Greater Albania –
The Next Crisis in the Balkans?

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ABSTRACT

University of Växjö, School of Social Sciences, Department of Peace and Development Studies
Master Thesis
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Date: 2009-06-08

The Balkans has suffered from quite a few problems as a result of the countless ambitious endeavors for great states of the ethnic groups residing in the peninsula. The most recent great state idea to have caused troubles in the region is the Serbs’ Great Serbia (i.e. Yugoslavia), which caused a cycle of wars, the latest one being the war in Kosovo in the late 1990s. This thesis attempts to evaluate the rumors of yet another great state in the making – or rather awakening again: the attempt at a Greater Albania, and whether the Albanians in the Balkans are still harboring the idea of any such state. Particular emphasis is placed upon the following questions:

- Where does the idea of a Greater Albania stem from?
- Is a Greater Albania today still on the Albanians’ agenda as a real political plan?
- What speaks for and against a Greater Albania? Is the idea even feasible?

The findings indicate that none of the Albanian communities residing in the Balkan region wish for a Greater Albania, nor do their leaders. The Serbs nonetheless maintain that an Albanian threat exists and has done so ever since 1878 when the idea of a Greater Albania first arose. However, according to the results of this study, their claims lack credibility. Everything indicates that today, and with Albania striving for membership in the European Union, the idea of a Greater Albania has been left in the past.

Keywords: Greater Albania, Greater Serbia, nationalism, Kosovo
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The Balkans is not a region often mentioned anymore, and yet there are so many loose ends that need tying up before the situation (between the Albanians and the Serbs) can be said to be under control. A recent “string” pertains to the idea of a Greater Albania. I came across this term in an English newspaper and was surprised to discover how often it has been mentioned since it has not received any significant attention. Considering how much instability the latest “great state” in the Balkans caused in the region, I was curious to see if a Greater Albania should be something to worry about; and with that purpose in mind, I set out to write the thesis that you hold in your hands.

Someone who has helped with the making of this study, and who I would like to thank, is my tutor Manuela Knapp, senior lecturer in peace and development studies at Växjö University.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANA</td>
<td>Albanian National Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Armata Kombetarë Shqiptarë - AKSh)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANUF</td>
<td>Albanian National Union Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUI</td>
<td>Democratic Union for Integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>ICG</td>
<td>International Crisis Group</td>
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<td>KLA</td>
<td>Kosovo Liberation Army</td>
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<td>LDSHMZ</td>
<td>Democratic League of Albanians in Montenegro</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Lidhja Demokratike e Shqiptarëve në Mal të Zi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NLA</td>
<td>Albanian National Liberation Army</td>
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<td>UDSH</td>
<td>Democratic Union of Albanians</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Unioni Demokratik i Shqiptarëve)</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The spelling of the name “Kosovo” has been used in this study because it is more commonly used in the English-speaking world. The proper Kosovo Albanian spelling is “Kosova”.

1. INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter presents the research problem, along with its context. A presentation of the purpose and research questions, as well as a description of the study’s disposition, is also included.

1.1 Problem Formulation

“This is a neighborhood of many fantasies -- Greater Serbia, Greater Macedonia, Greater Albania, Greater Croatia, Greater Islam. If left to themselves they will produce a Greater Explosion.” - THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

“The Yugoslav crisis began in Kosovo, and it will end in Kosovo,” was a saying often repeated in former Yugoslavia. All the parties to the Balkan conflicts seemed to agree on this even before war broke out in Kosovo but today as the story seems to finally have come to an end with the status of Kosovo resolved, a change of heart appears to have taken place. Serbs now claim that Kosovo is not the end of the Greater Serbia dream but instead the beginning of another nuisance: a Greater Albania.

The term refers to a merger of Albania, Kosovo and the Albanian-inhabited areas of Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Montenegro – creating a greater Albanian state. It, along with Greater Serbia, is only one of many “great ideas” that have existed in the Balkans. But of all these great plans, a Greater Albania is the only one still mentioned.

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1 Friedman 1998
2 Malcolm 1999: xliiv
4 Day, East and Thomas 2002: 241
It is interesting to see if the idea of an Albanian scheme for unification has credibility or is a mere Serbian propaganda fabrication, or perhaps a misguided assumption, because the idea might cause further instability in the region whichever way. History might repeat itself if a genuine wish for a Greater Albania among the Albanians, and a will to act on that wish, exists. The still fragile Balkan region may regress into instability and uproar if the Albanians move to dissolve the present borders in the region in pursuit of an Albanian union. A Greater Albania would not only be a threat to the Serbs and to the other neighbors who would lose territory, but to the whole EU, which would most definitely not benefit from another Balkan war in proximity. Even if the notion has no real merit, the existence of these rumors indicates that the former enemies (Serbs and Albanians) are still ruled by history. If the theory is mere fabrication from the Serbian side, this indicates that they continue to use history for their nationalist agenda. If they on the other hand really believe in the idea of an Albanian threat and fear that nationalism continues to dominate politics in the region, the fear will hinder them from moving on and letting the past be the past.

Either way, if the allegations and fears of an Albanian unification continue to persist, it might potentially destabilize the entire region. In order to determine whether it would be wise to work on a plan to prevent an eruption of problems tied to the Greater Albania idea, it is imperative to ascertain the facts. Is it a matter of curbing Albanian nationalism, or Serbian nationalistic propaganda? Or is it a matter of establishing trust between the two parties? This is what will be explored in this study.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The main purpose of this paper is therefore to use all available sources to determine whether the idea of a Greater Albania continues to be an item on the policy agenda of Albanian groups residing on the Balkans, or if it has been definitely put to rest.

The following questions are posed:
• Where does the idea of a Greater Albania stem from?
• Is a Greater Albania today still on the Albanians’ agenda as a real political plan?
• What speaks for and against a Greater Albania? Is the idea even feasible?

1.3 Disposition

The method and material applied in the study are introduced in the following chapter, along with a critical source analysis. The empirical work is divided into three sections. The first one (chapter three) serves as a background to the problem at hand. This historical section begins with a description of how the ethnic map in the Balkan Peninsula came to be so complex. Next follows an account of the Serbs’ repeated attempts at a Greater Serbia, and a presentation of where the idea of a Greater Albania stems from and how it developed. The chapter is concluded with a short summary.

In the second section (chapter four) I give an account of what has been said on the subject of a Greater Albania in the various primary and secondary sources I could find and consulted for this study. Slavic and Greek diverse thoughts on the matter are presented, as well as the Albanian account. What “outsiders”\(^5\) accept as true is also depicted. Subchapter 4.2 goes on to review which conditions indicate a Greater Albania, and which ones do not. Lastly, an analysis of the results is presented in the third section along with concluding remarks.

\(^5\) I.e. scholars of non-Balkan descent, international non-governmental organizations, non-Slavic governments etc.
2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Method and Material

Methods Applied

As implied by the questions posed, the research perspective adopted in this study is a qualitative one. A qualitative research design seemed appropriate in this study since people’s subjective experiences and the meanings they attach to their experiences had to be explored in order to properly reach the stated purpose of this study.⁶

It being a historical account, the first section of the study is a mere descriptive one. The descriptions have ultimately served to achieve a deeper understanding of the results produced.⁷ The method of process tracing was applied in this chapter to produce these historical descriptions, meaning that the path leading to the present situation has been mapped in detail in an attempt to “find and confirm the causal mechanisms that link cause(s) to outcome”.⁸ What has been traced in this study, from the very beginning of its formation, was naturally the idea of a Greater Albania so as to achieve a greater comprehension of why the idea is mentioned today. Especially subparagraph 3.2.2 presents the historical events that have led to the current situation.

The beginning of section two, which delves into if a Greater Albania is today on the Albanians’ agenda, required an argumentative text analysis. The argumentative analysis helped detect the different actors’ arguments and reasoning. The descriptions later helped in evaluating whose arguments hold, and whose do not – if a Greater Albania is on the agenda. This is another one of the argumentative analysis’ functions, to determine the

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⁶ Marsh & Stoker 2002: 199
⁷ Esaiasson et. al. 2007: 25-26
⁸ Ibid: 144
arguments’ conclusive power.⁹ In order to do this properly and correctly, an analysis of the discourse of a Greater Albania as a whole was conducted. The term discourse analysis refers to numerous different approaches to the in-depth study of texts. All discourses are viewed as social practice, and are utilized for certain purposes such as “offer blame, make excuses, to present themselves in a positive light etc.”¹⁰ The discourse of the Greater Albania idea was outlined in this case in order to better understand the reason of the arguments in the discourse and their credibility.

**Material**

Quite different materials were required in section one and two. The first section naturally necessitated historical texts. There is an immense amount of information available on the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, but very few of these books and articles put focus on Greater Albania. In fact, it appears that no more than one book properly deals with the Albanians’ “search for Greater Albania”. What’s more, the book is written by an Albanian scholar¹¹, which of course presented a difficulty due to the risk of subjectivity. The use of the book as a source for this study therefore had to be greatly limited. Books written by non-Slavic and non-Albanian researchers were almost exclusively applied in order to ensure credibility. On account of the difficulty of finding sources on the topic, tidbits from a variety of (seemingly) unbiased sources have served to present a bigger picture in order to properly explain the evolution of the Serbian and Albanian great state nationalisms and give a background to the matter at hand. One good book used in the historical descriptions is Noel Malcolm’s Kosovo: A Short History (1998), which in detail reiterates the development of the two competing nationalistic agendas of the Albanians and Serbs. Another one worth mentioning is Stephen Schwarts’ Kosovo: background to a war (2000) which offers more of an overview of the past of Albanians and Serbs.

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⁹ Bergström & Boréus 2005: 91
¹⁰ Mikkelsen 2005: 186
¹¹ Paulin Kola - The Search for Greater Albania
Contemporary sources were essential in the second section. They naturally had to be subjective given the nature of the question dealt with in the chapter. Web pages such as the Serbian news sites B92 and Serbianna, and the Macedonian Macedonian News were searched in order to try to detect what the neighboring Slavs have to say about the notion of a Greater Albania, and who exactly fears that the Albanians have not let go of their dream for a Greater Albania. Likewise, Albanian news sites such as Albania Today provided for the Albanian viewpoint.

The international non-governmental organization (International Crisis Group - ICG)\textsuperscript{12}, served as a useful source for an “outside” perspective, as well as English-speaking newspaper sites such as the New York Times, that were examined for quotes from international\textsuperscript{13} politicians and scholars.

\section*{2.2 Source Critical Analysis}

A source critical analysis is conducted with the intention to critically assess the truth-value of sources, and the information provided by them.\textsuperscript{14} It is with this intent that the criteria of valid sources, employed in a source critical analysis, have been kept in mind when choosing which sources to use. The criteria utilized are:

Authentication deals with the authenticity of a source and is fulfilled by confirming legitimacy through other independent sources.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{12} An international non-governmental organization "generally recognised as the world’s leading independent, non-partisan, source of analysis and advice to governments, and intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations, European Union and World Bank, on the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict." – International Crisis Group 2009
\textsuperscript{13} i.e. politicians and scholars of non-Balkan origin
\textsuperscript{14} Esaiasson et. al. 2007: 313
\end{flushright}
The criterion of *independence* concerns the authenticity of the actual content of a source. The credibility of a source’s content can be proven through other sources that state the same thing. The main idea is that primary sources are more reliable than secondary ones, and that the researcher should be non-partisan.\(^{15}\) This criterion is of special importance to this study seeing as the study deals with rival parties, but in this case, secondary sources had to be used for the historical accounts in order to fulfill the criterion satisfactorily. Primary sources could not be used due to risk of subjectivity. However, all sources applied are not secondary, primary sources were used in chapter four seeing as they best served the purpose.

*Simultaneity* refers to the notion that the time elapsed between an event and its’ record should be as short as possible in order for the transcript to be considered credible.\(^{16}\) This criterion was of particular consequence in chapter four, where the Internet has played an important role given that up to date information is much easier to get hold of on the Internet.

Lastly, the criterion *tendency* regards the possibility of sources wanting to deliberately give a biased account of reality.\(^{17}\) The subjective sources used in chapter four obviously do not meet this criterion, but, as mentioned before, this is intentional and serves a purpose. Regarding, the information provided for in the historical accounts, legitimacy has been confirmed through the findings of other sources that reinforced what was ultimately written in the study. The sources have been evaluated to be independent after the information provided by them was matched up to information given by other independent sources. As can be noted, more than one source has sometimes been given for the same information in the study.

\(^{15}\) Ibid: 317-319
\(^{16}\) Ibid: 329
\(^{17}\) Esaiasson et. al. 2007: 321
3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Any research that deals with the situation in the Balkans requires a historical narrative. The Balkan Peninsula is after all the place where the past is very much the present. This thesis will therefore first embark on an account of Balkan history in an attempt to clarify where the idea of a Greater Albania stems from, and how the Albanians even came to be divided into the six territories that they supposedly want to unite into a greater Albanian state. The Serbian search for a Greater Serbia will also be covered since it has been one of the most pronounced “great plans” in the region.

“We dreamed of a greater Albania. The Serbs dreamed of a greater Serbia. Both were terrible mistakes. These dreams destroyed us and destroyed them.”
– A former nationalist from Kosovo

The Balkan region has been plagued with countless ideas of great states ever since the French Revolution (1789) and the Napoleonic era (1795-1814) introduced the ideology of nationalism to Eastern Europe. The Bulgarians aimed at a Greater Bulgaria, the Croatians at a Greater Croatia, the Albanians at a Greater Albania, and the Serbs at a Greater Serbia. Therefore, considering the long history of “great plans” in the Balkans, it is not surprising that the region is now facing a situation where its inhabitants are again mentioning latent plans for the formation of yet another great state.

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18 Hedges 2002
19 Frucht 2005: 423
3.1 The Very Beginning – How They Came to Meet

The two ethnic groups (the Serbs and the Albanians) that came to be such rivals with competing nationalistic agendas first met sometime around the sixth century A.D. when the Slavs invaded the Balkans. The Slavs, Europe’s largest ethnic family, was an Asian people that came from an area beyond the Carpathians and consisted of several different tribes, one of them being the Serbs. Other Slavic tribes were today’s Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, Bosnians, Montenegrins, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bulgarians and Croatians.

One of the people present in the Balkans at the time of the Slavic influxes was the Illyrians, who are thought of to be the ancestors of the Albanians and the original ancient people of the region.

Map 1. The Illyrian Kingdom. Source: The Lost Truth

20 Schwartz 2000: 13
21 Day, East & Thomas 2002: 517
23 Buckley & Cummings 2001: 13
3.2 “Great Ideas”

3.1.1 The Quest for a Greater Serbia

Being so high in number, the Slavs managed to either push back or assimilate the autochthon Illyrians and settled down in the central Balkan Peninsula. They eventually divided into the different peoples they primarily identify themselves as today and established their own nation states. The Serbs formed their first state in the 12th century and quickly transformed it into a great state by further invading Albanian-inhabited lands around the year of 1343. The great Serbian state included most of what is today known as Albania, Kosovo, parts of Montenegro and parts of Macedonia. It lasted until 1389, when the Ottoman Turks conquered the Serbs in the Battle of Kosovo Polje (Field of Blackbirds). Despite their defeat and Kosovo’s consequent incorporation into the Ottoman Empire, nationalistic Serbs would come to frequently refer back to this battle during their endeavors.

Map 2. King Dušan’s Greater Serbia. Source: Book Rags

24 Stavrianos & Stoianovich 2000: 9
25 White 2000: 192
Plans To Restore Great Serbia

To reestablish the Great Serbia that had been lost to the Ottomans became the leading ideology of the Serbs from the middle of the nineteenth century and onwards. The first political plan designed for this purpose was written in 1844 by the Serbian Minister of Interior, Ilija Garašanin, in the form of an internal memorandum entitled Nacertanije (The Outline). The memorandum was essentially a rather detailed plot for the making of a Greater Serbia by conquering the lands of Albanians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Macedonians and Croatians. As means to achieve this, Garašanin urged for assimilation of non-Serbian populations.27 A proper chance for the Serbs to restore their Greater Serbia did not arise until the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, during which they moved to invade Kosovo. The war proved successful for the Slavs, the resulting Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 guaranteed the Serbs autonomy and certain Albanian areas28 - creating a Greater Serbia. The treaty also produced a Greater Bulgaria, which stretched all the way to central Albania.29 However, the European Great Powers30 did not much care for this Slavic expansion, leading them to meet in Berlin the very same year with the intention of revising the treaty. Kosovo remained with the Ottomans.31

The Serbs resumed their pursuit for a Greater Serbia. Strategies in line with Garašanin’s urgings began to form and be adopted. The Serbs started by obliterating Albanian villages and expelling over 100 000 Albanians from their state.32 Garašanin’s memorandum was kept a secret up until 190633 but another document, which has been referred to as a proposal for ethnic cleansing, was made public in 1902. A Serbian politician had written

29 Kola 2003: 8
30 Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany and Italy
31 Vickers 1998: 42-45
32 Warrander 2007: 11
33 Cohen 1996: 3
an article titled "To Extermination: Ours or Yours", advising how to best deal with the non-Serbian people of the Balkans. It has been argued that it was this article that inspired the bloodbath which took place in 1903.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{The Establishment of an Albanian State}

Meanwhile, as the Serbs fought for the creation a Greater Serbia, the Albanians fought for independence from the Ottomans. The Albanian uprisings, which had commenced in 1912 in Kosovo, had become so large-scale and widespread that the Porte\textsuperscript{35} decided to meet with the Albanians and ultimately agreed to a sovereign Albania within the empire.\textsuperscript{36} Serbia, being against the decision, formed an alliance with Bulgaria and declared war against the Ottoman Empire, consequently starting the First Balkan War (the same year). Greece and Montenegro joined the alliance later on. Serbian objectives were to conquer Kosovo and the port of Durrës in Albania (giving them access to the sea), dividing what became Albania between itself and Greece in the process.\textsuperscript{37} In order to assure the Westerners’ support, they started a propaganda campaign against the Albanians. As part of this campaign, they first armed Albanians willing to follow their instructions. The Albanians, unaware of the Serbs’ real intentions, agreed to this. The Serbian plan was to instill in the Westemers’ minds a picture in which the Albanians were out of control, conducting atrocities against Serbs. The Serbs even handed lists of these “atrocities” to the Western ambassadors but this turned out to be a bad move because when a dozen of these cases were investigated, the conclusion was that most of the cases were fabricated and that the responsibility for the few ones which were not false lay with the Serbs.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34} MacDonald 2002: 109
\textsuperscript{35} I.e. the Ottoman court in Constantinople
\textsuperscript{36} Malcolm 1999: 246-248
\textsuperscript{37} Clark 2000: 26, Malcolm 1999: 255
\textsuperscript{38} Malcolm 1999: 250
convert to the Serbian Orthodox faith. All the while, the Serbian press made reference to the previously mentioned battle in 1389.\textsuperscript{39}

The Albanians moved to declare an independent Albania at the Congress of Vlora on November 28 1912, and Austria Hungary threatened with a military intervention if the Serbian expansion continued. It was therefore to avoid a wider war that the Great Powers met in London in December the same year.\textsuperscript{40} The new borders in the Balkans that were drawn at the London Conference did not include a Serbian coast, but the Serbs were ceded the province of Kosovo.\textsuperscript{41} The Serbs, with a Greater Serbia in mind and Kosovo in their possession, resumed their nationalist campaign. In 1913, they adopted a law for the “liquidation of bandits” which, amongst other things, entailed expulsions in Kosovo. 120,000 Albanians are estimated to have left the region during 1913-1915. At the same time, the Serbs managed to extend their territory further by conquering parts of central Albania in 1915, but were ultimately forced to draw back by the Austrians and Germans who in addition seized Kosovo.\textsuperscript{42}

\textbf{Yugoslavia}

The campaign for a Greater Serbia proved successful eventually. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Britain, France, Italy and the U.S. decided to give the South Slavs their great state: the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.\textsuperscript{43} This new state included Serbia, Montenegro, several parts of Austria-Hungary (including Croatia and Slovenia) and Kosovo. The Serbs were content with this outcome and regarded the new state as a sort of Greater Serbia since they once again had Kosovo under their control and the kingdom was ruled by a Serbian king.\textsuperscript{44} Yet, this did not mean that the plans for

\begin{footnotes}
\item[40] Clark 2000: 26
\item[41] Judah 2008: 38
\item[42] Malcolm 1999: 257-259
\item[43] Rogel 2004: 5-6
\item[44] Ibid: 5-6, Malcolm 1999: 264
\end{footnotes}
expansion and homogenization were dropped. Another attempt at shifting the demographics in Kosovo was initiated. All Albanian-language schools had been shut down in 1918 and the Serbs now went ahead with discouraging any public education for the Albanians so that they would be less equipped to resist the premeditated “serbianization”. The plan was to make the Albanians “backward, unenlightened, and stupid” and keep them that way for twenty years, which was estimated to be the time needed “to carry out the national assimilation”. As means to achieve the designed assimilation, Albanian land was taken illegally and given to new settlers (which were mostly of Serbian descent).  

The overwhelming Serbian influence in the Slavic kingdom changed into Serbian dictatorship in 1929 and the state was renamed Yugoslavia, meaning the land of the South Slavs. In 1937, another nationalistic memorandum, titled Iseljavanje Arnauta (the Expulsion of the Albanians), became official. Inspired by Hitler’s and Stalin’s expulsions of Jews, the memorandum was a detailed blueprint of how to force the Kosovo Albanians to leave for Albania and Turkey. The memorandum, written by a political adviser to the Yugoslav government, read:

“There is no doubt that the whole matter will arouse international reaction, inevitable in such cases. […] However the modern world is accustomed to even worse. It has its own concerns so we should not be too afraid of the reactions from abroad. If Germany can evict hundreds of thousands of Jews, if Russia can transport millions of people from one part of the continent to the other, a few hundred thousand evicted Albanians will not provoke a world war.”

Force was described as “the only solution”, stating “We have always been superior to [Albanians] in its use.” Specific methods such as bribes, threats, compulsory labor,

45 Ramet 1995: 198
46 Bert 1997: 24
47 Tucker & Roberts 2004: 1678
48 Cohen 1996: 4-5
49 Schwartz 2000: 80
dismissal of Albanians from state, private and self-employment were promoted in the memorandum, as well as this proposal: “A horde of Montenegrins from the mountains should be sent down to provoke massive clashes with the Albanians […] In extreme cases, some local uprisings can be provoked which would later be put down by blood – the most effective means.”

However, the Second World War commenced before the plan could be realized\textsuperscript{50}, during which Yugoslavia suffered from German and Italian invasion. Josip Broz Tito became the head of yet another Yugoslavia after the war. The half Croat, half Slovene Tito had been the leader of one of the resistance movements formed during the war, the communist Partisan movement. He divided the new state into six autonomous republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro) and two regions (Kosovo for Albanians and Vojvodina for Hungarians), hoping that this would dampen the nationalist sentiments among the different ethnicities.\textsuperscript{51} Tito did manage to repress ethnic problems through a series of coercive means up until his death in 1980. However, since the ethnic problems had not been solved but had merely been quelled during his reign, they resurfaced after his death. The new situation was ideal for politicians who saw the opportunity to use nationalism as an instrument to further their political ambitions, one of them being Slobodan Milosevic\textsuperscript{52} who, like many of his predecessors, had a Greater Serbia in mind:

“We must secure unity in Serbia if we wish, as the largest and most populous republic, to dictate the further course of events […] These are the questions of borders, essential state questions. The borders, as you know, are always dictated by the strong, never by weak ones." […] If we must fight, then my God, we will fight and I hope they will not be so crazy as to fight against us. Because if we don't know how to work well or to do business, at least we know how to fight well”.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Schwartz 2000: 81-82
\textsuperscript{51} Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia 2004: 12-17
\textsuperscript{52} Treverton 1992: 145-146
\textsuperscript{53} Engelberg 1991
3.2.2 The Quest for a Greater Albania

The Greater Serbia idea therefore arose quite early. In contrast, the Greater Albania idea did not emerge until the 19th century. 1878 to be exact, that was when the first significant manifestations of Albanian nationalism originated in the shape of the first Albanian nationalistic organization, known as The League of Prizren. The League was created in response to the Berlin Congress, at which discussions were being conducted on the topic of allotting Albanian land to Slavs.54 The Ottomans had beforehand divided Albania into four provinces and the plan was that major parts of the province of Kosovo would be given to Serbia, the province of Shkodra to Montenegro, Manastir to Macedonia and Janina to Greece.55 The League’s aim was therefore to prevent these land losses, as well as to demand the unification of the four Albanian provinces into one autonomous

54 Kola 2003: 8-9
55 Frosina Information Network (Albania and the Albanians)
Albanian state within the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{56} It is an Albania with these boundaries that is today referred to as Greater Albania.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{Map 4.} The four Albanian vilayets during the Ottoman empire. Source: Frosina

The Albanians sent a memorandum to the British Prime Minister less than a week after the opening of the congress. They realized that they needed the support of at least one of the Great Powers and the British were deemed the best choice because they were the ones most opposed to Slavic expansion. In the memorandum the Albanians asked for an independent Albania, declaring “Albania will never stand the Slavic domination”.

\textsuperscript{56} Waller et. al 2001:173
\textsuperscript{57} Williams 2001: 123
Throughout the month-long period during which the congress was in session, the Albanians busied themselves with protests and petitions\(^{58}\), but to no avail, because as mentioned in paragraph 4.2.1, Kosovo remained with the Ottomans. What is more, parts of northern Albania were ceded to Montenegro.\(^{59}\)

The League was ultimately crushed by the Ottomans in 1881, who moved to deport the Albanian leaders and their families. The Porte had initially supported the League but later became alarmed by its strong nationalistic character.\(^{60}\) Despite this blow, the nationalistic spirit conjured up by the League lived on. It was revived in 1899 under the name of the League of Peja or Besa-Besë (Pledge for a Pledge) as it was also called. At this meeting, the Albanians met to create a truce of all blood feuds so that they instead could put their focus on defending their territory against the Slavs.\(^{61}\)

**A Divided Albanian State**

They were however not successful because, as mentioned earlier, several Albanian-inhabited areas were conquered by the Serbs and their allies, who did not like the idea of an autonomous Albanian state under the Porte’s rule, during the First Balkan War.\(^{62}\)

Following their independence declaration in 1912, the Albanians made it clear at the London Congress that they did not want a divided country and demonstrated this by including delegates from Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro at the congress. The Great Powers agreed to formally recognize the state of Albania but did not immediately decide on its borders. To alter the situation in its favor by time to decide on the Albanian borders, Serbia organized elimination of Albanians to reduce their presence in Kosovo.\(^{63}\)

\(^{58}\) Skendi 1967: 44-46
\(^{59}\) Kola 2003: 8
\(^{60}\) Waller et. al 2001:173
\(^{61}\) Elsie 2004: 109-110
\(^{62}\) See subchapter 3.2.2 under "The Establishment of an Albanian State", Kola 2003: 10-11
\(^{63}\) Clark 2000: 26
The plan worked, Albania not only lost Kosovo to Serbia, but also the other Albanian-inhabited territories which are today known as western Macedonia, southern Serbia, eastern Montenegro, and northern Greece (Chameria).

Discontent with the outcome, which meant that more than half of the Albanians were left outside of the new state\textsuperscript{64}, a group of Kosovo Albanians established the Committee for the Defence of Kosovo in 1918. The Committee advocated Kosovo’s liberation and the establishment of an Albanian state encompassing all Albanian-inhabited lands. The organization was however ultimately defeated (in 1924).\textsuperscript{65}

A Greater Albania did nevertheless become a reality during the Second World War, but under foreign rule. The Italians occupied Albania in 1939 and annexed a section of Kosovo and the Albanian-inhabited parts of western Macedonia to the state.\textsuperscript{66} The area later came under German rule but the Germans were being dispelled by 1944 and it looked as if Kosovo was to be yet again a part of Yugoslavia. In order to avoid this, an Albanian nationalistic organization, known as Balli Kombëtar, was established.\textsuperscript{67} Nonetheless, the Kosovo Albanians were forced to declare themselves in favor of joining Yugoslavia at the Prizren Conference in 1945.\textsuperscript{68} Albania lost Kosovo as well as the Albanian-inhabited areas of Montenegro, Macedonia and southern Serbia to Yugoslavia.

Albanian nationalism waned in the period that followed due to the extremely repressive and isolationist Enver Hoxha regime, which Yugoslavia had brought to power in Albania in 1944-1945.\textsuperscript{69} The Albanians in the authoritarian country were too preoccupied with simply surviving and trying to escape the constant threat of political persecution to have

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Vickers & Pettifer 1997: 181
\item International Crisis Group 2004 : 3-4
\item Schwartz 2000: 82-83
\item Ramet 1995: 198
\item Mullen 1997: 90
\item International Crisis Group 2004: 4
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
in mind nationalistic aspirations.\textsuperscript{70} Another reason for the lack of nationalistic sentiments amongst Albanians was the underdeveloped status of the ethnic Albanian regions in Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{71}

After the end of the Cold war, Albanian nationalism was revived as an effect of the fall of the Soviet Union and the consequent dramatic changes in Europe. Numerous ethnic groups emerged with territorial aspirations based on “historic maps”, and one of these maps depicted a Greater Albania. One of the many other similar great plans in the Balkans that the Albanians’ Greater Albania agenda had to compete with was the ambitious Greater Serbia.\textsuperscript{72}

The Greater Albania idea therefore has a long history, and is not a mere new invention of the Serbs. The Serbs have been fighting against the idea for quite some time as part of their endeavors for a Greater Serbia, and have been quite successful in doing so up until Kosovo’s independence. What is also important to bear in mind when looking at the Serbs’ mentioning of a Greater Albania today are the differences between the Serbs’ attempts at a Greater Serbia and the Albanians’ attempts at a Greater Albania. A Greater Serbia was established as early as in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century and existed three times, in the shape of: medieval Great Serbia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and Yugoslavia. In contrast, the idea of a Greater Albania arose as late as five centuries afterward and never truly came to being since the two times a sort of Greater Albania existed, it did so under foreign rule. These differences coupled with the long-standing enmity between the Serbs and Albanians might suggest why the idea of a Greater Albania has been resurrected (by the Serbs). A Greater Albania has never been a reality\textsuperscript{73} because of Serbian interference and it is now safe to say that the Serbs are no longer a threat with the

\textsuperscript{70} Olsen 2000: 6
\textsuperscript{71} International Crisis Group 2004: 4
\textsuperscript{72} International Crisis Group 2003: 4-5
\textsuperscript{73} Except under foreign rule (see previous page)
third Greater Serbia (Yugoslavia) having been put to an end. The Albanians might perceive this new situation as an opportunity to finally form a Greater Albania; or perhaps the Serbs are simply fearful of such a state merely because of their weakened state. Another option is that there is no real fear for a Greater Albania, that the allegations are mere attempts to obstruct the Kosovo Albanians in their attempts to transform Kosovo into a well-functioning state. Whatever the case, it is obvious that the longstanding enmity between the modern Slavs and the modern Illyrians and the history shared between them in their attempts for greatness has had some bearing on the present situation and should therefore be kept in mind when analyzing the present discourse on Greater Albania.
4. A Greater Albania – Myth or Reality?

This chapter evaluates the existing discourse on the topic as well as the conditions that speak for and against the formation of a Greater Albania.

4.1 Is a Greater Albania Today Still on the Albanians’ Agenda?

4.1.1 The Serbian Viewpoint

It is perhaps not surprising that the loudest voices in the Greater Albania debate belong to the Serbs. The Serbian government, Serbian scholars, as well as ordinary Serbs are fearful of a future Greater Albania. Even American Serbs have expressed their fears of a Greater Albania in letters to Senator Biden and to (the then Secretary of State) Colin Powell, warning them of an Albanian scheme for an ethnic unification and pleading to them that “The Albanians must be unequivocally told that continuing the quest for a “Greater Albania” would permanently destabilize the region”.74

Three key arguments in the Serbian discourse of the supposed Albanian threat can be distinguished: (1) the war in Kosovo was a byproduct of the Albanians’ attempts at a Greater Albania, (2) the Albanians have not given up their pursuit for a Greater Albania, and (3) Montenegro’s and Kosovo’s independence are springboards for the greater Albanian cause. What has exactly been said is revealed below.

74 Djordjevich 2002
The War in Kosovo – A Result of Ambitions for a Greater Albania?

Already during the 1980s, at the very beginning of the Kosovo conflict, did Serbian scholars and clergymen claim that the Albanians were plotting for the formation of a Greater Albania.\textsuperscript{75} The Serbs became more vocal in their assertions as the conflict in Kosovo escalated. In 1998, the Serbian \textit{Novi Sad} weekly wrote that the “KLA military leaders […] are striving toward Greater Albania”.\textsuperscript{76} Another Serbian newspaper, \textit{Politika}, announced that “Renowned experts in this area predict the secession of Kosmet\textsuperscript{77}, a division of Macedonia, and a disappearance of Montenegro as preconditions for the establishment of a new Albanian state”.\textsuperscript{78} The Serbian government itself claimed in 1999 that Albanians were smuggling drugs to finance their schemes for a Greater Albania.\textsuperscript{79}

To this day, Serbian scholars maintain that “Kosovo Albanian nationalists envisioned enlargement of Kosovo” and that it was with this “aim of achieving Kosovo’s independence and subsequent merging of Kosovo into a Greater Albania” in mind that the “Kosovo Albanians took up armed rebellion in 1996”.\textsuperscript{80} During his trial, Milosevic laid blame on the Albanians and their alleged endeavor at a Greater Albania for being the cause of the war in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{81} The current Serbian government seems to share Milosevic’s view. Like Milosevic, they define the Kosovo war as “a separatist war for the creation of a Greater Albania”.\textsuperscript{82} This quote can be found on their website:

“The 1999 NATO aggression on Serbia and the then Yugoslavia and the direct military support to the separatist-terrorist ethnic Albanian movement, as well as the years-long debate on the so-called status, are nothing else than a major reward for an ideology of ethnic hatred, mass ethnic cleansing and a strong

\textsuperscript{75} Sells 1998: 56
\textsuperscript{76} Balkan media and policy monitor 1998
\textsuperscript{77} The Serbian shorthand for Kosovo – Deretic 2004
\textsuperscript{78} Petrovic 1999
\textsuperscript{79} Apostolovski 1999
\textsuperscript{80} Trbovich 2008: 234-236
\textsuperscript{81} Los Angeles Times 2002
\textsuperscript{82} Savich 2008
support to the formation of a greater Albania which will be a factor of long-term destabilization in southeast Europe and on a wider scale.”

Montenegro & Kosovo – The First Steps towards a Greater Albania?

The notion of a Greater Albania has often been brought up by the Serbs in relation to discussions on Kosovo’s and Montenegro’s status. When the Serbs got wind of the Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic’s plans to lead Montenegro out of the Serbia-Montenegro federation, they immediately took to warn the Montenegrins of an Albanian threat. A Serbian article proclaimed:

“History is full of absurdities. In our conditions, one of them could be that Montenegro, the state that in the past took pride in its honor and courage, could become a part of the least developed country in Europe - Albania!”

adding that “Intoxicated by tempting talk of independence, citizens of Montenegro were unable to see that a Greater Albania was in the making”.

In 2001, the Serbs even put a date on when the Albanians would commence their fight for a Greater Albania in Montenegro. Serbian media, along with certain Montenegrin media channels, warned the world that the Albanians would start a war against Montenegro that very summer with the purpose of establishing a greater Albanian state.

Four years later, as independence was mentioned as a possible solution for Kosovo’s status, the Serbs again cautioned that the consequence would be a Greater Albania and would assure “permanent instability and turmoil in the Balkans.” The West was warned that:

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83 Serbian Government (Understanding of Kosovo history needed to comprehend problem)
84 Petrovic 1999
85 Koprivica 2001
86 Bataković 2007:261
“To many Albanians, an independent and monoethnic Kosovo is nothing but a phase of the process leading to fulfillment of these nationalistic aspirations. Of course, changing the now existing borders of four sovereign states in the volatile Balkans is nothing short of creating conditions for permanent instability and new cycles of wars.”

A Greater Albania at Any Cost?
This belief in an Albanian scheme to create a greater state appears to persist amongst Serbs to this very day. An article from *Politika* can be found on the Serbian government’s website with the title “Greater Albania Instrument of Great Forces’ Interests”. Moreover, a year ago, more than three months after Kosovo’s independence, the Serbian government published a piece titled “The CIA and Greater Albania […]” on their website, asking the question “Why did the US support Greater Albania in Kosovo and Western Macedonia?”

Other Serbian sites which argue that there exists a conspiracy for a Greater Albania can be found with headlines such as “Definitive Proof: The KLA’s Objective is Greater Albania”, and “Kosovo: Key Dates in the Century Long Goal to Create Greater Albania” (published on the day of Kosovo’s first independence day).

Serbian scholars too warn about an Albanian threat, arguing that the Albanians are determined to establish a Greater Albania at any cost and that this aspiration “jeopardizes stability in the whole of Southeast Europe” to the point of threatening to cause a “new, third Balkan war.”

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87 Washington Times 2006  
88 Apostolovski (*Greater Albania Instrument of Great Forces’ Interests*)  
89 Savich 2008  
90 Slobodan-milosevic.org 2009  
91 Serbianna 2009  
92 Teržić
A Greater Islamic State?

The Serbs refer to statements from Albanians themselves as a way of demonstrating that a conspiracy for an Albanian union does truly exist. One Serbian site has selected interviews with Kosovo-Albanian politicians from an Albanian newspaper to post with the purpose of showing “the open way in which these politicians advocate the creation of a greater Albanian state”, declaring “Greater Albania is their objective: Kosovo-Albanian politicians in their own words”. The three interviews they have chosen include quotes such as “We offer the fulfilment of the historic aspiration for national unification, or said even more plainly, the formation of an ethnic Albania”, “We are determined to realize […] the creation of the Kosova-Albania Union” and “We do not understand creation of a new nation in the Balkans, but we do understand unification of the Albanian nation […]”. The same site has also posted a memorandum from the Albanian National Union Front (ANUF) in which the nationalistic party declares that the Albanians “united under the ideas and under the Platform of the National Unification of ANUF, will fight though all the means for realizing the reunification of the Albanian lands into a single state, Albania.” Several other similar quotes from Albanian media sources can be found.

Another method adopted by the Serbs to favor their case is to establish a link between the Greater Albania idea and Islam. The Albanians are labeled “Islamists” and it is argued that “The Greater Albanian political concept in its original and authentic program was totally imbued with the spirit of pan-Islamism and radical political Islam” to showcase the evil of the suspected Greater Albania plan. They go on to condemn America’s

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93 Slobodan-milosevic.org 2004 (Greater Albania is their objective: Kosovo Albanian politicians in their own words)
94 Slobodan-milosevic.org. 2004 ( ICG CLAIMS THAT ALBANIANS AREN’T TRYING TO ACHIEVE GREATER ALBANIA BUT ONE ALBANIAN ORGANIZATION BEGS TO)
95 Daka 2004
96 Washington Times 2006
97 Terzić
“double-standards” and urge that “As we are facing challenges and dangers of radical Islam and terrorism worldwide, let’s not dismiss the Balkan experience”.98

Yet another Serbian technique to prove the legitimacy of their claims is to recount history. History as far back as 1878 where “The basis for the Greater Albania strategy can be found” is revisited99, continuing with references to other past tidbits such as the Albanian nationalist organization from 1918-1924100 and the “Fascist-sponsored and Nazi-supported “Greater Albania””.101 They go on to mention the break-up of Yugoslavia as the time of reemergence for the Greater Albania ideology. The United States is described as the successor of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, due to it taking on the role as “sponsor of a Greater or Ethnic Albania”. The future is mentioned from a gloomy perspective, where Western Macedonia and Southern Serbia are described as “the next targets of Albanian separatism”, adding that “Kosovo is only the beginning, not the end”.102

4.1.2 Other Neighbors and Russia
Other neighboring states have not been as vocal in their claims of an Albanian scheme for a Greater Albania as the Serbs, but some comments have been made. The other three states in the region (Greece, Macedonia, and Montenegro) that have a great deal to lose would a Greater Albania come into being, have all commented on the rumors of latent plans for an Albanian union,

In November 2000, a Greek EU parliamentarian made a statement concerning a prospective greater Albanian state, claiming that even Albanian educational programs

98 Djordjevich 2006
99 Savich (Western Macedonia, Illirida, and Greater Albania)
100 See paragraph 4.2.2, under “A Divided Albania” for further details
101 Bataković 2007: 50-58
102 Savich (Western Macedonia, Illirida, and Greater Albania
included the design of a Greater Albania. The Albanians dismissed these claims as “absurdities”\(^\text{103}\) but a Greater Albania was again mentioned by the Greeks in 2008 when the Greek Minister of Culture Antonis Samaras declared that Albania and Bulgaria would annex Macedonia, consequently resolving the longstanding conflict between Greece and Macedonia over Macedonia’s name. Greece on the other hand would have nothing to fear from the formation of a Greater Albania and a Greater Bulgaria, according to him.\(^\text{104}\) Macedonia officially condemned the comments made by Samaras\(^\text{105}\) but the topic was brought up by Macedonians themselves in 2004 when the country was to vote on the Law on Territorial Organization of Local self-Administration, which would entail decentralization and greater autonomy for the Macedonian Albanians. The opposition warned that this could possibly lead to claims for a Greater Albania\(^\text{106}\) but were not taken seriously and the law was passed.\(^\text{107}\)

In 2007, Macedonia’s foreign minister, Antonio Milososki, explained that he was not fearful of Albanian extremists rousing for a Greater Albania “as Slobodan Milosevic did in his quest for a Greater Serbia”. “A Greater Serbia and a Greater Albania are twins; a greater Serbia was lesson enough”, he said.\(^\text{108}\) The public in Macedonia on the other hand seemed divided on whether or not to take seriously the rumors of a greater Albanian scheme. One Macedonian was quoted to say “The biggest fear for me, as a Macedonian, is that Kosovo's independence will bring only partition for Macedonia”\(^\text{109}\); while another instead saw new opportunities with an independent Kosovo as neighbor. Two days prior to the Kosovo Albanians’ independence proclamation, a businessman in Skopje predicted that business in Macedonia would benefit from an independent Kosovo. A Macedonian Serb on the other hand made a gloomy prediction: “Kosovo will be independent, but this

\(^{103}\) Nura 2000  
\(^{104}\) Albanian Economy 2008  
\(^{105}\) Marusic 2009  
\(^{107}\) Brunnbauer 2002  
\(^{108}\) Morrison 2007  
\(^{109}\) Macedonian News 2008
will be dangerous because they will take a part of Serbia and then they will want a part of Macedonia and Montenegro. This is going to happen in the next few years and we expect trouble”.110

An article found on a Macedonian news site says “Don’t count on it”, reporting that although “there are some nationalist ethnic Albanians who advocate unification […] there appears to be little overall public enthusiasm for it _ not in Albania itself, not in newly independent Kosovo, and not in Albanian-dominated areas of neighboring countries.” The article concludes that “In the end, Albanians might indeed find a unity of sorts _ under the umbrella of an expanded European Union.” 111

The notion of an Albanian threat surfaced in Montenegro during the period leading up to the general elections in April 2001. The elections would determine if Montenegro was to remain with Serbia or break free from the federation. The residing Montenegrin President, Milo Djukanovic, had namely stated that he would immediately organize a referendum on independence if he was to win the election.112 Representatives of the anti-independence coalition “Together for Yugoslavia” joined the Belgrade politicians in warning the world of the alleged Albanian threat, adding that Montenegro’s minorities should not be the ones deciding the fate of the country because they were aiming at destabilizing Montenegro. This view was, to a certain extent, reflected in the media as well. The Montenegrin public was cautioned that there was a risk of the conflicts in southern Serbia and Macedonia spreading to Montenegro if the country was to break free from the federation, and that the Albanians might seek independence in order to instead become part of Albania.113

110 Koleka 2008
111 Macedonian News 2008
112 De Vrieze 2001: 10-11
113 Ibid 20, Kaminski 2001
Serbian media was quite active in warning the Montenegrins of the threat the Albanians posed. Montenegrins were notified of some Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) scribbles on the walls of a number of schools in Podgorica, and the presence of armed Albanians in the Montenegrin municipalities Plav and Gusinje.\textsuperscript{114} The Albanians supposedly had three training centers in the country “where fighters were only waiting for orders to start down the war path.”\textsuperscript{115} Montenegrin authorities dismissed these accounts, and in August 2001, the Montenegrin Police together with the Yugoslav army issued a joint statement rebutting the existence of terrorist groups in Montenegro.\textsuperscript{116} Nonetheless, the previous claims were soon followed by new ones. Two Serbian newspapers, Dan and Nedeljni Telegraf, reported that Albanian uprisings were about to commence in Montenegro and the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{117} Serbian and Montenegrin media continued to circulate the concept of an Albanian threat even following the elections, specifically warning that the Albanians were planning an uprising in the city of Plav as part of their aspirations to establish a Greater Albania.

Not everyone took the warnings seriously. The same year, in 2001, a Montenegrin political analyst was quoted to say that “assaults on Montenegrin territorial integrity are highly unlikely”\textsuperscript{118} and went on to explain that they had been warned numerous times of other similar plans and conspiracies over the past decade, none of which had yet materialized. He added: “The ethnic Albanian parties are headed by moderate leaders, who, albeit insisting on changes and coming forth with demands that do not always seem justified, do that in a moderate manner, avoiding conflict. Therefore […] I believe that Montenegro will not be affected by the current violence in the Balkans”.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{114} De Vrieze 2001: 20
\textsuperscript{115} Koprivica 2001
\textsuperscript{116} Koprivica 2001: De Vrieze 2001: 21
\textsuperscript{117} Koprivica 2001
\textsuperscript{118} De Vrieze 2001: 20-21
\textsuperscript{119} Koprivica 2001
A Montenegrin reporter, covering the Serbian and Montenegrin newspapers’ news of an imminent Greater Albania, referred to them as “nonsense” the same year. He wrote:

“Sixty percent of Montenegro's ethnic Albanians are in favor of resorting to armed insurrection to resolve status, just like in Kosovo and Macedonia! This shocking discovery appeared on the Yugoslav army Web site at the beginning of June. No sources were given, and Internet users are expected to take the Yugoslav army's word for that. However, anybody with the slightest knowledge of conditions in Montenegro knows very well that such a claim is nonsense, made with a single goal in mind -- to fuel anti-Albanian sentiments in Montenegro, as part of a systematic campaign that has been pursued for quite some time by certain Belgrade and Podgorica media outlets.”

The Montenegrin referred to the peaceful coexistence of the various groups in Montenegro during the 20th century as well as quoted a Montenegrin Albanian politician who promised that the Albanians were not seeking to destabilize the situation in Montenegro, and concluded the article with these words:

“It is obvious, however, that the instigators of anti-Albanian feelings could not care less about reality. They prefer the reliable method -- disturb the public and create new enemies.”

The Russians appear to also have an opinion on the matter. In March 2008, they declared: “Kosovo spurs more Greater Albania Dreams”. They write that “What many Albanians want is a greater Albania that incorporates the country Albania, Kosovo, big parts of Macedonia and part of Ipiros, which is in Greece”, and attempt to prove this by offering quotes from three Macedonian Albanians.121

120 Ibid
121 Russia Today 2008
4.1.3 What “Outsiders” Say

In 1999 the American Ambassador to Macedonia, Christopher Hill, was quoted to say: "We spent the 1990's worrying about a Greater Serbia. That's finished. We are going to spend time well into the next century worrying about a Greater Albania." However, the correspondent from Associated Press, quoting Mr. Hill, remarks “Of course, Greater Serbia was always a project pursued with ruthless violence. There is no evidence that Albania has similar will or might.” Most internationalists appear to agree with the latter viewpoint. A Belgian representative was quoted to say, following the Greek EU-parliamentarian’s statements regarding a Greater Albania scheme, that “These Greek absurdities not only failed to receive support among the parliamentarians, but even caused an outburst of laughter.”

In 2000, Kosovo administrator Bernard Kouchner, when asked about the “shadow” of a probable Greater Albania, dismissed the term as “some kind of phantasmagoria which is coming from Western countries”. Others who have dismissed the claims of plans for an Albanian merger are the ICG, who say, in their 2004 report Pan-Albanianism: How big a threat to Balkan stability?, that

“Although all Albanians are now familiar with the terms “pan-Albanianism”, “Greater Kosovo” and “Greater Albania”, it is rare to hear them use such terms themselves. […] very few advocate the redrawing or abolition of borders.”

A union is not believed to be popular amongst any of the Albanian communities living in the Balkans. The ICG writes that the few times Albanian leaders have mentioned a union, have always been followed by critique from the larger political establishment. They also point out that there was no great support for the Albanian parties in favor of a Greater

122 Cohen 1999
123 Bryson 1999
124 Nura 2000
125 Abazi 2000
126 International Crisis Group 2004
Albania even in Macedonia where tensions have been high. The ICG concludes their report by stating that:

“There is widespread misunderstanding of Albanian national aspirations. Albanians have got used to the idea of separate Albanian entities in the Balkans. They are well aware of the cultural and ideological divisions between them, and are therefore content to preserve their separate political entities […]”

Likewise, Miranda Vickers, who has written several books on the topic, reports the struggles by the various Albanian communities for different political, economic and cultural goals have not been carried out with a Greater Albania in mind. She writes that “each of the five Albanian entities in the Balkans has its own distinct problems and agendas to address” and that it is clear that “there is no desire or debate in mainstream Albanian society for any form of political unification of Albanian-inhabited territory.”

It should also be mentioned that the fact that Kosovo was granted independence and that 58 countries have recognized the country so far is an indication that the international community does not deem an Albanian threat to exist.

4.1.4 The Albanian Response

As for the Albanians themselves, they have quite consistently denied any scheme for a Greater Albania, which they recognize to be a “very sensitive issue”. Albanian media, the five Albanian communities, as well as the politicians representing them, appear to be in unison when rejecting the notion of a Greater Albania.

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127 Ibid
128 Ibid
129 Vickers 2004
130 Kosovothanksyou 2009
131 Judah 2001 (Greater Albania – A Fading Dream & Albanians Back Macedonian Unity)
132 Raxhimi & Zogiani 2001
The Albanians state that, whereas it has been an objective of the Serbs to establish a Great Serbia, a “'Great Albania' has never been a project of any Albanian governments”. They claim the term to be a Serbian fabrication so as to “justify the inhumane treatment of millions of Albanians inside its borders.” It is mentioned that the Serbs reused the “fabrication” as an argument against an independent Kosovo, adding that “Kosovo’s independence is not part of a 'Great Albania' project.”

Albanian media outlets have been vital tools in reproducing the Albanian side, i.e. reassuring the world that a Greater Albania “does not exist in the minds of the common Albanians; and despite saying that they do support the demands of their brethren in Macedonia, not many would really accept a unification of the Balkans’ Albanian population.” In 2002, the Albanian newspaper Koha Ditore published an article stating that the problems of the various Albanian communities as a nation had been misused by Serbs and Macedonians who had conjured up a theory of a Greater Albania, adding that “It was very difficult to convince Europe that this problem doesn't exist”. They went on to say that:

“Today, in Kosovo, Albania, and other areas inhabited by Albanians, there is a consensus among the main politicians that they don't want the unification of ethnic lands in one state, even though they rightfully aim to have freedom of movement, economic and cultural cooperation, which they lacked for half a century. Even Brussels now understands that machinations to prove that there was an idea of a greater Albania were simply propaganda. As for the unification of all Albanians, this will happen when Brussels becomes their capitol, when all Albanian lands one day enter the European Union.”

The Political Establishment in Albania

Two Albanian politicians caused alarm when they in 2005 mentioned an Albanian union. Arben Xhaferi, a party leader in Macedonia, had been quoted to say that Kosovo should

133 Illyrians.org
134 Semini 2001
135 Unmik Online 2002
unite with Albania and annex parts of southern Serbia as well as parts of Macedonia in the process; and Veton Surroi, the leader of the Kosovo Opposition Political Party, had declared a national unification to be a possible option if the aspirations of the Albanians were not met. Following these remarks, Albania’s foreign minister Besnik Mustafaj assured Europe during a visit to the EU institutions in Brussels that an amalgamation of Albania and Kosovo is “out of the question”. However it was Mustafaj himself who, only the year after, caused quite a commotion when he said that it could not be ruled out that other borders in the Balkans might change if Kosovo was to be partitioned along ethnic lines. Serbia reacted without delay, accusing Mustafaj of hinting at the formation of a Greater Albania. Representatives of the group assigned by Belgrade to conduct negotiations on the final status of Kosovo declared that Mustafa’s comments proved that the dream for a Greater Albania had not been abandoned.

The remarks caused a reaction in Macedonia as well, where they were called unacceptable. The Macedonian president, Branko Crvenkovski, said: “This is completely opposite to [Tirana’s] pledges of good neighbourly relations and to Albania’s tendencies to move towards the EU and NATO”. Mustafaj replied by saying that his comments had been taken out of context and been misunderstood, and that he had only meant that a partition of Kosovo would be ill-advised. He revealed that he had already assured the Macedonian Foreign Minister this over the phone. To the Serbian allegations he countered that a Greater Albania does not exist in Albania, neither as an expression nor as an idea.

Albania had prior to this incident consistently ruled out a union. The, at that time, Albanian president Rexhep Meidani had in the year of 2000 dismissed the notion as mere

136 Derkeiler 2005
137 Balla 2006
138 Ibid
139 Ibid
propaganda from Belgrade in an interview for an Albanian newspaper. “The Albanians see their future in integration into the common European structures where borders are turning into geographic symbols, where they would not be isolated or overpowered by destructive megalomania of Serb ultra-nationalist concept of Greater Serbia”, Meidani said.140

In 2007, Mustafaj reiterated that no scheme for a Greater Albania existed.141 His successor, Lulzim Basha, did the same during a visit to the US saying “There is a plan for greater Albania. It’s supported by the government of Albania, by the government of Kosovo, by the government of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, but this greater Albania is called the European Union.” He did not deny that a “vague goal” for a Greater Albania had existed at some point in the last century, but continued to say that “today’s only goal in Tirana, Pristina, Skopje is integration into the European Union and NATO. […] These organizations provide the full set of safeguards for the prosperity of Albanians and the guaranteeing of their human rights and their national rights.”142

The Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha, is yet another to have dismissed a Greater Albania. He rejected the idea at a time when warnings that an independent Kosovo would lead to a Greater Albania was floating around in 2007 and 2008.143 A complete change of mind from when he first became President of Albania in 1992 and declared a Greater Albania to be one of his key goals. However, within the year he repented and publicly announced that: “the concept of a Greater Albania is not considered in serious Albanian political circles”.144 In his statement to the UN General Assembly in September 2007, he assured that the claims that “Kosovo’s independence […] lays conditions for the creation of a Greater Albania, as well as the fear from having two Albanians states, in the Balkans

140 Abazi 2000
141 Webindia 2007 People Daily 2007
142 Bugajski 2007
143 The International News 2008
144 International Crisis Group 2004: 11
are unfounded”, adding that “Albania remains determined to fully respect the international borders of its neighbors.”145 What he said in the statement he made some weeks prior to the day when the Kosovo Albanians proclaimed their independence, was that “There should be no fears. Both Albanians in Albania and those in Kosovo are against the idea of a Greater Albania”, and that, on the contrary, “The independence of Kosovo is a more certain way to put the idea of a Greater Albania into the archives”.146 In 2009, it was the Albanian President Bamir Topi who ruled out a Greater Albania, saying “the unification will happen in Brussels, in the European family.”147

Nationalistic politicians who do not agree with the official stance of Albania are existent in the country. As mentioned in subparagraph 5.1.1, ANUF does state its aim to be a Greater Albania. However the party was recognized to be alone in its sentiments (in 2004). Other Albanian politicians merely advocate closer political, economic and cultural ties among Albanians in the region, and the steps taken towards this aim are described as small. The ICG writes that “Rather than redraw territories, Albanian leaders have aimed to ensure that existing borders do not obstruct connections between ethnic Albanians as a whole.”148 The former Prime Minister of Albania, Fatos Nano, ensured the world during his reign that the steps at closer ties among Albanians in the region will not lead to any border-changes. He stated that :

“The emphasis should be on promoting free movement between peoples of Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo, which would help to avert pressure from ideas associated with greater Albania. It is all about creating new ways of co-existence, firstly amongst Albanians, so that we are seen as emancipated and democratic and a factor for stability in the Balkans”.149

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145 United Nations 2007
146 The International News 2008
147 Balkan Insight 2009 (Albania Floats Idea Of Balkan Schengen)
148 International Crisis Group 2004: 11
149 Ibid
In line with this, Albania’s and Kosovo’s Interior Ministries have jointly decided that citizens in Albania and Kosovo will be able to travel from one country to the other without passports, only valid IDs. This will be possible by October 30th this year.\textsuperscript{150}

\textit{The Albanian Political Establishment in Montenegro & Macedonia}

The Albanian political leaders in Macedonia seem to share the view of the Albanian government (disregarding Xhaferi’s comment). In 2008, two days prior to the announcement of Kosovo’s independence, the head of Macedonia’s main Albanian political party told Reuters: “Why talk about building or removing classical borders when Europe has drawn lessons from its old conflicts and decided to build a joint future for its states?”, declaring “We love this country as much as the Macedonians love it.”

Albanian leaders in Montenegro also insist that the Albanian community in Montenegro have no wish to shift any borders, but merely want to be granted equal rights.\textsuperscript{151} Prior to the important elections that decided Montenegro’s status, many Albanian politicians countered the Serbian charges of an Albanian threat\textsuperscript{152} by officially dismissing any plans of a Greater Albania. One of the Albanian politicians in Montenegro to have dismissed the Greater Albania charges is Ferhat Dinaša, the head of Montenegro’s main Albanian party the Democratic League of Albanians (LDSHMZ).\textsuperscript{153} He was quoted to say in 2001: “The persistence of certain forces and their exponents in Montenegro to see evil where there is good, to forecast instability where stability reigns, is amazing”, and that unfortunately some Montenegrins “took this information at face value and was disturbed by it, which is what these forces wanted to achieve.” He added that it was a mere matter of deliberate attempts to agitate the public and provoke anti-Albanian sentiment in order to hinder the forces working for an independent Montenegro, as well as the political

\textsuperscript{150} SETimes 2009
\textsuperscript{151} Koprivica 2001
\textsuperscript{152} Petrovic 1999
\textsuperscript{153} Koleka 2008
activities of the Albanian parties and their representatives. Dinosa again dismissed the notion of an Albanian unification as “fabrications and hallucinations” in 2008, two mere days prior to Kosovo’s parliament declared independence from Serbia, adding that “No serious political Albanian party in the Balkans speaks of such a thing (as Greater Albania).”

Another Albanian party leader in Montenegro, Mehmet Bardhi, has rejected the notion of an Albanian union, pronouncing “They should trust us more, because Albanians have never worked against the interest of Montenegro”. Bardhi added that “the wars must be stopped. All places must be democratized, all borders should be open. Then there would be no need to change borders.”

The Public
What is perhaps most important is that there appears to be very little popular support for a Greater Albania amongst any of the five Albanian communities, judging from opinion polls and comments made by Albanian civilians. The concept is even referred to as “obsolete”. Two Albanian CNN correspondents write that feeling empathy “for the plight of their ethnic minorities abroad” is as far as it goes, that “most ethnic Albanians do not take notions of uniting the Albanian people seriously.” Correspondingly, a poll conducted in Kosovo in 2005 revealed that not even 10 per cent wished for a union with Albania. A Kosovo Albanian, and former adherent of the Greater Albania idea, explained “Our demands are being fulfilled, so why ask for more?”

154 Koprivica 2001
155 Koleka 2008
156 Kaminski 2001
157 Raxhimi & Zogiani 2001
158 Ibid
159 Economist 2007, Darkeller 2008
160 Macedonian News 2008
Another opinion poll, one conducted on behalf of the State Department’s Office of Research, found similar results. Even though tensions ran high in Macedonia in 2001, 87 per cent of the Albanians were in favor of a united Macedonia. When asked about a union, 71 per cent of the Albanians preferred an ethnically-mixed Macedonia to a Greater Albania. Only 16 per cent expressed a wish for a union. The number dropped to 13 per cent when they were asked if they would still support a union if it involved “fighting with neighbouring countries.”

Some Albanians (outside of Macedonia) even condemned the Albanian approach of guerilla warfare in Macedonia, this despite the fact that they were supportive of their struggle and deemed the demands of the Macedonian Albanians to be warranted. A person from Albania was quoted to say: “It was the wrong thing to do, and it is the wrong signal that we send to internationals”, adding that “After the help [ethnic] Albanians got in Kosovo, people will think that Albanians are greedy […] It is like, someone gives you a hand, and you want to take his whole arm”.

A majority of the Macedonian Albanians themselves were reported to say that they wished for a cease-fire, and for the government to take their complaints seriously. They insisted that they were not aiming at any union with other Albanians. Even as tensions were high in Macedonia, in 2001, an Albanian in the country was quoted to say:

"Being together with Kosovo or thinking about a Greater Albania is something that nobody here is talking about. I don't know who is behind the transmission of this news that we are for a Greater Albania. Probably it is somebody that wants to discredit us in the eyes of the European Union and the foreign media so that the world thinks Albanians in Macedonia are bad."

161 Judah 200 (Albanians Back Macedonian Unity)
162 Raxhimi & Zogiani 2001
163 Synovitz 2001
164 Kaminski 2001
The sentiment was perceived to be “almost universally shared” by other Macedonian Albanians.\textsuperscript{165} Even those favoring a Greater Albania were quoted to say

“
We would love to unite. It would be good to be all together, to have no borders. But we do not really know. We fear that because these are big things and nobody wants war.”\textsuperscript{166}

Likewise, the Albanians in Montenegro are reported to be in opposition to any border changes. They instead say that they “want to take an active part in each country’s multiethnic, if imperfect, democracy”, but are reported to be frustrated by the slow pace of change.\textsuperscript{167}

Other than not wanting a Greater Albania, the Albanians recognize serious obstacles in the way of any such dream; even the ones who dream of a Greater Albania are aware of the hindrances, mentioning the authority of the international community. The director of the Albanian Media Institute is quoted to saying: “If I said there were no people who dreamed of a Greater Albania I would be wrong. But it is not a popular idea. If the Security Council or an international conference offered us a Greater Albania we would not refuse it, but on the other hand we would not fight for it either.”\textsuperscript{168}

\section*{4.2 What Speaks For and Against A Greater Albania?}

In order to properly assess who is telling the truth and ascertain the feasibility of the idea itself, conditions that speak for and against a Greater Albania will be presented. Discontent minorities in the neighboring states and the existence of extremists have been chosen as conditions that seem to support the possibility of a Greater Albania still being on the agenda. Conditions that seem to dissuade from the idea are: the lack of significant

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{165}] Synovitz 2001
\item[\textsuperscript{166}] Koleka 2008
\item[\textsuperscript{167}] Kaminski 2001
\item[\textsuperscript{168}] Judah 2001 (Greater Albania – A Fading Dream)
\end{itemize}
public support amongst the Albanian communities in the Balkans, Albania’s problems and the opposition a move for a Greater Albania would receive from the international community. These conditions are presented in further detail below.

4.2.1 Pros

**Discontent Minorities**

A big circumstance that implies the development of a Greater Albania plot is the situation of the Albanian minorities in Macedonia, Greece, and Montenegro. All three Albanian minorities have complained of discrimination in their respective country and considering that the war started in Kosovo due to similar reasons, the possibility of these situations flaring up like it did in Kosovo is not too far-fetched.

The Great Powers had no idea what a basis for countless conflicts they were establishing when deciding to divide the Albanian-inhabited areas in the Balkans in 1913. All aspects of the modern Albanian question - including the war in Kosovo and the clashes in western Macedonia (2001) – are deemed to have their roots in the historic decision to exclude many Albanians from the newly-created Albanian state.\(^{169}\) The conflict-filled minority-question in Greece is no exception. The problems existent are judged to be “directly linked with the drawing of the boundary between Albania and Greece” when Greece was granted parts of southern Albania.\(^{170}\)

The Albanians today represent the largest minority in Greece.\(^{171}\) Migration experts estimate that approximately 150,000-200,000 Albanians reside illegally in Greece, and another 634,000 are legal citizens according to Greek government sources from 2005.\(^{172}\)

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\(^{169}\) Ibid
\(^{170}\) Roudometof 2002: 155
\(^{171}\) Greek Helsinki Monitor 1994
\(^{172}\) Minority Rights Group International 2008 (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Macedonia: Albanians)
At the same time, the country has been under critique from several human rights groups for having the worst records in the European Union for racism against ethnic minorities. Racist sentiments are reported to be especially strong towards the Albanian immigrants, mainly due to the construction of negative stereotypes in the Greek media and by certain politicians. Therefore, being the lowest ranking ethnic group in Greece, the Albanians have especially been subject to ill-treatment. Discrimination towards them in the form of police brutality is reported to be widespread, and they are reported to be mistreated by the Greek government as well. A strategy of the Greek government has been to use their Albanian minority as a bargaining chip whenever tensions have arisen in interstate relations with Albania. Retaliatory methods such as limiting the availability of visas and work permits for Albanians, or sudden mass arrests and massive expulsions (known as “broom operations”) have mainly been adopted in times of conflict, especially over the Greek minority in Albania; whereas compromises have been made whenever the situation was advantageous, such as when Albania has offered concessions towards Greek investors and businessmen in return for better treatment of the Albanian minority.

The Albanians are the largest minority in Macedonia as well, where they represent as much as 25 per cent of the overall population (2002 census). The inter-ethnic relations in this country have been especially troublesome. Reports of daily discrimination from the Albanians (and other minorities) existed in the year of 2000, whereas the

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173 BBC 2004
174 Vidali 1999
175 Heraclides 2000
176 Minority Rights Group International 2008 (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Macedonia : Albanians)
177 Vidali 1999
178 Clandiestinenglish 2009
180 Vidali 1999
Macedonians were said to be fearful of an Albanian union. Another problem observed was underrepresentation in employment; only 9.4 per cent of the Macedonian work force was reported to be of Albanian descent. Albanian demands for greater recognition and civil rights were being made. They insisted that they be recognized as equal by the Macedonian Constitution, that the Albanian language should be classified an official language, and that they be granted a state-funded university.

Frustrations mounted so high in 2001 that it looked as if history was to repeat itself yet again in the Balkans, when a full-scale civil war in Macedonia was on the verge of erupting. The aggravated Albanians had initiated an uprising led by the Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA). Fearing a civil war, the two rival sides met in the summer of 2001. The talks were mediated by the EU and the US and eventually lead to the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The agreement guaranteed greater rights for the Albanians particularly regarding language use and participation in public life, including public-sector employment, but the situation appears to have not progressed. The Albanians remain excluded from both private- as well as public-sector employment, and problems exist pertaining to language use in public administration and access to education in Albanian in areas where they constitute less than 20 per cent of the population. Hidden discrimination towards the Albanians is reported to be widespread, including by public officials.

Tensions arose again in 2007 regarding Kosovo’s final status and resulted in sporadic outbreaks of violence in Western Macedonia. Albanian extremists announced wishes to

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182 International Crisis Group 2000: ii
183 Ibid: 18
184 Balla 2006
185 European Stability Initiative 2008
186 Minority Rights Group International 2008 (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Macedonia : Albanians)
separate from Macedonia and instead unite with Kosovo, due to neglect from the government in Macedonia.\textsuperscript{187}

The situation appears to still be problematic. In May 2009, Menduh Thaci, the leader of the ethnic Albanian opposition, stated that the Macedonian government was waging an “undeclared war against the Albanian option”. The government was accused of “totally blocking the provisions of the 2001 Ohrid peace deal” and “bringing uncertainty about Macedonia’s EU and NATO future”. He urged for a greater role of Albanians in policy-making, and also attacked the government’s Albanian coalition partners, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), for ignoring Albanian priorities.\textsuperscript{188} If this is indeed true, and the rights guaranteed to the Albanians during the Ohrid talks are not fulfilled, Albanian extremists might feel the need to yet again resort to violence. The man who had led the NLA during the 2001 uprisings, a Mr. Ali Ahmeti,\textsuperscript{189} maintained as late as in 2008 that the revolts had been justified, saying:

"Nobody wants war with its suffering and destruction, especially not we Albanians. But we were forced by the situation, because we had used all possible means, we used up all possibilities one can reach with legal means… There was injustice towards the Albanians… and this is why the armed conflict started."\textsuperscript{190}

The Albanian minority in Montenegro constitutes only 5 per cent of the Montenegrin population, which is estimated at 630,548 (2003 census)\textsuperscript{191}, and can mainly be found in the parts of the country near the Albanian border.\textsuperscript{192} The situation of this minority group is much less conflict filled than for the Albanians in the other mentioned countries\textsuperscript{193} but

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid
\textsuperscript{188} Balkan Insight 2009 (Thaci: Macedonia Ignores Its Albanians)
\textsuperscript{189} European Stability Initiative 2008
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid
\textsuperscript{191} US State Department 2008
\textsuperscript{192} Albania.com
\textsuperscript{193} Minority Rights Group International 2008 (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous
that is not to say that problems are non-existent. In fact, several do exist. The Albanians are reported to be subjected to everyday indirect discrimination. One Albanian is quoted to say "There is too much discrimination -- the police give us more tickets than the Slavs […] I lost my job because I am an Albanian". Discrimination is especially noticed concerning employment, which is identified to be the key problem. The number of Albanians estimated to work in state bodies and public services is as low as 0.03-0.05 per cent. Even in Ulqin, where 85 percent are Albanians and the power is shared by two Albanian parties (LDSHMZ and UDSH), the head of the police and the municipal court are not of Albanian ethnicity. Another problem pertains to education. Albanian language primary schools do exist, but very few references to Albanian history and culture are included in curricula.

The Montenegrin Albanians have made demands that they be granted a similar standing as that of minorities in Western countries, namely regulation of their status under a new constitution and that legal mechanisms protecting their individual and collective rights be adopted. The unfair treatment of the Albanians has even caught the attention of Albanians in the US, who, in 2002, urged the Montenegrins to “restore the rights of the Albanians before it is too late”. But the problems appear to persist. In 2006 Amnesty International issued a public statement declaring that “Montenegro: Newest UN state must stop torture and take action to bring police to justice”. Montenegrin authorities were

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195 Ibid
196 The Democratic Union of Albanians, Unioni Demokratik i Shqiptarëve in Albanian
199 Ibid: 20
200 DioGuardi 2002
called on to ensure an investigation on the allegations against police officers suspected of torture and ill-treatment of 14 Albanians, whereof three were US citizens.201

\textbf{Extremists}

Yet another factor that speaks for a Greater Albania is the persistence of some radicals to attempt to rally for an Albanian union. NLA’s efforts almost succeeded in 2001 in Macedonia, and as late as 2007 they were at it again.

Nationalists in favor of a Greater Albania exist in the neighboring country Albania as well, were the previously mentioned national party ANUF (FBKSh in Albanian) is active. As late as in December 2008, \textit{Albania Today} published a public statement from the ANUF political spokesman where it read that the aim of the ANUF “has been and remains the Albanian national reunification”.202 The party refers to a “natural Albania” but deems it to be too early for a “nationwide uprising liberation”, saying that “All political-diplomatic means must be exhausted first” However, they go on to state that a unification will be celebrated before the year 1913.203

Another symbol of contemporary Albanian nationalism is the Albanian National Army (Armata Kombëtare Shqiptarë, AKSh). The AKSh is described as “a loosely organized criminal extremist group” by the US State Department.204 Reports differ on when the movement was established but it is believed that AKSh’s aim is to unify all Albanian-inhabited areas and create a Greater Albania.205 The leader of the movement has however been quoted to say in 2008 (by a Serbian media source even) that the AKSh’s purpose is not to create a pan-Albanian union, but rather protection of “the territorial integrity of

201 Amnesty International 2006
202 Adili 2008
203 Adili 2007
204 US State Department 2003
205 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2008
Kosovo if it is threatened”. The AKSh has not been labeled a terrorist organization by the US but is nonetheless believed to “pose a threat to peace and stability in the region” due to its “purported violent goals”. The organization has claimed responsibility for a handful of acts of violence in Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans in the past year.

4.2.2 Obstacles

No Wish for a Greater Albania

What is of great importance is that the ones willing to go to extreme measures to realize an Albanian union appear to be very few in number. Even an Albanian scholar stating that an “Ethnic Albania” will be a fact “in the very near future” writes that this will be done “in a peaceful and legitimate manner”. The support for a Greater Albania, even through peaceful means, is quite weak. As little as 10 per cent Kosovo Albanians wanted an Albanian union in Kosovo even before they were granted independence; the number was 16 per cent in Macedonia as tensions ran high in the country. The expressed disapproval of the violent nature of the Macedonian Albanians’ struggles further shows the mindset of contemporary Albanians. This existing outlook amongst the Albanian communities in the Balkans obstructs the plans of the few existent extremist urging for a Greater Albania. The popular support for ANUF is estimated to be “miniscule” and is reported to always have been so.

Albania’s Unwillingness and Problems

Another problem for the extremists envisioning a Greater Albania is the improbability of Albania being the head of any unification movement. As clarified in subchapter 4.1.5, the

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206 Tanjug 2008
207 US State Department 2003
208 See subparagraph 4.1.5
209 Hyseni 2007
210 See subparagraph 4.1.5
211 International Crisis Group 2004
Albanian government has been very adamant in their rejection of an Albanian union. The infrequent comments made by Albanian politicians indicating a Greater Albania of any kind have all been rebutted. The comments have been very few in Albania itself. Two mere statements are recognized as made by any “prominent official in Albania”. The first one of these two was made in 1998 by the Albanian Academy of Sciences, but was dismissed as simply a method to “regain lost prominence”. The second statement came from the chairman of the Democratic Alliance, a government coalition partner, in 2001. The chairman, a Mr. Arben Imami, publicly claimed the unification of Kosovo and Albania to be a party goal but was severely criticized by the broader political establishment, including his own party.\footnote{Ibid: 11}

Another indication of the unlikelihood that Albania will come to spearhead a unification movement in the future is the country’s innumerable domestic challenges.\footnote{Ibid} The damages done during Enver Hoxha’s authoritarian rule\footnote{Ibid: 4} are so substantial that they are yet to be fixed. The country was classified as Europe’s most backward country in 2000. In fact, Albania’s level of economic development was so low, and its physical and social infrastructure so substandard, that they resembled those of the poorest and least-developed countries in Africa and Latin America.\footnote{La cava & Nanetti 2000: 9} However, progress has been made since. The country has been reclassified as a middle-income country, but remains one of the poorest countries in Europe.\footnote{Albanian Flag Europe and Central Asia Dept. 2008} Therefore, as one of the poorest countries in the world, Albania has chosen to prioritize financial development and has formally applied to join the European Union on 28 April this year.\footnote{Economist 2007} On 1 April 2009, the country was formally welcomed as a member of NATO.\footnote{NATO 2009}
A mission of a Greater Albania would most definitely hurt Albania financially, at least judging from the impact the war in Kosovo had on Albania. The influx and maintenance of refugees from Kosovo slowed social and economical growth to such a big extent in the country that it was temporarily reclassified as a low-income country. Likewise, the Kosovo Albanians who took refuge in Albania were sadly disappointed to see in what state the country that they had idealized as their motherland was in.

**International Resistance**

Even if Albania had the will and capacity to lead a unification movement, it is highly unlikely that other countries would not interfere. If the reaction to Kosovo’s independence is any indicator of what effect a move towards a Greater Albania would generate, it will not be an easy matter. Serbian opposition is guaranteed. Serbia not only has not recognized Kosovo yet, but has said that it never will. Serbia’s big powerful friend Russia would also quite possibly oppose any such move. The country has opposed an independent Kosovo almost as much as Serbia and does not recognize Kosovo to this day. Then there is the matter of those countries that, like Serbia, would have to give up certain parts of their land for a Greater Albania. They are quite many in number, four to be exact, and would together be a big roadblock for the Albanians.

What’s more, it is highly unlikely that the rest of the international community would support Albania in this case given their keen intent for the region not to relapse into volatility.

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219 Albanian Flag Europe and Central Asia Dept. 2008  
220 Judah 2001  
221 Bilefsky 2008  
222 Noinvite 2008  
223 Kosovathanksyou 2009
5. Analysis & Conclusions

We have established which actors argue that a plan for a Greater Albania exists, and that the Albanians generally reject the notion of any such scheme as mere fabrications. The actors who accept the Albanian statements as true have also been accounted for, as well as the indicators for and against a Greater Albania.

What follows next is an analysis of which arguments hold. Are the Albanians speaking the truth when denying the existence of any plans for a Greater Albania? Are their actions consistent with their statements, or do they validate the accusations? Furthermore, if the Albanians are really aiming at a Greater Albania, what implications would such a move have? Is a Greater Albania even realistic?

5.2 Analysis

This study concludes that the idea of a plot for a Greater Albania continues to be presented as a real threat to Serbia and the Balkan region by the Serbian government, Serbian scholars, American Serbs, and certain Montenegrin media outlets. However, it also indicates that a Greater Albania is certainly not perceived as a reality, possibility or threat by the large majority of Albania’s surrounding neighbors. The lack of sources concerning this topic from other countries also seems to indicate that Greater Albania is treated more like a myth than a reality. It looks as if the Russians have not mentioned a Greater Albania other than that one time; and the statements made by certain Macedonian politicians in 2004 concerned the elections and seem to not have been repeated since. Also, the two statements from the Greek politicians appear to be the only noteworthy times the idea of an Albanian threat was promoted by Greeks. The comments made by the Greek Minister of Culture were obviously a mere attempt at agitating the Macedonians.
The above executed discourse analysis of Serb, Montenegrin and Albanian comments and statements on the topic of a Greater Albania presents two starting points for my attempt to answer the final question of this study:

a) A Greater Albania has been a continuing quest ever since 1878. It is this quest that initiated the war in Kosovo and the independence of Kosovo is therefore the first real step towards achieving this greater Albanian state.

b) A Greater Albania is not an aspiration of the Albanians, and Kosovo’s independence is not part of a scheme for an ethnic union. The Albanians only want to unite with the European Union as a framework, remaining in their respective states.

If the future presaged by the Serbs and Montenegrins is the accurate one, we can, in their own words, expect “instability” and “turmoil”. As mentioned above, it is highly unlikely that any state whatsoever would support the Albanians if they sought to unite. Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Montenegro would almost definitely resist any such move. No country would accept loss of land, especially not so as to produce a greater neighbor, and would almost definitely resort to violence in order to prevent it from happening. Serbs still have not reconciled with the fact that Kosovo is now a sovereign country; they would never agree to giving up a piece of southern Serbia, especially not to their foremost enemies: the Albanians. And they would probably not have to do so. Despite the friendly relations, it is highly unlikely that the Albanians would have the support of the US in an endeavor to unite. The idea of a Greater Albania is just as politically incorrect as the idea of a Greater Serbia was. The situation as regards Kosovo was unique given that human rights and humanitarian law offences such as mass murder, “forcible displacement”, “widespread burning of homes”, “organized and individual

224 Washington Times 2006
rape” and “identity cleansing” were conducted.225 The situation of the Albanians in Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro and southern Serbia might not be perfect but it is nowhere near as bad as it was in Kosovo and is no cause for a Greater Albania.

In my opinion and based on my previous analysis, two reactions are likely should the Albanians actually attempt to unite:

a) Small-scale fighting would erupt in the region before the international community quickly defeated the Albanian extremists and consequently put an end to the warfare.

b) Serbia, Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro, and perhaps even other neighbors such as Croatia, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Romania, would come together and quickly overpower the Albanian forces.

Either way, a Greater Albania would not be the outcome. I therefore consider the idea as not realistic; and the Albanians are aware of this, at least judging from their statements. The Serbs might be right in that there is a wish for a union, but it is of no consequence since a Greater Albania is not even remotely viable. The Albanians lack the capacity and the support required to realize the idea. They do not even have the support of their own people who simply do not want to unite.

Furthermore, let us look at the Serbs’ claims that the rebellions in Kosovo were a mere attempt at a Greater Albania. Several facts contradict this theory:

- First of all, if the war in Kosovo really had really been a “separatist war for the creation of a Greater Albania”, Albania would undoubtedly have intervened. However, it did not. The country was very much in favor of the NATO

225 US State Department 1999
operation and received over 450,000 Kosovo Albanians refugees, but it did not get involved directly. Neither did the Albanians in the other neighboring countries rally to join their ethnic kinsmen in their fight.

- Likewise, if the rebellions in Macedonia were an attempt at a Greater Albania, why did Albania and the Albanians in Montenegro, Southern Serbia, Kosovo and Greece not join in on the fight? And, surely they would not have accepted the Ohrid agreement if a Greater Albania was what they were after.

- Furthermore, the Serbs were mistaken in predicting that a Kosovo would lead to a Greater Albania. It is more than a year now since Kosovo became independent. Would they not have attempted at a union by now if a union is what they aspire towards?

The Serbs’ prophecy that an independent Montenegro would lead to a Greater Albania proved just as wrong.

- The Albanian fight for a union that was supposed to take place in Montenegro in the summer of 2001 never did so.

- Neither did an Albanian uprising surface after Montenegro’s independence, as Serbian and Montenegrin media outlets warned of.

- The Albanians in Montenegro have not sought to break free and join Albania.

Therefore, a lot indicates that the greater Albanian idea is just as outdated as the idea of a Greater Croatia or a Greater Bulgaria. The Serbs are right in a way in that there are some extremists who do want a Greater Albania but they ignore the fact that very few Albanians support these extremists, who themselves are very few in number. There really is no evidence that the Albanians are planning a Greater Albania. So why do the Serbs

226 Kim 2000
227 Human Rights Watch 2000
228 Savich 2008
229 Koprivica 2001
230 De Vrieze 2001: 20-21
insist that a Greater Albania is in the making? A very probable answer is that they do so for political reasons. The theory has been used strategically. It was used as they fought to hold on to their Greater Serbia, as an argument against independence for Montenegro and Kosovo.

If this is the case, and the Greater Albania theory is mere propaganda for political reasons, it will probably not take long before the term will cease being used. There is no motive for the term anymore, Kosovo is lost to the Serbs, and so is Montenegro. It might however reemerge if Albanian uprisings reemerge. The situation for the minorities in all the countries in the region needs therefore to be improved in order to assure stability in the region.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on this study, it is obvious that the notion of a Greater Albania is a mere myth. However, even though a Greater Albania appears to not be a viable threat, the mere existence of this idea illustrates the deep suspicion and hatred that persists to exist between Serbs and Albanians. Something needs to be done for it not to cause a resurgence of conflict in the region. Three areas are of especial importance: economic development, integration and the protection of minority rights. Region-wise, intergroup relations need to be improved by establishing a regional policy on political, cultural and civic equality for ethnic minorities. Equal rights for minorities would eliminate the possibility of extremists opting for a territorially based solution of minority status in Macedonia and Montenegro. The Albanians in turn need to pacify the Serbs by continuing to assure them that they do not wish for any border changes in the region.

What the international community can do is to help increase economic prospects across the Balkans and thus assure a swifter accession to the EU for the countries in the region. Every effort should be made to accelerate their admission. It is of great importance that
the countries in the region become a part of the international community so that they start identifying themselves in other ways than as Serbs and Albanians, Slavs and Illyrians. Only then will the politics in the Balkans cease being dominated by the relation between Albanians and Serbs.
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