

The United States of Albania

By Xhavit Shala

The term United States of Albania¹ has become of frequent use in the region's political vocabulary. This term was first introduced by analysts and circles that want to undermine Albanian interests in the Balkans in the attempt of scaring the international factor. In their mind the use of the term USA is reminiscent of Greater Albania.² While used initially by those that oppose Albanian interests in the region, the Serb insistence on partitioning Kosova and the general trend of developments in the southern Balkans, make analyses of this thesis necessary. Is this only a scheme, a creation of our Slav opponents, or does it truly represents an opportunity for the aspirations of the Albanians who were persecuted for more than a century and were divided in five different states?

On March 01, 2006, the Serb paper "Glas Javnosti," published an extended article written by the military political analyst Milovan Dreçun.³ According to the article, the author says that the Albanian have a strategy of creating the United States of Albania in the Balkans. The author says that the two documents that form the foundation of this strategy is the Platform for the Resolution of the Albanian Issue of the Albanian Academy of Sciences, published in the summer of 1988⁴ and the Memorandum of the Kosovar Intellectuals Forum of October 26, 1996. The position reached by the Academy of Sciences in Tirana that the Albanians were practically divided into five states and that the only solution for the Albanians is their unification into one state, according to the author reveals "a greater Albania strategy which has clearly delineated its direction, goals and the future of the developments in this part of the Balkans."

The author deliberately confuses the efforts of the Albanians to gain the rights that have been denied to them for more than a century with certain military scenarios that would destabilize a number of states in the Western Balkans. After analyzing the political and diplomatic moves undertaken by the Albanians, the paper also publishes the alleged plan that will be pursued in creating the Albanian states in the Balkans. The author says that the political and diplomatic moves will be reinforced by a military strategy that according to him has been well organized by the Albanians.

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² The article was first published in the weekly "ABC" no 32, April 15, 2006

³ "The Union of the Albanian States up to 2010"- published in the Serb paper "Glas Javnosti", 01.03.2006, by the Serb military analyst Milovan Dreçun.

⁴ The Document of the Albanian Academy of Sciences titled "A Platform for the Resolution of the Albanian National Cause", October 20, 1998

The creation of the United States of Albania would allegedly undergo two phases. The first stage foresees the creation of new Albanian states in Montenegro, Macedonia, Greece and Kosova. During the second stage these states would then be united with Albania. The key to this strategy, the author says, will be the independence of Kosova. Giving independence to Kosova then would only push forward the intentions of the Albanians to create several other mini-Albanians states in the Balkans. And by the same logic, the independence of Kosova must be avoided at all cost if we are to prevent the destabilization of the Balkans.

The author insidiously says that the wise political and diplomatic moves undertaken by the Albanian factor for more rights in Montenegro, Southern Serbia and Macedonia and the unresolved Albanian issue in Greece, are directed from a single political entity with centers in Tirana and Prishtina. The author also speaks about the unification of Kosova with the Albanian inhabited areas of the Preshevo valley, a state entity that would be open to both Serbia and Albania.

The unification of the Albanian-inhabited lands of Southern Serbia with Kosova is one of the eight options that the American Institute for Peace presented about a year ago in Geneva when it published its study "On the Final Status of Kosova"⁵ According to this plan, independence for Kosova would come via partition. The northern communes of Zveçan, Zubin Potok, Leposavic, and the northern Mitrovica would go to Serbia. Most of the Albanians inhabited communes in the south of Serbia would become part of an independent Kosova. There would in practice be an exchange of territories. This option has also received the support of the American analyst Ted Carpenter⁶ and the Albanian writer Rexhep Qosja⁷. The Contact Group, and the US and the EU separately, have officially rejected this option. They are convinced that the application of such an option would destabilize Bosnia, Macedonia and Serbia. Nevertheless, the U.S. Institute of Peace believes that the Security Council would be ready to accept a partition if it were to receive assurances that this would have no negative impact on Bosnia and Macedonia. According to them, the partition would provide the Serbs with compensation in exchange for the independence of Kosova. Perhaps, the statement made Albania's Foreign

⁵ The study on the final status of Kosova prepared by the American Institute for Peace titled "On the Final Status of Kosova: Options and Inter-border Demands." Published in the Serb paper "Vecernje Novosti", 20.12.2004

⁶ In an interview for the VOA, the analyst Ted Carpenter considers a condition for the success of the independence the partition of the region of Mitrovica. "No one likes divisions along ethnic lines and it is understandable why the US and the EU do not want to consider such a solution, but I think that the division of Kosova in this case would be appropriate because it would help establish stability. Otherwise, Mitrovica will remain an open wound that will damage the country for years to come. If Kosova will not be divided, a source of instability will remain open and the international troops will continue to remain for an indefinite period of time, a state that in the long term the Albanians will not like."

⁷ According to Rexhep Qosja "the division would imply the partition of the territory that would have to be followed by the voluntary displacement of the Serb population that lives in the other areas of Kosova to the area partitioned and the movement of the Albanian population into the interior of Kosova territory" (<http://www.tokashqiptare.com/analizat/analiza-2005/dhjetor/109.htm>.)

Minister, Besnik Mustafaj, a few days ago, should be seen in the light of the Serb insistence for the partition of Kosova.⁸

The article in the *Gllas Javnosti* says that the Albanians in Macedonia will also seek to establish an autonomous region there. The Military Analyses Institute of Greece in a piece published on January 7, 2005 supports the same point, adding “that it now appears that the foundations for the future division of this state have already been laid. The Albanian element is getting itself ready and working to accelerate the pace of developments. The Cantonization of Macedonia could be achieved by applying the same model that was partially applied in the case of the Republic of Bosnia.”⁹ In spite of these points, the signing of the Ohrid Agreement and the strong US and European support for Macedonia, in spite of the alleged agreement between Xhaferri and Gjeorgjevski on carrying out the ethnic division of Macedonia,¹⁰ make any option for the federalization of Macedonia not likely¹¹.

In Montenegro, while the Albanians of the Orthodox faith have been assimilated, the Muslim and Catholic Albanians have preserved their ethnic identity and are seeking more rights. According to *Gllas Javnosti*, the ethnic Albanian areas of Plava, Gucia, Rozhaja,

⁸ On March 14, when asked about the consequences that could derive from the partition of Kosova, the Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs made a statement (below) that caused a real diplomatic quake. “Tirana is ready for any case. If Kosova is partitioned, Albania cannot give guarantees on not changing the borders not only with Albania but also with the Albanian part of Macedonia. The Albanian government has analyzed this issue with all of its options. I want to assure that in no circumstance will we be taken by surprise.” The statement caused quite a stir and led to reactions in many countries. Greek press wrote under the title “God willing, it is not true” alluding that Mustafaj’s statement referred to the so-called “Greater Albania.” Reactions went as far as to demand the resignation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The SP’s Political Secretary Ben Blushi considered the statement of the minister a declaration of war. (*Gazeta Shqiptare*, March 19, 2006)

⁹ Greek Military Analysis Institute – Athens, January 7, 2005 <http://www.iaa.gr/aa/item.asp?ItemID=238>

¹⁰The EU, NATO and the U.S. all condemned the idea of ethnically pure states proposed by the former Macedonian Prime Minister, Gjeorgjevski, published in April of 2003 in the daily. The Prime Minister of Macedonia, Branko Cervenkovski, reacted harshly against the position taken by the leader of the biggest opposition party for the creating of an ethnically pure Macedonia. According to Cervenkovski, the leader of the VMRO-DPMNE has publicly presented a terrible scenario that foresees the partition of the state and the destruction of its territory. International Community representatives in Skopje and the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the statement and considered it destabilizing. Georgevski’s “Offer” foresees the creation of Macedonia in accordance with its ethnic borders. He proposes the exchange of Albanian inhabited territories in Macedonia with those inhabited by Macedonians in Albania, in the area of Liqenas. In a second version, Georgevski proposes the displacement of Albanians living in Skopje, Kumanova and Kercova in exchange for financial compensation. The displacement would be followed by the construction of a concrete wall that would separate the Albanians from the Macedonians. The idea was criticized by the leader of the Democratic Union for Integration, Ali Ahmeti. (“*Gazeta Shqiptare*”, April 22, 2003, pg. 19).

¹¹ On the day that the official reactions were issued in Skopje, the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also went out with a statement that considered Xhaferri and Menduh Thaci’s remarks on the creation of the ethnic state in Macedonia regressive and detrimental to the cause of peace. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilir Meta considered the statement made by the Albanian political party in Macedonia an effort that could destabilize Macedonia and the Balkans.

could form an autonomous region with Ulqin as the capital. The Albanian support for the referendum could also ensure that Montenegro achieves its goal of complete independence from Serbia. In exchange for the support, the Albanians would ask for more rights and concessions to be made.¹² However, a federalization of Montenegro in the classical sense of the word would not be likely.

It is quite interesting to note that the paper has not forgotten to include the issue of Chameria as part of the alleged plan. The military-political analyst knows fully well that Greece has made no effort to resolve the “Chameria” problem. The analyst foresees that the matter would be dealt with militarily. Whereas in the other areas inhabited by the Albanians, the Albanian military operations would last for a very short period, the most difficult class that would last to about 12 months would be in the northwestern part of Greece, Milovan Dreçun says.

As a matter of fact, the failure to resolve the property issue of the Albanians of Chameria has been considered to hold the potential for a future conflict by Western governments. On the request of the British Government, two of most knowledgeable analysts of the Balkans, Miranda Vickers and James Pettifer, prepared a study on the Cham property issue. In January of 2006, Pettifer told an Albanian daily “that the conflict over Chameria could be very serious indeed as it would be located on the shores of the Adriatic, near Corfu, an important economic center for Greece, and would be a war that according to the experts could be instigated easily.”¹³ According to Pettifer, the terrain in Chameria is very harsh and could make it easy for small groups to operate and make any police action difficult to undertake. These are some of the reasons, which according to him, would make a conflict in Chameria very difficult to contain. A serious engagement on the part of Greece to resolve the Cham property claims in line with international conventions would eliminate any potential for a future conflict there and would refute any wild imagination for a Cham republic in Greece that Gllas Javnosti predicts.

The Serb paper sets a timetable for the creation of the United States of Albania. According to them the independence of Kosova would be achieved within 2005-2006; The Federalization of Macedonia would be completed by 2007, and the unification of the United States of Albania would take place by 2010, ahead of the entry into the EU.

¹² According to the Lajmet.com news agency, (03.2006): “The Albanian MPs of the Montenegrin Parliament will be able to address Parliament in their Albanian language soon. The Montenegrin Parliament has passed a by-law that allows the Albanian MPs to use their native tongue. In the meantime, the Tuz Civic Initiative has announced for a protest to take place under the motto “Songs for a separate commune.” They warned that unless the government amended the law on the capital city that included Tuz as part of Podgorica, their protest would escalate.

¹³ Interview of James Pettifer for the journalist Mentor Nazarko published in the “ABC” no.20, 23.01.2006. According to Pettifer, “the reason the Greek government is hesitant to do anything about the Cham issue is that they fear entering into an agreement with the Chams. Many Greek politicians have told me privately that they know that the Chams are in the right but if they take action, they are afraid that the Jews, the Turks, the Slavs, and especially the Macedonians would have an open door to present their demands. Greek politicians are afraid that if they enter into the first agreement with the Chams, then what would follow is an agreement with Skopje which would be a disaster for Greek claims in the region.”

According to the paper, this new Balkan state would consist of Kosova and Metohia, Southern Serbia, Northwestern part of Macedonia and the Northwestern part of Greece.

The Serb commentator Milovan Dreçun deliberately mixes the successful diplomatic efforts of the Albanian factor in the Balkans to achieve the rights that for more than a century were denied them, with military scenarios. Such a thesis would compromise the actions undertaken by the Albanian factor at a time when the status of Kosova is being defined. It would also add credibility to the Serb claim that the Albanians play a destabilizing role in the Balkans.

The integration of Albania and of the independent state of Kosova into the Euro-Atlantic structures, the full implementation of the Ohrid agreement, the resolution of the Cham property issue, and the integration of all the Balkan states into the EU would make any national borders and consequently any USA in the Balkans unnecessary. Otherwise, any attempt to block the independence of Kosova or to partition it could push many Albanians, who were persecuted for more than a century and were divided into five states, to reconsider the thesis of a USA in the Balkans and strive to bring it to realization.