

**The Albanian Nationalism: between the National Revival and the Security  
Prospects in Adriatic-Aegean Region**

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**Abstract**

*The study will address the phenomenology and the processes that marked the Albanian independence movement, concomitantly illustrating it as an integrated stage into the Balkan trend of nation-state edification during the decline of the Ottoman Empire, hence enforcing the debate over the mechanism that had been used in administrating the territorial possessions of the quasi-defunct caliphate. On this occasion, the research will highlight the external involvement in supporting the Albanian independence movement, mentioning in this way the Italian Kingdom, the actor that assumed the role of protecting independent Albania as a result of Rome's primordial interests in assuming a predominant role in the Adriatic security architecture.*

*Simultaneously will be pursued Tirana's nationalist projects and the points of tension from the relations with Greece and Yugoslavia as a result of overlapping the territorial expansionist ethnic agendas of these three states. Therefore, it will illustrate how the Albanian state's interactions with proximity are influenced by the regional climate of state-building on ethnic backgrounds, with a major impact on the security perspectives*

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*over the divergent energies of militant nationalism. In this way, the paper will analyze both the Albania – Greece – Italy triangle, with Rome inoculating the moderation in the Athens – Tirana relationship and mentioning the main the Italian foreign policy objective of assuming the role of a Mediterranean power.*

*Last but not least, the Albanian National Revival Movement is presented from the perspective of social history and ideology, legitimizing Albania's independence, highlighting the domestic lines of rupture and the societal manifestations that could be framed in post-Ottomanism. Differentiating from the Balkan space by Albanian Kemalism eradicated by Ismail Kemal, the Albanian nationalism marked also by a modernization dichotomy: on the one hand by the desire of building a state based on the West-European model, by the agrarian reform and by overcoming the religious differences, and on the other hand the outstanding nationalist conservative revolution of returning to Albania's national values under Skanderbeg's flag of the two-headed black eagle.*

The Albanian question, part of the Balkan people's liberation movement against on background of the war Ottoman-Russian war, was brought to the attention after the League of Prizren was formed on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1878, when the 300 representatives of all regions inhabited by Albanians gathered in Kosovo to form a genuine National Assembly. On this occasion, a government-led committee was formed and headed by Abdyl Frashëri,<sup>2</sup> a notorious personality throughout the Ottoman Empire. Cornel Mărculescu is the historian who appreciated that the structure created at Prizren was". The first political-military organization that represented the entire Albanian people in order to carry out a sustained political

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<sup>2</sup> Andreas Hemming, Gentiana Kera, Enrique Pandelejmoni, *Albania. Family, Society, and Culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, LIT VERLAG.AG GmbH & Co. KG Vienna, Münster, Vienna & Zürich, 2012, p. 193.

struggle for the recognition as a stand-alone state and against denationalization, and a cultural plea for national school system and literature".<sup>3</sup>

The building up of the transnational structure of the Albanian communities was determined by the fact that the formation of an Albanian state was stipulated in the *San Stefano Treaty* (1878), as it was not included on the agenda of the Berlin Congress (1878) despite the fact that there were movements in the Albanian provinces to bring them under the same flag. The economic and political decline of the Ottoman Empire, manifested by the imminence of the political fragmentation at the beginning of the twentieth century, gave the Albanians the right context for self-determination, especially since the caliphate encountered difficulties in exercising control over its sovereign territory. Practically, the revived Albanian national project represented an inseparable at that time a part of the new political configuration state of Southeast Europe.

The League of Prizren constituted in fact when the Albanian issue started as problematic on the international stage and exposing the post-caliphate succession could be achieved by creating the Levantine and Mesopotamian mandates, while the populations of the Western Balkans begun to self-manage according to the ethnic criteria. Virtually from the moment Prizren in 1878, the great powers have faced claims of the Albanian unionist parties, in addition to the requests for the inviolability of the territories lived by Albanians as well as for international recognition of the Albanian nationality. In this way, besides the union of the four Ottoman *vilâyet* structures inhabited by Albanians in one state, the agenda of the Prizren movement also provided for the emancipation of the Albanian people through a two-point plan: the establishment of Albanian schools and the stimulation of national literature.

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<sup>3</sup> Corneliu Mărculescu, *Unele aspecte ale cooperării albanezilor din România pentru renașterea națională a Albaniei* in "Studii Balcanice", no. 1, (2017), p. 56.

The collapse of the caliphate represented a veritable reverse of the Ottoman entry into Constantinople. Thus, if in the 14<sup>th</sup> century the feudal fragmentation of the Balkan states<sup>4</sup> facilitated the Sultan's domination over the space between the Adriatic and the Aegean seas, five centuries later irredentism led to statehood regaining for the South-Eastern European people under a suzerainty regime. By extrapolation, there was a link between the *Eteria* movement formed by Alexander Ypsilantis and the struggle for the independence removal of the Ottoman suzerainty, Ypsilantis himself characterizing *Eteria* as a "general movement of liberation of the peoples of the Balkans".<sup>5</sup> Despite the modest results of *Eteria*, the movement was the precedent for the Prizren League, highlighting the systemic malfunctions of the Caliphate.

If at the level of the Albanian territories Constantinople's control was an impediment to the implementation of the program agreed at Prizren, the Albanian diaspora was one of the engines of the struggle for independence, Romania being a fertile ground for the Albanian rebirth,<sup>6</sup> taking into account in this respect the editorial, journalistic and scientific activity of the ethnic Albanians from Romania. It was established the *Section of the Albanian Writing Society* (1880), the first Albanian school that opened in Romania, funded by the Romanian state was followed by the emergence of the subsidiary of the *Constantinople Society for Albanian Books* (1881) from Bucharest, marking the materialization of the two points related culture from the claims of the League of Prizren.

Furthermore, the Albanian community in Romania had been involved in setting up the *Drita (Light) Cultural Society* with a cultural purpose of printing the Albanian writings so that in 1895 the first Albanian newspaper called

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<sup>4</sup> Nicolae Ciachir, *Republica Socialistă Federativă Iugoslavia*, Bucharest, The Romanian Encyclopedic Publishing House, 1969, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Valentin Lipatti, *Balcanii de ieri și de azi: contribuții românești la cooperarea balcanică multilaterală*, Bucharest, Political Publishing House, 1988, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Cornel Mărculescu, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

*Sqipetari* (The Albanian) started its activity. It was followed by the Albanian – Romanian School, the Albanian printing house on Lipscani (1895) and the newspaper *Shqipëria* (Albania, printed since 1897). A year later, the *Ylli i shqipërisë* (The Star of Albania) gazette appeared, together with the newspaper *L'Indépendance Albanaise*. It was also the era when societies such as *Echo d'Albania* or *L'Albania* were founded in Rome and Brussels.

Constantinople's reaction to the cultural activity carried out by the Albanian diaspora in Romania consisted of the request addressed to King Carol I to expel the members of the Committee<sup>7</sup> who was on the Romanian territory without Romanian citizenship. At the same time, a request from the Sultan was submitted to the Prefect of Bucharest for an investigation targeting members of the Albanian Diaspora, accused of "no other purpose than to develop national sentiment through culture, the development of Albanian language, the teaching of teaching books, and by their power to contribute to the opening and assistance of existing schools for the learning of the Albanian people, aiming, to gain the independence during the game of the great powers, so to form an Albanian state with an autochthonous gentleman".<sup>8</sup>

Bucharest's counter-reaction, formulated by Foreign Affairs Minister Ion Brătianu, came to defend the Albanian committees, the Romanian Foreign Minister blocking the Ottoman request under the system by evoking the asylum-seeking system. The signal given to Constantinople in Bucharest was perceived as an overcoming of benevolent neutrality to the Albanian re-awakening movement. Thus, in 1905, the *International Pan-Albanian Congress* was organized, being led by Prince Albert Ghica, ended up with the formation of

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<sup>7</sup> The governmental structure set up by the 300 representatives forming the League of Prizren on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1878 in Cornel Mărculescu, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 67.

*Kombi* (*The Nation*) body, in fact, a committee to guide the movement of independence.

In the same year, it was set the *Albanian Liberation Committee* from Monastir, followed by the formation of the cultural societies *Bashkimi* (*The Union*), *Djalëria Sqipetare* (*The Albanian Youth*) and *Dija* (*The Science*, 1906), a subsidiary of the *Albanian Society* from Bucharest. A year later appeared the *Komitet i sqipëtareve per lirin e Shqipërisë* (*The Albanian Committee for the Liberation of Albania*) from Bucharest, an organization meant to fight for Albania's independence. The Albanian diaspora's activity from Bucharest, which made the transition from the cultural objectives to political ones, also meant an involvement by former sovereign states in the struggle for independence of the Balkan peoples still in vassalage. The Ottoman Empire was therefore in a situation of a former territory, now a state turned into a bastion of Balkan self-determination: the Kingdom of Romania.

The Albanian question had become even more worrying with the Austrian-Hungarian, German and Italian alignment in the structure of the *Triple Alliance* (1882, also known as the *Central Powers*) is counteracted by forming a blocking opponent, the Allies formed in three stages: the *Franco-Russian Agreements* (1891-1893), the *Anglo-French Agreement* (1904) and the *Anglo-Russian Agreement* (1907). The block policy has proven to antagonize positions on the continent, and accentuating the spheres of influence in the Balkans.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the Albanian national revival has evolved not only from a geopolitical point of view, based on the Balkan quality of the hegemonic ambitions of the powers of the times but also from a civilizational one, with South-Eastern Europe traditionally representing a space of cultural convergence.

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<sup>9</sup> Valentin Lipatti, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

The Balkans are thus witnessing the interaction of three European civilizations:<sup>10</sup> Orthodox (Eastern) civilization, Western civilization, and Islamic civilization. Historically, there were civilized differences in the European continent, according to the three cultural areas. Thus, the Eastern, Hellenized by Orthodoxy, was marked by an idealist perception of reality, thus of universal mysticism, while the West, Romanized par excellence, developed a pragmatism augmented by Protestantism, the situation leading to the myth of the two Europe. The European Islamic civilization, mainly represented by Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, complemented the dual vision of Europe by introducing the dimension of the Third Europe, combining Jewish, Hellenistic, Arabic and Mesopotamian traditions into that its "divine correction for the differences that have been created between Judaism and Christianity".<sup>11</sup>

Considering the position of cultural *mélange*, the Albanian independence movement was organized around two poles: Islam and nationalism motivated by their uninterrupted possession of the space between the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, as well as by Albanians` Illyrian origin. Thus, the cultural frontier between European Christianity and European Islam, represented by the line starting with the Turkish – Bulgarian – Greek border, continuing with northern Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia, and Herzegovina, imprinted the Albanian awakening with a certain form of ethnic relativization, sort of amoralism. Likewise, the Albanian nationalism was also marked by the conflict between tradition and innovation, having the *Balkanization* as a subsidiary definition of the political fragmentation, the feature integration of the Albanian movement into the regional trend of self-determination.

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<sup>10</sup> Antoaneta Olteanu, *Homo balcanicus: trăsături ale mentalității balcanice*, Bucharest, Paideia Publishing House, 2004, p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 83.

The support from the Eastern Balkans for the Albanian independence had materialized within the *Balkan League*, through bilateral meetings and agreements signed by the parties. On this occasion, a joint action between Bucharest and Sofia against Constantinople was outlined, both of them acting in the direction of safeguarding a newly acquired independence, as well as in strengthening its regional position. The First Balkan War (1912) brought the Balkans to the situation where the former vassals stood up against the former suzerain power, in fact the secular enemy.<sup>12</sup> The *Peace of London* of May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1913 demonstrated the destruction of the Ottoman domination in the Southeast Europe<sup>13</sup> and lead to the increase of the division among the Balkan actors, the high aspect it is power operated. Beyond the image of the Coalition of former Ottoman territories, the position of the actors during the First Balkan War also encouraged the Albanian struggle for independence.

In parallel with the First Balkan War, the first Albanian anti-Ottoman *guerilla* actions took place starting with September 1912, being carried by the mountain tribes from Kosovo and Malësia, so that in August the entire Albanian territory would be in a state of insurrection. With the insurrection movement leading the Albanian territorial claims in the foreground with direct impact on the territorial integrity of neighboring countries: Kosovo (Serbia), Scutari (Montenegro), Epirus (Greece). As a result, Albania was invaded by the Serb, Montenegrin and Greek troops, the Serbs reaching Shkumbin, and the Greeks

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<sup>12</sup> Nicoleta Ciachir, *Războaiele balcanice prin intermediul istoriografiei bulgare* in "BALCANIA" no. 2 (2014), University of Craiova, Faculty of Letters, Universitaria Publishing House, Craiova, 2017, p. 153.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.



occupying Vlorë,<sup>14</sup> thus alighting the "risk Albania to be divided between the Slavic and g cold".<sup>15</sup>

When the balance of power in the Adriatic-Mediterranean basin risked being tilted in favor of Yugoslavia and Greece, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Italy intervened to support an Albanian internal resistance movement headed by Ismail Kemal, bey of Vlorë.<sup>16</sup> With the support of the three actors' highly interested in the region, the Albanians organized a National Assembly on November 28, 1912, which proclaimed Albania's national independence. On the same day, it was decided to set up the Provisional Government led by Kemal, with the task of managing siege and territorial jurisdiction.

The Program of the Provisional Government contained points like the defense of national independence, the return to the old flag<sup>17</sup> adopted during Skanderbeg's rule,<sup>18</sup> the modernization of the Albanian society, the establishment of a Western-style state,<sup>19</sup> the overcoming of religious differences, as well as the implementation of agrarian reform. The imperative of the modernization program – practically the core of the Provisional Government –

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<sup>14</sup> Founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. as Aulona, Vlora is the starting point of the Albanian Riviera; The city carries historical importance to Albania as it hosted the First National Assembly, which declared the country's independence from Ottoman rule on November 28<sup>th</sup> 1912.

<sup>15</sup> Michele Rallo, *Albania (de la proclamarea independenței până la instaurarea comunismului) și Kosovo*, Bucharest, Sempre, 2004, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Rank of the Ottoman administrative hierarchy, governor of a district or province of the Ottoman Empire *Almanach de Gotha, Nobility of the World: Volume VIII – Turkey* in <http://www.almanachdegotha.org/id244.html>

<sup>17</sup> The Black bicephalous red eagle: Flags of the World, *Albania. Shqipëria – the Republic of Albania, Republika e Shqipërisë* in <https://flagspot.net/flags/al.html#ori>

<sup>18</sup> Gjergj Skanderbeg, an Albanian national hero known for victories against the Ottoman Empire at Moker (1445) and Oranik (1447), whose mythical reputation was built around the ability to defeat a superior opponent in the battlefield: Tristan Dugdale – Pointon, *Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg (1405-1468)*, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in [http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/people\\_skanderbeg.html](http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/people_skanderbeg.html)

<sup>19</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

followed a principle according to "the nation must be an agency of its own historical emancipation".<sup>20</sup>

Independent Albania was automatically included in a protection network compounded of Rome – Vienna, the Austrian-Italian protection for a country to The Land of the Eagles<sup>21</sup> being perceived as a way of *blocking the Pan Slavism and the Serbian avant-garde*.<sup>22</sup> In this context, the Albanian state has become a stake in the Adriatic security, the common goal of Rome and Vienna being the control of the triangle formed by the port of Vlorë, the Sazan Island and the Otranto Strait.<sup>23</sup> It is the moment when the position towards Southeast Europe antagonized the European powers, France and the Russian Empire were the traditional protectors of Serbia.

The outbreak of the Second Balkan War on June 16<sup>th</sup>, less than a month after the First Balkan War ended confirmed the imbalance of forces equilibrium in the Balkans: the change of belligerents, thus the enemies from the previous war became allies and *vice versa*. The failure of Russian diplomacy to moderate Bulgaria's claims<sup>24</sup> led to the alignment of the previous war belligerents in the new conflict, the regional alliances being dismantled. In addition to diplomatic deadlock, the regional security architecture collapse was due to the susceptibility of the Balkan allies perceived the action of members from the cooperative structures, the mistrust in the good intentions of the proximal neighborhood escalating to the preventive war.

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<sup>20</sup> Antoaneta Olteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> Morris H. Turk, *The Land of the Eagle-People* in "The Journal of Race Development" vol. II, no. 1 (July 1911), p. 54 in [https://www.jstor.org/stable/29737895?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/29737895?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>22</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> The Otranto Strait (Albanian: *Kanali i Otrantos*, Italian: *Canale d'Otranto*) connects the Adriatic Sea with the Ionian Sea, separating the Albanian territorial waters from the Italian ones:

European Straits Initiative, *Strait of Otranto* in <http://www.europeanstraits.eu/Partners/Strait-of-Otranto>.

<sup>24</sup> Nicoleta Ciachir, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

The Peace of Bucharest negotiated between from July 16<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup>, qualified by the Romanian side as democratic and characterized by the Bulgaria one as "the dictate from Vienna",<sup>25</sup> practically contained the seeds of a future confrontation, basically fueling regional revanchism for the two world conflagrations. The deepening of the contradictions between the Balkan countries<sup>26</sup> was one of the main consequences in the medium and long-term within it the third party is presented by the Bulgarian side in the most vehement terms: "the injustice that was repaired at Craiova in 1940 [...] the robbery/invasion from Bucharest".<sup>27</sup> Under the circumstances, the Balkans were metamorphosed into Europe's powder barrel, becoming a case study per se through the unpredictable nature of the regional power relations, to some extent preparing the actor for the Great War that would encompass Europe one year later.

The *Treaty of London* (1913) between the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire officially acknowledged Sultan `s withdrawal of European possessions, with the authorities from Constantinople accepting the new post-caliphate Balkan order. For Albania, the treaty *de facto* meant a recognition of the detachment from the quasi-defunct caliphate. The Recognition of the right to self-determination was, however, the shadow of Tirana losing of Kosovo in favor of Belgrade, following the Balkan wars The loss of Kosovo, virtually the only territorial gain of independent Albania, had meant a situation similar to "internationalization of the moral trauma of non-recognition",<sup>28</sup> similar to the failure of fulfilling the historical remembrance, thus leading to a form of public, *historical and moral invisibility*.<sup>29</sup> One could thus distinguish Tirana`s missionary ideology, with the liberation of the Albanian people becoming the socio-cultural leitmotif of Southeast Europe.

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 159.

<sup>26</sup> Valentin Lipatti, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> Nicoleta Ciachir, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>28</sup> Antoaneta Olteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

However, the guarantee of the Albanian self-determination has been undermined by the establishment of an international protectorate status by the International Control Commission<sup>30</sup>, consisting of representatives of the major powers with civilian control responsibilities and managing the transition to a new order patented by the Conference of Ambassadors. It is also said that Albania was a "sovereign, hereditary and neutral principality, guaranteed by the great powers",<sup>31</sup> the neutrality component from the message of the great powers aimed at virtually neutralizing any form of revanchism, known as Tirana's claims for reuniting the territories inhabited by Albanians from Southeast Europe. It also aimed at the exclusion of the Albanian state from any revanchist structure that would have served to change the regional *status quo*.

Considering the recurrence of regional confrontation as a tool for regulating the neighborhood relations, it was decided to assign the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace<sup>32</sup> with the mission to determine the causes leading to their exit Balkan war, which resulted in a report published in 1914. The document analyzed the roots of the Balkan War presented the views and aspirations of the belligerents, the economic, social and moral consequences of the wars while illustrating the relationship with international law. Basically, in the report the *Balkanization*<sup>33</sup> had been evoked as a particular form of political fragmentation, while at the same time revealed the "frustrations manifested politically, ideologically and culturally, stemming from the inherent tensions and contradictions".<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagine the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, New York & Oxford, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Antoaneta Olteanu, *op. cit.*, p.106.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

The report also contained an introduction by Baron Paul-Henri-Benjamin d'Estournelles de Constant,<sup>35</sup> which reiterated the principle of the peace movement: "Allow us to repeat, for the benefit of those who accuse us of *whispering about peace*, which I have always advocated: War rather than slavery; Arbitration rather than war; Conciliation rather than arbitration".<sup>36</sup> De Constant also presented the material and moral exhaustion of the Balkans during the regional wars, stating a *manifesto* to the civilized world encouraging the actors from Southeast Europe to appeal to treaties and arbitration as a means of dispute settlement thus approaching the legal paradigm in international disputes.

If the international situation showed stability in a lesser or greater extent, the internal situation in independent Albania exposed pronounced rupture lines pronounced between the capital city and the region, mentioning in this way the discontents of the Albanian *beys* from the central and southern Albania regarding Kemal's agrarian reform. The leader of the opposition movement against the modernization program of the Tirana Prime Minister became Essad Toptani Pasha, the representatives of this non-alignment movement that founded the Senate and Government from Durrës.<sup>37</sup> The situation led to the breakup of Albania, Kemal controlling the south, and Toptani controlling center, the northern being managed by three or four local councils.

The Council of Ambassadors decided on 23 November 1913 to resolve the *Albanian contentious*<sup>38</sup> by designating of Wilhelm de Wied,<sup>39</sup> the Principle of

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<sup>35</sup> Auguste Beernaert, Paul Henri d'Estournelles de Constant, The Nobel Peace Prize 1909 in [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1909/balluet-bio.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1909/balluet-bio.html) (accessed on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Maria Todorova, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Durrës historically known as Epidamnos and Dyrrachium, is the second most populous city of the Republic of Albania.

<sup>38</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Maria Oprea, *Un Suveran al Albaniei este înmormântat la București. Biserica Luterană, lăcașul de veci al lui Wilhelm de Wied*, the archive of the magazine "The Albanian's Friend", History, July, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017, The Association of the Albanian League from Romania, Craiova:

Protestant Confession. The choice for the descendant of the Bavarian prince family consisted of the hypothesis of a religious equidistance of the future monarch. Beyond the internal considerations, the choice had also a geopolitical component option being supported William of Wilhelm of Wied being supported by Austria-Hungary and prevailing the Italian proposal of Fu'ād of Egypt.<sup>40</sup>

Having the dynastic problem resolved, the *Protocol of Geneva* was signed on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1913<sup>41</sup>: Çamëria being transferred to Greece in order to end the Greek-Albanian dispute<sup>42</sup> and Kosovo, the latter remaining in Serbian borders in line with the situation after the Balkan Wars. On January 22<sup>th</sup> 1914, the International Commission of Control took over the government's prerogatives, depriving the Cabinet headed by Ismail Kemal of any authority because of its proximity to Italy and to the Ottoman Empire. Kemal co-balances the nationalistic dissatisfaction of the Muslim majority with the designation of the prince of Wied as sovereign, which led to his expulsion in the context of sacking the sovereign designated in Durrës on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1913 Wilhelm de Wied became, by all means, the monarch of Albania, based on the Prince'a Status<sup>43</sup> approved by the International Commission for Control. Despite the measures of the protective powers to stabilize the internal climate, the intra-state conflicts continued to be an inherent component of the Albanian social-political life. The Greek uprisings from the south proved the main problem for Tirana, the Albanian sovereign planning to resolve it through an agreement with the Greek Government. In this way, the

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[http://www.alar.ro/n93/istoriec681/un\\_suveran\\_al\\_albaniei\\_este\\_inmormantat\\_la\\_bucuresti\\_biserica\\_luterana\\_lacasul\\_de\\_veci\\_al\\_lui\\_wilhelm\\_de\\_wied-s1276.html](http://www.alar.ro/n93/istoriec681/un_suveran_al_albaniei_este_inmormantat_la_bucuresti_biserica_luterana_lacasul_de_veci_al_lui_wilhelm_de_wied-s1276.html)

<sup>40</sup> Fu'ād I. *King of Egypt*, Encyclopædia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Fuad-I>.

<sup>41</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Genc Lafe, *La questione irrisolta della Çamëria nella complessità dei rapporti greco-albanesi*, Università del Salento, 2014 in <http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/palaver/article/viewFile/14277/12442>

<sup>43</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

*Protocol of Corfu* was signed on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1913, legally binding the international community to recognize the borders of Albania, the Hellenic Republic engaging to comply with the Albanian territorial integrity, while Tirana granted Southern Epirus with greater autonomy.

The *Protocol* agreed on the Aegean island had a contrary effect because of the Greek guerrillas (*andartes*) set up a provisional government in the Southern Albania by the arms, which eventually led to civil war in the area. As a result of the deterioration of the internal climate, the Prince of Wied left Albania on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1919, then happening the uprising of the *Kemalists*<sup>44</sup> from Central Albania: starting from June in Tirana and from July in Elbasan. Considering the power vacuum created by the throne vacancy, the Paşa Essad of Durrës undertook a *coup d'état* coupled with the attempts from *andartes* of uprising in order to prepare for the invasion of the Greek troops.

Franz Ferdinand's murder at Sarajevo on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914 led to conflicting relations between the Austria-Hungary and Serbia, tensions stop giving a month later when Vienna declared war on Belgrade, marking the beginning of the Great War. Concerning Albania, the Austrian state of protectorate was conditioned by the active participation within the military maneuvers deployed by the Central Power. Tirana's refusal to follow the protective power in World War I led to the abolition of the Austrian imperial subsidies for Albania, otherwise poor, external funding that allows not only the subsistence but also resistance against internal and external enemies. The decision was followed by the final departure by Bavarian Prince's final departure from Albania, who had in the meantime returned to managing the effects of the international situation that precipitated.<sup>45</sup>

September 1914 marked Albania's return into the sphere of Ottoman influence, immediately after Burhan Eddin was designated by Constantinople as

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<sup>44</sup> The supporters of Ismail Kemali are also called *Kemalists*.

<sup>45</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

king of Albania, whose authority was exercised exclusively over the Southern Albania, with Central Albania headed by the *Essadist* Senate, and while Scutari<sup>46</sup> and Vlorë were administered by local councils. In this context, Essad formed a new Provisional Government, declaring war on Central Powers, a decision that led to riots across Albania.

The loss of the Habsburg House's protection inherently led to a vulnerable position for Tirana on the international scene, therefore on October, 14<sup>th</sup>, 1914 the Greeks invading Santi Quaranta<sup>47</sup>, occupying Gjirokastra<sup>48</sup>, the Italians arriving at Vlorë on October 29<sup>th</sup>, thus debuting the confrontation between the Greeks and the Italians in the Northern Epirus, followed by the Italian offensive in the Southern Epirus. The participation of *guaranteeing powers* to World War I made Italy the only actor able to defend the decisions taken at the Council of Ambassadors, the only defender of the Albanian independence.<sup>49</sup>

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1915, the *Pact of London* was signed, with Italy returning to Sazan Island and Vlorë, Albania becoming an independent state under the Italian protectorate. In fact, the new configuration of the Albanian state configuration consisted only of the central and southern Albania territories, with Epirus coming back to Greece. Rome's decision to enter the war on May 24<sup>th</sup> led to the Serbian invasion in northern Albania, with Montenegro occupying Scutari. The regional revanchism, based on the idea of Balkan belonging to the Balkan people<sup>50</sup>, brought the area to Vienna's attention, thus witnessing the entry of the Austrian-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian troops into Serbia and Kosovo, from where they headed to Montenegro and Albania, basically, the Habsburgs

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<sup>46</sup> Municipality and city in northwest Albania, known as Shkodër in Albanian.

<sup>47</sup> Southern municipality in the district of Vlorë, known as Sarandë in Albanian.

<sup>48</sup> Municipality located in southern Albania, between the Gjerë mountain and the Drino watercourse.

<sup>49</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Valentin Lipatti, *op. cit.*, p. 26.



liberating the Albanian territory from occupation between January and February 1916.

The fall of the *Essadist* Government from Durrës led to the formation of the National Council led by Ahmed Zogolli<sup>51</sup>, *bey* of Mati<sup>52</sup> and a follower of the moderate anti-*Essadist* position. In this context, Paşa Essad embarked together with the Serbian Army on the Italian ships from the Adriatic Sea, leaving Albania for Corfu. Zogolli became the leader of an army that gained more and more positions that he had to the Habsburgs, then enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army as a colonel, then heading the Albanian delegation at Carol I's coronation festivities in Vienna.<sup>53</sup> The Austrians proclaimed the autonomy of the territories under Colonel Zogolli. being "tired to have him on an allied day, and another opponent day".<sup>54</sup>

The Proclamation of Gjirokastra from June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1917 was the Italian reaction to the actions of the House of Habsburg at the Adriatic Sea, the General Giaconto Ferrero declaring "the unity and independence of the whole of Albania under the aegis and protection of the Kingdom of Italy",<sup>55</sup> the reaction of the leadership from Rome being supported by Kemal. Thus, Italy denounced the Albanian chapter of 1915 from the *Pact of London*. As a result, Paris also engaged in revitalizing the policy of spheres of influence in Southeast Europe, occupying the Korçë<sup>56</sup> and proclaiming the Republic of Korçë, in relation to autonomy to France.

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<sup>51</sup> Born Ahmed Zogu (also written Zog), the future Albanian king gave up the Ottoman-based Zogu name, taking over his father's name, Zogolli, with Italian resonance and meaning "son of Zogu."

<sup>52</sup> Former Albanian northern district dissolved in 2000, today a component part of the Dibër district.

<sup>53</sup> Charles (I). Emperor of Austria, Encyclopedia Britannica:  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-I-emperor-of-Austria>.

<sup>54</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> City and municipality in Southern Albania.

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, a Provisional Government was installed at Durrës – headed by Pasha Turhan Përmeti and supported by the Italians – that later sent two memories to the Peace Conference in Paris on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1919, requesting the following aspects: reconfirmation of Albania's independence and annexation of Kosovo, Dibër<sup>57</sup> and Çamëria. Under the conditions of Tirana's territorial claims, the *Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement* was signed to secure the mutual aid between Athens and Rome and targeting Albania and Aegean island possessions, a deal denounced by the Italians a year later.

The League of Nations's decision on the Albanian independence from December 9<sup>th</sup> led to the Allied guarantee on Albania's right of self-determination: "an independent state administered by Italy under the mandate of the League of Nations".<sup>58</sup> The decision was followed by the convening of the Lushnjë National Assembly,<sup>59</sup> a caste assembly of *Kemalists* and a group of *beys*, resulting in the formation of the Government of Suleiman Delvina and in the appointment of a Regency Council, which expressed the aspiration of the agrarian reform.

Even under the League of Nations mandate for protectorate over Albania, Italy committed to the Albanian request of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1920 of to respect the Albanian self-determination right.<sup>60</sup> Signing the Agreement of Tirana from August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1920, Italy and took the mission of withdrawing its troops from Albania and switch back to the traditional diplomatic support for the Albanian independence, mentioning the Italian lobby in Belgrade for determining the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to return to the pre-war borders.

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<sup>57</sup> District in northern Albania.

<sup>58</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>59</sup> City and municipality in Central-Western Albania.

<sup>60</sup> Deona Çali Kalaja, *The admission of Albania in the League of Nations* in the "Journal of Liberty and International Affairs", volume I, number 3 (2016), Institute for Research and European Studies, p. 56 in [http://e-jlia.com/papers/3\\_5.pdf](http://e-jlia.com/papers/3_5.pdf).

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the Ambassadors' Conference confirmed Albania's independence in the pre-war borders, Italy becoming "an agent of the League of Nations in Albania and a guarantor of the independence of this country".<sup>61</sup> Corroborating the situation with the *Treaty of Rapallo* of November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1920, it was recognized the direct interest of the Italian diplomacy regarding the Albanian independence, confirming at the same time Albania's role regarding the security mechanism from the Adriatic region. The relation led to the Italian protectorate in Albania similar to the mandate in 1919, although Albania was accepted as a full member in the League of Nations under the decision of December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1920.<sup>62</sup>

Albania's entry into the sphere of Italian influence turned out to be an inevitable consequence of the internal protectorate at the external climate, Albania was still suffering from socio-political fractures, noting the anti-Zoghist revolt that debuted in Tirana and included including Durres, Zogolli assuming the mission of defending the rights of all Albanians beyond confessional particularities, under the slogan of "nationalist and European renewal".<sup>63</sup>

Since 1923 Zogolli launched a set of measures for the modernization of the Albanian society, consisting mainly of autonomy of confessional and public instruction. The aspirations of the European peasantry, so also Albanian, the agrarian and fiscal reform were not implemented, the Albanian leader being a representative of the landowners from Central and Southern Albania. Depending on the conservative nationalism of the bourgeoisie, Zogolli's doctrine was closer to the Italian fascism, hence the assumptions about his sympathy with the Mussolini regime. The internal frustrations over the synergies of the economic,

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<sup>61</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>62</sup> Lavdosh Ahmetaj, *The Acceptance of Albania into the League of Nations on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1920*, in "European Scientific Journal", vol. 10, no. 23, University of Vlora, 2014, p. 227 in <http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/3946>.

<sup>63</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

social and political program followed by Zogolli materialized in considerable Albanian immigration.

Rome's geopolitical calculation led to the vision of orienting the Yugoslav dynamism towards the Aegean Sea and not to the Adriatic Sea, therefore the expansion of Italian influence in Southeastern Europe had been one of the priorities of the Mussolini regime given its desideratum of transforming Italy into a Mediterranean power. In view of this way, it was signed *The basic Italian-Albanian Trade and Navigation Treaty* of January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1924. Tirana's alignment to the direction of the Italian foreign policy was made concrete by Albania's recognition of the USSR as part of the *Zoghist* propaganda.

At the geostrategic level, the Albanian decision to recognize the Soviet state was the beginning of the transposition phase of the Adriatic basin into an Italian lake,<sup>64</sup> followed by the claim of Rome's exclusive right of intervention in administrating the Albanian internal affairs. An edible example in this way is the *Non-Intervention Agreement in the Albanian Affairs* between Belgrade and Rome on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1924.

Zogu regained the power on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1925, assuming the office of President of the Government and having three major objectives: the election as lifelong President of the Republic, the restoration of the monarchy and the ascension to the throne. On January 19<sup>th</sup>, Zogu supported his inaugural speech, proposing a *Fundamental State* containing "strong enough innovations to allow the future president access to the dictatorship [...] inspired by reactionary-republicanism and Balkanism".<sup>65</sup> Zogu's project essentially involved a gradual transition to totalitarianism, based on four pillars: diminishing the

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42.

authority of the Parliament, limiting the role of the political opposition, police repression, and census.

The task of modernizing Albania assumed by Zogu was practically dismantled because the project stood up from the Oriental despotism rather than from the projects of building a modern European state. Therefore, inspired by the internal power leverage, Zogu led Albania toward a form of "Oriental variation on a Balkan background".<sup>66</sup> George Kennan characterized the Southeast European inclination towards totalitarianism by analogy with the *immature dilettantism*<sup>67</sup> of Tsar Nicholas II.

The Albanian sovereignty became after 1925 an empty concept in the situation because in the late interwar period Rome and Tirana signed a number of economic understandings and conventions, with strong political implications for the Albanian state. The *Memorandum of Understanding* of February 24, 1925, between the Government of Albanian and the Italian Credit, was the first of the acts of liquidating the Albanian self-determination, in the event that, in exchange for 2 million pounds and 2 million gold francs<sup>68</sup>, Tirana pledged to unite with Rome within a treaty of political and military alliance. The treaty was supplemented by a series of agreements mandating Italy to fully manage the Albanian economy, under some agreements for the exploitation of the Albanian mineral and oil resources by Italy.

The Italian control over the Albanian financial sector was carried out through a convention of the loan granting for public works managed by *ad-hoc* companies. In order to manage wastewater treatment of it was created *Società per lo Sviluppo Economico dell'Albania*<sup>69</sup> (*The Albanian Economic Development Company*)

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<sup>66</sup> Maria Todorova, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>68</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>69</sup> Touring Club Italiano, *Albania. Ristampa anastatica*, Studio Bibliografico Idrometra, Milano, 1940: [https://books.google.ro/books?id=8J9exOJ01RcC&pg=PA57&lpg=PA57&dq=Societ%C3%A0+per+lo+Sviluppo+Economico+dell%27Albania&source=bl&ots=Nytcam9zdzq&sig=UINuw8\\_kO7sZT-LXIIF](https://books.google.ro/books?id=8J9exOJ01RcC&pg=PA57&lpg=PA57&dq=Societ%C3%A0+per+lo+Sviluppo+Economico+dell%27Albania&source=bl&ots=Nytcam9zdzq&sig=UINuw8_kO7sZT-LXIIF)

and *Società per la Valorizzazione Economica dell'Albania*<sup>70</sup> (The Albanian Economic Growth Society), mainly funded with Italian financial capital and followed by the establishment of the *Banca Nazionale dell'Albania* (The National Bank of Albania).

On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1925 the *Commercial Treaty* between Rome and Tirana was signed, historiographical presented as "a massive colonization work of all the Albanian economy compartments which, almost simultaneously, determined a parallel colonization of civilian life, and successive to the political scene of the Albanian nation".<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the treaty was guaranteeing the protection of a great power, so guaranteed and the defense the Albanian territorial integrity against the constant threats of being dismantled and shared between the Balkan allies of France, namely the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In counterpoint, the preeminence in managing the foreign affairs also meant to include a regional current irrelevance of the Balkan states in the struggle between the great powers.<sup>72</sup>

The motivation that led the Albanian political decision-makers to remove political independence from foreign policy was the result of the controversial *Francophile* trend of dividing Albania between the French, the Serb, Montenegrins and the Greeks, thus giving up the foreign policy in order to safeguard the Albanian territorial integrity. In the epoch, Tirana accepted the proposal of an *Oriental Locarno*,<sup>73</sup> adhering to Rome's plan of establishing the Italian protectorate

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<sup>70</sup> Lorezo Iaselli, *L'espansione finanziaria dell'Italia in Albania (1925-1943)*. *The National Bank of Albania is at SVEA*, the University of Naples "Federico II", Department of Analysis of Economic and Social Processes, Linguistics, Production and Territorial Processes, Naples, p. 65 in [http://www.delt.unina.it/stof/12\\_pdf/1.2.pdf](http://www.delt.unina.it/stof/12_pdf/1.2.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>72</sup> Antoaneta Olteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>73</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

over the Danubian-Balkan nations, in return for guaranteeing the respect for the post First World War borders.

The *Treaty of Alliance* signed on November, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1925 was followed by the *Italian-Albanian Friendship and Security Pact*<sup>74</sup> from November 27<sup>th</sup>, Albania's inclusion under the Italian sphere of influence being legally established. In the given context, the Albanian foreign policy ceased *de facto* to exist by the end of November 1925, with the *Military Convention* signed next year and giving Italy the task of reorganizing and modernizing the Albanian Army.

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1928, the Constituent Assembly proclaimed the Kingdom of Albania, with Ahmed Zogu as a king, from now Zog I. Essentially, irrespective of the Republican or monarchical political form, until the political union achieved by the Italian intervention in Albania., the Albanian state could irrefutably be considered as an Italian quasi-colonial possession. The Kingdom began under the sign of a secular revolution inspired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a European-inspired modernization. The reform of the Albanian legal structure was achieved by replacing the Ottoman norms,<sup>75</sup> followed by the agrarian, financial and confessional reform.<sup>76</sup> The consequence of the reform process in line with the domestic climate was the transformation of Albania into a "Western and Western-based social and political entity in terms of their application".<sup>77</sup>

The final step towards the annulment of the Albanian self-determination was the subject of the secret talks between Rome and Tirana in 1932 for a custom, thus anticipating the imminent Italian occupation and the reduction of the Albanian statehood up to cancellation. In this regard, the *Indelli- Beratti Protocols*

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<sup>74</sup> Also known as the *Pact of Tirana*.

<sup>75</sup> The abandonment of the *Honorary Codes of the Mountains (Kanun and Besa)*, the abolition of polygamy and the introduction of divorce.

<sup>76</sup> The establishment of the National Churches or the introduction of statutes guaranteeing national autonomy.

<sup>77</sup> Michele Rallo, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

of March, 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936 were signed, with effect on the economic relations, reiterating Albania's membership of the Italian sphere of influence. The Italian invasion of April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1939 demonstrated the counter-concession.<sup>78</sup> The rhetoric of the historical science demonstrated how the external performance of Tirana oscillated between being an actor and a subject of hegemony, culminating in the transformation into the object of the expansion of the fascist imperial community.

The existence of the Albanian independent state proved to be a matter of the regional geopolitical climate, especially because the region seemed to be a pressure release point as well as a buffer zone for solving the imperial and post-imperial discontents. To some extent, the evolution of the Albanian political project could be considered as being paradoxical: it had never been completely independent because of the recurrent *bandwagoning*, but without being aligned to any great power it was impossible to exist. Practically, its existence was the result of the most complicated geopolitical calculations in Constantinople, Rome or Vienna, to some extent determined by the interactions between the empires and their Republican heirs.

In essence, the Albanian self-determination could be included in the chapter of *Balkanism* manifestation in the context of the Ottoman Empire dissolution and perfectly synchronized with the Balkan people movement of national reawakening, nation-state building, and *greater states* projects. Albania remains one of the vital actors for exercising control over the Eastern Adriatic, thereby becoming an object of the Fascist foreign policy, culminating with the annexation from 1939.

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<sup>78</sup>Ștefan Popescu, *L'Occupation Italienne de l'Albanie (Avril 1939): Perceptions et Attitudes Français* in "Studii Balcanice", no. 1 (2017), University of Craiova, Faculty of Letters, Universitaria Publishing House, p. 128.