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A Greater Or A Lesser Albania? The Roots Of The Albanian Nationalist Movement And The Call For A “Greater Albania”

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Abstract: Recent manifestations and publicly made arguments for creating a “Greater Albania” which would unite ethnic Albanians into a single territorial entity has resulted in a highly divided response from both the public and politicians. But what is this so-called “Greater Albania”? How did it come into existence? Who supported the idea of a “Greater Albania” and in response, who opposed it? This article will seek to answer these questions by defining what “Greater Albania” was—both as a reality and an ideal—and discuss how it developed and transformed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Keywords: Greater Albania; Kosovo; Yugoslavia; nationalism.

Uma Albânia Maior Ou Menor? As Raízes Do Movimento Nacionalista Albanês E O Apelo Por Uma “Grande Albânia”

Resumo: Manifestações recentes e argumentos publicamente feitos para a criação de uma “Grande Albânia”, que uniria os albaneses étnicos em uma única entidade territorial, resultou em uma resposta altamente dividida tanto do público quanto dos políticos. Mas o que é essa chamada “Grande Albânia”? Como surgiu? Quem apoiou a ideia de uma “Grande Albânia” e, em resposta, quem se opôs a ela? Este artigo buscará responder a essas perguntas definindo o que era “Grande Albânia” - tanto como realidade quanto como ideal - e discutir como ela se desenvolveu e se transformou ao longo dos séculos XIX e XX.

Palavras-chave: Grande Albânia; Kosovo; Iugoslávia, Nacionalismo.

Introduction

In late July 2020, the British-Kosovar pop star Dua Lipa made a controversial statement on social media after posting an image of the flag of “Greater Albania” to Twitter with the caption “au-toch·tho·nous *adjective* (of an inhabitant of a place) indigenous rather than descended from migrants or colonists.”¹¹ The flag which Lipa posted features an amalgam of nationalist imagery including a map of “Greater Albania” bedecked in red and black, portraits of the Founding Father of modern Albania Ismail Qemali and his close associate the guerrilla fighter Isa Boletini, as well as the term “autochthonous” emblazoned along the bottom of the flag in bold letters. Lipa’s message was retweeted over 13,000 times, stirring up fierce debates over the validity of her claims in both social and academic circles. This was not the first time that this banner had made an appearance which resulted in a highly divided response from both the public and politicians. In fact, this exact flag had been spotted

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?

THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

several years earlier in October 2014 when a drone carrying the banner was flown over Partizan Stadium in Belgrade during a qualification football match between Serbia and Albania for the 2016 European Championship. Brawls erupted throughout the stadium after Serbian footballer Stefan Mitrović pulled down the flag and the match came to an abrupt end as angry fans, followed by riot police, rushed onto the playing field.^{III}

From an outsider’s perspective it can be difficult to understand how something as simple as a flag could serve as such a central source of pride for some and one of great contempt for others. These recent manifestations concerning “Greater Albania” are often seen as forms of banal nationalism^{IV} which are generally (and rightfully) regarded as sensationalized or highly distorted versions of the original concept/ideology. Therefore, a closer examination of the history and ideology behind the symbols represented on the “Greater Albania” flag is necessary in order to reveal the complex and contentious ideal which has been deeply embedded throughout much of the Albanian nationalist discourse over the last century and a half. But what is this so-called “Greater Albania”? How did it come into existence? Who supported the idea of a “Greater Albania” and in response, who opposed it? While extensive research has been conducted on “Greater Albania” and Albanian nationalism during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (namely focusing on contemporary nationalist/political movements in Kosovo and Albania) the earlier nationalist movements are often skimmed over or lost in the larger discussion of conflicts such as the Balkan Wars, the First World War, and the Second World War. Hence, by outlining the significant historical periods when the Albanian nationalist movement first came to fruition, this article will seek to answer the questions posed above by defining what “Greater Albania” was—both as a reality and an ideal—and discuss how it developed and transformed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In doing so, the article will highlight a number of the individuals, groups, and entities who have either worked in favor of a “Greater Albania” or who were actively against establishing one over the course of two centuries.^V

The dream of a “Greater Albania” from the “national renaissance” to the *kaçak* rebellion

There is a distinct challenge in establishing a precise timeline of how and when the concept of “Greater Albania” came into being. However, it can be argued that the months leading up to/directly following the creation of the organization the League of Prizren in 1878 serves as a logical starting point. This specific period of time (1878-1912) which began with the formation of the League of Prizren and ended with the declaration of an independent Albanian state is part of a larger period in Albanian historiography known as the *Rilindje Kombëtare*, meaning “national renaissance” or “national rebirth” and was defined by growing intellectual movements, nationalist ambitions, and opposition to territorial divisions among the ethnic Albanian territories in the Balkans.^{VI} In 1877, the Constantinople-born ethnic Albanian Abdyl Frashëri established a secret “Albanian committee” in Ioannina (Greece) and began writing up a memorandum which would outline the committee’s nationalist goals and ambitions. Noel Malcolm highlights the importance of this document stating, “of all the documents produced during the period of *Rilindje*, the one which deserves to be called the foundation of the entire autonomist programme was a memorandum sent by this committee to the Ottoman government in the spring of 1877.”^{VII} This memorandum listed a number of

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?

THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

demands from the committee including: the uniting of all Albanian provinces into a single vilayet which would employ Albanian officials, limiting military service to the confines of the vilayet’s territory, and the establishment of Albanian language schools in the designated area.^{VIII}

The following year, an urgent general meeting of Albanian leaders was called in Prizren in the region of Kosovo in response to the enforcement of the Treaty of San Stefano which was signed on 3 March 1878 and had been imposed by Russia onto the Ottoman administration.^{IX} The Treaty of San Stefano served a number of purposes, but its main goals were to solidify Russia’s presence in the Balkans, placate those with Pan-Slavist^X ambitions, and suppress any influence from Austria-Hungary in the region. As a result of the treaty, Bulgaria’s territory had vastly increased and now stretched into central Albania, and the borders of Serbia were expanded to include most of northern Kosovo.^{XI} Incensed by these divisions, over 300 Albanian delegates (mainly from Kosovo and Western Macedonia) gathered together on 10 June 1878 in Prizren, marking the formation of the League of Prizren. One of the first acts by the League was to issue two official documents on 18 June 1878. The first document known as *Karamane* (“The Book of Resolutions”) urged for the merging of the vilayets of Janina, Bitola, Shkoder, and Skopje into a single Albanian vilayet; the second document called *Talimat* (“The Book of Instructions”) outlined the principles of administration for the proposed vilayet. The League agreed that the relationship with the “Sublime Porte” would be maintained through a governor elected by the sultan^{XII} and “although what was considered Albanian territory at the time was not easy to define, the League remained unified over the question of defending Albanian territorial integrity.”^{XIII}

The weeks and months which followed the first initial meeting of the League were marked by a flurry of activity from local ruling elites and League members as well as by the European and Ottoman powers. The Berlin Congress—held essentially at the same time that the League was formed—“was convened in the summer of 1878 for the purpose of revising the territorial settlement reached at San Stefano the previous March...The Balkan states, which would be affected by the outcome of the negotiations, were not allowed to participate in the deliberations, only to send representatives to present their respective demands”.^{XIV} Initially, the Porte had supported the actions of the League of Prizren believing that they could somehow convince the Powers to reconsider the whole “Eastern Question” and prevent the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire’s hold over the Balkans. However, the Porte had greatly overestimated both the influence and the loyalty of the League and when the demands of the League went almost entirely unnoticed at the Berlin Congress and they subsequently refused to send military recruits, the Porte quickly began to reassess and withdraw their support. The final straw for the Porte came when, during a meeting in February 1881, Abdyl Frashëri exhorted the League to abandon the Porte, form their own army, and unite all Albanians within one Albania. The Ottoman government responded in late March of 1881 by sending an army of around 10,000 men into Kosovo led by Dervish Turgut Pasha to stamp out the League once and for all.^{XV} Resistance to Dervish Pasha’s troops was short-lived and Prizren was captured in April, followed by Gjakova/Djakovica and Ipek/Pejë/Peć in May. Abdyl Frashëri was captured and arrested in central Albania and Dervish Pasha arrested over 4,000 individuals for their involvement in the League and resistance to the Porte’s authority. Malcolm writes, “The Ottoman action was crudely effective. Although there would be various uprisings in Kosovo during the next three decades...all would be localized revolts, not involving resistance throughout Kosovo, and most were short-lived.”^{XVI}

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?
THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

The outbreak of the Balkan Wars at the end of 1912 provided the Albanian political and intellectual elite with the brief interlude needed to rekindle their efforts to establish an independent Albanian nation. Prior to the Balkan Wars, the Albanian statesman Ismail Qemali had spent time composing proclamations, forming alliances with other notable Albanian figures, and travelling through European capitals such as London and Paris in an attempt to gain international support for the creation of an independent Albanian nation. A fleeting victory was achieved on 28 November 1912 when Albanian independence was declared following a conference in Vlore and Qemali was appointed as leader of the National Assembly as well as Foreign Secretary.^{xvii} Unfortunately, both the Ottomans and the Great Powers failed to recognize this declaration of independence for Albania as being legitimate and within days the Serbian troops had invaded Albania, occupied the port of Durrës, and “initiated a rule of terror against the local Albanian population.”^{xviii} In December 1912, the Great Powers convened at the Ambassadors Conference in London in order to reach a solution concerning Albanian independence. On 29 July 1913 it was declared that Albania would be recognized as a sovereign state that was independent of the Ottoman Empire. However, this recognition was conditional and meant that the Great Powers were given the right to select a prince to rule over Albania and in March 1914, the German Prince Wilhelm of Wied was chosen. Prince Wilhelm of Wied lasted a mere six months in Albania before he fled into exile in September 1914, having been severely underprepared for the situation in the country.^{xix} Another condition was that the Great Powers would redraw the borders of Albania, giving “the whole of Kosovo, Dibra, Ohrid, and Monastir to Serbia, and, in the north, gave Hoti, Gruda, much of Kelmendi territory, as well as Plava and Gucia, to Montenegro.”^{xx} As a result of this delineation, the borders of Albania were drastically reduced with a large part of the ethnic Albanian population left outside of the new state borders and foreign involvement would still have a defining role in the future of the Albanian nation.

Following the end of the Balkan Wars, Albanian nationalist ideals which had previously been incorporated into intellectual/political movements started to merge with new types of activism among ethnic Albanians which often took the form of armed resistance. During this time and into the interwar period, the nationalist movement was led by armed groups of rebels known as *kaçaks*, who were active throughout Kosovo and Northern Albania during much of the early twentieth century and served as the main source of opposition to Serbian rule and expansion in the region. Relations between the Serbs and Albanians became particularly tense during the Balkan Wars and the First World War when Serbian soldiers carried out a violent campaign which sought to increase Serbian control in the newly annexed territory of Kosovo. Following the conclusion of the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference, tensions between Serbs and Albanians only increased when the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was declared and authorities in Belgrade began to establish a policy of colonization which greatly favored veterans of the Serbian Army and sought to promote a national (Serbian) spirit throughout the region of Kosovo.^{xxi} During this time, regions such as Kosovo and Macedonia were ultimately, viewed in pre-war terms by the Serbian elite as being “integral parts of the Serbian national body in which the process of integration had not been completed, and in which they faced violent conflict with rival programs of national integration/assimilation.”^{xxii} Kosovo Albanians collectively opposed this colonization and their submergence into a Yugoslav state as outlined by the Versailles Treaty and responded by inciting an armed rebellion against their Serbian occupiers and

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?
THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

establish a “Greater Albanian” state in the years following the conclusion of the First World War.^{xxiii}

The resistance movement which later came to be known simply as the *kaçak* rebellion, was fought by armed groups of guerrilla soldiers who took part in hit-and-run based attacks against the forces of the Yugoslav occupation.^{xxiv} The *kaçak* movement consisted namely of Albanian immigrants from the region of Kosovo and was revered by the Albanians as a national-liberation movement and condemned by the Serbians as being an organisation of outlaws. The *kaçak* movement served essentially as both of these things, with one group of outlaws taking part in guerrilla warfare fought up in the hills against settlers and local officials while a separate group of regular outlaws who were avoiding military service and taxation, committed raids and looted remote areas which were poorly protected.^{xxv} During the rebellion, the Committee for the National Defense of Kosovo—also known as the Kosovo Committee (*Komiteti e Kosovës* or KK)—established in 1918 and located in Shkodër (Northern Albania) helped to provide much of the support and arms for the *kaçaks* who were dispersed throughout Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro.^{xxvi} The resistance movement was also aided by the state of Italy, whose troops had occupied Albania for much of the First World War and held a number of territorial interests and claims throughout the region.^{xxvii}

The rebellion in the central Drenica region of Kosovo, led by Azem Bejta Galica and his wife Qerime “Shota” Galica, served as the main point of resistance and became increasingly popular amassing around 10,000 active fighters (however, only half of them were actually armed^{xxviii}) by early 1919.^{xxix} By the time the rebellion had finally come to an end, it was estimated that, “more than 12,000 Albanians had been killed, about 22,000 of them had been imprisoned, and roughly 6,000 houses had been burned.”^{xxx} On 15 July of 1924, Bejta was captured and on 24 December of that same year, Ahmet Zogu came to power as premier of Albania and entered into a private agreement with leaders in Belgrade where he promised to eliminate the *kaçak* threat. The *kaçak* rebellion finally dwindled out following the fall of Bejta when “one of the more liberal governments in Belgrade issued a sweeping amnesty decree that included more serious crimes.”^{xxxi} However, this tradition of violent resistance against foreign invaders and anti-Serbian sentiment and the desire to establish an ethnic Albanian nation was something that would be carried on into later generations and form a historical narrative which would help fuel Albanian nationalism during the outbreak of the Second World War.

“Greater Albania” as an imposed reality during World War II

At the dawn of World War II, the desire to unite Albanian lands and provinces was, as previously mentioned, far from a new concept and was a view which was held by a number of Albanian nationalist organisations in the previous century. However, alongside the revival and development of new Albanian nationalist movements, the Great Powers of Europe also began to weigh the benefits of the possible expansion and unification of Albanian territory in the Balkans. During this period, their solution was to establish a new territory referred to as “Greater Albania”. According to Franziska Zaugg, “Greater Albania” was “the name for the Albanian state which existed between 1941 and 1944 and was a de jure Italian protectorate until the capitulation of Italy on 3 September 1943 and was then referred to as a “neutral state”.” However, this state was de facto occupied by German troops until November 1944.

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?

THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

Geographically, “Greater Albania” consisted of central and southern Kosovo (known as “New Albania”), the border areas of Montenegro and Macedonia, and “Old Albania”.^{xxxii} Ultimately, despite the fact that “Greater Albania” had only a relatively brief lifespan of around three years, it remained a central part of the Albanian nationalist doctrine in the years to come.

The establishment of a “Greater Albania” arguably began in March/April of 1939 when the Italian army invaded Albania and the ruler, King Zog (also known as Ahmet Zogu or King of the Albanians) was forced to flee the country and was subsequently replaced by King Victor Emmanuel III. Shortly after the Italian invasion, the Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano got to work gaining the support of ethnic Albanians by pursuing a political campaign which seemingly supported Albanian irredentism and the enlargement of Albanian territories but was ultimately meant to benefit the ambitions of the foreign powers (i.e. the Axis powers) in the region. Over the course of the next year, Ciano openly called for the union of all Albanians and the creation of a “Greater Albania” which would incorporate the regions of Kosovo and Chameria (*Çamëria*). Although Ciano’s call for a “Greater Albania” was initially met with enthusiastic support from the Albanians, the Italians were still seen as invaders and therefore, failed to gain the full cooperation of the Albanians when they invaded northern Greece in October 1940 and were forcibly pushed back into Albania only a month later. The invasion of Greece was seen as an embarrassing failure for Italy, resulting in a number of devastating losses and requiring direct intervention from the German forces in order to remedy the situation. The Germans first tried to reach a diplomatic agreement with Greece but quickly realized that a military campaign would be the only solution to reasserting dominance of the Axis powers in the region. In April 1941, German forces invaded and effectively defeated both Greece and Yugoslavia providing Italy with a new opportunity to redeem themselves.^{xxxiii}

The creation of a “Greater Albania” state which would last from 1941 to 1944 was declared by Victor Emmanuel in August 1941. As previously mentioned, the proposed borders of “Greater Albania” would encompass parts of Kosovo (“New Albania”), Macedonia, Montenegro, and “Old Albania”. However, the issue of whether the area of northern Kosovo—namely Mitrovica—would ever become a part of “Greater Albania” provided a point of contention between the Italians and the Germans in years to come. The Germans had intentionally held onto Mitrovica in order to maintain control over the Trepça mining complex which was rich in iron ore deposits. However, the situation was further complicated when the Germans set up a model occupation regime which granted considerable autonomy to the Albanian population. As 1941 drew to an end, the Italians were seen in a less than favorable light by both the Germans and the Albanians and the question of Kosovo was still not fully resolved.^{xxxiv}

In addition to the efforts being made by the occupying powers, ethnic Albanians also sought parallel involvement alongside the Axis forces in resolving the Albanian national question when an anti-Communist resistance movement known as Balli Kombëtar (or “the National Front”) was established in November 1942 by the Albanian diplomat Midhat Freshëri. Freshëri provided a direct connection to one of the most significant nationalist movements in Kosovo, the aforementioned League of Prizren, since he was the son of Abdyl Frashëri, the leader who had acted as the intellectual powerhouse of the organisation. Balli Kombëtar was often depicted by communist historians as being a reactionary landowners’ party; however, its goals and political programme were generally anti-feudal, left-of-centre,

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?

THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

and reflected many of the views of the supporters of the long-since-ousted Fan Noli.^{XXXV} Essentially, it was an umbrella organization which gathered many different shades of political attitudes and their followers, the so-called “Ballists” held the central and self-proclaimed goal to maintain a “Greater Albania” after the war ended.^{XXXVI}

At one point, Balli Kombëtar even attempted to combine forces with a rival nationalist organization, the National Liberation Movement (later became the National Liberation Front). The National Liberation Movement was not always directly opposed to establishing a “Greater Albania”. However the group “owed much of its existence to crucial assistance from Yugoslavia’s Communists” and therefore, “it unsurprisingly opted for a policy that left Kosovo in Yugoslavia.” However, following their brief consensus on establishing a “Greater Albania”, they ultimately failed to negotiate and form a solid agreement during the Mukje accord in August 1943.^{XXXVII} From their formation, the Ballists had been regarded with general resentment and hostility from the Communists since they refused to join up with the National Liberation Movement. An attempt to make amends between the two organisations occurred in early August 1943 in the village of Mukje, just north of Tirana. Ymer Dishnicia, who acted as the main Communist representative during the negotiations, wrote in a report to Enver Hoxha that two main obstacles arose during talks between Balli Kombëtar and the National Liberation Movement. The first concerned the issue of creating an “ethnic Albania” which would include Kosovo, while the second was the Ballists’ demand for Albanian independence. Miladin Popović, a former Partisan and a secretary of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and Kosmet (short for Kosovo and Metohija), was enraged after reading this report and the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha responded in a similar fashion, condemning the idea of Albanian independence which brought the Mukje agreement to a confrontational end.^{XXXVIII}

Nostalgia for a “Greater Albania” in the time of Tito and Hoxha

Founded in 1945 and existing until the constitutional reforms of 1963, the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, led by Marshal Josip Broz Tito, consisted of five nations—Slovenes, Montenegrins, Croats, Serbs, and Macedonians. Any groups which existed outside of these designations were referred to as “nationalities” or “ethnic minorities”. Yugoslav Albanians were excluded from all five of these nations and were considered to be a mere nationality rather than a nation within Yugoslavia. The main argument that the Yugoslav government could provide for this lack of a national designation for Yugoslav Albanians was that an Albanian nation already existed (in Albania) and therefore it was not fair or possible for them to have “two nations”. All of these measures were in place essentially because Yugoslav authorities feared that the promotion of a Yugoslav Albanian national identity could threaten the Yugoslav unity and the territorial integrity of the state.^{XXXIX} Ivo Banac discusses why union with Albania might have been particularly appealing to ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia during this period. He writes of how no other minority “...was in such deplorable circumstances as the Albanian community... Impoverished, forbidden the use of their language in public life and in the schools, largely illiterate, they nurtured impotent bitterness towards the Serbs and looked to their compatriots in Albania as the only source of relief.”^{XL} Ultimately, this denial of a national identity for ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia may have inadvertently both renewed and encouraged their desire for union with Albania. Therefore, the

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?

THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

concept of (re-)establishing a “Greater Albania” once again became one of the central goals of the Albanian nationalist movement in Yugoslavia and formed the bedrock for many of the Albanian nationalist organisations and movements that were created throughout the latter half of the 20th century.

Within the Yugoslav state, the majority of ethnic Albanians resided in the region of Kosovo Metohija. An official report states, “750,483 members of the Albanian national minority or 4.8% of the total population reside in the entire territory of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia...Out of the total number, most Albanians live in the Autonomous-Kosovo-Metohija region, 498,245 [total individuals].”^{XLII} In the post-war era, Albanians even outnumbered the Montenegrins in Yugoslavia and yet they were still denied the status of a nation. One of the central aims of the Central Committee (CC) of the League of Communists in Yugoslavia (LCY) was to maintain control over the various national minorities and to preemptively stamp out any attempts to establish national self-determination. Yugoslav authorities were particularly concerned with the Albanian national minority since they maintained a relatively high population density both in and around the Kosovo region. They had also become aware of the Albanians’ widespread dissatisfaction with their status in the region and their desires to try and establish a “Greater Albania”. A 1955 report from the CC reflects on the potential threat that the Yugoslav Albanian national minority could pose to the state. The report reads as follows:

According to them [the Yugoslav Albanians], the basis on which the reactionary activity of teachers of the Albanian minority is built and developed is reduced to two irrefutable truths in which they find historical and political justification: Kosovo and Metohija, Western Macedonia with [ethnic Albanian] regions, and that [ethnic Albanians], as a people in Yugoslavia, are disenfranchised. and only within the ethnic borders of "Greater Albania" can they be liberated nationally and socially.^{XLIII}

This perceived threat became a growing reality when a number of clandestine anti-Yugoslav Albanian nationalist movements (referred to as *Ilegalja* due to their illegal/forbidden nature) came into existence in Kosovo in the years that followed the Second World War. The most notable groups were formed between the years 1958-1963 and included: the Revolutionary Party for the Unification of the Albanian Lands (1958) founded by Metush Krasniqi; the Revolutionary Committee for the Unity of Albanian Lands in Yugoslavia with Albania (1960) founded by Kadri Halimi, Ali Aliu, and Ramadan Hoxha; the Revolutionary Movement for Albanian Unity (1963) led by Adem Demaçi, Ramadan Shala, and Mustafë Venhari. The political programs for these separate movements varied, however they generally agreed that union between Albania and “Albanian lands in Yugoslavia” would be a main priority. Article 1 of the official program for the Revolutionary Movement for Albanian Unity stated that their central aim was “...the liberation of Albanian provinces annexed by Yugoslavia and the union of these provinces with their motherland, Albania.”^{XLIII} It was not long before these organisations were brutally suppressed by the Yugoslav authorities and their illicit activities and promotion of the union of ethnic Albanian lands resulted in the arrest and decade-long imprisonment of Adem Demaçi beginning in 1964.^{XLIV} However, despite these initial setbacks, these organisations played a vital role in setting a foundation for the development of nationalist movements as well as establishing the basis of a national programme for the Albanians.

In addition to supporting the ideologies of the various *Ilegalja* and irredentist movements, a number of the individuals in Kosovo who desired a “Greater Albania” had also

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?
THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

become influenced by the “Enverist” ideology which had made its way over to the region in the 1970s through the transfer and use of Albanian textbooks in Kosovar schools and institutions. In addition to the Albanian books and literature circulating through institutions in Kosovo, individuals were often provided with a somewhat distorted view of Albanian politics and society through listening to Albanian language radio shows such as Radio Tirana and Radio Kukes.^{XLV} Enver Hoxha, the leader of Albania from 1944 until his death in 1985, had adopted a strict policy of isolation which meant that the country was effectively cordoned off from much of the outside world for forty years. Therefore, this devout admiration for Albania was in many ways unusual at the time due to the fact that the majority of Kosovar Albanians had never even been permitted to enter Albania and the individuals who supported an uprising had no grasp of what “Enverism” actually was.^{XLVI} Henry H. Perritt writes, “The secrecy and silence surrounding Albania acted to accentuate Kosovar fantasies that Albania was a paradise for ethnic Albanians. Albania’s strictly regimented Maoist isolationism prevented most Kosovar Albanians from visiting the country and realizing what an economic and political wreck Albania represented.”^{XLVII} A Kosovo Albanian individual who was interviewed in Pristina/Prishtinë discussed his infatuation and subsequent dissolution with Albania. He stated,

I was dreaming almost every second night how I would pass the border and go to Albania and was mystified by that whole issue...and when I saw it all, I never dreamt of Albania anymore. Because it was a tragedy, it was a tragedy of the Albanian people what happened after. I do not know that it was more organised or much better in Enver Hoxha’s time. Probably there would be a time of peace, or a time of bliss but on average it was tragedy.^{XLVIII}

Gradually, disillusionment with Albania may have been felt to a varying degree by certain individuals who were part of the Kosovar Albanian community. However, the common narrative found throughout the majority of the pamphlets, newspapers, and materials issued by the numerous Albanian nationalist organisations both in Kosovo and abroad stated that union with Albania would remain a key objective.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that external factors changed enormously over time in the Balkans, ethnic Albanians always remained on the periphery, existing in what seemed to be endless instability and precarity. Numerous factors including a lack of unified religious/linguistic identity amongst ethnic Albanians, the denial of an official national belonging for Yugoslav Albanians, and the exclusion of ethnic Albanians from nearly all of the political decision-making process over more than two centuries left many Albanian nationalists with no clear consensus on what “Greater Albania” actually was, nor what it should be. As mentioned in the introductory remarks, the desire to establish a “Greater Albania” and to finally realize the goals of Albanian nationalist movements throughout history still manifests itself in the modern day. While many argue that this is strictly an Albanian problem or a nationalist one it ultimately presents an important opportunity in the current age for the European powers to consider the consequences as well as the connections between arbitrary border demarcations and contemporary forms of ethno-nationalism.

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?

THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

Notes

^I Samantha Guzman (Simpson) is a PhD candidate at the History Institute of University of Bern in Switzerland. Parts of this text have been adapted from an unpublished MA thesis by the author titled, “A call to arms: tradition, nationalism, and paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland and Kosovo during the twentieth century” (Budapest, Central European University, 2016).

^{II} Dua Lipa, Twitter post, 19 July 2020, <https://twitter.com/DUALIPA>.

^{III} James Montague, “Ending an Albania-Serbia Game and Inciting a Riot, With a Joystick”, *New York Times*, 7 October 2015.

^{IV} For more on the concept of banal nationalism see Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1995).

^V This article is by no means serves an exhaustive account or a complete history of Albanian nationalist movements, “Greater Albania”, and the individuals and groups which either supported or defied it. Rather, it provides a brief introduction about the concept and how it has formed and changed over the last two centuries. For deeper insight into the idea and reality of “Greater Albania” see the titles included in the references section.

^{VI} Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (London: Pan Macmillan, 1998), 217.

^{VII} *Ibid.*, 220.

^{VIII} *Ibid.*

^{IX} Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 42-43.

^X For more on the concept of Pan-Slavism see Hans Kohn, *Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology* (New York: Random House, 1960); John Matthew Barlow, *Gale Researcher Guide for: Pan-Slavism and the Creation of Yugoslavia* (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Gale, 2018); David Mackenzie, *The Serbs and Russian Pan-Slavism 1878-1878* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967).

^{XI} Paulin Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2003), 8-9.

^{XII} Katarzyna Kropiak, “Integration Concepts of the Lands Inhabited by Albanians: The Process of Shaping of Albanian State Borders,” *Politeja* 4, no. 30 (2014): 60.

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^{XVI} Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 226-227.

^{XVII} Kropiak, “Integration Concepts of the Lands Inhabited by Albanians”, 64.

^{XVIII} Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000), 130.

^{XIX} Hall, *The Balkan Wars*, 130-131.

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^{XXVII} John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeast Europe, 1914-2014: A Century of War and Transition*, Second Edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 51.

^{XXVIII} Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 24.

^{XXIX} Klejda Mulaj, “Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of Kosovo Liberation Army”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 12 (December 2008): 1105.

^{XXX} Mulaj, “Resisting an Oppressive Regime”, 1105.

A GREATER OR A LESSER ALBANIA?

THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
“GREATER ALBANIA”

GUZMAN, S.

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- XXXI Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian*, 101-102.
- XXXII Franziska A. Zaugg, *Albanische Muslime in der Waffen-SS: Von “Großalbanien” zur Division “Skanderbeg”*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, GmbH & Co. KG, 2016, 14 (Footnote). [Translated to English from the original German text.]
- XXXIII Bernd J. Fischer, *Albania at War: 1939-1945* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1999), 70-83.
- XXXIV Ibid, 84-88.
- XXXV Malcom, *Kosovo*, 303.
- XXXVI Milenko Doder, *Jugoslavenska Neprijateljska Emigracija*. Zagreb: Centar za Informacije i Publicitet, 1989, 6. [Translated from the original Serbian text to English].
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THE ROOTS OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE CALL FOR A
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