nationalism and Communism in the Balkans*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969. p. 219.

<sup>20</sup> Justin Godard. *L’Albanie en 1921*. Paris: Presses Universitaires. 1922. p. 205. Quoted in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*. p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> An international frontier-drawing commission headed by an Italian General was mandated by the Conference of Ambassadors of the Great Powers. The Italian General was assassinated by Greeks, and as retaliation the island of Korfu was bombarded and even occupied by Mussolini’s navy.

## **B. THE NEW STATE OF ALBANIA AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES**

Their vitality and determination to maintain their independence has no equal in human history.

Milovan Djilas

The new state of Albania immediately sought to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. Apart from the utilitarian aspect of the dire need for political and economic support, at the time there were also thousands of Albanians who had arrived in the United States to whom America was “almost as dear as their motherland and upon whom no other country has such a hold on their imagination and affection.”<sup>22</sup> In December 1921, an Albanian delegation contacted the U.S. ambassador in Rome and requested diplomatic recognition by the United States, and promised that the Albanian government would grant concessions to U.S. oil companies.<sup>23</sup> In fact, a couple of U.S. oil companies had already been seeking oil concessions from Albania, where oil fields with large reserves ready to develop were found.<sup>24</sup> Secretary of Commerce Hoover, was concerned that the U.S. companies were at a disadvantage in securing concessions with the Albanian government compared to the position of the Italian and British companies, inasmuch as both Britain and Italy had already sent active representatives to Albania to advance the claims of their nationals. Therefore, to support the U.S. companies trying to do business in Albania, Secretary Hoover suggested to the Secretary of State that serious consideration be given to the recognition of Albania and the possibility of sending American government representatives to the country.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> U.S. Ambassador in Italy in a telegram to the Secretary of State Hughes on April 3, 1922, citing a U.S. emissary at the time, C. Telford Erickson, who later represented the Government of Albania in contacts with the U.S. officials prior to establishing diplomatic relations. The Ambassador in Italy (Child) to the Secretary of State Hughes, Document No. 875.6363/20. December 13, 1921. *The Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, Vol.I, p. 594*

<sup>23</sup> The Ambassador in Italy (Child) to the Secretary of State. Document No. 875.01/158. December 13, 1921. Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 595

<sup>25</sup> The Secretary of Commerce (Hoover) to the Secretary of State. Document No.875.6363/21. April 26, 1922. Ibid.,596.

By the end of April 1922, the Department of State sent Mr. Maxwell Blake to Albania as consul general to inquire about the situation in the country and advise on any possible relations that ought to be established. Blake soon reported that although the Albanian State had not definitely emerged from the stages of hopeful experiment, it was, nevertheless, sufficiently established in fact to command international support.<sup>26</sup> Blake brought to the attention of the U.S. government the material factors that were worthy of consideration by emphasizing the commercial possibilities that Albania offered through possession of rich natural resources awaiting development.<sup>27</sup> He also conveyed to the State Department the moral encouragement that Albanians needed in their struggle to preserve their independence by underlining the high regard of Albanians toward the United States

The Albanian government, on the other side, reiterated its pledge of according concessions to American concerns and also promised that the American interests in Albania would receive the most-favored-nation treatment even without signing a formal economic agreement. The Albanian government accepted without objection the American passports carried by naturalized Albanian-Americans and released from military duty all holders of U.S. passports<sup>28</sup> who were serving in the Albanian Army.

On July 28, 1922, the United States recognized Albania *de jure* and, by December of that year, the United States sent Mr. U. Grant-Smith to Tirana as U.S. minister to Albania, thus starting officially the bilateral relations between the two countries. This coincided with the time when Ahmet Zogu was appointed Prime Minister of Albania. A former officer in the Austrian Army, Zogu had held various ministerial posts in the Albanian government since 1920; he became the leader of a reformist Popular Party that created the republican government in 1922. In the first years of formal relations, the representatives from the United States tried to negotiate concessions for two U.S. oil

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<sup>26</sup> The Commissioner in Albania (Blake) to the Secretary of State. Tirana, June 28, 1922. Document No. 875.01/215. *Ibid.*, 602.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 603.

<sup>28</sup> Believing in the prosperity of an Albanian independent state, between 1919-1925, twenty to thirty thousand Albanian émigrés journeyed back to Albania from the United States. For more on this, see Joan F. Kontos. *Read Cross, Black Eagle, A Biography of the Albanian-American School*, New York, 1981.

companies operating in Albania, Sinclair Exploration Company, and Standard Oil Company. As already noted, the concessions were already promised by the Albanian government, but negotiations were severely handicapped by opposition from various foreign interests, particularly from Italian and British oil companies.<sup>29</sup> Negotiations were also handicapped by the inability of U.S. companies to obtain a financial loan for supporting their activity in Albania.

In the meantime, the economic conditions in Albania worsened, and political stability deteriorated. Albanian governments appeared and disappeared in rapid succession. Between July and December 1921 for example, Albania's prime minister was changed five times. On 6 April 1924 two American tourists were shot dead as they drove on the road toward northern Albania.<sup>30</sup> Their murder caused great dismay throughout Albania, and deep anxiety for the government. Although it was never fully determined who actually carried out the attack, different theories captivated public opinion. Apart from the common suggestion that armed bandits murdered the tourists, there also have been theories that emphasized political reasons. One theory suggested that they had been mistaken for supporters of the opposition, while another, which seemed more plausible, suggested that the crime was committed in order to discredit the government in the eyes of foreign observers in a time of continuing border disputes with both Greece and Yugoslavia.<sup>31</sup> Not very long after the death of the Americans, on May 5 Avni Rustemi, a prominent politician,<sup>32</sup> was assassinated outside the Parliament building in Tirana. The opposition accused the government of being unable to ensure the safety of either Albanian or foreign citizens and, to the despair of Zogu, the opposition gave the young Rustemi a martyr's funeral in the southern town of Vlora. Following the funeral, a popular liberal-minded revolt engulfed the country, led by Zogu's main political rival,

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<sup>29</sup> In a report to the Secretary of State dated December, 21, 1923, the U.S. Minister in Albania, Grant-Smith, noted that the Anglo-Persian agents continued to be active. They had the support of Mr. Justin Godard, the French author of a well-known Albanophile work, who was well regarded by Albanians. His endeavor aimed at securing an oil concession for an area near Vlora (Valona). For more see: *Ibid.*, p. 608.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Luis Coleman and George B. de Long.

<sup>31</sup> Miranda Vickers. *The Albanians: A Modern History*. New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. 1995. p. 110.

<sup>32</sup> Leader of a Radical Youth Organization and delegate to the Constituent Assembly.

Fan S. Noli, a Harvard graduate of 1912.<sup>33</sup> Noli's Liberal opposition forced Zogu into exile in June 1924 and formed a quazi-left-oriented government that tried to institute land reform. In foreign affairs Noli rushed to recognize Soviet Russia but failed to achieve international recognition for his government, despite his eloquent speech at the Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva, a speech that was widely published and made the headlines in *The New York Times* as “one of the most-talked-of, and certainly the most picturesque, speeches of the session which made the delegates to the Assembly of the League of Nations gasp.”<sup>34</sup> Noli appealed to the U.S. government for recognition by pledging to fulfill the promises of equal opportunity for U.S. oil companies vis-à-vis British and Italian companies. Besides, he promised that his government would bring to justice the murderers of the two American tourists. Although the U.S. minister in Tirana suggested that Noli’s government was inclined toward the United States and that the American interests would be served by the continuance of the new regime, Secretary of State Hughes refrained from recognizing a government which had resulted from a revolution and had, in fact, overthrown Zogu’s government by force. Moreover, the new government was not even considered legal, according to the then-Albanian constitution, pending the holding of elections, something that Noli declined to pursue because he believed the volatile security situation in the country needed a paternalistic government.

Taking all of this into account, the United States didn’t recognize Noli’s government. Secretary Hughes advised his representative in Albania to continue to carry on with Noli’s government the relation that the minister had with the previous regime, but “[u]nless the Head of the State has been changed, the question of recognition does not seem to arise.”<sup>35</sup> Unable to get international recognition and incapable of coping with a series of promises for reform, Noli’s position grew weaker every day. However, due to international pressure, by November Noli was preparing for election to the Constituent

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<sup>33</sup> A reform-minded Orthodox bishop, Fan S. Noli was educated with Western ideas at Harvard University and had even translated Shakespeare and Ibsen into Albanian. Noli and other Western-oriented leaders formed the Opposition Party of Democrats that called for abolishing feudalism, resisting Italian domination, and establishing a Western-style constitutional government.

<sup>34</sup> *New York Times* Oct 5, 1924. p. XX13.

<sup>35</sup> The Secretary of State to the Minister in Albania (Grant-Smith). Document No.875.01/243. June 24, 1924. *The Foreign Relations of the United States, 1924, Vol.I*. Government Printing Office. 1943. p.311.



Assembly. Nevertheless, before the elections could be held, former Prime Minister Zogu, who was residing in Yugoslavia, was already going ahead with preparations for a comeback. He returned with the assistance of about 1,000 Yugoslav army regulars and Tsarist Russian troops settled in Yugoslavia, who volunteered to overthrow Noli in retaliation for his recognition of the Soviet regime. By Christmas Eve, Zogu executed a coup d'etat, ousting Fan Noli and reclaiming the capital. Noli and members of the cabinet, accompanied by approximately five hundred fellow idealists, fled into exile.<sup>36</sup>

On February 1, 1925, Zogu became the president of a similarly newly proclaimed republic. Understanding the importance of the relations with the United States, in early 1926 Zogu sent to Washington a prominent leader of the Albanian nationalist movement, Faik Konica (Konitza) as Albanian minister. Konica thus became the first official Albanian representative accredited in the United States.<sup>37</sup> Zogu's main energies were devoted to keeping Albania on as friendly relations as possible with her neighbors Yugoslavia and Greece.<sup>38</sup> He also began to strengthen relations with Italy in exchange for loans and, in 1927, signed the controversial Treaty of Tirana, a treaty of friendship with Italy that was followed by a military alliance intended to last for 20 years. The Treaty was unwelcomed not only by Albania's neighbors who perceived it as a threat to their interests in Albania but also by others in the country who were witnessing the rapid economic and military penetration of Mussolini's Italy. Referring to this treaty, Anne O'Hare McCormick in a column in the *New York Times* of June 19, 1927, noted that "[n]obody is afraid of Italy and everybody is afraid of Mussolini. That, in a sentence, sums up the reaction of the Balkans to an Italian diplomatic offensive so irritating that it justifies the cynic's observation that the direct cause of every war is a peace treaty."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> In 1930 Noli retired from political life and returned to his academic and religious duties in the U.S.

<sup>37</sup> Albania did not have a legation building in Washington, D.C. therefore Minister Konica maintained offices in an apartment of the Mayflower Hotel.

<sup>38</sup> For more on Zogu's diplomatic efforts, see Bernd Jürgen Fischer. *King Zog and the Struggle for Stability in Albania*, New York, 1984

<sup>39</sup> Anne O'Hare McCormick: *Mussolini Has Hypnotized the Balkans*. *New York Times* June 19, 1927. p. SM10.

On September 1, 1928, Zogu declared Albania to be a monarchy. Under instructions and pressure from Italy,<sup>40</sup> he proclaimed himself “Zog First, the King of Albanians,” a title that bore an ambiguous connotation for the half of the Albanian population that lived outside Albania. Nominally his regime was a constitutional monarchy, but for all practical purposes his rule seemed to share many of the characteristics of the Italian monarchical government, with a strong police force and a complex and inefficient bureaucracy. Because of the title “The King of Albanians” with exceptions of Italy, Hungary and Greece, other European states exercised an attitude of caution and were just waiting for the position of the United States government. The situation for the King became exceedingly oppressive, and silence reigned in political circles in Albania for several days until it was broken by the recognition of the monarchy by the United States. The foreign minister of Albania, Iliaz Vrioni, considered U.S. recognition as “the crowning diplomatic triumph” of the new government which would immediately be followed by recognition by all others.<sup>41</sup> Actually, this proved to be the case. The U.S. minister in Albania (Hart) conveyed to the State Department the exploding joy that erupted in the capital of Albania after the announcement was made in a very inspiring message:

A demonstration was ordered to be held in front of the Legation on the evening of September 15. I invited the multitude to come in the legation court. There were about 1,500 persons, headed by the Government’s military band. The band first played the American and then the Albanian anthem and gave vociferous applause at which juncture nothing was left for me to do but make a speech, which I had not intended doing. The Department will not receive a copy of the speech, which was entirely improptu, but left it suffice to say that I said nothing that would do any harm. While it is the usual course for many foreigners, official and otherwise, when speaking to the people of this country, to treat the Albanians as children, I have never done that. My policy adopted at the beginning of my career here was followed once again. I assumed that I

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<sup>40</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations. 1928. Vol.I. p. 846.

<sup>41</sup> The Minister in Albania (Hart) to the Secretary of State. September 27, 1928. *The Foreign Relations of the United States, 1928 Vol.*. Government Printing Office. 1943.

was facing an assemblage of several hundred intellectual Babe Ruths<sup>42</sup> and gave everyone of them a base on balls.<sup>43</sup>

Zog continued to seek close relations with the United States during his tenure as monarch of Albania. Besides establishing his delegation in Washington, Zog managed to open an office for an Albanian consular general in New York, which served also as the Albanian representative in the World Fair Organization, as well as a consulate in Boston.<sup>44</sup> In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Albania signed four bilateral treaties with the United States<sup>45</sup> and eleven multilateral agreements.<sup>46</sup> But in the international context Zog's political problems were daunting. Despite his efforts to recover from the disastrous treaty with Italy which bore the danger of full colonization, King Zog was unable to overcome the tightening screws of fascist Italy over Albania. The *Mussolini Memoirs*<sup>47</sup> and the *Ciano Diaries*<sup>48</sup> give a full account of just how much the conquest of Albania kept dominating Mussolini's dreams. The United States of America followed the Italian penetration into Albania with great concern, and strongly opposed any step against Albanian's independence by fascist Italy. To encourage Albanians in their struggle for independence, U.S. Senator Robert R. Reynolds of North Carolina visited Tirana in

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<sup>42</sup> Babe Ruth, the most famous American baseball player.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.851.

<sup>44</sup> Ironically, even today Zog's diplomatic establishments remain the biggest Albanian representation in the United States. Currently only the Albanian Embassy in Washington, D.C, represents Albania in the U.S. The U.S. has already given concurrence to an Albanian request for opening an Albanian general consulate, but the decision to send the representatives has not been yet finalized in Albania.

<sup>45</sup> Bilateral treaties between United States and Albania: (1) Arbitration Treaty, signed at Washington, October 22, 1928; (2) Conciliation Treaty, signed at Washington, October 22, 1928; (3) Naturalization Treaty, signed at Tirana, April 5, 1932; (4) Extradition Treaty, signed at Tirana, March 1, 1933

<sup>46</sup> Multilateral treaties to which both Albania and the United States were parties: (1) Convention for the Formation of the International Union for the Publication of Customs Tariffs, Regulation and Final Declarations, July 5, 1890; (2) International Labor Organization: Convention and Protocol for Limiting the Manufacture and Distribution of Narcotic Drugs, July 13, 1931; (3) Treaty for the Limitation and Reduction of Naval Armament, London, April 22, 1930; (4) Arrangement relative to the Repression of the Circulation of Obscene Publications, May 4, 1910; (5) Conventions and Protocol for the Suppression of the Abuse and other Drugs, January 23, 1912 and (6) July 9, 1913; (7) Universal Postal Union of Cairo and Final Protocol, March 20, 1934; (8) Treaty for the Renunciation of War (Pact of Paris), August 27, 1928; (9) Treaty Recognizing the Sovereignty of Norway over Spitzbergen, February 9, 1920; (10) Telecommunication Convention, December 9, 1932; (11) Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded of Armies in the Field (International Red Cross Convention), July 6, 1906.

<sup>47</sup> *Mussolini's Memoirs*, edited by Raymond Klibansky. Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Press.2000.

<sup>48</sup> *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943*. Edited by High Gibson. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday & Co. 1956.

December 1937 and met with the King. Senator Reynolds was the highest official from the United States who had ever visited the country.

To ensure the stability and continuity of his reign, on 27 April 1938, Zog married Geraldine Apponyi, born in 1915 of an American, Gladys Stewart, and an Austro-Hungarian Count, Julius Apponyi. But Mussolini's ambitions over Albania were unstoppable, and the occupation of the country seemed to be just a formality. By 1939 Mussolini was frustrated by the fact that Hitler had accomplished the German annexation of Austria and seizure of Czechoslovakia without consultation or compensation for Italy. Every time Hitler occupied a country, he just sent a telegram to Mussolini. Therefore, the Italian response was the formal occupation of Albania.<sup>49</sup> To that goal, by early April 1939 Italy made a series of demands upon Albania, such as: control of all Albanian ports, communications, roads, and the airfields to "safeguard" Albanian independence; an Italian organizer in each Albanian ministry who would have the rank of minister, ranking immediately below the Albanian minister; Italians in Albania to have equal civil and political rights with Albanians; etc. Considering these demands as a move toward a protectorate over Albania, King Zog ordered mobilization and refused to consider the Italian demands. The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Galeazzo Ciano, who was the mastermind of the Albanian occupation, speculated that "King Zog will give in. There is above all, a fact on which I am counting: the coming birth of Zog's child. Zog loves his wife very much as well as his whole family. I believe that he will prefer to insure to his dear ones a quiet future. And frankly I cannot imagine [Queen] Geraldine running around fighting through the mountains..."<sup>50</sup> On the eve of the aggression, on April 6 King Zog was reported to have left the country and went into exile while his government eventually disintegrated. On April 7, 1939, while the Queen had just given birth to a child, Italy attacked Albania and, facing an unorganized and poorly armed resistance, easy

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<sup>49</sup> Stanley G. Payne: *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1995. p. 243.

<sup>50</sup> *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943*. Edited by Hugh Gibson. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday & Co. 1956, p. 52. Cited in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*. p. 88.

conquered the country.<sup>51</sup> With such a swift and thorough victory, Italy gained what Hitler described as “a stronghold which will inexorably dominate the Balkans.”<sup>52</sup>

Italy’s attack on Albania was denounced by Secretary of State Cordell Hull through a statement that had “the express approval of President Roosevelt.”<sup>53</sup> The Italian attack was considered as a forcible and violent invasion that constituted unquestionably an additional threat to the peace of the world<sup>54</sup> The statement of Secretary Hull was followed by a formal protest by Faik Konica, the Albanian minister to the United States.<sup>55</sup>

After the occupation, Italy established a puppet fascist government in the country. Under Italian orchestration, the Albanian monarchy was abolished and a delegation from the Albanian fascist government offered the crown to the Italian King, Victor Emmanuel, thus realizing the union of Italy and Albania on April 16, 1939. Under the new arrangement, the Kingdom of Italy and Albania, the Albanian army was incorporated in the Italian army, and the Albanian interests abroad had to be protected by Italy. A unification of the diplomatic and consular services was followed by the abolishment of the ministry of foreign affairs of Albania. The Albanian representation abroad and foreign representations in Albania were cancelled. Consequently, on June 12, 1939, the United States announced the closure of the legation in Albania. Opposing the occupation and unification of Albania with Italy, the Albanian minister in Washington requested that the U.S. government allow the Albanian legation to continue the work as the representative of Albania as a means to morally influence public opinion and the Albanian community in the United States<sup>56</sup> This proposal was not accepted by the U.S.

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<sup>51</sup> Douglas Porch. *The Path to Victory: The Mediterranean Theater in World War II* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.2004.

<sup>52</sup> Vickers. p. 139

<sup>53</sup> *New York Times* April 9, 1939 p. 1, 34

<sup>54</sup> For the full text of Secretary Hull statement see: Department of States Press Releases April 8, 1939, p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> *New York Times* April 9, 1939 p.L34.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum of Conversation of Secretary of State Cordell Hull with the Minister of Albania in U.S on June 24, 1939. *The Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939. Vol. II.*Government Printing Office. 1956. p. 420.

government and in July 1939, the Albanian legation in Washington, D.C., the Albanian consular general in New York, and the consulate in Boston were closed. The U.S. government never formally terminated its relations with King Zog, but neither did the United States recognize the Albanian government in exile. As result there was no Albanian authority to represent the country abroad. Even Zog himself was not recognized in his capacity as King of Albania; instead he received admittance to England in the quality of a distinguished private person and was encouraged throughout his stay in London to keep a low profile. The British were sensitive to America's distrust of British support for certain monarchies; the support the British gave to the King of Greece was highly criticized by the United States<sup>57</sup> This policy of non recognizing an Albanian government in exile had a toll for Albanians because unlike other East European countries, they were deprived of mustering sufficient strength for representing either resistance forces within the country or unified Albanian groups abroad.

After an easy occupation of Albania, Mussolini decided to use Albania as a springboard to invade Greece under the pretext of "protecting the maltreated Albanian minority."<sup>58</sup> The Italians launched their attack on October 28, 1940, and at a meeting of the two fascist dictators in Florence, Mussolini stunned Hitler with his announcement of the Italian invasion. Mussolini counted on a quick victory, but Greek resistance fighters halted the Italian army in its tracks and soon forced them into retreat, pushing them back into southern Albania. <sup>59</sup> In April 1941, Germany and its allies crushed both Greece and Yugoslavia, and a month later the Axis gave Albania control of Kosovo and parts of Northern Greece populated by Albanians, thus almost doubling the territory and the population of Albania. Ironically, Albanians witnessed the realization of their dreams of uniting most of the Albanian-populated lands only during the Axis occupation of their country.

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<sup>57</sup> Vickers. p. 142.

<sup>58</sup> Lendvai. p. 223.

<sup>59</sup> R.A.C. Parker *The Second World War: A Short History*.Oxford University Press, New York, 1989.p.55

## 1. United States-Albanian Relations During World War II

Eventual Albanians started their armed opposition against the Italian occupation, which by late 1941 turned into an organized guerrilla uprising. Recognizing the growing anti-Axis resistance in Albania, on December 10, 1942, Secretary of State Hull reaffirmed United States support for the restoration of a free Albania.<sup>60</sup> Under the title “Hull says Albania will be kept free,” *The New York Times* noted that “the Albanian people were encouraged to overthrow Italian rule by Secretary of State Cordell Hull tonight in a statement that forecast American military assistance to the guerrilla bands that are operating against the Italian forces in that country”.<sup>61</sup> The secretary’s announcement was followed by the same statement given by the ministers of foreign affairs of Great Britain<sup>62</sup> and the Soviet Union.<sup>63</sup> Be that as it may, at the very moment that Allied countries were engaged in fearful fighting with Axis powers, a bizarre movement was initiated by the Greek government. The prime minister of Greece, in a memorandum sent to the secretary of state, expressed the Greek frustration toward the secretary’s statement in support of restoration of a free Albania that was “unacceptable to Greek nation without a clear simultaneous recognition of their rights in the district of Northern Epirus [southern Albania].”<sup>64</sup> In addition to that, the Greek government, through its ambassador in Washington, requested to negotiate secret talks with the U.S. government over Greek claims in Southern Albania. After expressing surprise at such a request, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles pointed out “the U.S. government had not and would not make any secret commitments with regard to territorial changes to any other country”.<sup>65</sup> As far as Greek territorial claims, the American position was along the lines of the general government policy maintained most strictly by Secretary of State

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<sup>60</sup> For the text see Statement Released to the Press December 10, 1942. Department of State *Bulletin*, December 12, 1942, p. 998.

<sup>61</sup> *The New York Times*, December 11, 1942. p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> For text of the statement by Anthony Eden, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on December 17, 1942, see *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol.385, cols. 2114-2115.

<sup>63</sup> For text of the statement by the Soviet Commissariat of Foreign Affairs regarding the independence of Albania, dated December 18, 1942 see *Izvestia*, December 18, 1942.

<sup>64</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations. 1942. Vol. II. p. 827.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 828-829.

Cordell Hull: since there were many territorial disputes throughout Europe, the best approach would be to try to have them postponed until after the war.

Besides the Italian occupation of the country, the most important question for Albanians remained the Greek claims over southern Albania. When Athens signaled its intention to annex Northern Epirus (southern Albania), the Albanians changed their initial attitude of applauding the victories of the Greeks in their war against the Axis.<sup>66</sup>

As the Albanian resistance was growing, the lack of unity among the various groups of patriots in the country became evident. Two major competitive resistance groups emerged, Nationalists under the name Balli Kombetar (National Front) and Communists under the name FNC (National Liberation Movement). After some early cooperation between them, striking differences regarding the way of proceeding with the war against Italians and Germans, and particularly the way the annexed territories would be handled in a post-war Albania, turned the Albanian resistance into a bloody civil war. Nationalists were committed to retaining the territorial annexations of 1941. Some of them, impressed by German “willingness” to recognize Albania’s “neutrality” and reconstitute the Albanian Council of Regents, even supported the Germans. Communists, on the other hand, inspired and backed by Tito’s partisans, claimed anti-Axis purity, including the repudiation of Axis-initiating territorial transfers.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the war the United States encouraged Albanian leaders to prevent hostilities among them and to avoid internal warfare, considering that the Albanian cause would be helped in the eyes of the Allies by a unification of all resistance groups for common actions against the Germans and for the liberation of their country.<sup>68</sup> Due to the unwillingness of President Roosevelt to engage the U.S. military in southern Europe and the Balkans, the overall U.S. engagement in Albania, as in other parts of the region, was limited. In American-British strategic affairs, Roosevelt and Churchill had agreed in

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<sup>66</sup> Joseph Rothschild & Nancy M. Wingfield. *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*. Third Edition. New York: Oxford University Press. 2000. p. 69.

<sup>67</sup> Rothchild & Wingfield. p. 71

<sup>68</sup> To this aim, discussions were held at Bari in August 1944 between Albanian representatives of National Liberation Cometee and the Political Cometee of the Balkan Air Force. For more, see *Foreign Relations*, 1944, Vol. III. p. 276.



March 1942 that the Pacific was to be an American region, the Middle East would belong to Britain, while Europe and the Atlantic were to fall under joint responsibility. According to this plan, which was basically followed throughout the war, the Balkans also belonged to the British Middle East Theater.<sup>69</sup>

Following this Allied strategy, and to organize the anti-Axis resistance in the Balkans, the British established their missions in the countries of the region. By late spring 1943 the British had already established their mission in Albania and had stationed liaison officers in both resistance movements. Between the spring of 1943 and the end of 1944, around fifty British officers were sent to Albania to coordinate the Allied assistance and motivate the anti-Axis resistance. American policy at that time was based on the “primacy of military considerations” that meant supplying with weapons groups that were actively engaged in fighting the Germans. On the reports of the British mission, the Allied Command denounced the Nationalists as collaborators and supported the communists throughout the war by supplying them with scores of weapons, thus helping them to become the leading force in the Albanian war.<sup>70</sup> The United States hoped that after the war Albanians would leave aside their disputes and would succeed in forming a broadly representative provisional government conforming to the will of the Albanian people that could restore order in the country.<sup>71</sup>

The Communists were able to manipulate the Nationalists’ activities into collaboration with the Germans and succeeded in linking the larger war, the war against Axis forces, with the civil war against their domestic enemies. The U.S. policy of aiding groups who fought Germans was gradually applied to FNC, culminating in an agreement signed in Bari in August 1944 for coordinating action against the Germans and delivering the military supplies. In addition to that, Secretary of State Hull advised the Allied Force

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<sup>69</sup> Geir Lundestad. *The American Non-Policy Toward Eastern Europe, 1943-1947*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1978. p. 77.

<sup>70</sup> As early as 1940 the British had begun to investigate the possibilities of encouraging an anti-Axis resistance movement in Albania. A special Operation Executive (SOE) had been set up in 1940, which observed the events in Albania from Cairo and Istanbul. For more on British missions in Albania during the war, see Amery, Julian. *Sons of the Eagle: A Study in Guerilla War*. London: Macmillan, 1948.

<sup>71</sup> For more on U.S. policy toward resistance groups in Albania see: *Foreign Relations*, 1944, Vol. III. p. 272-295.

headquarters at Caserta against any supplying of arms for the Nationalists because, apart from the question of the charges made against them of collaboration with the Germans, they had demonstrated an inactivity vis-à-vis the common enemy, the Germans.<sup>72</sup> Largely due to appeals made by the Voice of America and BBC, mass support for an Albanian uprising emerged particularly in the southern part of the country where the communist resistance was stronger. LNC was particularly successful in appealing to the younger generation. By the summer of 1943, secondary schools were closed because many young Albanians had joined the LNC.<sup>73</sup>

The U.S. decision to stop supplying Nationalists with weapons, followed as it was by the withdrawal of the British mission from the Nationalists' headquarters, was in fact a costly decision for Albania because, besides the tendencies of the Nationalists to collaborate with the Germans and their unwillingness to fight without promises of British support, this decision brought about the collapse of all opposition or potential opposition to the FNC.

In mid-1944, British headquarters further encouraged partisan forces on their movement and advised Enver Hoxha to gradually build up the National Liberation Council and its army. The British also assured him that relations between British headquarter and Hoxha would be strengthened for postwar purposes.<sup>74</sup> On May 24, the Albanian National Liberation forces, in a convention held in the town of Permet, created the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council, a supreme legislative and executive organ, and the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Committee, with the attributes of a provisional government. Among other decisions, the convention, commonly known as Congress of Permet, forbade King Zog re-entry into the country and annulled all international treaties signed before the Italian occupation of Albania. Officially, the National Liberation Movement was a mass organization representing all shades of "democratic" political opinion, but in reality it only implemented the program and the policies of the Albanian Communist Party. The LNC Congress requested additional military missions from the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>73</sup> Miranda Vickers, p. 151.

<sup>74</sup> Lendvai, p. 228.

United States and the Soviet Union and urged the Allies not to work with what the LNC regarded as “discredited political parties.” It also expressed the desire for military recognition from the Allies, the exchange of military representatives, and the increasing of military support. An agreement was reached and a team of three Albanian military representatives was stationed in Bari at the Balkan Air Command, an Allied body that was coordinating all activities in the Balkans. Five months later, in October 1944, another convention was held in the town of Berat, in which, following Tito’s<sup>75</sup> example, the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Committee was changed to the Democratic Government of Albania. Enver Hoxha, the leader of the Communist Party, was named the President of the Council of Ministers. On October 20, Hoxha made a declaration to the effect that all three Great Allies would be requested to recognize his government. Meanwhile, on September 23, 1944, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had sent a directive to the supreme Allied commander, Mediterranean Theatre, Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander, authorizing him to deal with such local groups as he found in control in Albania, in the absence of a recognized government. A joint American-British team, Military Liaison Albania, was sent to the country to coordinate civilian relief in liberated Albania.<sup>76</sup> Hoxha also requested that a military representative be sent to Washington to coordinate military cooperation between the United States and Albania. He also wanted to send a financial representative to coordinate any assistance from the United States, as well as to coordinate with Albanians in the United States the resumption of remittances to their relatives in Albania that had been broken off during the war. The U.S. government considered these requests as premature, since formal relations had not been established.

## **2. United States-Albanian Post-World War II Relations**

The Allied success in operations in Western Europe, particularly their landing on Normandy, changed the course of the War and put the Germans in retreat in all theatres, including the Balkans. By late November 1944, Albania was liberated. Following the

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<sup>75</sup> Josiph Broz Tito, President of the National Liberation Movement in Yugoslavia, and military leader of the Partisan guerrilla forces in that country.

<sup>76</sup> All American and British economic assistance to Albania was provided through UNRRA, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. In the first years after the war UNRRA provided to Albania \$26,260,000, the greater part of which came from the United States. For a full description of UNRRA see George Woodbridge. *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1950.

liberation of the country, the Albanian government officially requested recognition by the United States.<sup>77</sup> In his official request Enver Hoxha claimed that his government was the only government representing Albania internally and externally. Furthermore, Hoxha indicated that the government had announced publicly its democratic principles and would protect and guarantee human rights.<sup>78</sup> The Albanian government expressed the desire to be recognized without reservations and promised that it would “stand faithful in all sincerity to the cause of democracy and independence of the people.”<sup>79</sup> (At that very moment nobody would ever have predicted that this note would start one of the most unfortunate periods in U.S.-Albanian relations, wherein both governments couldn’t arrive at satisfactory arrangements for the establishment of diplomatic relations and hence put Albania under communist domination for half a century.)

Meanwhile, in domestic politics the prospect for any reconciliation between FNC and the Nationalists, as the United States had hoped during the war, seemed rather bleak. Leaders and other important members of Albanian anti-Communist movements Balli Kombetar and Legality had been evacuated from Albania. They had been put away by Allied military authorities in a camp at Santa Maria di Lucca, south of Brindisi, the nearest point in Italy to the Albanian mainland. Hoxha requested that these persons, whom he considered “war criminals”, should be returned for trial. Hoxha feared that the British had planned to send this group back to Albania to stir up organized resistance. The U.S. government’s position was that none of the Albanian war criminals were in American hands and urged that ultimate disposition of such persons be determined through an agreement between Albania and Allied governments.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The Albanian representative in Caserta, Mr. Kadri Hoxha, presented the note to Mr. Alexander C. Kirk, who was simultaneously U.S. ambassador in Italy and political adviser to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater. The note addressed to President Roosevelt, dated December 21, 1944, was signed by Hoxha.

<sup>78</sup> Only a couple of years later it turned out that the Albanian Communist regime was one of the most oppressive regimes of its kind.

<sup>79</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations, 1945, Vol. IV. p.4-5.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.42.

On the other hand, the exiled leaders of two Nationalists' movements, Midhat Frasheri<sup>81</sup> and Sali Muftija,<sup>82</sup> asked the U.S. government to take no measures toward recognition of Hoxha's government, arguing that Hoxha's communist regime did not represent the free will of the Albanian people. Further, they claimed that Hoxha's regime had been imposed on the people not only by force but also by sheer terrorism.<sup>83</sup> Mr. Frasheri and two other prominent leaders of Balli Kombetar sent another letter to the State Department by the end of April 1944, in which, among other issues, they requested that at a convenient time after the war was ended an impartial plebiscite be held "for the regions that belong to us [Albanians] ethnographically, because Albania should not be divided in two for the sake of imperialism and injustice."<sup>84</sup>

By November 1944, the State Department had already assembled a team for handling the Albanian affairs at Bari and designated U.S. General Consul to Cairo (Egypt) Joseph E. Jacobs as the head of the would-be American mission to Albania. When everything seemed to be going smoothly, a major shift of British policy toward Albania occurred.<sup>85</sup> On November 3, 1944, the British embassy in Washington presented to the State Department a memorandum regarding the position of the British government toward Hoxha's provisional government, which underlined that in the confusing situation in Albania, the British would send a military mission<sup>86</sup> to Albania but would not recognize the provisional government and expressed the hope that the United States government would concur.<sup>87</sup> The United States decided to accept the British proposal for proceeding cautiously toward formal recognition as an appropriate approach, for obvious reasons. First, the approach of proceeding cautiously fully complied with the general U.S.

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<sup>81</sup> President of the Balli Kombetar (The National Front) Organization

<sup>82</sup> Representative of Legaliteti (Legality) Organization

<sup>83</sup> Letter sent to Secretary of State *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1945, Vol. IV.* p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>85</sup> By early October 1944, British Government issued new directive toward Albania, which stated that British Mission to Nationalists would finally withdraw and negotiations sympathetic to Hoxha were about to start. For more on British position during that time see: *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1944, Vol. III.* p. 281.

<sup>86</sup> The British Military mission headed by Brigadier D.E.P. Hodgson arrived in Albania in January 1945 and took over the British OSS (Office of Strategic Services) mission that was in Albania during the war. The team included also a political and economic adviser.

<sup>87</sup> *U.S. Foreign Relations, 1944, Vol. III.* p. 282.

policy toward provisional regimes in liberated countries as pronounced by President Roosevelt in his annual State of the Union address to the Congress. President Roosevelt emphasized that “[d]uring the interim period, until conditions permit a genuine expression of the people’s will, we and our Allies have a duty, which we cannot ignore, to use our influence to the end that no temporary or provisional authorities in the liberated countries block the eventual exercise of the people’s right freely to choose the government and the institutions under which, as free men, they are to live”.<sup>88</sup> From this perspective, the situation in Albania was still not very clear. In many regards the civil war had overshadowed the war against the Axis occupiers, and the prospects for a free, democratic Albania seemed rather bleak. Second, the United States didn’t want to upset the Soviet Union, since it was agreed that for liberated countries of Europe the three principal Allies, Americans, British, and Soviets would consult each other on matters of international importance, such as recognition, boundaries, alliances, etc. The Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe stated that the United States, Great Britain, and USSR would jointly assist people in Europe as liberated states to form internal governmental authority that would broadly represent all democratic elements of the population, and pledged to support their earliest possible establishment through free elections.<sup>89</sup> In addition, the British proposal coincided with meetings held in Moscow during October 1944 between British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. Churchill and Stalin discussed postwar arrangements in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Balkans, and decided on respective “spheres of influence”.<sup>90</sup> Although Albania was not mentioned during the talks, it is likely that the policy toward Albania

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<sup>88</sup> For the text of President Roosevelt’s annual message to the Congress on the State of the Union, January 6, 1945, see Department of State Bulletin, January 7, 1945, p. 22.

<sup>89</sup> For text of the Declaration on Liberated Europe, included as part V of the report of the Crimea Conference, February 12, 1945, see Foreign Relations, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945, p. 971.

<sup>90</sup> On Churchill’s initiative the influence was expressed in percentage. Soviets secured 90% in Romania, 80% in Bulgaria, 80% in Hungary while Britain secured 90% in Greece. Yugoslavia was divided 50-50.

For more on Churchill-Stalin meetings see U.S. Foreign Relations 1944, Vol. III, P.1100-1180.

was the same as that toward Yugoslavia, for which “perhaps neither side cared enough or perhaps they recognized that partisans, who controlled substantial areas, might have a word to say.”<sup>91</sup>

Third, although the State Department didn’t see any advantage to adopting entirely similar procedures with those of the U.K., the United States was in no way disposed to stepping ahead of the British in the matter of relations with Albania and did not want to embarrass them in their ongoing negotiations.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, Secretary of State Hull also cautioned that Albanians generally had high regard for and particular confidence in the United States because of its disinterested position. He advised that the United States probably had to agree in general with the proposed British plan, but should not give the support of American prestige in Albania to the British if it would appear to prejudice the U.S. position.<sup>93</sup>

Enthusiastic about their victorious war cooperation with the Allies against the Axis, Albanians had no doubt that after the promises made during the war, the provisional government would be recognized by all Allied powers promptly. Inexperienced in dealing with foreign policy issues, particularly with Great Power politics, as time went by Hoxha became very anxious, not only because his government was not being recognized but also because of the indifference shown toward him by Allied leaders. An ambitious leader, and possessed with the well known Albanian pride, Hoxha was very sensitive to the fact that he had addressed a written communication to the Allies leaders and had not received a written reply.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> R.A.C. Parker. P.253

<sup>92</sup> Anti-British sentiment was becoming intensive. At the time some unfortunate incidents had occurred between the British and FNC: British Land Forces, Adriatic made landings on the Albanian coast on December 5, 1944 without informing the FNC in advance; the British had not fulfilled their promises made at the Bari conference in August for supplying FNC; Partisan forces in northern Albania arrested and maltreated a British liaison officer found with a Nationalist Leader (Gani Kryeziu) opposed to Hoxha; a Greek minister of press had claimed Northern Epirus (Southern Albania) and forces of a rightist guerrilla led by General Napoleon Zervas had crossed the border in raids. Albanians saw the British position as favorable to Greece in this regard.

<sup>93</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations, 1945, Vol. IV. p.13.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p.15.

Unlike the British, the United States decided to proceed with sending a civilian team in an entirely informal capacity to gather the necessary information regarding the conditions and developments in Albania, as well as the extent to which the provisional government exercised authority in the country. This mission had to be entirely informal and, as the secretary of state advised, “should not give rise to conjecture on the part of the Albanians regarding the intentions of U.S. government in the matter of recognition.”<sup>95</sup>Hoxha gave an affirmative answer to the U.S. proposal and asked that the team be sent to Albania as soon as possible, “as quick actions would make a good impression.”<sup>96</sup>Furthermore, Hoxha promised that the U.S. team would be free to enter Albania with no conditions attached.

Jacobs and his team<sup>97</sup> arrived in Tirana on May 8, 1945. The following day he called on Hoxha and briefed him on the object of the mission and reiterated the official position of the United States toward Albania, including the U.S. support for Albanian independence and the conducting free elections in an appropriate time; the U.S. rejection of Albanian entry into a Yugoslav or wider federation; the insistence that questions of territorial disputes be addressed in a general settlement after the war; etc.<sup>98</sup> Hoxha struck Jacobs as a forceful character with ambitions but suffering from effects of an inferiority complex because of his failure to win recognition. Throughout the meeting Hoxha expressed regret that Albania was the only country among those who resisted Axis powers that had not been recognized by Allied powers.<sup>99</sup> The American representative in Tirana was skeptical from the very beginning as to Yugoslav and Soviet intentions, although Hoxha and members of his Cabinet rarely mentioned the Soviet Union.<sup>100</sup> Even in cabling his first impressions, Jacobs emphatically stated that Albania was dominated by FNC and Hoxha’s government had overwhelming support in the country, particularly among the younger generation, while opposition was not well organized and came largely

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<sup>95</sup> Secretary of State to the Representative in Albania, *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>97</sup> Harry T. Fultz, economic adviser; Eric W. Hoffmann, special assistant; Anthony Stevens, clerk.

<sup>98</sup> For U.S. policy toward Albania see *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34



from the wealthy classes.<sup>101</sup> Despite considering the efforts of the members of the government as well-intentioned toward the well-being of the people, Jacobs predicted that “failure of the United States and Great Britain to recognize Hoxha’s regime will drive it completely into Yugoslavia-Soviet fold.”<sup>102</sup> Although at that stage the Soviet influence was still an enigma for the U.S. representative, he sensed that the USSR was just awaiting developments<sup>103</sup>, preferring that the United States and Great Britain refuse to recognize Albania.<sup>104</sup> Jacobs emphasized the Albanian feeling of national identity and warned that any attempt to federate them with Yugoslavia or any other political units would encounter resistance and bloodshed.

Two weeks before Jacobs’ report was presented, the British embassy in Washington had provided the State Department with the final report of the British mission in Albania. The British believed that the opposition movement was stronger and better qualified than Hoxha’s regime for governing the country. The British underestimated the effectiveness of the Hoxha’s regime and proposed reversing the policy toward Albania by supporting the opposition groups through coercive measures.<sup>105</sup> Jacobs disagreed with this conclusion and also with the British claim that the regime in Albania was fundamentally unfriendly to the United States and Great Britain.<sup>106</sup>

On October 4, 1945, a consultative meeting was held in the Foreign Office in London between British<sup>107</sup> and U.S.<sup>108</sup> representatives for finalizing the procedures for

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>102</sup> Jacobs described Hoxha’s Cabinet as “a sincere, patriotic group of individuals who were going to be difficult to deal with. They were ignorant of the science of government, knew little of international relations, and were highly sensitive over the fact that, after fighting a common enemy, they had failed to receive any recognition.”

Ibid., p.26

<sup>103</sup> Soviet Military Mission arrived in Albania on July 18, 1945 and was headed by Colonel Sokolov.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>105</sup> By early July 1944, British Prime Minister Churchill had approved the line taken by the Foreign Office to the effect that at the moment the British could not give support to the opposition in Albania.

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations, 1945, Vol. IV, p.26.

<sup>107</sup> Mr. Hayter, Chief of the Southern Department; Mr. Laskey, Desk Officer for Albania and Greece.

<sup>108</sup> Mr. Jacobs, U.S. Representative in Albania; Mr. Cannon, Political Adviser on the American delegation in London.

recognition of the Albanian provisional government. Mr. Jacobs insisted that recognition be given to the Hoxha regime, while British representatives showed some reservations regarding the issue of the Albanian-Greek frontiers. At the end it was decided that recommendation be given to both the U.S. and British governments that recognition be accorded, but that the act of recognition to be withheld until Albanian authorities had engaged themselves to hold free elections in the country. The British government, nevertheless, still insisted on the Greek claims and wanted to make a reservation that, in affording recognition, Great Britain did not recognize the present boundaries of Albania as final. After consultations with Jacobs, the U.S. ambassador in London, Winant, cabled to the secretary of state his view that except possibly for some very minor adjustment of the 1939 Albanian-Greek frontier, Greece had no valid claim to Albanian territory.

Accordingly, I see no need for the U.S. to be overly sensitive to these Greek claims. We should be more concerned in gaining the good will of the Albanian people and the regime we propose to recognize, some of which we shall assuredly lose if we follow the Foreign Office suggestion.<sup>109</sup>

In a concerted action the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union recognized Hoxha's government as the provisional government of Albania on November 10, 1945.<sup>110</sup> It is worth noting that throughout his stay in Albania, Jacobs exercised a sympathetic understanding of the problems of the Albanian people, and his conclusions and recommendations provided bases for the American approach.

The establishment of diplomatic relations by the U.S. government was conditional on three aspects. First, on assurances that genuine free elections would be held, all democratic groups and candidates would be fully safeguarded, and that foreign correspondents could enter Albania to report freely on elections. Second, that the Albanian government had to give the assurances that all treaties and agreements that were in force between the United States and Albania before the occupation by Italy, remained

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<sup>109</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations, 1945, Vol. IV. p. 64.

<sup>110</sup> Due to some technical reasons the note with the text of U.S. recognition didn't arrive from Washington to the U.S. legation in Tirana until November 12. Therefore the U.S. note was presented two days after the Soviet and British notes. The Soviet note contained no conditions regarding recognition.

valid. Third, that the establishment of diplomatic relations should not be construed as prejudicing consideration of other questions of an international character involving Albania.

In his reply Hoxha committed to conducting free elections and to freedom of reporting by the foreign press. Hoxha took the momentum and used the election as a cosmetic gesture for eliciting his government's legitimacy in the eyes of Western powers.<sup>111</sup> After the war Hoxha maintained the facade of cooperation with those non-Communist resistance elements that were not opposing his policies of reconstructing the country. On December 2, 1945, general elections were held in Albania. Although 29 out of 111 candidates were independent, Hoxha's Democratic Front (the renamed National Liberation Front) ran uncontested and won 93% of the votes. Under conditions favorable to the government, the opposition could not make a far better showing than these independent candidates. News correspondents and foreign representative in the country visited various polling stations. A majority of correspondents commented favorably on the way elections were held and the friendly way they were received. Although the United States considered the elections as acceptable and recognized the results, the State Department did not want to abandon its policy of non-recognition, even if it was recognized that this course could hardly be expected to lead to substantial results.

Thus the issue of treaties became the focal point of the negotiations between the two governments. Hoxha first requested that copies of such treaties be sent to the Albanian government, claiming that the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs either were destroyed or stolen by occupiers. Later Hoxha proposed that treaties be renegotiated after diplomatic relations were formally established. He claimed that according to the decision made at the Congress of Permet,<sup>112</sup> all international agreements of King Zog were cancelled. Several notes followed between Washington and Tirana in which Washington insisted that the Albanian government first affirm the validity of the treaties and later examine them, while Hoxha requested that the procedure be the other way

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<sup>111</sup> Rothschild & Wingfield, p. 119.

<sup>112</sup> "All agreements with the Foreign States, political and economic, which were made by the Government of Zog to the disadvantage of the Albanian people, are to be cancelled and new treaties drawn."

around. Jacobs recommended to the State Department that insistence upon the U.S. position would delay recognition and lose considerable good will on the part of the United States, which was until that time more tolerant than either the British or the Soviets. “I do know how strongly the Department feels with respect to this matter but I suggest for consideration that we modify our position to extent of accepting the assurance with respect to treaties as set forth in Hoxha’s note, [which] indicate willingness upon receipt of copies to examine our treaties in the light of the Permeti resolution after establishment of relations.”<sup>113</sup> The State Department informed Jacobs that it was not disposed to modify its position on continuing validity of the treaties.<sup>114</sup> Understanding the U.S. persistence, Hoxha tailored somewhat his position and agreed to accept all eleven multilateral international agreements in which the United States and Albania were signatories.<sup>115</sup> Arguably Hoxha made this concession as an effective tool for use in the ongoing negotiations for membership in the United Nations.<sup>116</sup> The United States rejected the offer and asked the government of Albania to “communicate the confirmation of the continued validity of treaties and agreements between the United States and Albania to the American Representative in Tirana at an early date.”<sup>117</sup>

Several findings of Jacobs’ mission are important to better understand the situation in Albania during that time, particularly the limbo in which Albania’s future was held due to the myriad domestic difficulties and external factors. Above all, his observation that delays in recognizing the regime by the United States and Great Britain were affording advantages to the pro-Yugoslav and pro-Soviet element in the government proved to be the bitter truth. Domestically, pro-Yugoslav elements had tightened their

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<sup>113</sup> *Foreign Relations*, 1945, Vol. IV, p. 76.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>115</sup> For bilateral treaties between the United States and Albania, and multilateral treaties where both countries are signatories, see footnotes 46 and 47, p. 15.

<sup>116</sup> Albania was not invited to the San Francisco conference and, therefore, was not a founding member of the United Nations organization. After the war the Albanian government applied for U.N. membership. Although favorably disposed toward admission of Albania in the early stages after the war, the U.S. requested that Albanian government fulfill its international obligations. Later, when it became clear that Albania fell apart as a Soviet satellite, the U.S. considered Albanian membership in the U.N. nothing more than adding another vote to the Soviet bloc, and therefore Albania was not admitted in the U.N. until 1955.

<sup>117</sup> *Foreign Relations*, 1946, Vol. IV, p. 10.

grip on power. This coincided also with a steady deterioration in the situation of the Albanian opposition. A new Albanian constitution was proclaimed which was virtually the same as the Yugoslav constitution. The state took control of industry, banking, and transportation, and a customs union emerged as the first step toward merging into the Yugoslav Federation. Besides fostering political and economic ties with Yugoslavia, a fast increase in Soviet prestige and activity had already started to occur in Albania. By early January 1946 the Soviet legation had been established, although still not fully staffed with political, economic, and military advisers.

United States and British delays gave rise to the feeling that western Allies were indifferent to Albanian aspirations. Apart from ideological reasons, this was, in fact, one of the factors that drove Hoxha's regime faster into the arms of Yugoslavia<sup>118</sup> and later into the arms of the USSR. The more the Soviet presence increased, the more the relations with U.S. and British missions deteriorated. This was one of the most unfortunate developments in the history of Albania, which ironically was not inevitable. Several favorable factors could have made Albania follow a very different path.

First, a comprehensive long-term strategy and a more active involvement of the United States and Great Britain could have retained the western orientation of the Albanian people, since in the early stages the Soviet Union had an inferior status in Albanian affairs compared with that of the United States and particularly the British, who had been working with Hoxha for fifteen months during the war. Unlike most countries of Eastern Europe where the course of events was determined less by local factors than by the decisive intervention of the Soviet Union, Albania was liberated without a single Soviet soldier setting foot on its territory. But unfortunately this fact remained just a historical statistic. Very soon Albania would fall under Soviet control, thus exceeding even Stalin's prediction in the aftermath of the World War II that "whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as

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<sup>118</sup> Although Tito's Yugoslavs were Hoxha's political mentors throughout the war, Yugoslavia didn't rush to recognize Albania. Yugoslavia extended diplomatic recognition to the Albanian government on April 28, 1945.

far as his army can reach.”<sup>119</sup> The dominant position that the Soviet Union enjoyed during the war in countries of Eastern Central Europe was nonexistent in Albania. Although Soviet policy toward Albania in the early stages after the war will not be dealt with in this paper, what is remarkable about the relationship between Moscow and Albania is not the support given by the former to Hoxha, but how very limited that support was.<sup>120</sup> This seems to have been partly due to the special British interest in the Mediterranean. No Yugoslav troops went to fight in Albania, either; on the contrary, Albania’s contacts with Western powers were much more comprehensive than those with Yugoslavia and, needless to say, with the Soviet Union.

Second, on the domestic front, despite the fact that communists won both national and civil wars, in the early stages after liberation Albania was obviously at a crossroad. Communism as an ideology didn’t have any tradition in the country<sup>121</sup> and even the resistance organized by FNC embodied a mixture of both revolutionary and nationalist ideas. Particularly for that time, the Albanian government was no worse than others in the region. Most cabinet members and a large part of the population had direct ties with the West. The Albanian provisional government had twelve members, of whom eight had studied abroad: five in France, one in Italy, one in Russia, and one in Turkey, while the secretary of the National Liberation Council,<sup>122</sup> Albania’s supreme legislative body, was a Harvard graduate. About twenty-five percent of Albania’s population had either been in the United States or had friends and relatives who had been there. In addition, several

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<sup>119</sup> Milovan Djilas. *Conversations with Stalin*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company. 1962. p. 114.

<sup>120</sup> In mid-1946 the Albanian government was denied a high-level official visit to Moscow. The first visit of Hoxha to Moscow was held in mid-1947. It was an unremarkable visit during which Hoxha was appalled to see how little Stalin knew and how disinterested he was in Albania. In October 1947, when Cominform was created, Albania was the only communist-dominated country not invited to join. For more, see Vickers. *The Albanians: A Modern History*. p. 170-180. In January 1948 Stalin told a Yugoslav delegation that the Soviet Union had no specific interest in Albania and that Yugoslavia was free to “swallow” Albania any time it wished to do so. For more on the Soviet dislikes toward Hoxha and Stalin’s position toward Albania through 1948 see Djilas. *Conversation with Stalin*.

<sup>121</sup> During 1920, when communism was rapidly spreading out throughout Europe, Albania was the only country in the region without a Communist Party. With some sporadic attempts initiated by Albanian individuals residing abroad, the situation remained the same until World War II started.<sup>121</sup> Until late 1941 the communist movement consisted of four isolated discussion groups with less than two hundred people. For more see Vicker, p. 145; Lendvai, p. 225.

<sup>122</sup> Koco Tashko.

thousand Albanians had been educated in American schools in Albania. Third, although Hoxha seemed to have made his decision to go east, during the first years after the war his position was still weak. The economy was in a total collapse.<sup>123</sup> Politically, in order to consolidate his hold on power, Hoxha needed international recognition and respectability by Western countries, particularly by the United States and Great Britain.<sup>124</sup> While the United States made many concessions with regard to the Romanian, Yugoslavian and Bulgarian settlements, it strengthened its opposition to the Albanian regime even further, which could hardly be interpreted as less than a substantial Soviet victory.<sup>125</sup>

But, as a matter of fact, the American plans for the post-war period were based on a very low level of participation in the Balkan area. It was neither desired nor expected that U.S. military forces should be placed there. Although it was certainly assumed that efforts would be made to keep the area open for American economic interests, the political representation was to be small, as were relief and rehabilitation programs.<sup>126</sup> Above all, Albania was not important to the United States either politically or economically. The United States had some economic interests in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and particularly in Romania, but its economic interests in Albania were insignificant.<sup>127</sup>

In a very short time the situation was transformed to the point that the relations between Albania and the United States appeared to lead nowhere. The trend of

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<sup>123</sup> According to UNRRA during the war, besides some twenty-eight people killed, almost one third of all buildings were destroyed, as was over one third of all livestock; nearly all mines, ports, bridges were rendered unusable, many towns and villages were destroyed. Figures taken from Vickers, p. 166.

<sup>124</sup> Rothchild, p. 120.

<sup>125</sup> The U.S. made concessions with these countries and continued relations even when they were deteriorated in a degree that was unbearable for many policymakers in Washington, such as the case of Yugoslavia, where in August of 1946 two U.S. planes were shot down or when Yugoslavia took an extraordinarily anti-Western course during the Trieste conflict. For documentation on the forcing down of two unarmed American transport planes by Yugoslav aircraft on August 9 and 19, 1946, see Foreign Relations, 1946, Vol. VI, pp. 915 ff.

<sup>126</sup> Geir Lundestad, p. 96.

<sup>127</sup> The U.S. trade balance with Albania in 1939 was about \$280,000, while with Yugoslavia it was about 9 million dollars and with Romania about \$12 million. The U.S. assets in Albania as of August 1, 1939, were some 1.3 million dollars, in Bulgaria the U.S. had some 11.8 million dollars, in Yugoslavia it had 50.3 million, while in Romania these assets reached the figure 66.1 million dollars. For a full chart of U.S. trade and assets in Eastern Europe before the war, see Lundestad pp. 478-479.

conversations with Hoxha indicated a lack of the cordiality which had characterized numerous conversations of his with the U.S. representative in Tirana.”<sup>128</sup> Jacobs soon concluded that Hoxha’s government was biased in favor of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. “I feel certain that what has taken place here within short period of 6 weeks transforming an atmosphere of good will and democratic spirit at election time on December 2 to a regime of suspicion and fear is being forced upon Albanian authorities by small group Albanian Communists working hand in glove with Moscow and that majority members [of] Government are not only in sympathy but helpless.”<sup>129</sup>

By March 1946, Albanian policy toward the United States was a carbon copy of Yugoslavia’s attitude, resembling the Soviet-style propaganda by slapping the U.S. positions on Albania in an organized radio and press campaign. To reverse the trend, Jacobs suggested that the State Department approach Moscow and discuss the Albanian affairs in view of the Yalta conference, but the State Department didn’t believe it advisable to discuss this issue with the Soviets. It became clear that since Moscow gave full support to the existing government in Albania, the Western powers had backed down. The relative unimportance of Albania lead the United States to not press further for any possible reversal of events in Tirana. What George Kennan had once noted in another context was also valid for Albania: “For the smaller countries of Eastern Europe, the issue is not one of communism or capitalism. It is one of independence of national life or of domination by a big power which has never shown itself adept at making any permanent compromises with rival power groups.”<sup>130</sup>

Following the Yugoslav pattern, a series of trials were organized in the country in which a number of individuals were accused of sabotage and collaborating with the United States against the Albanian state. The economic adviser of the U.S. mission, Fultz, and some employees of the American mission, along with UNRRA’s representatives, were alleged to have instigated and subsidized sabotage activities at a draining project on

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>130</sup> George Kennan Memories 1925-1950, p. 118. Quoted in Paul Lendvai, p. 444.



Lake Maliq, near Korca.<sup>131</sup> Most of the individuals accused in this case, including Abdyl Sharra, chief engineer of the project; Kujtim Beqiri, engineer; and Pandeli Zografi, technician, were graduates of American Technical School operating in Albania before the war, in which Fultz was serving as principal. The United States considered the situation unacceptable and started to think of withdrawing the mission. From that moment on comments by both governments resembled reciprocal accusations, which only served to further deteriorate the situation, and on November 2, the United States decided to withdraw its mission from Albania.<sup>132</sup>

It could be argued that the deterioration of relations between Albania and the United States (and of course Britain) was not entirely the fault of the Albanian government. In fact there is some room for this argument. Apart from backing down from the communist pressure, some steps of the Western governments further complicated the already volatile situation. Besides delays in recognizing Hoxha's government, the United States and particularly Britain sent signals that appeared to endorse ongoing aspirations for partition of Albania by her neighbors,<sup>133</sup> thereby giving to the communists the opportunity to pose as the indispensable champions of Albanian independence and territorial integrity. Two particular cases had a significant effect in this regard.

First, in a sudden move, by early August 1945 Brigadier Hodgson, the head of the British military mission, accused the Albanian regime of occupying Sazani (Saseno) Island, a small Albanian island about five miles off Vlora (Valona) harbor,<sup>134</sup> and advised the supreme Allied commander in the Mediterranean to protest such "aggressive action." Hodgson's recommendation later became official policy of the Foreign Office. In Jacobs' observation, the Americans and the British knew that the island had been occupied by Albanian partisans, and he predicted that the British protest would come as a shock and

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<sup>131</sup> The crisis between the Albanian Government and UNRRA at the end of 1946 over the allegations made against UNRRA employees during the trial is described in George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History*. Vol.II, pp. 175-177.

<sup>132</sup> The withdrawal was announced to the press on November 8, 1946. For text see Department of State *Bulletin*, November 17, 1946.

<sup>133</sup> Rothschild & Wingfield, p. 120.

<sup>134</sup> Italian control of Saseno was established by occupation on October 30, 1914. An Albanian small military unit seized the island in mid-October 1944 without any significant resistance from the Italians.

would strengthen the hands of those members of the regime who didn't want any cooperation with the United States and Great Britain.<sup>135</sup> Jacobs further recommended that the U.S. government.

should make a point-blank request of the British Foreign Office for a clarification of its real policy toward a setting up of an independent Albania and toward opposition groups in Albania and elsewhere. In other words, we should know whether the British Foreign Office is really desirous and prepared to support the establishment of an independent Albania. We should make it clear that we know of utterances of certain British officials who prefer to see the country divided up and the southern part added to Greece.<sup>136</sup>

As for the Saseno Island matter, the State Department supported the recommendation of Jacobs and informed the British Foreign Office accordingly. Following the basic lines of U.S. policy regarding territorial disputes, the United States proposed that this issue be considered in the peace settlement. The issue was discussed at the third meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in London on September 14, 1945.<sup>137</sup> Before the meeting King Zog sent a letter to the secretary of state protesting that Albania was not invited to represent herself in the conference, while her neighbors, Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia had been invited. Zog expressed his disappointment that Albania's future was being decided without her being given any voice in the decision and that no justification had ever been given for the discrimination against Albania. "All Albanians are of the same opinion, and they are far more concerned that their country should be represented as one of the United Nations than as to who should represent it. If Albania were invited to send representatives I feel certain they would reach agreement as to who should represent them."<sup>138</sup> However, the Council of Foreign Ministers decided the cession of the island of Saseno by Italy to Albania, but the overall sessions of the Council of Foreign Ministers terminated in a deadlock over procedures. The United

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>137</sup> See Record of the Third Meeting, minute 5, under heading Section I: Territorial Provisions for Italy in Europe, item (9), vol.II, p. 163.

<sup>138</sup> King Zog I of Albania to the Secretary of State. Henley-On-Thames, Bucks, September 11, 1945. For the full text, see Ibid., p. 52.

States supported the Council of Foreign Ministers' decision and later rejected also the Italian proposal that Allied forces occupy this Island until its ultimate fate was settled by peace treaty.<sup>139</sup>

Second, before the Paris Peace Conference,<sup>140</sup> on February 19, 1946, U.S. Senator Pepper submitted a resolution<sup>141</sup> to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations supporting Greek claims on Northern Epirus (southern Albania). This proposal was later passed by the Senate. Albanians were disappointed and Hoxha requested clarifications from the U.S. government. The Department of State replied to Hoxha with not much clarity, indicating that actions taken by the Senate do not represent the attitude of the Executive Branch of the U.S. government.<sup>142</sup> Understanding how vital this issue was to the existence of Albania, Jacobs urged that the Council of Foreign Ministers<sup>143</sup> find some way to resolve the Albanian-Greek frontier; he made the following judgment of the problem: "...continual rattling this old claim by Greece seriously affects peace of Balkans and gives Albania excellent excuse to keep army fully mobilized and Soviet to pose as protector little Albania and to supply arms and military advisers. There is nothing that makes Albanians of all political and racial complexions... see red more quickly than proposal to give southern Albania to Greece."<sup>144</sup>

During the conference, on August 19, 1946, Greek Prime Minister Tsaldaris met with U.S. Secretary of State Byrnes to discuss the Greek-Albanian territorial disputes. Tsaldaris informed the secretary that Greece had decided to put forward to the Council of Foreign Ministers a resolution regarding this issue and asked for U.S. support. The

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<sup>139</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations, 1945, Vol. IV. p. 80.

<sup>140</sup> Paris Peace Conference July 29-October 15, 1946 resulted in the Paris Peace Treaty signed on February 10, 1947. The victorious wartime Allied powers (principally the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union) negotiated the details of treaties of peace for their lesser WWII enemies Italy, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Finland.

<sup>141</sup> The text of resolution: "Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that Northern Epirus, including Corytsa [Korca] and the twelve islands of the Aegean Sea, known as the Dodecanese Islands, where a strong Greek population predominates, should be awarded by the peace conference to Greece and become incorporated in the territory of Greece." Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>143</sup> The Council of Foreign Ministers met in Paris, April 25-May 15, 1946, and June 15-July 12, 1946.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

secretary agreed to support the Greek resolution but “was careful to make no commitment with regard to Greek territorial claims against Albania.”<sup>145</sup> The ambiguous U.S. policy of dealing with this issue at the Paris peace conference was taken by Hoxha as a clear indication of U.S. support for Greek claims. Meanwhile, as predicted by Jacobs the conference was another opportunity for the Soviets and Yugoslavs to pose as the protectors of Albania, which initially was not invited to the conference.<sup>146</sup> At the proposal of Yugoslavia, and with the strong support of the Soviet Union, a delegation from Albania headed by Hoxha was later invited to present the Albanian position at the debate of the Council of Foreign Ministers.<sup>147</sup> In his speech<sup>148</sup> Hoxha glorified the Albanian resistance against Italy and Germany and strongly dismissed Greek accusations that Albania was part of the Axis powers. As a counterbalance to Greek territorial claims Hoxha raised the issue of Albanian Chams displaced by Greece during the war under pretext of their collaboration with the Axis powers.<sup>149</sup> After failing to negotiate even a lesser settlement for gaining some Albanian territories near Corfu, on October 1, 1946, the Greek delegation asked for another meeting with the U.S. secretary of state. The Greek delegation informed Byrnes that Greece had realized that at the time the situation was very unfavorable and that the Soviets would never agree to any solution satisfactory to the Greeks. Fearing that any decision taken would foreclose any future consideration of the question, the Greeks asked to leave the matter open and “neither raise it in the

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<sup>145</sup> Foreign Relations, 1946, Vol. III, p. 256

<sup>146</sup> The Council of Foreign Ministers decided to invite to the conference only U.N. member countries that had been attacked by Italy. Albania was not a member of the U.N. at that time. For countries that were not members of the U.N. it was decided that they might be given a hearing. At the Soviet insistence Albania was invited for a hearing. See *U.S. Foreign Relations*, 1945, Vol. II, p. 125-133.

<sup>147</sup> During the debate of August 22, 1946, the Greek delegation headed by Prime Minister Tsaldaris presented a resolution whereby the Conference would recommend that the Council of Foreign Ministers examine territorial questions between Greece and Albania. With the support of British and American delegations, the Conference decided to put the resolution on the agenda at the following meeting of the Council. The resolution was accepted by 12 votes to 7, with 2 abstentions. Voting in favor: U.S.A., Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Ethiopia, Great Britain, Greece, India, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and South Africa. Voting against: Byelorussia, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, U.S.S.R., and Yugoslavia. Abstaining: Belgium and Norway. For more on the debate of the Council see *Ibid.*, pp. 269-271 and 321-323.

<sup>148</sup> For text of Hoxha’s speech see *The Selected Works of Enver Hoxha*, Vol. I, 1946-1953. Tirana.

<sup>149</sup> For a full description on the issue of Albanian Chams see Miranda Vickers *The Cham Issue: Albanian National & Property Claims in Greece*. Conflict Studies Research Center. G 109. U.K. Ministry of Defence, April 2002.

future nor agree to its definite exclusion.”<sup>150</sup> Secretary Byrnes agreed to the Greek proposal and therefore the resolution was withdrawn.

These events consolidated the position of the regime in Albania and also gave a free ride to the Soviets, who claimed to have provided a protective shield to Albania. By February 1947 Hoxha tried to appease the United States, using the Yugoslavian government as mediator. During a meeting with Under Secretary of State Acheson, the Yugoslavian ambassador in Washington Sava Kosanovich raised questions about any possible U.S. approach toward Albania. But this time Americans were tired of supporting moves, which in Washington’s opinion could have little effect. Acheson was not disposed to talk about Albania. He indicated that U.S. patience with the Albanians was exhausted.<sup>151</sup>

In the judgment of the U.S. representative in Albania, mistakes had been made by both Albania and the United States during the negotiations. “Albania, preoccupied with urgent problems of establishing stable, secure government, had perhaps overlooked international aspects of its efforts to achieve this; and the United States, preoccupied during same period with numerous international conferences of major importance to world peace, had perhaps overlooked the importance of a small, though strategic, Albania.”<sup>152</sup>

The period 1945-1947 proved to be crucial for the history of Albania. After United States support was finally withdrawn, Hoxha’s regime fully embraced Stalinism and applied for almost half a century the most orthodox practices of a so-called “proletariat dictatorship” through collectivization, purges, and secret police.

### **3. A Forty Year Absence of U.S.-Albanian Relations**

As indicated in a report of the Central Intelligence Agency regarding the situation in Albania, Hoxha’s government was still eager to resume relations with the United

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 616.

<sup>151</sup> Foreign Relations, 1947, Vol. VI, p. 757.

<sup>152</sup> U.S. Foreign Relations, 1946, p. 31.

States.<sup>153</sup> In May 1949 Hoxha made another attempt to re-establish relations with the United States by sending message through the Albanian minister in France, Behar Shtylla. Minister Shtylla inquired of the State Department officials during his stay in New York <sup>154</sup> about any favorable view on the U.S. side for re-establishing relations, acknowledging that the Albanian government was ready to review the situation in the context of the new circumstances.<sup>155</sup> In view of developments in Greece and convinced that any reconciliation with the Hoxha regime was hopeless, the United States in collaboration with the British had made a decision and already started preparations for toppling Hoxha's regime by force. Therefore the Albanian offer was rejected.

By late 1947, the British plan to take coercive measures to overthrow Albania's regime had already prevailed in the Western intelligence community. British intelligence MI6 and the CIA organized the first Cold War attempt to roll back communism through covert force in a Soviet-dominated country. American and British intelligence experts hoped they would stir up trouble for Enver Hoxha's communist regime, thus creating an example for other Eastern European countries where some remaining guerrilla groups opposed to the communist regimes were still operational. With regards to the reaction of the Soviet Union to such an operation, the CIA concluded that it was highly unlikely that the Soviet Union would deliberately initiate a war with the West over Albania.<sup>156</sup> CIA and MI6 at various training centers in Malta, Cyprus, and West Germany trained an anti-Communist force, recruited from the Albanian-exile community. The first groups were

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<sup>153</sup> National Security Archives of the United States, Central Intelligence Agency, *Current Situation in Albania* Document No. 48635.

<sup>154</sup> Minister Shtylla met in New York with Mr. Harry N. Haward, Member of U.S. Delegation at the U.N., and Mr. John C. Campbell, Assistant Chief, Division of Southern Europe, Department of State during the Third Committee of the General Assembly to resolve the disputes between Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania.

<sup>155</sup> Between 1947 and 1949 Greece was engulfed by a bloody civil war between Greek Government Forces and Communist guerrillas in which surrounding countries were involved in different ways. Albania served as a sanctuary for Greek Communist guerrillas, and the two countries were almost on the brink of war. Fearing that Greece was falling apart, the U.S. supported the Greek government with substantial military and economic aid. For more, see Larry E. Cable. *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War*. New York: New York University Press. 1986, pp., 9-32.

<sup>156</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Estimate: Consequences of an Attempt to Overthrow the Present Regime in Albania*. Document No. C30351, Dated December 30, 1952. For more, see National Security Archives of the United States p. 7.

sent to Albania by late 1947. From the outset, however, the operation was doomed. The work of the Soviet mole H.A.R. Kim Philby, MI6's representative who was sent to Washington to work with CIA at the project's planning level, is thought to have ensured that these plans were passed via Moscow into the Albanian regime's hands, and ambushes were laid before any of the agents arrived. In any event, the regime's grip on the country was such that the chances of an uprising succeeding were slim. The few agents who somehow survived the ambushes escaped from Albania and returned to a training camp in Malta, told of informers and fierce security and of locals everywhere being too afraid to offer help or even shelter. The belief that it was possible to overthrow or even undermine Albanian communism by sending in a handful of armed Albanians was not realistic. The strength of Hoxha's control of the country was critically underestimated and agents continued to parachute in or land by sea until late 1953. It is estimated that some three hundred Albanian refugees lost their lives during this operation.<sup>157</sup>

After the failure of this operation, there was nothing remarkable in U.S.-Albanian relations for more than 30 years. The U.S. policy toward Albania resembled a lack of interest with containment policy vis-à-vis Soviet-dominated countries, while Hoxha continued his anti-American communist propaganda until his death in 1985. But Hoxha proved to be difficult to deal with even within the communist block. In 1948, after a Soviet-Yugoslav split, Hoxha rebelled against Tito and threw Albania into the arms of the Soviet Union. In 1949 Albania entered CMEA.<sup>158</sup> With Albanian membership in the Warsaw Pact, in 1955 a Soviet naval base was established in southern Albania, thus giving the Soviets an entry to the Mediterranean. But the honeymoon with the Soviets didn't last long. Signs of Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation, the process of "de-Stalinization" started by the new Soviet leadership after Stalin's death, the emerging rift in Soviet-China relations, and the readiness of Khrushchev to discuss the possibility of

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<sup>157</sup> For more on this operation, see Nicholas Bethel. *The Great Betrayal*. London 1984.

<sup>158</sup> Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the Soviet-dominated economic organization for Eastern Europe. From that time on, almost all foreign trade of Albania was with Russia and other members of CMEA.

autonomy for the Greek minority in Albania,<sup>159</sup> gave Hoxha not only a degree of apprehension but also an opportunity to become a Chinese protégé. The dispute between Hoxha and Khrushchev became so grave that diplomatic relations between Moscow and Tirana were severed in 1961 and consequently the Soviet base in Albania was closed. From then on Albania refused to participate in CMEA and the Warsaw Pact activities,<sup>160</sup> and no more Soviet vessels were regularly stationed in the Mediterranean. Following these events Hoxha indicated a desire to move nearer to the West. He found approaching Western Europe to be ideologically less embarrassing than seeking any help from the United States.<sup>161</sup> The minister of foreign affairs of Austria, Lujo Tonic-Sorinj, explained the Albanian government's intention during a meeting with Secretary of State Rusk on October 5, 1966. Minister Tonicic referred to approaches made by Hoxha, noting that "Albanians have indicated a desire to move nearer the West but they appear not to dare take any plunge and seem to be afraid of being repulsed by the West." Tonicic asked the secretary if the United States expected any change on the part of Albania. Rusk speculated that Albanians could become restless under the monopoly of China and indicated "it would be a great mistake for the United States to try to probe the intentions of the Albanians."<sup>162</sup> Albania accepted Chinese "guidance" in political and military affairs, and between 1961 and 1975 received approximately half a billion dollars in interest-free credits from China. Although Hoxha had already started his anti religion campaign, in 1967, inspired by Chinese Cultural Revolution, he succeeded in formally eradicating all worship practices in Albania, thus turning Albania into the first atheist state in the world.<sup>163</sup> Albania's relations with China soured in the early 1970s, apparently because of a change that occurred in China's foreign policy at this time. Hoxha disapproved the warming trend in Chinese-American relations, but particularly he was

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<sup>159</sup> In May 1960 Khrushchev expressed readiness to discuss the issue during a meeting with Sophocles Venizellos, the leader of the Greek opposition Liberal Party. See Rothschild, p. 174.

<sup>160</sup> When Russia invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, Albania denounced the invasion and officially withdrew from the Warsaw Pact.

<sup>161</sup> Rothschild, p. 176

<sup>162</sup> Foreign Relations, 1964-1968, Volume XVII, p. 55-56.

<sup>163</sup> For more see Peter R. Prifti. *Albania: Towards an Atheist Society*, in *Religion and Atheism in the USSR and Eastern Europe*, edited by Bogdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong. London: Macmillan, 1975.



angered when the Chinese leadership extended an invitation to Yugoslav leader Tito to visit China.<sup>164</sup> Albania launched an anti-China campaign in mid-1977 that led to a discontinuation of all economic and military assistance and the withdrawal of all Chinese technical experts working in Albania.

After breaking with China, Albania followed a policy of self-reliance, continuing to reject diplomatic relations with either the United States or the Soviet Union so long as Hoxha was alive, but did come out of her self-imposed isolation to a limited extent in the early 1980s. Albania opened talks with West Germany in an attempt to establish diplomatic relations<sup>165</sup>, and in fact several improvements were made in relations with Italy, Greece, and France. After the death of Hoxha in April 1985, a liberalization trend in foreign policy was becoming apparent, but economic conditions in the country worsened. In the meantime, the wave of political change sweeping across Eastern Europe in late 1989 affected Albanian domestic politics as well as her foreign relations. Concerned about extraordinary developments in Eastern Europe and particularly the dramatic events in Romania, Albania's leadership launched a campaign of political liberalization. On the domestic front, the dynamics changed dramatically when by the end of June 1990, some 5,000 Albanians took refuge in dozens of foreign embassies in Tirana and demanded to be allowed to leave the country. After some early hesitation the government conceded to the request and the refugees were allowed to leave. This gesture on the part of the government probably only encouraged people to demand more, and consequently the issue of allowing political opposition parties came under discussion. Demonstrations began occurring periodically, and by late 1990 the communist government agreed to give up its monopoly on political power. Subsequently the first

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<sup>164</sup> Tito's visit was a clear indication to Hoxha that Albania was not any more an important beachhead for China

<sup>165</sup> Albanian-West German differences were over Albania's demand for \$2 billion in reparations from the Federal Republic of Germany for damage done in Albania during WWII. Germany was unwilling to concede the principle of reparations, but did suggest the possibility of a loan or credits to finance a major industrial plant in Albania. Some improvement in relations became evident in 1984 when Franz Joseph Strauss, Premier of Bavaria, made a private trip to Albania, during which he met with various high officials in the country. Talks went on for almost three years until diplomatic relations were established in September 1987.

opposition party was created, the Democratic Party of Albania, followed by the appearance of opposition newspapers and the creation of additional opposition parties.

#### **4. Resumption of United States-Albanian Relations**

By early 1990 relations with the United States came back onto the Albanian agenda. The first contacts between American and Albanian diplomats occurred in May 1990, but the United States government, concerned about Albanian internal developments, allowed the discussion to go on for some time before diplomatic relations were officially renewed in March 1991.<sup>166</sup> The official establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States coincided with the first multi-party elections. General elections held on March 31, 1991, whereby the opposition parties won in the big cities, but the communists managed to retain their hold over the countryside and won two-thirds of the seats in the Albanian Parliament. But the new mandate for the communist government lasted for only one month. The Albanian domestic political scene was already filled with demonstrations, political rallies, general strikes, and some violence. The communist government resigned and a new government followed. This time half of the 24 cabinet members came from the opposition parties. After the change in government, relations with the United States improved rapidly. The U.S. government supported Albania's membership applications to international organizations and promised humanitarian assistance. In June 1991, the U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker paid a remarkable visit to Albania during which he addressed hundreds of thousands of Albanians<sup>167</sup> gathered in a rally held in the main square of Tirana on the occasion of his visit. Secretary Baker encouraged Albania's democratization process and pledged U.S. support.<sup>168</sup> Although the economic aid offered by Secretary Baker to Albania was modest (\$6 million), its symbolic significance to Albania was very important, as it pointed to possible future U.S. support. Furthermore, Baker cautioned that the future of Albanian-

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<sup>166</sup> *The New York Times*, March 13, 1991.

<sup>167</sup> *The New York Times* of June 23, 1991 reported that some 300,000 people attended the rally for Secretary Baker.

<sup>168</sup> *The New York Times*, June 23, 1991.

American relations would depend on Albania's continued pursuit of democratization.<sup>169</sup> In November of that year, Albanian Prime Minister Ylli Bufi paid the first ever visit of an Albanian premier to the United States. Although his visit technically was not in an official capacity, Bufi did meet with U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Arnold Kanter and with members of the House foreign affairs and Senate foreign relations committees. In addition Bufi met various U.S. officials in departments of Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture, and officials from the World Bank with whom he discussed Albanian economic needs. He also signed an agreement with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation that was intended to guarantee American investments in Albania. But given the devastating economic and political situation in the country, such moves were too little if not too late. The government was not able to deal with the myriad problems<sup>170</sup>, and after the opposition pulled out, the government collapsed.<sup>171</sup> A technical government followed for preparing the new elections that were scheduled for March 22, 1992. Meanwhile the opposition leader, Sali Berisha, visited the United States twice and was able to receive the full support of the U.S. government and various Congressional leaders. Understanding the challenges to democratization, the United States publicly supported the opposition parties in Albania and, in a unique move, U.S. Ambassador to Tirana, William Ryerson, participated in opposition rallies.<sup>172</sup> The U.S. support proved to be of critical importance for the landslide victory of the opposition in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> elections. On April 9, 1992, the new Albanian Parliament elected Berisha as president of the republic, Albania's first noncommunist president since the end of World War II.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Minton F. Goldman. *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe: Political, Economic, and Social Challenges*. New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1997, p. 77.

<sup>170</sup> For the dire economic situation in Albania during that time, see *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 13, 1991; *The Boston Globe*, June 13, 1991; *The New York Times* September 3, 1991.

<sup>171</sup> United States Department of State, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report Eastern Europe* (FBIS-EEU)91-235, December 6, 1991, p.3

<sup>172</sup> For more on the U.S. support of the opposition parties during the election campaign see Elez Biberaj. *Albania in Transition*. pp. 130-138.

<sup>173</sup> FBIS-EEU 92-063, April 1, 1992, p. 3.

## II. NEW ERA OF UNITED STATES-ALBANIAN RELATIONS

The new government created after the election of 1992 introduced an ambitious, Western-oriented program of much-needed economic and democratic reforms to overcome Albania's longtime isolation and economic stagnation. The United States and Western European countries hailed the program and pledged to support the full transition from a centralized socialist system to a liberal market economy. Albanian relations with the United States underwent major changes. In fact, after the Cold War, the United States had been generally responsive to approaches from post-communist governments of Eastern Europe for closer, stronger, and more long-lasting relations, but particularly due to the situation in the Balkans, Berisha's emphasis on relations with the United States met with much interest in Washington.<sup>174</sup> The United States and the NATO alliance were very much concerned that the destabilization of the Balkans could threaten Western interests. Therefore, the integration of this region into a Euro-Atlantic security structure was envisaged. Albania officially requested to become a NATO member and in June 1992 was admitted into the North Atlantic Cooperation Council.<sup>175</sup> Berisha was invited to Washington in June 1992 to meet with President Bush at the White House, thus starting a new era in the relations between the two countries in the political, economic, and military fields. Fearing that the conflict in Yugoslavia could be spread into Kosovo and then to Albania, Berisha pleaded for help and regarded the United States as a protector. Although the United States made no official commitment to Albania's security at that time, the Bush Administration, worried about the spillover of the Bosnia conflict in Kosovo and other neighboring areas, by the end of December 1992 made a deterrent threat known as the "Christmas warning" to the Serbian government, indicating that the United States was prepared to take unilateral military action against any conflict

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<sup>174</sup> Between 1992 and 1996 the U.S. committed over \$200 million to addressing humanitarian needs and in assisting Albania's political and economic transition. See Elez Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, p. 232.

<sup>175</sup> Albania became a member of the Partnership for Peace Program on February 23, 1994. On September 22, 1994, Albania released the Introduction Document that determines areas and level of participation in cooperation with NATO, and has since presented the yearly Individual Partnership Program (IPP). Albania has been a participant in the Planning and Review Process since 1995. In November 1999 Albania presented its Membership Action Plan.

spillover.<sup>176</sup> (The Clinton Administration reiterated the Christmas warning a few weeks after President Clinton's inauguration). It is worth noting that throughout the crises in the Balkans, Albania has been encouraged and praised by the U.S. government for its constructive role in resolving several of the inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, promoting peaceful dispute resolution and discouraging ethnic-Albanian extremists.<sup>177</sup>

**A. U.S.-ALBANIAN DEFENSE AND SECURITY RELATIONS, 1992-1997**

One of the most distinctive features of U.S.-Albanian relations is the countries' bilateral cooperation on defense and security issues, which besides the eagerness of Albanian authorities to start a close relationship with the U.S., has been based on two aspects:

First, the strategic location of Albania and the potential role she may play in the regional security. U.S. planners have considered Albania pivotal to the security of the region due to Albania's strategic location and the fact that large Albanian communities live throughout the Balkans. Thus helping Albania enhance internal stability and facilitate its political and economic integration has been perceived to be in the United States' national interest. A stable, prosperous Albania would be in a good position to help U.S. efforts to promote peace in the region and to combat terrorism, arms proliferation, and international organized crime.<sup>178</sup>

Second, the U.S. leadership believed that military reform was essential in transforming the societies of Eastern European countries, and through cooperation with their defense establishments, the Defense Department could play a key role in helping them to build democratic institutions. As Secretary of Defense William Perry noted,

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<sup>176</sup> The Christmas warning was given in the form of a brief message conveyed through the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, in which President Bush warned Yugoslavian leadership that in the case of escalating the conflict in Kosovo or neighboring areas, the U.S. would take military action even without participation of European countries. For more on the Christmas Warning see *The New York Times* February 1993.

<sup>177</sup> Department of State, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, October 2004, Background Note: Albania at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm>, Accessed November 21, 2004.

<sup>178</sup> USAID website, Country Overview: Albania at <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cbj2002/ee/al/>, (Accessed October 12, 2004.)

[I]n all of those countries, the military represents a major force. In many cases, it is the most cohesive institution. It often contains a large percentage of the educated elite, and it always controls key resources. In short, it is an institution that can either support democracy or subvert it. In these new democracies, we can choose to ignore this important institution or we can try to exert a positive influence.<sup>179</sup>

The U.S. had already initiated a partnership program in which state national guards partnered with comparably sized Central or Eastern European countries to help them reform the military according to democratic principles. As part of this program, in January 1993, the first bilateral agreement was signed between the Ministry of Defense of Albania and the United States European Command, and a military liaison team (MLT) from the South Carolina National Guard was dispatched to the Ministry of Defense of Albania.<sup>180</sup> In October 1993 Secretary of Defense Les Aspen invited Minister of Defense of Albania Zhulali to Washington. A Memorandum of Understanding on Defense Cooperation was signed that created the necessary conditions for increased Albanian and American bilateral defense cooperation.<sup>181</sup> In January 1995 the first U.S.-Albanian bilateral working group, later known as the bilateral defense consultations, was held in Tirana to discuss defense and security matters. Albania agreed to host a U.S. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) Unit for conducting reconnaissance missions over Bosnia in support of U.N. peacekeepers. The stationing of UAVs in the Gjadri air base was warmly hailed by the United States, since even some NATO countries had previously refused to host them. Following the hosting, a constant flow of American

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<sup>179</sup> William Perry. *Preventive Defense*. Address at a North American luncheon in New York City on May 23. For full speech see <http://www.trilateral.org/nagp/regmtgs/96/0523perry.htm>. Accessed August 4, 2004)

<sup>180</sup> Later, as part of a rearrangement, New Jersey was assigned as primary partner while the New York National Guard was assigned as associate partner for Albania.

<sup>181</sup> Other memorandums signed for defense cooperation between the U.S. and Albania: Memorandum of Understanding between Albania and US European Command for sending to Albania the Military Liaison Team, signed in January 1993; Memorandum of Agreement on Hydrographic Studies, signed in July 1994; Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of USA on providing communication equipment SY-71E to Albania (signed in 1998); Memorandum of Understanding between U.S. Task Force and the Directorate of Civilian Aviation for the Control of Rinas Airport (signed in May 1999); Memorandum on Security Agreement between USA and Albanian Government regarding Security Measures for the Protection of the Military Classified Information (signed in 1995); Agreement between USA and Republic of Albania for the destruction of Ammunition (signed in December 2001).

military personnel traveled to and from Albania to give advice and check the situation. The first Albanian military officers were sent to U.S. military institutions for training under the IMET program.<sup>182</sup> By 2001 about \$2.7 million was allocated for the training of 140 Albanian military officers in U.S. schools and military academies. In 1994 Albania became eligible to receive excess defense articles from the United States under the EDA program; thus a considerable number of articles were selected and shipped to Albania, including vehicles, trucks, three patrol boats, etc., from U.S. bases in Europe and elsewhere.<sup>183</sup> The U.S. Department of Defense responded positively to the request made by the minister of defense for a defense adviser to the Ministry of Defense of Albania.<sup>184</sup> The Albanian government repeatedly requested that U.S. military bases be stationed in Albania. When building permanent bases appeared impractical from a U.S. perspective, Zhulali asked for more of a U.S. presence in Albania through conducted bilateral exercises. He also proposed that a national training center be built in the Biza region, which would be used for training by Albanian and U.S. military personnel, and could be offered for NATO exercises as well. A series of bilateral exercises followed, reaching a climax in 1995 when 12 such exercises were conducted. Some of these

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<sup>182</sup> International Military Education and Training. The United States as the largest Western education provider began to train and educate foreign servicemen in 1947 within IMET. Since its inception it has had two broad missions: first, to provide professional military education and military training for allied or friendly armed forces, and second, to expose foreign military personnel to democratic values, respect for human rights and belief in the rule of law. See for details, Duncan L. Clarke, Daniel B. O'Connor, Jason D. Ellis, *Send Guns and Money: Security Assistance and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Westport Praeger, 1997.

<sup>183</sup> Excess Defense Articles. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Arms Export Control Act authorize offering to foreign governments defense articles declared as excess by the military departments in support of U. S. national security and foreign policy objectives. Typically, EDA is transferred to support U. S. allies in their modernization efforts. Until December 2000 Albania received under EDA about \$34 million including over 160 military vehicles and other excess articles

<sup>184</sup> For a full account of the activity of the U.S. defense adviser in Albania, see C. Dennison Lane. *Once Upon an Army: The Crisis in the Albanian Army, 1995-1996*. Ministry of Defense of the United Kingdom: Conflict Studies Research Centre, G114, September 2002.

exercises were of a humanitarian nature such as “Uji Kristal”<sup>185</sup> (Clear Water) and “MEDEX 95.” Others, such as “SAREX 95” and “Peaceful Eagle 95”<sup>186</sup> were focused on training the Albanian military in search and rescue missions, as well as peacekeeping operations. In July of 1995, the joint U.S.-Albanian military exercise “Rescue Eagle 95” was conducted on the Albanian coast, in which approximately 1,700 Marines of the 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expedition Unit participated. These exercises were followed by frequent visits of U.S. ships to the main Albanian port of Durres.

Albania became eligible to buy non-lethal military equipment from the United States with funds provided under the FMF program.<sup>187</sup> A Security Assistance Office was attached to the Ministry of Defense of Albania for coordinating FMF, EDA, and IMET programs.<sup>188</sup> During a visit to Washington in September 1995, Berisha asked President Clinton for more U.S. military assistance to Albania and, in a meeting at the Pentagon, he discussed with Secretary of Defense Perry the possibility of supporting the Albanian navy for its coast guard duties.<sup>189</sup> The U.S. was very interested in regional security cooperation and encouraged Albania in this direction. In 1995 Albania sent a company-size unit to Bosnia as part of Stabilization Force (SFOR), and ever since, the unit has been rotating in

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<sup>185</sup> In July 1994, during a tour of the region in support of humanitarian efforts, the spouses of Secretary Perry, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy Joe Kruzel, who died on a peace mission in Bosnia in August 1995, and Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense Army Maj. Gen. Paul Kern visited the military hospital in Tirana. They witnessed the difficult situation in the hospital and realized that since it was a military facility it could not receive humanitarian assistance. They encouraged the Pentagon to find an appropriate way to assist the Albanian military in this regard. “Uji Kristal” followed, during which considerable work was done by South Carolina Guardsmen, including building two wells. The Albanian government named a hospital wing honoring Joe Kruzel; a plaque in the trauma center bears his name.

<sup>186</sup> Approximately 150 U.S. and 150 Albanian soldiers participated in a combined peacekeeping exercise September 11-21, 1995, near Durres, Albania. Peaceful Eagle '95 was the first combined, bilateral peacekeeping exercise between U.S. and Albanian soldiers conducted in that country. It involved about 150 engineers from the 3rd Inf. Div., and as many Albanian soldiers from the Shijaku Division, some of whom had trained with U.S. soldiers at Fort Polk, La., in a Partnership for Peace exercise called Cooperative Nugget '95.

<sup>187</sup> Foreign Military Financing. The U.S. launched Foreign Military Financing, known also as Warsaw Initiative, in 1996 to assist Partnership for Peace countries aspiring to NATO membership. Until 2002 Albania received \$14.5 million in U.S. military equipment and technical assistance under FMF.

<sup>188</sup> In 2002 the Office was upgraded to Defense Cooperation Office and took over also the Military Liaison Team.

<sup>189</sup> The U.S. agreed to send to Albania three patrol boats as part of the EDA program and also to sell to Albania two brand new patrol boats.



and out of Bosnia every six months. This was the first time Albania sent troops for a peacekeeping mission outside the country, and such a move has been always regarded by the United States as a significant investment, taking into account the modest capabilities of Albania.

The U.S. Administration believed that building trust and understanding between the militaries of neighboring nations meant building trust and understanding between the nations themselves.<sup>190</sup> In this regard Albania was considered an appropriate place to start building a new partnership among countries of the region. With the support and full financial sponsorship of the United States, two major events took place in 1996: The Southeastern European Defense Ministerial was convened in Tirana from March 31 to April 1, with the participation of ministers of defense from Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Italy, Turkey, and the United States.<sup>191</sup> During the conference, the ministers discussed regional security and cooperation, including peacekeeping missions, and humanitarian and disaster relief. They also discussed exchanging military information, conducting joint exercises and training, and improving civil/military relations. The ministers decided to continue with such meetings on an annual basis.<sup>192</sup> Although this meeting didn't elaborate any final document, it carried a symbolic significance for the troubled region of the Balkans, since it was the first time that the ministers of defense of these countries met and openly discussed their security concerns. The U.S. secretary of defense encouraged the countries of the region to build a new security partnership, emphasizing the need for openness among the countries regarding defense budgets, plans and strategy by noting that "no country in the region should have to guess about the capabilities or intentions of its neighbors."<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> William Perry. *Preventive Defense*. Address at a North American luncheon in New York City on May 23. For full speech see <http://www.trilateral.org/nagp/regmtgs/96/0523perry.htm>. Accessed August 4, 2004)

<sup>191</sup> Greece refused to participate in this event due to tensions with Turkey at that time.

<sup>192</sup> In the following meeting held in Bulgaria in October 1998, besides 9 countries of the region, the following countries participated as observers: Belgium, Canada, The Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom. For a chronology of events of SEDM, see <http://www.seebrig.pims.org/sedmcc.htm>.

<sup>193</sup> *Ushtria dhe Koha*, April 2, 1996.

During the summer of 1996, a major multilateral exercise codenamed “Peaceful Eagle 96” was conducted in the vicinity of Tirana with the participation of troops from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, Turkey, Romania, and the United States.<sup>194</sup> This was the biggest exercise ever held in the region; some 2,000 troops from all participant countries took part.

The excellent defense cooperation between the United States and Albania was capitalized with the exchange of a series of high-level defense officials. Between 1992 and 1996 Albania was visited by Secretary of the Army Togo West, by the Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye, by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Shalikashvili, and by other high-level civilian and military officials from the Pentagon. Most important during this period, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry visited Albania twice<sup>195</sup>, while Minister of Defense of Albania Zhulali visited Washington three times in full official capacity.<sup>196</sup> Throughout this period the United States supported and encouraged the official request of Albania for NATO membership, as well as Albanian participation in the Partnership for Peace Program.

In the meantime, on the domestic front due to harsh political fighting accompanied by a political gridlock and the lack of experience in dealing with challenges created by the new political and economic system, a slowing of reforms occurred in the mid-1990s. Taking credit for the democratization of the country and opening of Albania toward the West, Berisha had already started to become authoritarian. But still the Clinton administration wanted to avoid weakening or antagonizing Berisha, who was viewed as a friend and whose government had contributed to stability in the

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<sup>194</sup> The U.S. was represented in this exercise by an intermediate staging base ISB in Ancona, Italy. Units crafted in the ISB were the 22d ASG, two movement control teams from the 14th Transportation Battalion at Vicenza, US Army Reserve (USAR) soldiers from the 314th Support Center at Vicenza, and a port management team from the 1321st Medium Port Command at Livorno, Italy. To support this JCS exercise, NMCB 40 deployed 39 personnel to Rinas and Biza, Albania.

<sup>195</sup> Secretary Perry visited Albania in July 1994 and in April 1996.

<sup>196</sup> Minister Zhulali visited Washington five times during his tenure as minister of defense. Three of these visits were in full official capacity: October 1993; July 1994; October 1995; January 1996; September 1996.

region.<sup>197</sup> Meanwhile the general elections of May 1996 had been strongly criticized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The U.S. criticized the election<sup>198</sup> and called for a comprehensive re-run of the ballot. When such calls were ignored, the U.S. administration backed away from supporting “the increasingly authoritarian Albanian president.”<sup>199</sup> Gabriel Partos, a prominent analyst of Balkan issues, argues that the severing of U.S.’s special links with the Berisha administration was made easier for Washington by the decline in Albania’s strategic importance following the Dayton Peace Accords on Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>200</sup> The political stability of the country weakened and a boom of the informal economy, followed by a rising of pyramid schemes, almost paralyzed the country’s economy and reforms. During a meeting held in October 1996 at the Department of State between the Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs Timothy Wirth and Minister of Defense of Albania Safet Zhulali, the United States warned the Government of Albania of the possible collapse of the pyramid schemes and of the likely consequences.<sup>201</sup> As feared, the pyramid schemes couldn’t be managed and they collapsed, thus bringing about a serious crisis with severe political, social and economic consequences.<sup>202</sup> The May 1996 parliamentary elections had already damaged the relations of Berisha with the U.S. administration and, therefore, by the time the unrest began, neither Berisha nor the U.S. representatives seemed to be interested in consulting each other.<sup>203</sup> Harsh criticism toward the United States emerged in Parliament from Berisha’s ruling party members, some of whom went as far as to argue that the collapse of the pyramid schemes was a CIA-led operation designed to

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<sup>197</sup> Minton F. Goldman. *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe: Political, Economic, and Social Challenges*. New York: M.E.Sharpe, p. 72.

<sup>198</sup> For more on the U.S. position toward the election, see Elez Biberaj, *Albania in Transition*, chapter 7 & 8.

<sup>199</sup> *Washington Post*

<sup>200</sup> Gabriel Partos. *Albania: Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management*, December 1997. London: The International Security Information Service, p. 5.

<sup>201</sup> The author was a participant in this meeting.

<sup>202</sup> For more on the 1997 crisis, see Gabriel Partos. *Albania: Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management*. London: The International Security Information Service, December 1997.

<sup>203</sup> After the election Berisha refused to meet U.S. Undersecretary Timothy Wirth and the Chairman of the Albanian Caucus in Congress, Elliot Engel, Congressman from New York.

disrupt Albania. In response to this criticism the U.S. ambassador in Albania expressed anger and stated that the U.S. government had criticized the government of Albania openly and in a constructive way by adding that irresponsible politicians who want to inflame the situation for their own purposes choose to interpret this criticism as “a hidden agenda aiming at destroying the country”.<sup>204</sup> Albania couldn’t respond effectively to the crisis without the help of the international community. Upset with the U.S. position, Berisha avoided calling for help to the U.S.-dominated NATO and instead appealed to the Western European Union for “military aid to restore the constitutional order and to safeguard the integrity of Albania,”<sup>205</sup> a move that coincided with the Clinton Administration’s decision to let Europeans deal with the crisis in Albania.<sup>206</sup> The European Union, in concerted efforts with the OSCE, responded quickly by sending a multinational force to Albania to help restore order and create the appropriate conditions for holding new elections.<sup>207</sup> Despite the fact that the United States was not part of a multinational force in Albania, the Clinton Administration encouraged all political parties to reach a peaceful solution and repeatedly supported the integrity of Albania throughout the crisis. Unquestionably the crisis of 1997 was a setback in the relations of Berisha with the U.S. administration, but most important, the crisis was a serious setback in democratic developments in Albania.

The new government created after the July election tried to restore order and bring the economy back on track. In international affairs, Nano’s government pursued a policy of recovering the shaken relations with the United States and at the same time approaching the European Union. But political stability remained fragile throughout 1998. Another crisis occurred in September that year when demonstrations erupted in the capital city to protest the killing of a prominent opposition leader. Soon the protests

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<sup>204</sup> Statement of U.S. Ambassador in Albania to the Albanian press on March 27, 1997. For the full text, see Albanian Telegraphic Agency at: <http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/ata/1997/97-03-28.ata.html#08>

<sup>205</sup> Albanian Telegraphic Agency, <http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/ata/1997/97-03-13.ata.html#12>

<sup>206</sup> For more on U.S. and European reaction to the crisis in Albania, see Gabriel Partos. *Albania: Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management*. London: The International Security Information Service, December 1997.

<sup>207</sup> Elections were held in July 1997 in which the opposition coalition led by the Socialist Party scored a landslide victory. Berisha resigned following the result of the election. The Parliament elected Rexhep Meidani as President of Albania for a five-year term.

turned violent, and the stability of the country was again in question. The United States and the European Union reacted by condemning the violence and requesting that order be restored. President Clinton sent a message to Albanian President Rexhep Meidani in which he condemned the use of violence for achieving political ends in Albania by noting that the guiding principles for all countries seeking to build democracy must be support of democratic institutions and the rule of law. He emphasized that the “warm friendship between the Albanian and the American peoples is at the heart of the good relations between our two countries.”<sup>208</sup>

## **B. THE CRISIS OF KOSOVO AND UNITED STATES-ALBANIAN SECURITY RELATIONS**

While the security and economic situation in Albania was slowly recovering, the situation in Kosovo was exploding.<sup>209</sup> In December 1997, NATO Foreign Ministers confirmed that NATO’s interest in Balkan stability extended beyond Bosnia to the surrounding region, and expressed concern at the escalating ethnic tension in Kosovo.<sup>210</sup> Throughout 1998 diplomatic efforts to find a peaceful, negotiated solution were undertaken by the international community. In the late summer and fall of 1998, U.S. officials began to consider major combat operations to protect civilians in Kososvo from

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<sup>208</sup> Albanian Telegraphic Agency, September 24, 1998. For the full text of President Clinton’s message see <http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/ata/1998/98-09-24.ata.html#19>.

<sup>209</sup> The seeds of confrontation in Kosovo were sown long ago. Throughout history Kosovo has been mostly inhabited by Albanians and has had a special place in Albanian history. At the same time Kosovo has had significance in Serbian history and thinking. In 1389, Serb forces were defeated by the Ottomans at the battle of Kosovo Polje. In 1913, after the Balkan Wars, Kosovo became part of Serbia, despite the ethnic Albanian majority, and later became part of Yugoslavia. Under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, Kosovo became an autonomous province within Serbia. But from the late 1980s Kosovo was increasingly affected by a rise in Serb nationalist sentiment. Slobodan Milosevic gained power in Serbia in 1987 and in 1990 the autonomy given to Kosovo in 1974 was revoked. During the 1990s, Kosovo Albanian resistance to rule from Belgrade grew. By and large, this was passive. However, after the Dayton Accords, which didn’t address the Kosovo issue, a more radical agenda emerged. Stepping up their program of independence, Kosovar Albanians not only demanded autonomy from the Serbs, but initiated a movement to cede Kosovo from Serbia to become an independent Kosovo. An armed resistance followed, which led to the creation of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA began a campaign of attacks against Serbian security forces, who responded with military repression of the population. For more on Kosovo history and developments, see Noel Malcolm. *Kosovo: A Short History*. New York: University Press, Second Edition, 1999; Tim Judah. *Kosovo: War and Revenge*. Yale University Press, Second Edition. 2002; Miranda Vickers. *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosova*. C. Hurst & Co, 1998.

<sup>210</sup> See NATO’s Handbook

ethnic cleansing.<sup>211</sup> NATO defense ministers, therefore, decided in June 1998 to task NATO military planners to produce a range of options, both ground and air, for military support to the diplomatic process. The Kosovo crisis brought back to full speed the U.S.-Albanian relations. U.S. planners considered Albania as a staging area for possible operations in Kosovo. The Albanian government fully supported the international community's efforts to resolve the crisis and expressed its willingness to make available to the United States and NATO all military facilities, including the right of the Alliance to use Albanian maritime and air space. In response to the escalation of the conflict, NATO undertook a series of air and ground exercises to demonstrate the Alliance's ability to project power rapidly into the region. Albania hosted many of those exercises. In mid-June 1998 a NATO air maneuver, codenamed Determined Falcon, took to the skies over Albania <sup>212</sup> while NATO Partnership for Peace exercise "Co-operative Assembly" took place in Albania from July 17-22. Another exercise, dubbed "Cooperative Assembly 1998," was held in Albania from Aug. 17-22, 1998. The exercise involved ground and air forces by bringing together more than 1,200 troops from the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Greece, Spain, Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Turkey, Italy, Albania, and Lithuania.<sup>213</sup>

In March 1998, President Clinton faced the most serious foreign policy crisis of his presidency when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization launched a massive air strike upon Yugoslavia to secure the rights of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.<sup>214</sup> The bombing was carried out largely by American forces and lasted for seventy-eight days until the Yugoslav government agreed to NATO's terms in June. Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic was forced to end his repression of the Kosovo Albanians.

During the operation, Albania played host to some seven thousand U.S. troops deployed in support of Allied operations. NATO's supreme Allied commander of Europe,

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<sup>211</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. Official Government Edition, p. 119.

<sup>212</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 1998.

<sup>213</sup> Pentagon briefing, 23 August 1998.

<sup>214</sup> For a full account of NATO's air operation in Kosovo, see Wesley K. Clark. *Waging the Modern War: Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Combat*. New York: Public Affairs. 2002.

Gen. Wesley Clark, requested the additional weapon systems in support of the operation Allied Force. On April 4, 1999, the United States offered and NATO accepted 24 Army AH-64A Apache attack helicopters (Task Force Hawk) to aid in Operation Allied Force.<sup>215</sup> In March 1999 Task Force Hawk was originally directed to deploy to Macedonia, but the Macedonian government determined it could not allow helicopters to be based there. Therefore the deployment had to be shifted to Albania, where the government had agreed to accept them and offered as the location for Task Force Hawk the only international airport in Albania at Rinas (Tirana). About 5,000 U.S. soldiers were part of the deployment to Albania.<sup>216</sup>

The crisis of Kosovo further deteriorated the already volatile security situation in Albania due to the large number of refugees (about 500,000) arriving from Kosovo. NATO, the United States, and the European Union supported Albania through large-scale humanitarian operations, such as “Allied Harbor,”<sup>217</sup> “Sustain Hope,”<sup>218</sup> “Shining Hope,” etc. On April 13, 1999, NATO approved plans for Allied Harbor, its first humanitarian operation ever. Allied Harbor was led by Lt. Gen. John Reith, U.S. Army, who was at the same time the commander of the NATO Forces operating in Albania,

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<sup>215</sup> For more see Pentagon press briefing April 4, 1999.

<sup>216</sup> Besides 24 Apache helicopters, Task Force Hawk’s deployment involved an Army Aviation Brigade Combat Team. This unit included a corps aviation brigade headquarters, a corps artillery brigade headquarters with a Multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) battalion, an attack helicopter regiment (Apache), a ground maneuver brigade combat team, a corps support group, a signal battalion, a headquarters troop battalion, a military police detachment, a psychological operations detachment, and a special operations command-and-control element. For more, see Global Security Website at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/ah-64a-ops.htm>. (Accessed on September 3, 2004.)

<sup>217</sup> The preparation for the deployment of a NATO force to Albania to conduct a humanitarian mission began on 7 April, when a NATO team led by Italian Mag. Gen. Pasqualino Verdecchia, deployed from Headquarters Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH) to co-ordinate NATO plans with Albanian authorities. A team of the AMF(L) (Allied Command Europe Mobile Force/Land) led by the AMF(L) commander, Lt.Gen. John Reith, arrived in Tirana on 10 April to make final preparations for the deployment of this NATO Immediate Reaction (Land) headquarters.

<sup>218</sup> Operation Sustain Hope was the U.S. humanitarian effort to bring in food, water, medicine and relief supplies for the refugees fleeing from the former republic of Yugoslavia into Albania and Macedonia. The overall objective of Operation Sustain Hope was to maintain stability in the region and prevent a humanitarian disaster and to provide for the security of the refugees.

AFOR.<sup>219</sup> Lt. Gen. Reith conducted meetings with the Albanian president and other high-level officials who pledged full support to the operation. The United States' contribution to Allied Harbor was Joint Task Force (JTF) Shining Hope, commanded by Major

General William S. Hinton Jr., United States Air Force.<sup>220</sup> By late 1999 almost all Kosovo refugees were returned home, thus concluding the first NATO humanitarian operation. In recognition of NATO's support during the Kosovo crisis, the president of Albania awarded AFOR the Order of Skenderberg, Albania's highest award.<sup>221</sup>

The credibility of the United States during and after the crisis of Kosovo reached an even higher level among Albanians. On the other hand, although Albania is a small and rather poor country by U.S. standards, the security partnership between the two countries was fostered during the crisis. Most important, Kosovo's crisis underscored Albania's utility as a staging area for NATO and U.S. operations in the region.

After the Kosovo crisis the U.S. continued to promote regional security initiatives and encourage countries of the Balkans to cooperate in regional security issues. Therefore, much emphasis was attached to the South Eastern European Defense Ministerial's (SEDM's) initiatives. On August 1999, SEDM activated the South Eastern European Brigade, SEEBRIG, a regional, multinational and military organization, made

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<sup>219</sup> Forces for Allied Harbor (around 8,000) were provided by Albania, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Luxemburg, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States. For more, see NATO'S AFSOUTH Command. *NATO'S Humanitarian Mission to Albania: AFOR, April-September 1999, Operation Allied Harbor* at <http://www.afsouth.nato.int/operations/harbour/default.htm#intro>. (Accessed April 20, 2004).

<sup>220</sup> The U.S. European Command established Joint Task Force Shining Hope on April 4, 1999, to provide immediate humanitarian relief to ethnic Albanian refugees fleeing the Province of Kosovo into Albania and the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. During its first 50 days of operation, JTF Shining Hope delivered more than 3,400 tons of food, equipment, and medical supplies to the refugees. On April 25, JTF Shining Hope was assigned to NATO's Operation Allied Harbour. For more, see USAFE Press Release June 29, 1999 at <http://www.usafe.af.mil/news/news99/uns99254.htm>.

<sup>221</sup> NATO maintains about 2,000 troops (AFOR 2) in Albania for logistical support for the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo, KFOR.



up of seven European countries, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Romania, Turkey.<sup>222</sup> The United States in partnership with the SEDM countries conducted in

Albania from 2 April - 31 July 2001 the engineering exercise "Cornerstone 2001."<sup>223</sup> This multinational exercise was conducted "in the spirit of" the Partnership for Peace program and represented the first in a series of engineering exercises planned for countries of the region.

In the late 1990s the United States had started a program of supporting the aspirant NATO countries of Eastern Europe in assessing their military capabilities and reforming their armed forces toward achieving NATO compatibility. A series of defense assessments started in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia. The same program was conducted in Albania during 2000-2001, supervised by the office of the U.S. assistant secretary of defense for internal security policy. In March 2000, a team from the ministry of defense led by Chief of the General Staff General Pellumb Qazimi traveled to Washington for a working visit to finalize with U.S. experts the program of reforming the Albanian armed forces. The defense assessment was the most detailed survey ever undertaken by the Albanian armed forces. It covered all aspects of the security and defense of Albania, including legal, structural, conceptual, doctrinal, operational and social framework. Based on the defense assessment, a ten-year program of reforming the Albanian armed forces was outlined. Minister of Defense of Albania Pandeli Majko was presented with the official document of the defense assessment at the Pentagon during a visit in the U.S. in late 2001. The United States pledged its full support to this program and a team of contractors<sup>224</sup> was sent to Albania as early as 2002 to help in implementing it. This is the most far-reaching reform in the history of the Albanian

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<sup>222</sup> SEEBRIG has a mechanized infantry regiment, supported by an infantry company and a mechanized company, and four infantry mechanized battalions (their equipment consists mainly of light infantry weapons and armored transporters for personnel). The first location of the headquarters was in Bulgaria, at Plovdiv, and since July 2003 SEEBRIG headquarters is hosted at Constanta, Romania.

<sup>223</sup> The name "Cornerstone," referring to the first building block of a structure, set the scope and mission for the exercise, which was to build a two-mile national highway. The highway will allow for unimpeded travel from north to south. Training on task force/coalition organization and management was conducted in the execution of road repairs/construction to an Albanian national roadway in the vicinity of the Milot River Basin, North of the city of Lac, Albania. This joint multinational force completed the repair and construction of a 2.7 km road along the Mati River.

<sup>224</sup> SAIC, Science Application International Corporation

military and aims at creating a Western-oriented force, driven mostly by professionalism of active peacetime forces.<sup>225</sup>The process is well under way and it is foreseen that by late 2006 Albanian armed forces will achieve interoperability with NATO, which will be a major step toward Albania's membership in the Atlantic alliance.

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<sup>225</sup> This implies that military active peacetime units will be mainly based on professional forces, that is, officers, NCOs and professional soldiers, while only part of them will be manned by compulsory military service personnel. Active units will be manned over 90% with personnel and 100% with effective and operational equipment available at any time. Current active units manned at some 20-25% will become a reserve force, manned at cadre level. The development of professional peacetime forces in conformity with the project will result in a force with much greater operational capabilities than the present one, to protect the country's interests and participate in international-led operations. For more see *Defense Assessment of the Republic of Albania*. Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Department of Defense, 2001.

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### **III. THE WAR ON TERRORISM AND U.S.-ALBANIAN RELATIONS**

Even before September 11, Albania and the United States had established a close relationship on counterterrorism activities. As already noted, in the first years of the post-Cold War era, Albania had a relatively peaceful transition, compared with other countries of the region, but the security of the country has been tested, nevertheless, by new challenges and threats that had not been known in the past. In the period of transition from totalitarian regime to democracy, new phenomena, such as organized crime, illicit drugs, and human trafficking, as well as terrorism, were introduced. The Albanian authorities were not prepared to handle properly these new challenges, and, of course, they were not able to handle it alone. Not only did law enforcement agencies not have the required experience, but also existing legislation was inadequate to deal with such phenomena.

#### **A. ALBANIA AND THE ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST THREAT**

Even though reliable statistics on the religion are lacking, Albania is frequently referred to as a "Muslim" country.<sup>226</sup> Although after September 11, some neighboring countries, for the obvious connotation, applied the reference, Albania as a nation does not affiliate herself with any particular religion, and Albanians are renowned for their extraordinary religious tolerance. (It is a little-known fact, for example, that Albanians protected their own Jews during the Holocaust while also offering shelter to other Jews who had escaped into Albania from Austria, Serbia and Greece.)<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Until the 16th century, almost all of Albania was Christian, the Roman Catholic religion being dominant in the north and the Orthodox religion in the south. In the 17th century, the Turks began a policy of Islamization by using, among other methods, economic incentives to convert the population. Albanians who adopted Islam received land, were exempted from taxes, and were allowed to serve in the military. By the 19th century, Islam became predominant in Albania, with about 65-70% of the population, while some 20% remained Orthodox and 10-15% Roman Catholic. These groupings remained in effect until the communist government outlawed religion in 1967, making it the world's only atheist state. Freedom of religion in Albania was restored only in 1990.

<sup>227</sup> According to Miles Lerman, former director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., Albania was the only country in Europe which had a larger Jewish population at the end of the war than before it. For more, see Frosina Network: An Albanian Immigrant and Cultural Resource at <http://www.frosina.org/articles/default.asp?id=89>

Nevertheless, Albania is a plausible target for Islamic fundamentalism. After the collapse of communism, the emerging democracy created conditions for the revival of religion. But the chaotic, impoverished status of Albania in the early 1990s meant that it was easy for the country to be penetrated by Islamic extremists who wanted to impose hardcore religion in Albania. Many “humanitarian organizations” mushroomed throughout the country, promising they would help the economy, including agriculture, education, transportation, etc. In fact, the overwhelming majority of them didn’t invest in the economy; they invested instead in building numerous mosques and some religious schools known as madrasas. In addition, in a move that brought much debate in the country, in 1993 Albania was invited to be a full member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). The government accepted the offer in the hope that money from the oil-rich Arab world would pour into the country.<sup>228</sup> The situation was already complicated after the democratic government in 1992, aiming at overcoming longtime isolation and bringing to the country much-needed foreign aid and economic assistance, introduced an “open-door policy”. Much-criticized loose procedures by which foreign nationals were able to obtain visas at the border permitted many unchecked persons to enter the country. Encouraged by inadequate border control and the negligent policy of the Albanian authorities, who kept focusing on political and economic reforms, in the early 1990s Albania gradually became a sanctuary for Al-Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist organization operatives.

## **B. U.S.-ALBANIAN JOINT ANTI-TERRORISM OPERATIONS**

Although Albania has not been faced with any real terrorist threat directed against her citizens, the events of late 1990s have shown that international terrorist organizations not only have been able to penetrate Albania, but they also have developed bases of operation and targeted foreign installations in the country. It is believed that Albania's state of anarchy in 1997 gave Islamic Jihad and other groups the opportunity to enter the

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<sup>228</sup> In October 1992, a delegation from the Islamic Development Bank visited Tirana to lay the groundwork for Albania to join the bank. The delegation promised to invest in Albania and develop cooperation in all areas of the economy, including agriculture, education and transportation.

country freely and establish operatives' cells. Some of these groups have been using involvement in charity as a cover for illegal activity.

In mid-August 1998, a CIA statement acknowledged that an attack had reportedly been planned on the U.S. embassy in Tirana by the terrorist network of Osama bin Laden, who was already accused by Washington of planning the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier that month. Upon learning of the possible attack, the United States evacuated dependents and non-essential personnel from the embassy in Tirana and reinforced security around it. This was later followed by a series of visit cancellations by high-level U.S. officials to Tirana. On 11 June 1999, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright avoided stopping in Tirana following her visit to Macedonia due to security concerns. State Department officials reasoned that there was a great deal of "lawlessness" in Albania, and that the Albanian government was not able to guarantee the security of high-ranking visitors.<sup>229</sup> In July 1999, Secretary of Defense William Cohen cancelled at the last minute his official visit to Tirana for security reasons. *The New York Times* claimed that the secretary's visit was cancelled because of "a threat on the ground related to Islamic militants affiliated to Osama bin Laden."<sup>230</sup> The closure of the U.S. embassy, as well as these visit cancellations, were followed by anxiety generated by the media and public opinion, and served as a wake-up call for Albanian authorities regarding the domestic security situation and the serious threat posed by terrorist cells operating in the country. The Albanian government started to work out a counter-terrorism strategy and to enact suitable legislation. The United States assisted Albania in establishing and training counter-terrorism units, as well as in identifying and monitoring suspect organizations.<sup>231</sup> An intensive cooperation emerged between Albanian law enforcement agencies and U.S. counterparts. A FBI adviser was attached to the Ministry of Public Order of Albania, while CIA representatives and Albanian secret service SHIK (National Information Service) started fruitful counter-terrorism cooperation. During 1998 counter-terrorism agents of the two countries executed a series of covert operations

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<sup>229</sup> CNN, 16 July 1999.

<sup>230</sup> *The New York Times*, 17 July 1999.

<sup>231</sup> Later developments indicated that some Arab charity organizations operating in Albania under a religion umbrella had links with terrorist organizations and had abused their funds for terrorist purposes.

to raid an Al-Qaeda forgery operation and another terrorist cell in Tirana. These joint actions by U.S. and Albanian intelligence authorities resulted in the arrests of about 10 terrorist suspects, including several alleged to have been associated with bin Laden.<sup>232</sup> *The 9/11 Commission: The Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* acknowledged that “these operations may have disrupted a planned attack on the U.S. Embassy in Tirana, and did lead to the rendition of a number of Al-Qaeda-related terrorist operatives.”<sup>233</sup>

Although much needs to be done, some steps taken before September 11 were significant in Albania’s attempt to fight terrorism within the country. Albania has been working to ratify all international instruments against terrorism.<sup>234</sup> In addition, Albania has adopted an entire legislative initiative and is continuing its fight against illegal drug trafficking and organized crime that can support terrorist acts. Albanian secret service SHIK (National Information Service), the Albanian Ministry of Public Order, and the Albanian Ministry of Defense created their specialized counter-terrorism units to deal with such phenomena.

### **C. ALBANIA AND THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM**

Albania supported the U.S.-led international coalition’s fight against terrorism in its very early stages. Immediately after the terrorist attack on September 11, Prime Minister Ilir Meta of Albania stated that “[i]n the just fight of the civilized world against terrorism and criminal forces of the darkness, Albania stands with USA and our allies of the European Union by putting at their disposal not only its territory and military bases but also all the necessary infrastructure and human resources.” Furthermore, Albania gave full support to U.S. diplomatic efforts to build up an international coalition against terrorism. Speaking at the United Nations on the aftermath of September 11, the Albanian

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<sup>232</sup> In August, Albanian officials also confirmed that, over the previous two months, the CIA had helped them seize four suspected Islamic militants in Tirana, accused of links with Egypt's Islamic Jihad group, which claimed responsibility for the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and is believed to have ties with bin Laden. A few days before the embassy bombings, the International Islamic Front for Jihad threatened to take retaliatory action for the arrest of the four men, who had been extradited to Egypt.

<sup>233</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*. Official Government Edition, p. 127.

<sup>234</sup> Albania has ratified all 12 UN international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism.

Ambassador to the U.N., Agim Nesho, noted that terrorism is a threat to international peace and security and should be fought with all the means, determination, and cooperation of all countries.<sup>235</sup> In addition, Albania supported United Nations Security Council resolutions 1368 and 1373 that dealt with cutting off the financing of terrorist organizations, collecting and exchanging information for the prevention of terrorist attacks, and denying safe havens for terrorists.<sup>236</sup> Albania was committed to pursuing the war on terrorism not only through supporting the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan, but also on the domestic front. During the month of December 2001, five foreign citizens were expelled from the country for threatening Albania's security, and an additional 223 foreigners were asked to leave for holding invalid residency permits. Suspecting illegal operations, the government froze the bank accounts and property of several Arab companies and NGOs, most of them engaged in religious activities. In mid-January 2002 Prime Minister Meta told the Albanian Parliament that some of these companies were financially linked to the Al-Qaeda network.<sup>237</sup> On the U.S. request, Albania granted overflight rights and opened seaports for refueling and maintenance support for the war against terrorism. Albania joined the International Coalition of Global War on Terrorism on January 10, 2002 in London, when a coalition memorandum was endorsed between the nations that were willing to participate in this coalition. Albania provided one elite commando detachment to Afghanistan under Turkish command to ISAF. In March 2003 an Albanian liaison team was attached to the headquarters of the United States Central Command, USCENTCOM, and on July 20, 2004, Albanian armed forces filled two billets in CFC-A, one lieutenant colonel and one NCO.

Albania made a humanitarian contribution to Afghanistan by donating military equipment in support of international efforts to build the new Afghan national army. The

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<sup>235</sup> The Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations, Ambassador Agim Nesho. Agenda 166: Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism: Report of the Secretary-General, New York, October 4, 2001. For full statement see <http://www.un.org/terrorism/statements/albaniaE.html>. (Accessed October 4, 2004.)

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> RFE/RL, *Officials Crack Down On Terror Suspects*, Tirana, 25 January 2002



first donation was made on November 26, 2002. It consisted of small arms and ammunition, as well as mortars and shells, to equip one battalion of the Afghan national army. The second donation for the ANA, which consisted of ammunition and helmets, was delivered in April 2004. This move was encouraged by the United States and praised by the international community.

Albania also strongly supported from the very beginning Operation Iraqi Freedom. The support was again in the realm of diplomacy, and by committing forces to the operation. On February 5, 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed the Security Council, presenting the U.S. case proving that Iraq had been developing illicit weapons. The Security Council did not reach a common stance on the subject, so the U.S. position did not gain approval. The following day, on February 6, 2003, a group of countries comprised of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia signed a letter supporting a U.S. military intervention in Iraq. Known as the Vilnius letter, stated that the evidence presented by Powell proved to the UN Security Council that Iraq had clearly violated UN resolutions, and that the countries from the Vilnius group would support U.S. military intervention in Iraq.<sup>238</sup> The Vilnius letter drew much criticism from some prominent members of the European Union, most notably France and Germany.<sup>239</sup> French President Jacques Chirac launched a furious attack on signatories, saying they had behaved “recklessly” in making pro-American statements on the Iraq crisis. He accused them of “infantile” and “dangerous” behavior, noting that “they missed a good opportunity to keep quiet.”<sup>240</sup>

The first contingent of one company of Albanian elite commandos was deployed in Iraq on June 06, 2003, as part of Multinational Brigade North (MNBN), with the mission to undertake and execute security operations in support of Operation “Iraqi

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<sup>238</sup> Vilnius 10 Sign Letter on Iraq. Europarlament. For more see [www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/delegations/latv/20030271/18b.pdf](http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/delegations/latv/20030271/18b.pdf)

<sup>239</sup> Chirac Blasts EU Candidate. BBC. Acc Jan 28, 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/Europe/2774139.stm>

<sup>240</sup> Ian Black, Furious Chirac Hits Out at ‘Infantile’ Easterners. The Guardian. Feb 18, 2003. See [www.guardian.co.uk/france/story/0,11882,897891,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/france/story/0,11882,897891,00.html).

Freedom.”<sup>241</sup> Currently the Albanian company is deployed in Mosul, securing the Mosul Airport, patrolling in and out of the airport perimeter, and manning a rapid reaction force. In addition Albania participates in MNF-I and MNC-I staffs with one officer and one NCO. Albania is rotating her units in and out of theater and so far the Albanian military has had more than one battalion either already there or currently serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The Albanian participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom has been fully backed by Albanian public opinion. Recent Gallup polls indicate that over 95 percent of Albanians support the United States’ actions in Iraq.<sup>242</sup> Not surprisingly, Albania was among the few, if not the only country where demonstrations didn’t take place on the eve of U.S. intervention in Iraq.<sup>243</sup>

Albania opened up training areas for U.S. forces, to include the 173rd Airborne and the Marine amphibious groups, to conduct large-scale training exercises that were no longer possible in some NATO countries. When the U.S. yielded to protests by shutting down the training base on Vieques Island, Puerto Rico,<sup>244</sup> Albania offered up Sazan Island for American units to do their final live-fire validation. After the recent PHIBLEX exercise conducted in Albania by 22<sup>nd</sup> Marines Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), MEU (SOC), the Unit representatives admitted that Albania provides an ideal place to train across all military capabilities from small unit live fire to naval surface fires.<sup>245</sup>

September 11 served also for a reevaluation of domestic security and the measures taken to prevent any terrorist attack against Albania. In 2002 the government

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<sup>241</sup> Some of the main duties they have accomplished include; Convoy Escort, Checkpoints, Patrolling in the city, Guard Duty and Support the new Iraqi Police to maintain public order.

<sup>242</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>243</sup> While the war on Iraq was becoming closer and more real, a great number of protests against the war were organized around the world by peace-promoting, anti-globalization, anarchistic and other organizations. Millions of people came out in the streets to protest against another war waged by the U.S. These protests took place in a lot of countries all over the world, including the United States and Great Britain.

<sup>244</sup> <http://web.amnesty.org/report2004/pri-summary-eng>

<sup>245</sup> Keith A. Milks, 22d MEU (SOC) wraps up Albanian PHIBLEX Marines, March 13, 2004 <http://www.usmc.mil/marinelink/mcn2000.nsf/lookupstoryref/200431393059> (Accessed September 12, 2004.)

approved the National Action Plan against terrorism, which specifies the relevant responsibilities of all government agencies in the war against terrorism and requires that every government agency make appropriate legal arrangements to better cope with the terrorist threat. According to the State Department report on the trend of global terrorism released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism on April 29, 2004, “Albania continues to cooperate extremely closely with the United States and other governments in sharing information and investigating terrorist-related groups and activities.”<sup>246</sup> The report acknowledged that the Albanian government has frozen the assets of a notorious terrorist financier, curtailed the activities of suspect Islamic NGOs, and detained or expelled individuals suspected of having links to terrorism or attempting to foment religious intolerance. In June 2003, the Albanian Parliament passed a strong money-laundering law that included antiterrorist financing provisions, bringing Albania’s legislation into compliance with international standards. The report gives credit also to the Bank of Albania, which has established a task force to monitor all financial activities of secondary banks and their compliance with client verification.<sup>247</sup>

2003 was one of the most successful years in cooperation between the two countries. Albania and the United States signed and ratified a number of agreements, including a treaty on the Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Promotion of Defense and Military Relations. Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Tirana on May 9, 2003, to sign an agreement with the foreign ministers of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia aimed at promoting the entry of these three countries into NATO. The agreement, the “U.S.-Adriatic Partnership Charter,” was proposed by the Albanian, Croatian, and Macedonian presidents to President Bush at the NATO Prague summit in November 2002 and was jointly drafted by the three countries.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2003/31626.htm>

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> The document commits these countries, which were left out of the next wave of NATO enlargement, to individually and cooperatively achieve political and economic reforms that will facilitate their integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Recognizing that they are on a path to alliance membership, the Charter also provides for bilateral meetings at least twice a year between each of the countries and the United States, which will assist in the achievement of the reforms, in order to review progress toward meeting the objectives outlined in the document.

Powell also signed an agreement with the Albanian government that exempts Americans in the country from possible war crimes prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, placing Albania, an EU aspirant, at odds with the EU members, which are among the 139 signatories to the ICC's founding treaty.<sup>249</sup>

Meanwhile the exchange of high-level defense officials between the two countries reached another stage. In January 2003, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers invited Albanian Chief of the General Staff General Pellumb Qazimi for an official visit to Washington. While the Albanian chief of defense forces has visited the United States on more than one occasion since 1993, this was the first official visit of an Albanian top military official to the United States. General Myers praised the Albanian contribution to the war on terrorism, while General Qazimi thanked the United States for the assistance given to Albania in reforming the military and the support given to Albania's efforts toward NATO membership.<sup>250</sup>

In April 2003 bilateral defense consultations were held in Washington to discuss future cooperation between the United States and Albania regarding defense and security. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld met at the Pentagon with Albanian Minister of Defense Pandeli Majko. The Albanian minister used the opportunity to reiterate Albania's willingness to host permanent U.S. bases on her territory. Although this offer has been repeated by Albanian authorities on many occasions in the last decade, the timing now seems opportune, since it is known that Western European countries, especially Germany, have placed growing restrictions on the training of U.S. forces stationed on their territory, and therefore the United States is seeking other military bases. As the *New York Times* notes,

[t]he Pentagon has proposed a plan to withdraw its two Army divisions from Germany and undertake an array of other changes in its European-based forces, in the most significant rearrangement of the American military around the world since the beginning of the cold war...the aim is

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<sup>249</sup> Albania was the 2nd European country to conclude a bilateral agreement with Washington protecting U.S. citizens; particularly those taking part in peacekeeping activities, from extradition to the court on grounds that they could be exposed to politically motivated prosecution. Romania, an EU candidate, is the only other European nation that has signed such an agreement with the United States.

<sup>250</sup> *Korrieri*, January 9, 2002.

to afford maximum flexibility in sending forces to the Middle East, Central Asia and other potential battlegrounds... Proponents [of the plan] see little merit in keeping a large number of forces in Germany now that the cold war is over. They argue that the United States would be better off withdrawing most of them and establishing new bases in Southeastern Europe, from which forces could be rushed if there was a crisis in the Caucasus or the Middle East.<sup>251</sup>

Two months later, on June 10, 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld visited Tirana and discussed with Albanian officials the war on terrorism and Tirana's desire to become a full-fledged member of NATO. Rumsfeld expressed U.S. appreciation for Albania's contributions to the war against terror by noting, "We particularly appreciate and value the assistance in Afghanistan as well as in Iraq...Albania also stepped forward and signed the Vilnius 10 letter, which came at a time that was important. We recognize that and appreciate it as well." <sup>252</sup>

In late March 2004, Prime Minister Fatos Nano traveled to Washington to participate in the official ceremony of admitting seven new members to NATO.<sup>253</sup> During his conversation at the White House with President George W. Bush, the prime minister pledged continuous Albanian support for the war on terrorism and expressed Albanian readiness to increase the number of Albanian troops in Iraq. The Albanian position carried another significance of the high priority that Albania places on its relations with the United States, since it came at a time when Spain had withdrawn its forces from Iraq, following the terrorist attack on Madrid.

In all contacts with U.S. counterparts, Albanian authorities have been insistent in their demand for more U.S. involvement in bringing U.S. capital to Albania. Albanians view U.S. investment in the country as a security certificate for more foreign investment, which is crucial to the economic development of the country. On the other hand, as proved during the Kosovo operation, building appropriate infrastructure compatible with

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<sup>251</sup> Michael R. Gordon: "A Pentagon Plan Would Cut Back G.I.'s in Germany", *The New York Times*, June 4, 2004

<sup>252</sup> Jim Garamone, Rumsfeld Discusses NATO Membership With Albanians, *American Forces Press Service*, June 11, 2002.

<sup>253</sup> Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

operations by U.S. and other NATO forces when needed remains particularly important for the war on terrorism. Some encouraging steps have been taken in this regard. In 2002 the U.S. company Lockheed Martin was awarded a \$33-million contract to provide new surveillance radar, navigation and landing aids, communications equipment, and an automated system for Albania's air traffic management.<sup>254</sup> The final goal will be to modernize Albania's air traffic management system completely by 2007. The first phase of the project focused at Tirana's Rinas Airport -- now called "Mother Theresa Airport," after the Albanian Catholic nun who dedicated her life to humanitarian care - has already been completed.

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<sup>254</sup> The work commenced in January 2003 with the goal of improving safety, security, service and capacity prior to the traffic increases as a result of the August 2004 Olympic Games in Greece.

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#### **IV. TOWARD THE FUTURE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The fall of communism presented Albania, as it did many other countries of Eastern Europe, with the challenge of completely redefining her relationship with the Western community, as well as with an opportunity to finally overcome its long self-imposed isolation from the rest of Europe. Albania adopted a strategic reorientation and during the last decade her foreign policy has been focused on integration of the country into Euro-Atlantic structures based on three main paradigms: a strong relationship with the United States; an interdependent relationship with the European Union; and a moderate regional policy approach.

For historical and cultural reasons Albania remains one of the most pro-United States countries in the world. Recent international polls indicate that pro-United States sentiment is getting even stronger within Albanian public opinion, particularly after the U.S.-led Kosovo campaign. The close cooperation of Albania with the United States has fully served Albanian national interests, and, in the last twelve years, every government in Albania has defined its policy toward the United States based on its national interest and the widespread positive feeling of the Albanian people toward the United States. Although in dire economic need, Albania is trying to prove to the United States and the international community that she can play a constructive role in regional security affairs and help on the global war on terrorism.

The United States, on the other hand, remains interested in the stability of Southeastern European countries and has continuously supported the independence of Albania. Since the collapse of communism, the United States has provided substantial assistance for Albania's political and economic transformation. Between 1991 and 2003, the United States has provided to Albania \$358.62 million through the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act. The United States supports Albanian integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and is providing meaningful assistance for reforming the Albanian military through a ten-year program of cooperation.



The U.S.-led NATO operation in Kosovo and the current U.S.-led global war on terrorism gave Albania not only the opportunity to express her gratitude to the Western community but also to show her commitment to Western values. As a matter of fact, Albania remains a good example of how some small and rather poor countries can still play an important role in supporting the United States despite their inability to project power beyond their borders. As is already known, September 11 has changed the way countries' capabilities are viewed by the United States. After September 11, the Bush administration has made clear that it puts greater emphasis upon coalitions than upon alliances. In fact, the Western alliances, with NATO at their core, contain the most professional military forces in the world; those forces will be central to achieving victory in the war on terrorism. But the recent debate over Iraq between members of Western alliances underlined the need for a flexible approach toward countries' capabilities and coalitions in the war on terrorism. *The United States National Strategy for Combating Terrorism(NSCT)* recognizes the importance of international cooperation, which becomes imperative in a world where terrorist organizations pay no respect to traditional boundaries. There is no doubt that the answer to international terrorism cannot come without America, but it cannot come from America exclusively. Today's growing threat of terrorism demands international consensus and understanding not only from powerful countries but from small countries, too. As a matter of fact, global understanding of the problem of terrorism is far from realization because too many different national interests stand in the way of global consensus. Different countries do have different views on the problem of terrorism, and their responses to the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism vary.

As stated in the NSCT, some countries are committed to fighting terrorism but lack the capacity to fulfill their sovereign responsibilities. After September 11, the United States redoubled its efforts to develop programs that help these countries to acquire the necessary capabilities to fight terrorism through a variety of means.<sup>255</sup> The cooperation of Albania with the United States in the war on terrorism represents another good example of why the NSCT calls for the United States to assist states that "are committed to fighting terrorism but lack the capacity." Not only has this Southeastern European

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<sup>255</sup> *U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, February 2003, p.20

country been willing to help the United States in any way possible after September 11, but Albania is also currently participating with combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq. Albania's willingness and commitment to fighting terrorism may prove in the future to be more important for implementation of this principle of the NSCT than her ability to project power beyond her borders. It is expected, therefore, that the United States will continue to help Albania enhance her national capacity. So, the question is not just how Albania can help; it is rather what the United States should do to enable Albania to become a serious and useful partner in the long-term campaign against international terrorism.

#### **A. CAN ALBANIA REALLY HELP? POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

Despite its daunting problems at home, Albania has wholeheartedly supported the United States in the global war on terrorism and is trying to successfully engage itself as a useful partner to the United States by exchanging security information, freezing terrorist assets, shutting down suspect Islamic NGOs, expelling foreign Islamic extremists from the country, and providing military and diplomatic support for the U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Albania not only publicly backed the U.S. intervention -- a move that put it at odds with many Western European members of the European Union, but also sent a combat unit to Iraq. Although Albania is a small and rather poor country by U.S. standards, its security partnership with the United States has been excellent in the last decade and reached a zenith during the crisis of Kosovo. The Kosovo crisis underscored Albania's utility as a staging area for U.S. operations in the Balkans. Albania allowed the United States to use its territory and air space for the Kosovo operation and has done the same for the current campaign against terrorism. Also, Albania allowed U.S. aerial unmanned vehicles to be stationed in its territory during crises in Bosnia, a decision that even some NATO allies couldn't make.

At a time when the United States is increasingly focused on security outside of Europe, the Albanian geographic location can not only serve as a useful staging area for U.S.-NATO-related exercises but also can assist in projecting American military capabilities and security leadership to nearby crisis zones. As is known, over the past decade Western European countries, especially Germany, have placed growing

restrictions on the training of U.S. forces stationed on their territory. The United States is seeking other locations for the U.S. military to be stationed for better coping with the international terrorist threat. Albania has expressed its willingness to host American military bases in its territory if so asked by the United States and can play an important role as one of America's strongest Balkan allies and partners.

As in the past, relations with the United States will continue to represent a major external reference in Albanian political contests and will remain crucial not only in domestic political decisions but also in shaping the international agenda of Albanian political institutions. But an important issue that cannot be ignored is how Albania balances any tensions between her close relationship with the United States, on the one hand, and her bid for European Union membership, on the other. As is true of many other countries of Eastern Europe, Albania has wholeheartedly aspired to become a member of European Union. The EU membership fully serves Albania's national interests. Politically, EU membership fulfills the hope that the successful model of the European Union, with its values of democracy, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and minorities can be transferred to Albania, thus ensuring lasting peace, freedom, security and political stability in the country. Enlargement will finally end her artificial distance from Europe, and thus her citizens will enjoy much-desired free movement within the enlarged European Union.

Economically, Albanian integration into the European Union is seen as a vehicle toward prosperity. EU membership gives Albania the opportunity to share in projects of economic integration in which the free movement of capital to and from Albania will apply. Currently, the European Union is by far the most important source of capital and the main trading partner for Albania. Over seventy-five per cent of Albanian trade is with European Union countries.<sup>256</sup> Since 1992, Albania has received a total of 1.3 billion € from the European Union's assistance programs.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Italy (71.5% exports, 34.6% imports), Greece 12.7% exports, 21.7% imports, and Germany 5.5% exports, 5.6% imports).

<sup>257</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/albania/#5](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/albania/#5). Accessed August 30, 2004

Therefore, Albania will need to develop reliable, interdependent relations with both the European Union and the United States, and avoid the emotional practice of taking sides when the United States and the European Union disagree with each other on various political issues. Counterpoising the European Union and the United States is not only a mistake but it is also irrational and counterproductive, particularly for a small country like Albania. Despite its excellent relations with the United States, no serious political actor in Albania would think about ignoring the European Union when searching for solutions to regional and international security problems. The recent debate over Iraq between prominent members of the European Union and the United States underlines just how difficult it will be for a small country like Albania to make rational political decisions. Therefore, this process will involve hard political bargaining for Albania and sometimes extremely difficult choices. The nightmare of any serious policy maker in Albania is to be caught between the two pressure fronts of the United States and the European Union. The case of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is the best example of an issue on which Albania increasingly felt the pressure of being stuck in the middle. While the United States strongly pushed for bilateral agreement with Albania to exempt U.S. soldiers from the ICC, the European Union pressured Albania to hold to the Union's line of supporting the Court. It is possible that time and again Albanian political institutions will be put in the very difficult position of making choices between the European Union and the United States of America.

Albanians are keen on showing their support for the anti-terrorist coalition led by the United States and to demonstrate to the international community that Albania is a reliable partner in stability operations, as well as in terms of control of flows of information, people and money. Albanians know that a reliable partnership in the fight against terrorism will be a valuable element when the USA assesses Albanian candidature for NATO membership. Nevertheless, Albanians must be realistic and realize that a pragmatic and sophisticated American policy takes into account both the scope and the limits of the possibilities offered by a tiny country like theirs. At the same time they should understand that as much as the United States can help, it is for Albanians to create

their national policies and to take full responsibility for them. The United States will not make the policies of Albania, it merely will respond to them.

Albania's moderate regional policy and the contribution in Afghanistan and Iraq have been appreciated, but in the future Albania will need to prove to the United States and Western allies that she is able to maintain domestic stability and progress with political and economic reforms.

#### **B. POLICY RECOMMENDATION FOR THE UNITED STATES**

Albania is pivotal to the security of the region due to its strategic location and to the fact that large Albanian communities are living throughout the Balkans. Thus helping Albania enhance internal stability and facilitate its political and economic integration is in the U.S. national interest. A stable, prosperous Albania would be in a good position to help U.S. efforts to promote peace in the region and to combat terrorism, arms proliferation, and international organized crime.

Indeed, following September 11, the United States began to engage these countries in the fight against terrorism. In return for the Albanian contribution to the war on terrorism, the United States provides Albania with political support, economic assistance, and military aid. The United States provides Albania with specialized training and assistance to help build its capacities to combat terrorism. Some of these programs are military in nature, but many focus on improving the efforts of civilian authority. They range from seminars in drafting legislation to the provision of equipment for enhancing border security and customs capability.

Since September 11, the United States has also worked with Albania to improve cooperation on law enforcement activities against terrorists. The close working relationship between U.S. law enforcement experts and their Albanian counterparts has focused on exchanging security information, freezing the assets of terrorists and affiliated persons and organizations, and preventing terrorist transit and safe haven in the country. In addition, the United States is helping Albania to reform its military through a ten-year program of bilateral cooperation that will bring Albanian armed forces close to NATO standards. This is the most far-reaching reform in the history of the Albanian military.

The results over the last three years are promising for the future of the Albanian armed forces and for achieving Albania's national goal of becoming a NATO member.

For many years to come, Albania will remain far from being seen as a main investment destination for United States capital, but the economic reforms could offer the legal bases and the necessary stability for an increased number of U.S. investments. Recent approaches of large U.S. companies to Albania, such as Lockheed Martin and Exim Bank, present a significant step in this regard; Albanian officials hope these companies will encourage further international commercial investment in the country. Albanian membership to NATO will further increase the security zone in Southeastern Europe. It will also provide commercial interests with the necessary security guarantees for U.S. and Western capital to be invested in Albania. Albanians hope that the 2007 NATO summit presents to them a great opportunity, and strong U.S. support for the Albanian bid for NATO membership remains crucial.

Albania remains by far the most pro-American country in Southeastern Europe, but there is another factor that makes Albania a special case in comparison to other countries of the region. Although Albania does not affiliate herself with any particular religion, from an outside perspective Albania is perceived as a Muslim country. Therefore Albania is important to the United States symbolically since it is important for the United States to demonstrate that it has strong support from predominantly Muslim countries in the global war on terrorism.

In conclusion, small and poor countries like Albania may prove in the future to be more important to the United States through their contribution to the war on terrorism than through their military capabilities. While Albania will surely need the United States for a number of strategic reasons, including security assistance, support for future NATO membership, and the encouragement of investment and economic development in the country, the United States will also benefit from assisting Albania and keeping her as an ally in its struggle against international terrorism. Albania shares many of the U.S. interests in the region; is becoming an important ally of the United States in the Balkans and can assist in projecting American military capabilities and security leadership to nearby crisis zones.

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