

Greater Albania: Threat of A New US-NATO sponsored Conflict In Europe

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Europe may be perched above the precipice of its first armed conflict since NATO's 78-day bombing war against Yugoslavia in 1999 and the resultant armed invasion of Macedonia from NATO-occupied Kosovo two years later.

With the formal accession of Albania into full NATO membership this April and the subsequent reelection victory (at least formally) of the nation's prime minister Sali Berisha, the stage is set for completing the project of further redrawing the borders of Southeastern Europe in pursuit of a Greater Albania.

Preceding steps in this direction were the U.S.'s and NATO's waging war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia a decade ago on behalf of and in collusion with the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a criminal violation of international law that terminated in the Serbian province of Kosovo being wrested from both Serbia and Yugoslavia.

50,000 NATO troops poured into Kosovo in June of 1999, accompanied by KLA leaders and fighters based in Albania, under the auspices of United Nations Resolution 1244 which among other matters condemned "terrorist acts by any party" and "Reaffirm[ed] the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other States of the region, as set out in the Helsinki Final Act and annex 2."

The U.S. and its NATO allies had no intention of abiding by the provisions of UN Resolution 1244 and demonstrated that contempt for a document they themselves had signed by rearming KLA fighters, who for years had attacked, abducted and murdered civilians of all ethnic backgrounds, and transforming the erstwhile armed secessionist group into the Kosovo Protection Corps.

UN Resolution 1244 expressly dictated that the KLA and affiliated underworld gangs were to be disarmed, so the NATO powers circumvented that demand by the sleight of hand maneuver of providing the KLA with new uniforms, new arms and a new name. But not a new commander. Chosen for that role was Agim Ceku, commander in the Croatian army during the brutal Operation Storm campaign of 1995 - "the largest European land offensive since World War II" [1] - and the chief of staff of the KLA during its joint war with NATO against Yugoslavia four years later.

Emboldened by Western military support in achieving its separatist agenda, the KLA unleashed affiliate groups against southern Serbia and Macedonia: The Liberation Army of Presevo, Medveda and Bujanovac in the first case from 1999 onward and the National Liberation Army in the second, which started attacks inside Macedonia from its base in

Kosovo in 2001.

Only the capitulation of the government of Serbia after October of 2000 and a similar bowing to pressure – Western pressure – by the government of Macedonia in 2001 satisfied long-term expectations by pan-Albanian armed extremists in both nations for eventual unification across several national borders with the backing of the U.S. and its NATO allies.

The decisive confirmation of Western support came in February of 2008 with the unilateral declaration of independence by separatist forces in Kosovo. The former head of the KLA and American protege Hashim Thaci, by then nominal prime minister, proclaimed secession from Serbia and most all NATO nations fell over each other to grant the illegal entity formal diplomatic recognition.

Twenty months later over two-thirds of the world's nations, including Russia, China and India, have not legitimized this abomination through recognition, but the West has held steadfast in its contempt for international law and support for violent extremists in Kosovo who have broader ambitions for the entire region, ambitions emboldened by consistent support from the U.S. and NATO and the conviction that the West will continue that backing in future.

With Albania now a full NATO member state and as such under the protection of the Alliance's Article 5 mutual military assistance clause, calls for a Greater Albania at the expense of the territory of several other European nations have grown louder and more unrelenting.

In response to the mounting campaign for extending the Kosovo model to southern Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and even Greece (Epirus), two months ago Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov admonished nations considering recognizing Kosovo's statehood to "think very carefully before making this very dangerous decision that has an unforeseeable outcome and is not good for stability in Europe." [2]

Nine days later Albanian Prime Minister Berisha bluntly stated that "the national unity for all Albanians project should be a guiding light for politicians in Albania and Kosovo." He insisted that "Albania and Kosovo must under no circumstances consider each other as foreign states." [3]

A Russian commentator responded to this pronouncement by warning that "Any attempt to implement the idea of Greater Albania is similar to the reopening of a Pandora's Box. This could destabilize the situation in the Balkans and unleash a war on the continent, similar to that of the late 1990s." [4]

Speaking of the "so-called Greater Albania project that embraces all territories in the Balkans where ethnic Albanians live, including Kosovo, some areas of Macedonia, Montenegro and several other countries," Russian political analyst Pyotr Iskenderov said that "the declaration of Kosovo independence and the recognition of this illegal act by the US and leading members of the European Union have stimulated the implementation of the idea of so-called Greater Albania." [5]

The remainder of Serbia is also affected – the Presevo Valley in the nation's south where Serbia proper, Kosovo and Macedonia meet – and so is Greece if a report of 2001 is to be credited. At that time Ali Ahmeti, founder and commander of the KLA and then leader of the

National Liberation Army (NLA) that had begun deadly attacks against Macedonia from its base in the Kosovo city of Prizren, was reported to have boasted of a Liberation Army of Chameria in the northwestern Greek region of Epirus, one equipped with an impressive arsenal of weapons.

The national flag introduced after February 2008 contains an outline of Kosovo with six white stars above it. While for obvious reasons not acknowledged, the stars are assumed to represent nations with ethnic Albanian populations: Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Greece.

The military training and combat readiness of pan-Albanian separatist and irredentist groups is being augmented on a larger scale than ever before by leading NATO nations. This March the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) began revamping the Kosovo Protection Corps, itself an avatar of the Kosovo Liberation Army, into an embryonic national army, the Kosovo Security Force, whose Chief of Staff is Lieutenant General Sylejman Selimi, seamlessly transitioning from commander of the Kosovo Protection Corps. A sympathetic news report of last December described his new post more accurately as the Chief of Staff of the Republic of Kosovo Army. [6]

The Kosovo Security Force (KSF) like the Kosovo Protection Corps before it is touted in Western circles as an alleged multi-ethnic police force; it is neither multi-ethnic nor a police force, but a nascent army, one which self-proclaimed Kosovo President President Fatmir Sejdiu last June characterized as “a modern force being build in accordance with NATO standards.” [7]

In the same month NATO announced that the prototype Kosovo army would be ready by September and “that NATO should increase its monitoring capacities inside the KSF in order to ensure the best capacity building for the KSF.” [8]

An earlier report from Kosovo also demonstrated that the new armed forces of the illegitimate entity would be nothing other than a NATO military adjunct:

“The security force is to be trained by British army officers, uniforms have been supplied by the United States and vehicles have been supplied by Germany.

“The Kosovo Security force is to be in line with NATO standards.” [9]

In February Italy announced that it would donate 2 million euros and Germany that it would give 200 military vehicles for the army in progress. NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe at the time, General John Craddock, traveled to Kosovo to launch the creation of the Kosovo Security Force and visited the KSF National Training Camp in Vucitrn, during which trip he said “I am satisfied with the progress to date. At the end of the first recruiting phase we have some 4,900 applicants seeking about 300 KSF positions in this first recruiting tranche.” [10]

In May of this year the British Defense Ministry signed an agreement with the fledgling Kosovo Security Force to “provide training to KSF members in different fields according to NATO standards.”

British Ambassador to Kosovo Andrew Sparks was quoted as saying “We hope that after signing this agreement and expanding our co-operation, Kosovo will manage to become a

NATO member.” [11]

Like troops from Albania for which NATO has provided combat zone experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, Kosovo’s new army will like other new NATO nations’ armed forces be used for wars abroad. As a recent example, in August the Head of the General Headquarters of Macedonia, General Lieutenant Colonel Miroslav Stojanovski, “pointed out that over a forth of the composition of battle service units of the AMR (Macedonian Armed Forces) or 1,746 soldiers participated in peace missions,” meaning NATO deployments. [12] Though more Macedonian soldiers were killed in 2001 at the hands of the KLA’s National Liberation Army offshoot than have died to date in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A news report this past May provided more details on the initial scope and long-term purpose of the new Kosovo army: “According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, the KSF is expected to have 3,000 active troops and 2,000 reservists. They are being organized according to NATO standards... [T]here is also the possibility of their being deployed abroad as the world situation warrants in the future.” [13]

When new NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen paid his first visit in that capacity to Kosovo in August to meet with KFOR Commander Giuseppe Emilio Gai, Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu, Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and Minister of the Kosovo Security Forces Fehmi Mujota, “President of Kosovo Fatmir Sejdiu stated that he hopes the state will take part in the peacekeeping operations of NATO abroad.” [14] Afghanistan is the apparent first deployment.

Six years earlier Agim Ceku had offered Kosovo Protection Corps troops to the United States for the war and occupation in Iraq as a *quid pro quo* for maintaining NATO troops in Kosovo.

NATO has deployed troops from nations like Georgia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Finland to Afghanistan for training under real-life combat conditions for use closer to home once they return, as military officials of the above-named nations have openly acknowledged. Several thousand Albanian and Kosovo soldiers steeled by operations in the Afghan war zone will be formidable fighting forces for future conflicts in the Balkans.

The distinction between the armed forces of Albania and Kosovo is becoming largely an academic one. In August Albanian Prime Minister Berisha issued an unequivocal statement that “the idea of national unity is based on European principles and ideals... Because of that the Kosovo PM, Hashim Thaci, and I will work towards removing all barriers that keep Albanians from feeling united no matter where they live,” adding that “there must not be a customs administration, and Albania and Kosovo should not look at each other as foreign countries.” [15]

Albania is now a full NATO member and as such the Alliance itself could be called upon to react if Kosovo authorities provoke a confrontation with neighbors like Serbia and Macedonia and Albania insist that it and Kosovo are not “foreign countries.” If Albania intervenes on behalf of its “brother nation” in a military conflict with a non-Alliance adversary, NATO will ipso facto become involved.

In September the foreign ministries of Russia and Romania expressed serious concerns about developments in and pertaining to Kosovo. Romania is one of only three NATO member states that haven’t recognized Kosovo’s independence, the other two being Spain and Slovakia. All three nations fear that the Kosovo precedent could contribute to the

forcible breakup of their own nations.

The spokesman of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Andrei Nesterenko, said that “considerable conflict potential” persisted in Kosovo and that he expected representatives of the international community to act impartially to prevent “new anti-Serb provocations.”

He added that “events in the province ‘show that considerable conflict potential remains’ and that the most recent inter-ethnic clashes were a result of the Kosovo Albanians’ desire to compress Serb ethnic territory at all costs,” and that “overall, the Kosovo problem remains one of the most serious challenges to security in the region.” [16]

Undaunted, on September 16 NATO announced on its KFOR website that “the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) has achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC).

“The decision was made after Exercise Agile Lion, which was the culmination point of just over seven months of hard work by KFOR and the KSF to recruit, train and equip the force.

“The next goal for the KSF is to reach Full Operational Capability. KFOR will mentor and support this process which is expected to take 2-5 years.” [17]

The preceding day the new U.S. ambassador to Kosovo, Christopher Dell, signed the U.S.’s first inter-state agreement with the breakaway entity, demonstrating America’s “commitment to an independent Kosovo,” with Fatmir Sejdiu and Hashim Thaci. Putative president Sejdiu said on the occasion:

“This agreement elevates this to the level of state cooperation between the U.S. and Kosovo, not just through various U.S. agencies, as was the case up to now.” [18]

What the extension of “independent Kosovo” portends was indicated in late September when Serbian police discovered a large arms cache in the Presevo Valley near the Serbia-Macedonia-Kosovo borders which included “machine guns, bombs, rocket launchers, 16 hand grenades and over 20 mines, as well as a large supply of ammunition” [19] and later in early October when Macedonian border police were “attacked with automatic weapons while conducting a routine patrol along the border with Kosovo.” [20].

What may also be in store was revealed late last month when Germany deported the first of 12,000 Roma (gypsies) it will force back to Kosovo. To exclusion, persecution, attacks and death. Roma remaining are perishing in shelters where the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) cast them off after NATO and the KLA took over the province in June of 1999.

“The camps, near a closed mining and smelting complex that includes a slag heap of 100 million tons of toxic materials, were intended as a temporary measure after a neighborhood that had been home to 9,000 gypsies was destroyed by ethnic Albanians as Serb security forces pulled out of the area in the final days of the Kosovo conflict in June 1999.” [21]

Weeks earlier Russia warned that it considered “the shutting down of the OSCE’s [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s] Kosovo mission set up to protect the rights of ethnic communities unacceptable.”

Russia’s ambassador to the OSCE, Anvar Azimov, stated, “Such steps, sanctioned by no one, are unilateral, and they affect the overall activity under the mandate of that mission.” [22]

On September 5 a Serbian news source reported that over 200,000 Kosovo refugees were registered in Serbia including ethnic Serbs, Roma, Gorans and other non-Albanians. That number excluded those not registered, those who fled to other countries like Macedonia and those driven from their homes but remaining in Kosovo.

Over the past decade hundreds of thousands of Kosovo residents, including ethnic Albanians, have been murdered and driven out of the province. Roma organizations have estimated that the number of Roma, Ashkalis and Egyptians so afflicted are in the six figures. Serbs, Gorans, Turks, Bosnians, Montenegrins and other victims of racial terror and extermination in Kosovo also number in the hundreds of thousands.

Western media have for ten years now routinely asserted that Kosovo was 90 percent ethnic Albanian. It may well be so now after such large-scale expulsions, but the above figures refute that it was formerly the case in a province of no more than two million inhabitants.

After Albanian Prime Minister's first statement that his country and people and Kosovo and its are one, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov issued a condemnation of it and by strong implication the West: "We are very concerned about the Albanian prime minister's statement.

"We are convinced that there should be appropriate feedback to the statement – first, from the EU, and from NATO as well. We haven't had such feedback yet. We hope that despite the fact that no public statements have come from the European capitals, negotiations with Albanian authorities are under way." [23]

"Moscow is concerned about statements from Tirana on 'the indispensable unification of all Albanians.'" [24]

Unless Lavrov's comments were strictly rhetorical, he will have a long time to wait before American, NATO and European Union officials make any, much less critical, statements on Berisha's and his Kosovo and Macedonian counterparts' demands for a unified Greater Albania (or Greater Kosovo). NATO nations armed, trained and provided logistical support to the Kosovo Liberation Army in its war with Serbian and Yugoslav security forces in the late 1990s; marched shoulder-to-shoulder with the KLA into Kosovo and institutionalized it as the Kosovo Protection Corps in the same year; delivered its National Liberation Army from a resounding defeat at the hands of the Macedonian army in 2001; recreated it again this year as the nucleus of a future Kosovo national army, the Kosovo Security Force; and recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of a Kosovo led by former KLA chief Hashim Thaci last year.

There's no reason to believe that Washington and Brussels will now abandon their clients and their project for subverting and mutilating four neighboring countries to create an ethnically cleansed, crime-ridden, expanded Albania-Kosovo super-state as the latter nears its completion.

On October 6 Berisha was in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, "to sign a number of agreements. According to [Berisha], his government will work to carry out infrastructure projects that provide for unifying Albania's and Kosovo's economic systems, build transport communications to ship goods and provide for the population's economic migration." [25]

An Italian news account of the visit reported that "Albania has also ceded to Kosovo the

Adriatic port of Shendjin (Shengjin), thus giving the newly independent state an exit to the sea.” [26]

In Berisha’s own words, “The Shengjin port is now Kosovo’s exit to the sea.” [27] Access to the Adriatic that Serbia no longer has since the breakup of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro three years ago.

His counterpart, former KLA chieftain Hashim Thaci, echoed his guest’s earlier statement in saying “Albanians live in many countries, but we are one nation. Countries in the region have two friendly countries in Kosovo and Albania, partner countries, for cooperation, peace and stability, for investment in the region, and for European integration.” [28]

The Albanian prime minister was quoted on the website of the Kosovo president on October 7 pledging that “Albania will assist Kosovo in any way it can. Albania is resolved to renew, in the quickest way possible, all its infrastructural ties with Kosovo. Within the next four years, the construction of the Qafe Morine-Shkoder highway will be completed and this will give Western Kosovo fast access to the sea. In the next year, my government will carry out a feasibility study and will draw up the project for an Albania-Kosovo railway. Many other infrastructural lines are and will be constructed.” [29]

Berisha also met with the commander of NATO’s Kosovo Force (KFOR), German Lieutenant General Markus Bentler, and said “Albanian troops could be a part of KFOR” before laying a wreath at the graveside of Adem Jashari, the first commander of the KLA. [30]

The day before the Berisha-Thaci meeting in Pristina, the compliant Serbian government of President Boris Tadic and Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic proved in part why NATO and pan-Albanian designs in the region have encountered little opposition. Jeremic, while pro forma stating his nation would not join NATO in the imminent future (though it has joined the Partnership for Peace transitional program), said “We pursue close cooperation because NATO is the most important factor to ensure security in the world.”

A Russian news site reporting on this claim reminded its readers that “In 1999 NATO air forces bombed Belgrade and other Serbian cities supporting Albanian separatists in Kosovo. Then more than 3,000 Serbian people died and tens of thousands of people were wounded. NATO also promoted Kosovo’s separation from Serbia.” [31]

Late last month U.S. Admiral James Stavridis, the head of U.S. European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, attended a meeting of the Adriatic Charter which Washington signed with Albania, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro in 2003 to prepare them and indeed the entire Balkans for NATO membership. Stavridis then departed for Croatia to oversee the multinational Jackal Stone 09 war games whose objective was to “successfully improve the ability of the participants to conduct counter-insurgency operations.”

Co-organized by the U.S Special Operations Command Europe, the latter’s commander Major General Frank Kisner boasted of the exercise’s success: “Dedicated planning seamlessly brought together representatives from 10 nations and allowed them to effectively execute a myriad of tasks from the air, on land and at sea.” [32]

Jackal Stone 09 was the first military exercise conducted in Croatia since its induction into NATO earlier this year. U.S. and NATO officials have repeatedly asserted that after Croatia

and Albania, first Macedonia, Bosnia and Montenegro would become full members and then Serbia and Kosovo would follow.

On October 2 Bosnia presented NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen with a formal application for a NATO Membership Action Plan, a de facto request for full membership. Rasmussen stated, "I believe that this application is the best route to lasting stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. It is my vision for all countries in the Western Balkans to be integrated in NATO." [33]

NATO has employed several pretexts for military intervention in the Balkans over the last fifteen years, many of them contradictory as with Kosovo versus the Bosnian Serb Republic and with Kosovo as a whole versus North Kosovska Mitrovica. Its intention, however, has been unvarying and persistent: To absorb every nation and pseudo-nation in the region into its ranks and to recruit from its new members and partners troops for wars further afield.

Armed separatism was the tool used to begin the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992, a process that has now fragmented that nation into its six constitutive federal republics and in the case of Kosovo torn a province from a former republic.

But the redrawing of national borders, with the disruption and violence that it inescapably entails, is not over.

Kosovo is indisputably a Pandora's box and one where Hope doesn't necessarily wait at the bottom. It remains a potential spark for and could increase the danger of, as was observed earlier, "destabiliz[ing] the situation in the Balkans and unleash[ing] a war on the continent, similar to that of the late 1990s."

Notes

- 1) Wikipedia
- 2) Black Sea Press, August 6, 2009
- 3) Voice of Russia, August 20, 2009
- 4) Ibid
- 5) Ibid
- 6) New Kosova Report, December 20, 2009
- 7) Kosovo Times, June 9, 2009
- 8) Kosovo Times, June 8, 2009
- 9) Kosovo Times, May 27, 2009
- 10) NATO, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, February 18, 2009
- 11) Southeast European Times, May 21, 2009
- 12) Makfax, August 17, 2009
- 13) New Kosova Report, May 20, 2009
- 14) Focus News Agency, August 13, 2009
- 15) Sofia News Agency, August 16, 2009
- 16) Tanjug News Agency, September 4, 2009
- 17) NATO, Kosovo Force, September 16, 2009
- 18) Beta News Agency, September 15, 2009
- 19) Tanjug News Agency, September 23, 2009
- 20) Makfax, October 2, 2009
- 21) Washington Times, May 3, 2009

- 22) FoNet, September 11, 2009
- 23) Russia Today, October 5, 2009
- 24) Voice of Russia, October 6, 2009
- 25) Ibid
- 26) ADN Kronos International, October 6, 2009
- 27) B92, October 6, 2009
- 28) B92, Beta News Agency, Tanjug News Agency, October 6, 2009
- 29) President of the Republic of Kosovo, October 7, 2009
- 30) Beta News Agency, October 7, 2009
- 31) Voice of Russia, October 5, 2009
- 32) United States European Command, September 28, 2009
- 33) NATO, October 2, 2009

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