

# Europe's Legalized Narco-State: Kosovo's "Independence" and a Greater Albania

Kosovo(stan)

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*Fifteen years ago, on February 17th, 2008, a NATO-sponsored Serbia's province of Kosovo unilaterally self-proclaimed its (quasi) independence. During the first decade of its NATO-protected and controlled „independence“, Kosovo became the first European legalized narco-state, a leading South-East European zone of human trafficking, a fundamental Balkan (together with Bosnia-Herzegovina) recruiting center of the Jihad Islamic fundamentalists for the ISIS at the Middle East and, above all, the cradle of the destruction of the Christianity in Europe to such extent that the Republic of Kosovo(stan) is, basically, today transformed into the first European Islamic Republic in which the biggest portion of non-Albanians are expelled or murdered, but primarily the Christian Serbs.*

However, the (quasi) independence of Kosovo(stan) is only a phase of the 1878 project of the creation of Islamic Greater Albania advocated by the First (pan-Islamic) Prizren League and for the first time realized during WWII when B. Mussolini established a Greater Albania with its capital in Tirana including Kosovo as well (without its northern part predominantly populated only by the Serbs). From the time of NATO's brutal occupation of southern Serbia's province of Kosovo (officially, Kosovo-Metochia) in June 1999, the systematic destruction of Christian shrines and monuments became an everyday duty of the local Muslim Albanians followed by the organized Islamization of the province by building a huge number of the mosques on every corner in Kosovo(stan).

Nevertheless, the secession of Islamic Kosovo from Christian Serbia is only a step toward the ultimate political and national goal of Muslim Albanians from the region (85% of all Balkan Albanians) to re-create a Greater Albania from WWII. The political situation in neighboring North Macedonia (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) is also going to the favor of inclusion of the western portion of the NorthMacedonia, populated by ethnic Albanians, into a Greater (Islamic) Albania. Henceforth, the crucial aim of this text is to analyze the historical and conceptual roots of a Great Albania project with the hope to

explain the current events concerning the „Albanian Question“in the Balkans. This text seeks, therefore, to contribute to a better understanding of the foundations of the national project for Great Albania from 1878 onward.

## The political program of a Greater Albania

At the first, it has to be stressed that the concept of a greater ethnic Albanian state, different from the other Balkan nations, did not appear originally as an authentic expression of the Albanian national movement itself. In other words, until the beginning of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875-1878, i.e. Serbian uprising in Bosnia and Hercegovina against the Ottoman yoke followed by Serbia's, Montenegro's, and Russia's war against the Ottoman Empire), Albanians, unlike Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Romanians did not attempt to create an independent national state for the reason that a regional and religious identity was dominant among the Albanians for whom basically the Ottoman Empire was national (in the sense of confessional) state. In order to preserve predominance of the Islamic values in the everyday life and social relations, Muslim Albanians opposed by different forms of disobedience to the central authority in Istanbul the sultan's reforms which the Ottoman Empire tried to implement during the 19<sup>th</sup> c., under pressure from the great European powers. Bosnian and Albanian Muslim feudal lords became the strongest defenders, within the European part of the Ottoman Empire, of Islamic theocratic society resisting any attempt from Ottoman central power to introduce some kind of administrative order into the functioning of the state taking into example West and Central European states.



The main power of the expansionist Albanian movement came from Muslim Albanians. With the exception of isolated examples of cultural efforts among the Albanians, mostly those in the Diaspora (Istanbul, Egypt, South Italy), Albanian Muslims have been the most important nation in the Ottoman Empire in its efforts to suppress the Christian movement in the Balkans. With their patriarchal-oriental society of Asian type, they constituted the main obstacle to Europeanization of this part of Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> cc. Exceptions to this were an insignificant catholic minority in the north of Albania, mainly in the region of Skadar, and the more numerous orthodox community in the south of Albania, which was strongly influenced by the Greek cultural orbit.

The first pan-Albanian political organization was founded in 1878 in the Kosovo town of Prizren (at that time with the majority of Serbian population) under the name „First Albanian League“. Today, after studying Ottoman historical sources from Istanbul, it is clear that the birth of this league, together with its political program, was not an expression of Albanian original liberation efforts as the league was, in fact, the only Turkish instrument for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. According to the reports from Krijevski, a French consul in Thessaloniki, Turkish powers gave weapons to the Albanian leaders. However, very soon

the league was abolished by the central Ottoman authorities as it started claiming greater autonomy from Istanbul for the lands inhabited by Albanians. According to Albanian demands, an autonomous province of (united) Albania within the Ottoman Empire had to be twice bigger in comparison with present-day Albania (Albania proper, Kosovo, East Montenegro, parts of Central and Southeast Serbia, West Macedonia, and Northeast Greece).

Obviously, for very practical political reasons the formation of the First Albanian League in Prizren coincided with the preparations for the International Berlin Congress dealing with the so-called Eastern Question or remapping South East Europe after the regional crisis in 1875–1878.

The attempt by Russia to solve the Eastern Question by securing its interests by creating a Greater Bulgaria (as a Slavic Orthodox state), at the peace negotiations in San Stefano (1878) between Russia and Ottoman Empire was finally met with fervent opposition from all other (western) major European powers. Although the project of Greater Bulgaria encompassed a significant part of territory inhabited largely by Serbian and Greek population, the central Ottoman authorities, with crucial support from British diplomacy (as historically the main opponent of Russian foreign policy in the East), convinced all other powers that the Albanians are the best defenders against the Russian and Orthodox “threat” to Western Europe. It is the fact that from that time (1878) until the present day the Albanians have been presenting themselves to the public of Western Europe as major defenders against an alleged expansion of Russian Orthodox pan-Slavism into Southeastern Europe. In fact, the western-made and supported „Greater Albania“ megalomaniac project in the hands of Turkish and other powers was to designed to counteract another equal megalomaniac project (of „Greater Bulgaria“) originating from Russia. It was a clear sign that neither Russia nor Western European great powers cared about a justifiable solution to the Eastern Question but in essence only about their strategic interests in the Balkans.

The Greater Albanian political concept from 1878 was imbued with the spirit of pan-Islamism and radical political Islam. Only from time to time did the Albanian political elite try to hide the distinctive Islamic feature of the foundations of their ideology, usually prompted by a desire to secure the support of some western power. A militant form of Islam prevailed in Kosovo and Metohija and in Western Macedonia, brought by the Albanian population from the mountainous parts of North Albania who forcefully descended into the gentle and fertile parts of these Balkan provinces. According to German Albanologist Georg Stadtmüller, the regions of Middle Albania constitute the original centers of the Albanian population. Albanian religious heterogeneity and a distinctive tribal identity have historically always been a permanent source of internal conflicts. This “unstable” condition of the Albanian state (established in 1912/1913) threatens primarily non-Albanian people in Albania itself, but also in the neighborhood. In the territory of Albania, large Slavic and Greek settlements have existed for centuries and Slavic and Greek toponyms have been largely preserved up to the present day. However, from the creation of the first Albanian state in 1912/1913, and especially during the rule of the Albanian communist dictator Enver Hoxha, a large part of non-Albanians, particularly the Slavic population, were assimilated by the means of state repression.

## The Ottoman conquest of South East Europe and its consequences

It has to be admitted that the Great Albania project is directly connected with the consequences of the Turkish (Ottoman) conquests in South Eastern Europe, and especially

with the wars of European Christian powers against the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. It has remained, in a sense, as a long-reaching hand of the Ottoman spirit in Europe, as a vehicle of Oriental kind of life, customs, and mentalities which were characteristic of the territory of South Eastern Europe at the time of Ottoman rule. The Christian population of European Turkey, primarily the Serbs, joined the struggle of the European powers during the Great Vienna War from 1683 to 1699 to expel the Turks from Europe. After the defeat of the Austrian army in 1690 as a reprisal the Serbs have been subjected to massive atrocities and to the first major ethnic cleansing in the region. The Ottoman destructive military campaigns allowed the overflow of Albanian people from their original regions into the countries of their neighbors, both Slavs and Greeks. It was not before the 18<sup>th</sup> c. that masses of Albanian stock breeders from the hilly regions of North Albania started descending into the fertile lands of Kosovo and Metohija populated by Orthodox Serbs in overwhelming majority, as well as into the regions of Western Macedonia.

Together with massive and regular atrocities which characterized this conquest of Old Serbia, there were also numerous other ways in which the compact Serbian ethnic body was broken followed by forced Islamization, different forms of robbery, plunder, destruction of religious sites, and many other forms of terror. All of such forms of atrocities are documentary testified by many foreign travel writers but in the first place by Roman Catholic missionaries and visitors (for instance in the report by Roman Catholic archbishop of Skoplje Matija Masarek in 1764). A similar process went on in the Albanian-Greek boundary regions. Albanian migration under the Turks went towards Greek lands, particularly Epir. With the strengthening of the Greek liberation movement, Turkey used Muslim Albanians to secure rule over the largest possible parts of Epir and Thesalia. That Kosovo and Metohija, of which Albanian authors often speak as “Albanian land” were irrefutably the central regions of Serbian settlement, is testified to by the fact that the most important monuments of Serbian architecture and Serbian spirituality were erected there. In Kosovo and Metohija alone 1,400 monasteries, churches, and other Serbian monuments were built. The most famous among them are: the Patriarchy church in Peć, monasteries Banjska, Gračanica, Dečani, St. Archangel near Prizren, Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren, etc. A logical question is: why would Serbs erect their central church, the Patriarchy in Peć, in the region where they were not in majority and which was not the central point of their national homeland?

## Demographic changes in Kosovo and Metohija

The greatest changes in the ethnic structure of the population of this part of Old Serbia occurred from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and from the time of the Berlin Congress in 1878 up to the liberation of these regions from the Ottoman yoke in 1912 (during the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars). These population changes were, basically, a consequence of the conflict between the Islamic Ottoman-feudal concept on the one hand (supported by Muslim Albanians and Ottoman authority), and the European Christian concept of society on the other hand (favored by Christian Serbs and Serbia’s government). Samuel P. Huntington was quite right when he defined similar processes after the Cold War 1.0 as “conflicts of civilization”. Kosovo and Metohija (Kosovo-Metochia or KosMet) may be the most convincing example of such a conflict today at least in Europe, bearing in mind that the radical Islamic features of the Kosovo Albanian secessionist movement are quite skillfully masked by Western (the USA, the EU and NATO) phraseology and symbols.

Numerous foreign (European) authors testify about the ethnic, political, and religious circumstances in the region of Kosovo and Metohija and around it. These are the works of, for instance, Ami Bue, Joseph Muller, Johan Georg von Han, Ivan Stepanovich Jastrebov, Aleksandar Giljferding, Viktor Berar, Gaston Gravier, and others. For example, Joseph Muller reports the data from 1838 about the religious and linguistic structure of the population in Metohija – in Peć, Prizren, and Djakovica; in Peć, Christian Orthodox and Muslim Serbs were in a majority (92.09%) in relation to the Catholic and Muslim Albanians (4.17%). In Prizren, the percentage of Serbs (Muslims and Christians), from the total population (24.950) amounted to 73.68%, whereas the percentage of Albanians (Muslims and Catholics), amounted to 16.63%. Only Djakovica (a town very close to the border with North Albania) had a clear Albanian majority – the percentage of Albanians (Muslims and Catholics), amounted to 80.76%, whereas the percentage of Serbs (Christians and Muslims), amounted to 18.05%.

## The Albanian leagues and their program of Greater Albania

The fact that Prizren, a town in Old Serbia, and on the outskirts of the Albanian ethnic region was chosen as the place for the session of the first Albanian league in 1878 (the Prizren League) testifies to the extremely expansionist nature of the Albanian geopolitical aims of the time. That is exactly where it was necessary to create a strong obstacle to further strengthening the Serbian liberation policy in Old Serbia. And it was not a coincidence that the session of the Albanian league was not held in Albania, like in Durrës, Valona, Tirana, or some other town. From the time of the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1878) the neighboring regions to Albania such as Kosovo, Metohija, today's western Slav Macedonia, and northern Epirus, where Albanians had massively settled, mainly in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, started being referred to as "Albanian lands". Therefore, the First Albanian (Prizren) League, created on the eve of the sessions of the Berlin Congress in 1878, assumed the obligation to defend the "Albanian lands" from their annexation by the neighboring Christian nation-states (Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia).

The League's documents reveal the essence of the Albanian movement of the League. The sessions were held in a Prizren mosque, and the special feature of the Statute (Kararname) was Islam. Albania and Albanians were not explicitly mentioned in any of the 16 articles of the Statute, but instead, they speak in general terms of "nation and motherland", "country", "our land", "Balkan country", "in the Balkans", and similar. The political subjects of the League are simply Muslims. Article 7 talks of the need for the League with "our long-suffering fellow countrymen and members of the same faith in the Balkans", and the last Article 16 qualifies the abandonment of the League as the abandonment "of Islam". It is also telling that Muslim landowners from the Raška (Sanjak/Sandžak) region (today in Serbia and Montenegro) between Kosovo and Herzegovina, and even from Bosnia-Herzegovina were present at this meeting.





Basically, the same ideas served as a foundation program for the so-called Peć League in 1899 and the so-called Second Prizren League in 1943. After the Ottoman authorities were expelled from Europe in 1912–1913 (as a consequence of the First Balkan War), and after the formation of an independent Albanian state in 1913 (under the umbrella of Austria-Hungary), the program's aims were adapted to the new geopolitical circumstances and new protecting powers. The insistence on a pure ethnic Albanian state is typical for the

conceptual program of Greater Albania, as is the rejection of any multi-ethnic concept at the same time. Following such a program, the organized ethnic cleansing of the non-Albanian population from the regions which were proclaimed as “Albanian lands” started right after the Berlin Congress in 1878. During the period from 1876 to 1912 around 150,000 Christian Orthodox Serbs were forced to leave Old Serbia, which was at that time within the territory of the Kosovo vilayet (the biggest Ottoman administrative province). Similar ideas had and Ismail Kemal Bey Vlora, the president of the first Albanian interim government when required by the great European powers to cleanse “Albanian lands” of Slavs and Greeks and praised Albanians for having ousted “Christian Slavs” with their guns and violence.

## Independent Albania and Albanians

After the First Balkan war in 1912–1913, in which the Albanians fought on the Ottoman side, the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1913 determined the borders of the newly created Albanian state. In November 1921, at the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris, it was agreed to recognize Albania as an independent and sovereign state. The Albanian state encompassed the biggest part of ethnic Albanian territory. It is clear that in the Balkans with its large-scale migrations and mixing of races, languages, and religions, particularly during the centuries-long Ottoman rule, it was not possible to draw clear ethnic borders for any nation-state. Some Albanians who, as has been already mentioned, settled in Old Serbia in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, remained within the borders of the Kingdom of Serbia (later Yugoslavia), but also tens of thousands of Serbs (Christian Orthodox and Muslim), remained in the newly created Albanian state, as well as a large number of Greeks, who, following the decision of great powers, were left in the Albanian state. The regions that the Greater Albania propaganda claims have never been a part of an Albanian state. However, a certain number of Albanian political leaders from the time of Ottoman rule, who lost their privileges with the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire, did not want to accept the borders of the newly created states in the Balkans, and they immediately started their activity aimed at the breaking up these new states, primarily Serbia and Greece. This activity, particularly strong on the eve of WWII, was directly supported by fascist Italy. The Greater Albanian irredentist activity between the two world wars enjoyed strong support from fascist powers, which were also interested in breaking up the newly created Yugoslav state which, they claimed, was the creation of the Franco-British “Versailles system”. Italy was in first place, but there was also the Third Communist International (Komintern) with its headquarters in Moscow. The pro-Greater Albanian “Kosovo Committee” joined the Komintern in 1920. In December 1921 Bajram Curi, one of the leaders of this organization, visited a Soviet emissary in Vienna and discussed the issue of Kosovo and Metohija with him, having handed him a memorandum on the Committee’s intentions. It is conspicuous that between the two world wars, the leadership of fascists and communist political organizations competed in supporting separatism among the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija. From 1939 an even stronger and better-organized activity of fascist Italy was directed toward Greece and Yugoslavia. Italy invaded Albania from April 7th to 12th, 1939, and occupied it from 1939 to 1943. Already in July 1939, Count Cano gave instructions to Albanian emigrants for action in Epirus and Kosovo and Metohija. He often repeated that irredentism in Kosovo and Metohija was “a knife aimed at the backbone of Yugoslavia!”

## A Greater Albania during WWII

With the beginning of WWI and shortly after, when fascist powers, headed by Germany and Italy, attacked the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a bloody-style realization of a Greater Albania



project started. A larger part of Kosovo and the whole of Metohija were annexed to fascist Greater Albania (under the Italian protectorate), parts of Kosovo were annexed to the newly created Greater Bulgaria, and parts of western today's North Macedonia also became included in Greater Albania. The Vienna Agreement from April 1941 determined the demarcation line between Greater Bulgaria and Greater Albania, but the Bulgarians were not satisfied in full with such territorial division.

The first official academic-political propaganda of WWII Greater Albania was on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1941 when Mustafa Kroja, the president of Greater Albania's government in Tirana, held a lecture in the Italian Royal Academy on the natural and historical roots of Greater Albania which had the aim to defend an existence of Mussolini-sponsored Greater Albania. In June 1942 he visited Kosovo-Metohija and at the meeting with the local Albanian leaders, he publicly declared that:

“... the Serbian population in Kosovo should be removed as soon as possible... All indigenous Serbs should be qualified as colonists and as such, via the Albanian and Italian governments, be sent to concentration camps in Albania. Serbian settlers should be killed.”

This speech once again simply confirmed that within the project of Greater Albania, it was no place for any other people but only for ethnic Albanians.

When Italy occupied these „Albanian“ territories immediately started both ethnic cleansing and systematic implementation of the Greater Albanian political and cultural program (Albanization) in all spheres of life. A small number of Serbian children who attended schools under Italian occupation were forced to study in the Albanian language like the children in western portions of Yugoslav Macedonia included in Greater Albania. Serbs were massively expelled from Kosovo and Metohija (around 100,000) and tens of thousands of Albanians from Albania settled there (up to 100,000 people). For instance, by April 1942 as many as 60.000 refugees from Metohija and parts of Kosovo arrived in southern parts of Central Serbia which were at that time under German occupation (German protectorate). These events significantly changed the ethnic structure of this part of Serbia. After the capitulation of fascist Italy in September 1943 the infamous “Skanderbeg SS Division”, made up of Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija, was established under the umbrella of the German occupation forces. This military formation pursued the project of Greater Albania until the final liberation of these regions at the end of WWII.

## Yugoslav Communists and Albanians

There were many political decisions made by Josip Broz Tito-led Yugoslav communist movement (the Communist Party of Yugoslavia) before and during WWII which show that the leadership of Yugoslav communists and partisan movement in WWII was consistent with their practical strategy of weakening and as possible as minimizing Serbian factor in future post-war socialist Yugoslavia. As a part of the same strategy, the Albanians in Yugoslavia, especially in Kosovo and Metohija, became very important instruments, particularly in a constant process of destabilizing Serbia as one of the six republics within the Yugoslav federation. This strategy was recognized even by foreigners familiar with Yugoslav politics during WWII.

After the war, it was expected that the expelled Serbs would return to their land in Kosovo and Metohija (during the war it is counted that there were up to 20,000 killed Serbs in

Kosovo and Metohija) but, however, in 1945 J. B. Tito's government legally prohibited the return of expelled Serbs to their pre-war houses and land in Kosovo and Metohija. Therefore, the outcomes of the occupation of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany of Kosovo and Metohija in 1941–1944 followed by the sanctioning of these outcomes by the post-war Yugoslav communist authorities, in fact, supported the realization of a Greater Albanian political project formulated for the first time in 1878. In general, all political decisions concerning Kosovo and Metohija and Albanians done in J. B. Tito's Yugoslavia (1945–1980) directly contributed to the further development and practical realization of Greater Albanian political ideology which in the new political-socialist environment became covered by the policy of Yugoslav "brotherhood and unity".

Yugoslav communists permanently practiced the pre-war strategy of the Communist International in Moscow to encourage nationalism of "small nations" and reduce the political influence of the most numerous nation. Therefore, since 1945, the Albanian political authorities carried on the policy of suppression and, in fact, the expulsion of Serbs and Montenegrins (a newly proclaimed nation by the Yugoslav communists) in the province of Kosovo and Metohija and thus having to prepare the ethnopolitical conditions for the province to join the projected Greater Albania in the future. For that purpose, it was used all forms of state administration like police, education, judiciary system, cultural institutions, academic platforms, etc.) in Kosovo and Metohija, which as an autonomous province in the Republic of Serbia has been in the hands of Albanians who as a national minority in Serbia had their Academy of Science in Pristina (probably the unique example for minority rights in the world history), the parliament, the government, the president, the university with classes in the Albanian language, and numerous other institutions. Nevertheless, Albanians abused this maximum possible framework of political and national minority autonomy which was at that time above all European standards, and used the total power they had to indoctrinate the Albanian population and particularly young people with the Greater Albanian national ideology propagating separation of Kosovo and Metohija from Serbia and Yugoslavia with the final political aim of the annexation of this province into neighboring Albania.

The Great Albanian secessionist propaganda achieved its greatest success in the period 1974-1981, after the adoption of the new federal Yugoslav constitution in 1974, which gave the provinces in Serbia (Vojvodina and Kosovo) attributes of statehood and federal constituency (basically, two provinces received the equal political status with six republics). As one of the consequences of the new situation, in practice, there was no border between socialist Yugoslavia and socialist Albania. At the time when Stalinism was at its peak in Tirana, inspiring anti-Serbian propaganda, different types of delegations from Albania's capital have been regularly visiting Pristina (administrative center of Kosovo and Metohija). A lack of fundamental freedom and political democracy in Albania was followed in Kosovo and Metohija with a policy of ethnic cleansing of Serbs and Montenegrins. Pro-Albanian propaganda was constantly promulgated in the education system as, for instance, some 25% of all textbooks used in schools in Kosovo and Metohija, particularly those on social, historical, and ethnocultural subjects, were imported from Albania (published in Tirana and used in the Albanian education system).

The policy of Albanization was parallel in both Albania and Kosovo and Metohija. In other words, together with the processes of denationalization of Serbian, Greek, Montenegrin, and Macedonian enclaves in Albania, the same policy of Albanization was done in Kosovo and Metohija. In the 1970s, for example, the Albanological Institute in Pristina composed a

special list of names that would substitute the existing Serbian and Slavic names in order to hide the ethnic origin of these settlements. The Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija have many scientific magazines but they mainly used them for the propaganda of Kosovo's secession and its Albanization.

## Conclusions

It can be concluded that a Greater Albania project with the leading idea of "all Albanians in one state" represents an example of 19th-century national romanticism questioning at the same time the existence of internationally recognized borders, and jeopardizing stability in the region. The program to create an ethnically pure Greater Albania, finally, represents a direct challenge to regional and even European peace.

The paradox of the whole situation lies in the fact that the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, who claim to have been systematically repressed and pursued for centuries, have reached such a level of development being part of Serbia, that, actually, today Kosovo's Pristina instead of Albania's Tirana is already playing the role of focal propagandist for the creation of a Greater Albania.

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