

**Visualizing Virtual Borders: Identity Territorialization Shifts and  
“Imagined Geographies” in the Albanian case**

BY

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no parts of this thesis have been submitted towards a degree at any other institution different from CEU.

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no materials previously written and/or published by any other person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

Ilir Kalemaj  
March 10, 2013

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Signature

## Abstract

The primary research question that this dissertation addresses is: *Why national borders change and why they are perceived differently inside versus outside of the state? What motivates such changes and what are the primary actors and factors that make groups have a certain mapping perception and when virtual shifts occur?* This broad and general question is broken down into two empirical and specific questions: (1) how the understanding of the Albanian nation takes on different geographical borders over time--with some periods associated with the Albanian nation mapping onto Albania's state borders and other periods the Albanian nation expanding on the broader concept of "Greater Albania", and (2) why different Albanian communities (in Albania in one hand and Macedonia and Kosovo on the other) have often imagined the borders of the Albanian nation differently at the same point in time?

This dissertation, builds on the argument that power struggles between 'internal' and 'external' (diasporic) elites plays the primary role in building political agendas that create national borders. I construct here a theoretical model that captures the dynamics of domestic versus international constraints on elite choices and how this leads to (re)construction of borders. This builds on the logic that the elites engineer and manipulate national(ist) symbols to create the necessary environment for personal political gains, which is mainly getting and retaining political power. In other words, these competing elites use expansionist/contractionary versions of national map and imagined virtual borders that may or may not be congruent with internationally recognized ones. In embracing one or the other map project, such elites, through cost-benefit calculations, are always constrained by external pressures, which conditionalize domestic discourse and place limits their on their actions and how it influences map weaving.

Although the primarily case is the Albanian case, studied comparatively in both spatial and temporal dimensions, as well as investigating compatibility/differences in mass and elite discourse and actions, the references include many empirical bits from a multitude of cases. In addition, the findings have general applications in both analytical and policy-level axes because concurrent maps exist across states and societies and elite clashes are often largely dependent on geopolitical limits, while policy relevance extends to include the degree and scale of map materialization.

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## Chapter 1

# Delineating the Playing Field Virtual Borders and Imagined Geographies

*“The boundaries of identity, so to speak, are constructed much as are territorial boundaries” (Kook 1995: 309-336).*

*“A boundary does not exist only in the border area, but it manifests itself in many institutions such as education, the media, novels, memorials, ceremonies etc. These are effective expressions of narratives linked with boundaries and border conflicts and serve as reference to the Other (Paasi 1999:76).*

In the language of Sir Walter Scott, writing in 1833, the same causes that made borders suitable as “theatres of war,” made them apt also for “singing”. Metaphorically this meant that borders were simultaneously conceptualized as sources of conflict or sources of imagination, through culture-sharing and stimulation of relationships that cut across various differences. In addition, historically speaking, borders have often been constructed as “towers of defense” and have served as fortresses against sudden enemy inroads. In yet another level, they have always been used to demarcate territory, as well as identity.

Though borders have always existed, in certain periods, nested identities have made them overlap with each other. That is to say that several border types have co-existed concurrently, cross-cutting each other horizontally. Prior to Westphalia treaty of 1648, multiple borders that arose as a result of overlapping loyalties, made same groups or individual subjects bounded to various territorial units, as well as different lords. For example, a Polish peasant could simultaneously recognize as an authority and paying



taxes to Vatican, Holy Roman Emperor, the king and the nobles (counts, viscounts or dukes in whose realm he lived).<sup>1</sup> Thus, we had a situation where concurrent authorities,-- whose boundaries expanded upon the same subjects and whose territory included the same groups,-- laid multiple claims over the same people. Meanwhile the loyalty of folk was equally divided amongst various sources of power and little connected to modern conceptualization of territory. After Westphalia, and its principles of territoriality, non-intervention and equality of states, we witness a gradual erosion of power of the Holy See, the Emperor or local feudal lords, in favor of a continuous centralization of power around the figure of absolute king as a symbol of nation's sovereignty. Later, the changes instigated by French Revolution and Napoleon's wars, as well as the systemic effects of the Industrial Revolution, made possible the mass revolutionary upheavals of 1848, which brought forth the modern concept of nation-state and the ultimate salience of national borders as prime markers of collective identity. However, the territorialization of identity via the concept of nation-state after the French Revolution, which presupposes congruence of national unit with state borders (Gellner 1996), it is actually more a myth than reality in a complex world where national, ethnic, cultural and political borders, crisscross each other in an interesting and volatile way both in the subnational and global levels. The creation of modern states, has been a major source of nation-building processes that consolidated the notion that state borders should closely follow the ethnic/ national lines and map into each other, thus following disintegration of old empires and new principles

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<sup>1</sup> The peasants had to obey the Church's law and pay one tenth of their revenue to Vatican, while being soldiers of king whenever called for duty and handing out all other rights, including the most personal ones to their direct overlord. An example of such conferred rights included the legendary and outrageous *jus primae noctis* (law of the first night), *droit du seigneur* (the lord's right), etc.

of self-determination in late 19<sup>th</sup> century. After all as Charles Tilly reminds us, identity does not exist without boundaries (Tilly 2006).

Without falling into the outdated debate of what comes first nation or state, it is important to stress what Conversi points out that: “[the] nation-states’ seem to have the power, tools (media) and legally enforceable apparatus (official education) to impose their primordialist vision as the only acceptable one” (Conversi 2006: 15). However, notwithstanding its ‘pedagogic’ role, it is often overlooked in the literature that the ‘nation-state’ has actually been the aspirant goal, the fiction or ‘ideal type’, rather than reality. Nation and state in practice rarely share the same borders (i.e. Japan), and while the administrative unit borders are dictated by multilateral and bilateral treaties; ‘virtual’ boundaries in popular perception often shift in connection to pressures from internal and external sources. *By ‘virtual borders’ I imply the one imagined by people as the borders that surround their ‘natural’ homeland.* In reality, most ‘nation-states’ are composed of more than one nation, or at least various ethnic groups, minorities etc, while its own kin may reside in one or many neighboring countries, being one of the main sources of regional instability, and often leading to potential conflicts.

Thus, borders have always been central to collective feelings of attachment to territory, which have often provoked room for continuous disputes that have been everlasting. Even recently, for example after WWII and continuing until at least the end of Cold War, borders have been the major cause of conflicts fought between states (Day 1987). National maps and republican borders have surprisingly continued to resist the epochal changes that took place after the fall of iron curtain and the dual illusionary belief

that the nation-state era was over and post-national citizenship was emerging. Various authors have painstakingly noted that: “boundaries continue to play an important role in the way territorial identities are formed and maintained” (Murphy 2002; Paasi 1996). In the post-1990 era, where new political realities (such as European Union) have emerged, associated with revolutionary notions, such as the post-national identity, the borders have often overlapped in a reminiscent way with pre-Westphalia. The European Union has further weakened the traditional border significance by pointing out at cross-borders policies and fostering cooperation amongst regions. On the other hand, globalization forces have forced rapid changes in traditional border relevance, also decreasing their salience, especially in regard to mobility of financial transactions, capital moves and freedom of travelling. This has happened simultaneously with other borders that have constantly hardened, especially republican borders in the demise of former federations (i.e. republics of Yugoslavia, former Soviet Republic countries etc).

Thus, it currently looks that though border’s importance was generally seen in the 1990s as decreasing, it looks today as unlikely to be disappearing altogether. Instead they seem to remain an important demarcator of ethnoterritorial groups, many of which will continue to struggle for territorial homogeneity and dominance at the expense of neighborhood groups (Newman 2005). Such changes in progress are particularly reflected in Middle East, Balkans, and African continent, where overlapping borders that disregarded ethnic, religious, tribal and other identities, superimposed by former colonial powers are now in a process of revision and may be prone to change from domestic

pressures, in conjunction with the degree of foreign intervention.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, borders scholarship has flourished recently, focusing *inter alia* in “boundary-related topics, such as territorial identities and the perception of boundaries” (Newman 2005: 321). The present project is a modest contribution in this energizing field of study that helps understand present realities by making references to the past and continuation of border symbolic power.

### 1.1 The Focus of the Study

This study concentrates particularly on understanding the process of territoriality, which Robert Sack defines as “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area” (1986:19) and how it affects shifts of ‘virtual’ boundaries in popular imagination, even when such shifts are not congruent and do not coincide with ‘hard’, internationally demarcated borders. This study compares both official documented history and collective memories as manifested in general public discourse, which at various periods tend to be reevaluated depending on socio-political factors. This in turn urges for more focusing in the processes of de-constructing and reconstructing history, particularly in regard to what constitutes the nation and where does the nation lie, as well as its corresponding inclusive and exclusive mental borders. The current project fits generally with the instrumentalist/functionalist and constructivist theories of nationalism (i.e. Anderson 2006; Hobsbawm 1990; Greenfield 1993), building on the scholarship of

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<sup>2</sup> Such examples vary from unsuccessful attempt to create ‘Greater Somalia’ to successful secession of Eritrea in 1993, helped greatly by Italian interests there and immediately recognized by international community, to simultaneous secession and recognition of Montenegro in 2001.

competing narratives and empirically tends to offer an unorthodox explanation of the Albanian case, analyzed in-depth, both synchronically and diachronically. More specifically, I try to understand ‘virtual’ border shifts in national imagination as in elite mainstream discourse (i.e. historiography, political rhetoric, cultural discourse), as well as manifested in folk imagination of nation and its boundaries (as reflected in oral stories, poetry, folklore, songs, children textbooks and popular traditions). The terms ‘border’ and ‘boundaries’ are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation (unless accompanied with a qualifier), following authors like Conversi (1995), Kürti (2001) and other notable authors in the field. Other authors (i.e. Dienner and Hagen 2010), have implied that the term ‘border’ has a political connotation, while ‘boundaries’ a cultural implication, specifically linking the state with the former and nation with the later. Yet others have conceptualized border as an imaginary line, while seen boundaries as indicating a natural obstruction. I have chosen to follow the former and not the later versions because it simplifies the discussion, while avoiding unnecessary distinctions.

In addition, I follow a general dyad between Albanians living within administrative Albania and ethnic kin that lives in former Yugoslavian republics to see the compatibility or shifts both in elite and mass perceptions in both sides of borders concerning the mental maps and investigating why during critical junctures, the understanding of boundaries is not necessarily compatible with administrative logic and presupposed congruence of state and nation borders. This is valuable to do since it enhances our understanding of various policy shifts, from the cautious one (like asking cultural autonomy) to open irredentist claims.

## 1.2 The Puzzle of Shifting Borders in National Imagination

The primary research question that this dissertation addresses is: *Why national borders change and why they are perceived differently inside versus outside of state? What motivates such changes and what are the primary actors/ factors that make groups have a certain mapping perception and when shifts occur?* This broad and general question is divided into two specific empirical questions: (1) how the understanding of the Albanian nation takes on different geographical borders over time--with some periods associated with the Albanian nation mapping onto Albania's state borders ("Albania proper") and other periods the Albanian nation expanding on the broader "Greater Albania", and (2) why different Albanian communities (in Albania in one hand and Macedonia and Kosovo on the other) have often imagined the borders of the Albanian nation differently at the same time?

There is a variation of the dependent variable both over time within each Albanian community and across space between Albanian communities. I have divided the Albanian communities into the one within Albania's administrative state borders and the 'external' kin living in neighboring states (former Yugoslavia) and studied how they evolved as part of different states there, in the aftermath of this Federation's disintegration. Thus I explore the various map configurations of the Albanian communities—which at times (i.e. during Communist era) is presented in the form of dichotomy, while at other periods (i.e. post-1990s), we have three or four such communities at least. The nation has sometimes been understood with the Albanian nation mapping exactly onto Albania's state borders and other periods the Albanian nation taking on the broader geographical borders of "Greater

Albania". Tracing the shifts of identity maps of the Albanian nation and why these borders are viewed differently from the perspective of different Albanian communities is the primary research aim of this study. This allows for a more comprehensive knowledge of how borders are (re)constructed, as well as when and why they shift. See the maps below for a visualization of the two competing claims of elites regarding the size of the nation and how the borders (both in material and virtual dimensions) are configured in nationalist narrative.



Map 2

Map of the Albania and its Officially Recognized Borders from 1913<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=122305](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=122305) Original source: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011.



**Map 3**

**Map Shows the Maximum Extent of Albanian Territorial Ambitions – ‘Greater Albania’<sup>4</sup>**



**Map 4**

**Territories Claimed on Behalf of "Greater Albania" by Most Albanian Nationalists<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>4</sup> Downloaded from: <http://strangemaps.files.wordpress.com/2006/09/galbania.jpg>

<sup>5</sup> See [http://www.novinite.com/media/images/2010-11/photo\\_verybig\\_122305.jpg](http://www.novinite.com/media/images/2010-11/photo_verybig_122305.jpg)



Starting from an empirical puzzle such as the one pertaining to the Albanian case(s), I arrive at broader generalizations regarding the constitutiveness of virtual boundaries and mental frame of the nation. This is partially based on historical studies by Sahlins (1989), Kürti (2001) and others that have shown how certain border delineation that derive from state-building mechanisms, develop certain national imagination and dictate the behavior of communities of co-ethnics across frontiers. I take this a step further by demonstrating that virtual boundaries are not simply imagined by national elites, but are often created and recreated as they are informed by *deliberate* political goals and strategies. After all, as it is already stated: “nationalism is a struggle over the definition of spatial boundaries, that is, over the control of a particular land or soil” (Conversi 1995: 77). The driving force of nationalist movements have been the political and cultural elites who make calculated decisions upon geographical location of homeland, its symbolic currency and how it maps in the imagination of people, decisions that have an everlasting effect on the view from below. But in doing so, they are constrained by external circumstances and intervention of third-party actors who may facilitate or inhibit their degree of freedom. Here, I look at both variables and the outcomes they produce in tandem with each other.

I start with the proposition that mental mapping of boundaries varies in time and space, with notable fluctuations during observable critical junctures. These junctures serve as opportunity openings for domestic elites to push forward a specific agenda embedded in a national project that furthers their interests. In this case, I conceive them as moments when shifts are noticed in national imagining and mental bordering of the nation.

Naturally, as stated above, the domestic agendas of the political elites depend on geopolitical circumstances that allow or constrain the agenda-setting of these internal players. The core argument, elaborated below, is that the elite decisions converge or split depending on the national map configuration based on a rational calculation, when the external intervention is weighted against domestic pressures to measure the nation and locate its 'hard' and 'virtual' borders. The external constraints play not only a passive role as they are taken into consideration by clashing elite projects, but most often are direct influences that affect, alter or play a crucial role in the shifting of boundaries.

Since the understanding of borders might vary depending on what side of the border one resides, the difference between national borders and state borders is that the former is 'virtual' and the latter is 'material', which means that there is a lot of malleability in the former that does not exist with the latter. Thus, it appears to be a textured and multi-faceted, rather than monolithic process. Here I talk not only of the elite and foreign influences and instrumentalization of borders in this process, but also the tools they use. In other words, how they accomplish this with manipulation of national symbols and what effect this has on the people. Thus I argue that this is an elite-driven process that uses alternative maps of the nation in order to retain power if they are on hold of it, or to assume power by championing an alternative map. This is of course only one of the means of holding or securing political power.

These propositions follow primarily from findings from the Albanian case, but can be further analyzed in other settings to see for similar results. Evidence from CEE countries (Hungary, Romania), Southeastern European countries (Serbia, Greece,

Macedonia), Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia) suggest border re-configurations and mental (re)mapping of territories fashioned after a specific geopolitical circumstances (different international treaties and exchange of territories), in conjunction with domestic reconfiguration, like popular shifts of imagination of the nation and its constitutive territory. In this project I follow the assumption that nation is a political project, subject to revision, especially concerning its outer and internal boundaries.

### 1.3 The Argument: Elite Clashes and International Constraints in Determining Border Shifts

Noel Malcolm in his book *History of Kosovo* has noted *inter alia* that: “[while] some writers in the early modern period did use the term ‘Albanian’ to distinguish, in a linguistic-ethnic sense, Albanians from Slavs, others used it geographically, to mean the inhabitants of an area described as ‘Albania’. And where geographical boundaries were concerned, *there were no universally agreed lines on the map*” (Malcolm 1998: 149). The mental mapping of the territory in the Albanian case has taken various conceptualizations in different historical periods. Moreover, elite and mass levels of perceptions<sup>6</sup> do not automatically converge and we have a variation in policy blueprint and changing attitudes of the politicians.<sup>7</sup>

There are two main angles from which to analyze shifts in boundary imagination and identity territorialization. The first is a *top-down approach* that views the domestic

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<sup>6</sup> As British historian Hobsbawm draws our attention in his seminal study: *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of this second point have been widespread, starting with Kosovar nationalists who at different times adopted much more conciliatory approach in return of political and economic favors to leaders such as King Zog and Hoxha who in different periods have greatly varied in their stance toward Albanian lands outside state borders: from open hostility and suppression of nationalism to irredentist policies.

elite, as well as foreign actors and geopolitical games, as the most important shapers of perception of national identity and therefore determines how people perceive the borderlands of their nation. The second is a *bottom-up* one, which tries to trace how the environment makes certain identity borders more salient than others. In this view, the elite just follow the shift in mass (national) sentiment. I take the *elite-driven* approach (Snyder 2000, Hobsbawm 1990) in explaining Albanian border (re)construction, when politicians, teachers, publishers, distinguished publicists, scholars, writers and poets, thus the *nationalizing intellectuals* and *petty bourgeoisie* (Hroch 1985; Gellner 1996) played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses. The tools that they used were the spread of print vernacular (Anderson 1991) through publishing of books, newspapers, magazines, assembling folklore, inventing myths, creation of epics etc. The outcome was a crucial element in development of an ‘ethnocultural nation’ (Brubaker 1996) that often overlapped with administrative borders. Some of the reasons for taking the elite-driven approach in the case of Albanian are structural, such as general lack of infrastructure or the widespread illiteracy rate, which works against grassroots mobilization (that is not driven by elite intervention or leadership) to reach the goal of making the spatial logic of the state’s territorial boundaries coterminous with the boundaries of the nation. Furthermore, although Hobsbawm is right when he points out that bottom-up processes are necessary to help us understand how people perceive certain phenomena, it is not so the case here where grass root movement failed to take place, given the structural absences noted above.

But the most important reason that justifies my top-down selection is the impact that ‘nationalizing intellectuals’, cultural elites and professional politicians have had in engineering nationalisms in the Balkan context in general and the Albanian case in particular. *The general proposition/argument that this research advances is that making of national map is engineered by clashes of elites (both internal and diaspora) who possess the necessary political clout and social, economic and cultural capital and consciously retain or manipulate virtual border discourse and shape of national map in conjunction with degree and scale of external constraints.* Thus, if the creation of material borders is a process primarily resulting, decided and recognized directly from third-parties (i.e. states, international organizations etc), the creation of mental boundaries<sup>8</sup> that create and perpetuate a sense of communal belonging is largely driven by the internal elites that however take always into consideration the magnitude of external pressures. These are competing elites, both ‘internal’ and ‘external’ that favor different national projects to further their political projects at hand. They succeed only when external pressure is weak and not able to bend their primary interest: *political survival*. This research identifies the conditions under which the internal actors shape the political and societal discourse regarding the mental mapping of the nation and its boundaries, always in conjunction with geopolitics of the day. These clashing elites use expansionist/ contractionary maps and versions of virtual borders that may or may not be congruent with state borders. Their actions reflects a cost-benefit calculation that seeks to maintain and keep certain gains when opportunities arise. Here, I depart from much of the (classic) constructivist

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<sup>8</sup> I use the terms ‘mental’ and ‘virtual’ borders interchangeably. Such borders configure a perceived national map that sits in opposition to state borders.

literature, because while constructivists suggest that identities shift and national borders are constructed, they often do not talk about the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing borders in national imagination. In this, they are as teleological as the modernists in imagining that something is rooted and then is consolidated (it goes in one direction). Rather, *my theory is about how these national borders change, why they are differently perceived by different communities and who is driving the change.*

#### 1.4 Why is Important?

This project is important not only because it presents an interesting empirical case, which can serve as a benchmark to see similar developments in other contexts, but primarily because it brings added value to the literature on nationalism, national identity and borders by bridging these inter-connected fields of study, as well as enhancing the knowledge in the specific field of territorialization of identity and border (re)construction. Though empirical and analytical aspects of this project take primacy, theoretical contribution is important in bringing added value to the existing field of border mapping, by unpacking causal junctures when domestic and international factors interact and maps shift. In the Albanian case, the picture becomes puzzling when we consider that communities across space (within and outside the state borders), have had a different imagination of what constituted their nations in different periods.<sup>9</sup> This project seeks *first* to provide an answer to the question of how shifts occur and why groups shift their

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<sup>9</sup> Often the people that have lived within administrative borders have been accused of fake cosmopolitanism, lack of patriotism and ignorance of nationalist question (especially witnessed in the post-communist period) from diaspora communities, or vice-versa, where main charges coming from a state nationals directed to co-ethnic brethren in adjacent territories are for losing out their national distinctiveness or promoting a non-existent separate (national) identity which has no relevance in present times.

perception of how large or small the nation-(state) is and border configuration changes. These shifts occur both in spatial and temporal dimensions. The current study does so by engaging in systematic observation of the shifts by focusing particularly in specific years that have served as opportunity openings for discourse change. *Second*, it analyzes the cause of such shifts in public discourse and textbooks, as well as elite thinking. *Third*, it undertakes to compare the findings if they can be applied or not to a general explanation for other national narratives nationhood construction. All in all, this thesis takes as starting point “the centrality of territoriality, borders, and boundaries in theories of national identity” (Kürti 2001: 2) and seeks to expand the existing scarce literature by pointing out the positive correlational relationship of political decision-making on one hand, and overlapping national maps on the other.

This research creates a conceptual apparatus that helps to understand such shifts in national imagining and mental mapping<sup>10</sup> and how this is reflected both in elite discourse (historiography, political rhetoric and cultural institutions), and the consequent effect that it has in the imagining as conceptualized in folk memory (oral poetry, folklore, myths, songs, etc). The main theme is that elites are remapping/conceptualizing the nation in these crucial junctures to serve their political purposes.<sup>11</sup> Thus, I carefully trace *mental maps* used by *competing elites* built on specific political agendas that serve particular political interests, primarily the need to capture or remain in power. As I argue in the

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<sup>10</sup> The term ‘mental maps’ was first coined by two geographers Gould and White 1974. For these authors, such maps reveal how people perceive a certain area and what kind of mental images they have of a particular place (Gould and White 1974: 174). For the purposes of this project, it simply implies symbolic virtual borders, which do not necessarily coincide with administrative borders and often overlap with each other.

<sup>11</sup> Other authors, like Snyder (2000) have made the argument that democratization process creates the propensity for conflict and noxious nationalism produced when “powerful elites within a nation need to harness popular energies to the tasks of war and economic development.”

subsequent chapters, *the elite competition*<sup>12</sup> is most likely to be fierce during times of political transition when international constraints are in flux and internal pressures increase. During such times, national identities are often used by challengers to overturn the existing political establishment. This has especially happened during critical junctures, when there is a regime change that stimulates handy processes of national identity reconfiguration, rather than when it is simply political rotation that happens in ‘normalized’ political scene. Critical junctures in this study are those periods where opportunity openings are witnessed for national map reconfiguration and how this map fits/misfits the Albanian state map.

The main *theoretical contribution* is to understand *how* mental borders are imagined, *why* they change and *who* plays the leading role in the process. This dissertation attempts to offer a parsimonious explanation for this, while unpacking the *agency* factors (i.e. domestic elite action) that affect this process (their motives, beliefs and set of values). It fits with general theories of nationalism, but rather than dealing with the emergence and development of nation-state, it deals specifically with the (re)making of mental borders that territorialize the national identity through processes of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, the specificity of theoretical argument and the empirical anomaly under investigation join together in this effort to systematically answer the puzzles presented.

The *empirical contribution* is twofold. *First*, border revisions have been a favorite topic of elites consistently in the Balkans. An author correctly notes that: “[o]ut of twenty-

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<sup>12</sup> Quincy Wright is one of the first authors to define and operationalize competition as a distinct category from conflict: “Conflict, defined as opposition among social entities directed against one another, is distinguished from competition, defined as opposition among social entities independently striving for something of which the supply is inadequate to satisfy all” (Wright 1980: 321).



three existing state borders in the region, nineteen continue to be contested” (Misha 2002: 35). Or as a Hungarian scholar puts it in referring to the same landscape after the end of Cold War, “contested terrains have become key elements in redesigning the new Central and Eastern Europe” (Kürti 2001: 1). This project seeks *first* to understand through symbolic border shifts, what motivates politics in this regard and what leads people to follow such revisionist agendas. Thus we come closer to explaining “why so many of the nineteenth-century romantic nationalistic myths, stereotypes and symbols remain part of the national consciousness of the Balkan peoples of today” (Garde 1994: 12). The *second* contribution lies in the originality of such study undertaken with the purpose of understanding mental border shifts, how this was internalized in mainstream discourse and how this affected political consequences in domestic and foreign affairs. *Third*, although it has as the focal point the Albanian case and the Balkan context, it may be used to derive general insights about how these processes work, to be applied to comparable cases elsewhere.

The *policy contribution* lies in the fact that identity-formation and nation-building processes are still ongoing (especially amongst the Kosovar- Albanians), where the elite, and the largest part of population seem divided between those who support an enlarged version of the nation and those who support one nation, two states theory. In Albania this rhetoric has been marginalized in political and often in societal discourse as well, but is especially salient for Albanian communities in Kosovo and FYROM. In addition, policy angle is important because politicians often do instrumentalize borders by enhancing certain maps over others, when informed by their daily calculations and political survival.

Such policies include *inter alia* a nationalist discourse based on granting citizen rights to fellow co-ethnics that live abroad-- what Van Evera calls the creation of a “diaspora-annexing policy” (Van Evera 1994: 264),-- the inclusion of territories of another neighboring country, adjacent to ones` country as part of textbooks maps in order to cultivate a certain frame in pupils` minds, the territory annexation as predominant goal/strategy or something in between these seemingly extreme policies.

### 1.5 Methodology/Research Design

Recognizing the great significance in better understanding the processes of national imagining shifts, I look at mass perceptions as reflected directly in popular songs, poems, epics, or by proxies such as pupils` textbooks that allow us to see how nation and its boundaries are configured in mental mapping of the common folk. These sources are duly analyzed to identify the level of influence of the political and mainstream cultural elite and how much compatible they are with official (national) map at the given time in analysis.

Textbooks are examined to deconstruct the various virtual borders of nation they depict at different times,<sup>13</sup> because they tend to greatly shape and influence mass perception, especially in the formative years of schooling. These textbooks, compiled by cultural elite have been tools used by competing political elites to construct a particular narrative on the nation and its (imagined) borders. Another powerful and related indicator

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<sup>13</sup> These periods are noticed based on textual analyzed evidence that shows a certain border narrative becoming the mainstream discourse at certain times.

that shapes imagination of people is maps that are found in geography textbooks and are crucial in territorializing the landscape. Maps are tools that classify and organize spatial area, shaping its territorial delineation and fuse it with political meaning. Thus, as an observer remarks: “[a] map can be thought of as an expression of a cartographer’s ideas, a device for storing spatial information and a source of knowledge for the map reader” (Lloyd 2000: 84). Anderson importantly mentions the concept of “logo-map” in its *Imagined Communities*, borrowed partly from Winichakul’s doctoral dissertation on the changing cartographies of the geo-body of Thailand (later published as *Siam Mapped*), which shapes the image of a territorial outline that is repeated through print and other visual media and becomes a powerful mythical icon of nationality. The territory-map nexus describes the relationship between geography and the perception of it.<sup>14</sup> As Baudrillard has convincingly argued in his book *Simulacra and Simulation*: “[t]he territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory...[and] that engenders the territory” (Baudrillard 1994: 1).

Although maps can be designed in line with a particular imagination of territory at a given time, most often they are politically constructed with the intent to promote a project that visualizes territory in a certain way.<sup>15</sup> The context and reason behind a certain map, where is it featured and which part of population is intended to have access to it, are necessary elements to be kept in mind to have an objective analytical approach on certain

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<sup>14</sup> For example Polish-American scientist and philosopher Alfred Korzybski remarked that “the map is not the territory,” meaning that an abstraction derived from something is not the thing itself. Korzybski held that many people do confuse maps with territories, i.e. confuse models of reality with reality itself.

<sup>15</sup> As Yi-Fu Tuan writes: “maps in school atlases and history books show nation-states as sharply bounded units. Small scale maps encourage people to think of their countries as self-sufficient entities... Cartography can clearly be made to serve a political end” (Yi-Fu Tuan 1977: 178; White 2004: 86).

textbooks. Similar inferences can be drawn for similar devices, such as stamps<sup>16</sup> that help configure a certain (virtual or real) territoriality, which in turn influences bottom-up perceptions and establishes certain understanding of legitimacy of the nation(-state). Some authors have addressed the intrinsic triple connection among the national symbols, national education and nation-building (Gorenburg 2003), while others have stressed the nation-building effects of education (Darden 2012).<sup>17</sup> All these proxies are evaluated in order to deconstruct and reconstruct the shifts of national maps and how the elites have used such tools to offset each other while obtaining and remaining in power.

In this project I follow primarily a constructivist ontology and epistemology, which tries to understand the mutual constitution of national identity, state-formation and border-building.<sup>18</sup> I propose that instead of a formal causal relationship where the state creates the nation or is *spilled over* as the result of nationalism and the process ends with perfect congruence of republican and ethnic borders within the modern concept of nation-state, in reality the mental frame and visual mapping is decisive in understanding the mutual constitution of these three elements through public discourse. This is also

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<sup>16</sup> As a noted author in political geography states: “[s]tamps and stamp production are unabashedly infused with political-geographic meaning, and, quite often, are actively produced symbols employed directly, and covertly, as seemingly banal tools in every state’s ‘nationalizing’ project. Stamp designing is rooted in specific places, infused with political and psychological intent and almost always meant to convey territorially specific, quasi-mythical stories and celebratory messages of achievement” (Murphy 2002: 40).

<sup>17</sup> In a forthcoming publication provisionally titled, *Resisting Occupation: Mass Literacy and the Creation of Durable National Loyalties*, Darden explores how the national identities initially introduced to a community through schools, account for subsequent patterns of voting, secession, and armed resistance to foreign occupation.

<sup>18</sup> It is important to stress that constructivist scholarship in general does not offer a “causal theory of identity construction” (Hopf 1998: 196). Here, however, following Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) who point at a rational nature of many social construction processes, I make a modest attempt in providing a sequential model of such identity formation that evolves through distinct shifts at particular periods. Analyzing and understanding why shifts in identity (re)construction happen (i.e. those in national consciousness of mental mapping of nation’s virtual borders) is another step in explaining identity construction through cause and effect relationship and constitutive mutual effect of structural ideas and role/strategies of actors.

important because often “[e]thnic communities feel a strong association with a particular, so-called ‘national’ territory and use historical, pseudo-historical, or even mythical arguments to press their claims to it” (Coakley 1993: 2), thus having both theoretical and practical relevance.

I follow here a qualitative research design that takes a longitudinal approach (i.e. Wagner 2010; Todosijevic 1998) in analyzing the Albanian case both diachronically and synchronically. Chapters are chronological, because it is a testing of my hypotheses at different times, in other words it is a qualitative time series analysis. Because of this choice, I needed to ensure that each chapter accounts for the same variables either contextual, or triggering, and so on. Therefore, I follow the same structure from chapter to chapter. The periods I am looking at, are the following critical junctures.<sup>19</sup> First, the initial nation-building period and specifically the period from 1878 to 1899, which signaled the beginning of nationalist awakening calls and drawing up for a first time a coherent mapping of nation to 1912-1913 and the state-building and institutionalization of borders, to 1921 when we have the recognition of Albania borders from international community. Second, I investigate changes happening in 1924, when a regime change forced by a domestic revolution in Albania, but largely helped by Kosovar elites and expatriates, created an opportunity opening for an expansionary map. Since the ousted leader Zog, could return in power six months later through help of Yugoslavs, the immediate change of border policy affected the imposed real and virtual map. Albania, not only did not pursue rhetorically or otherwise the expansionist project of Greater Albania, seeking to

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<sup>19</sup> Critical junctures in this study are those periods where opportunity openings are witnessed for national map reconfiguration and how this map fits/misfits the Albanian state map.

adjoin Albanian territories in former Yugoslavia, but further conceded existing territories north of the country. Third, I investigate the period of Nazi-Fascist occupation that brought forth the *Greater Albania*, not just in its virtual shape but for first time in material tangible fashion created by direct intervention, which soon shrank after war ended, where the new independent communist Albania returned to former state borders. Other critical junctures of interest that I am looking for signals of map shifts are in the 1990s and onward, when real changes, like changes of borders in Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, forced different elite project clashes regarding the visualized map in Albania. These are the main time periods that I have identified that bear considerate geopolitical (and/or domestic) flux and when border reconfiguration or contestation has become possible.

The *dependent variable* under investigation here is the shift in virtual boundaries, while the *independent variables* are two: the clashing elites and the external intervention, which facilitate or inhibit such mental maps. I focus on critical junctures, not lengthy periods, which enables me to cover lots of variation across space and time and make the generalizations why we witness such border shifts in some periods but not others.

I have selected the Albanian case, a historic and comparative study of virtual map amongst the Albanian communities, which allows for in-depth analysis to find underlying causal mechanisms for such border shifts. The reason for such case selection is justified by the variations seen in both temporal and spatial axes, allowing for both longitudinal analysis and careful process tracing identifying the causes of such shifts. It is spatial because it analyzes changes in virtual border perception between two Albanian communities: the ones living within Albania proper and ethnic external kin leaving in

neighboring states. I consider Albanians outside the borders in different areas of (former) Yugoslavia, as part of one community. This kind of operationalization is made, given the fact that the map of *Greater Albania* has most often overlapped with the institutional ones, in regard to this particular community which only later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was separated in different states.<sup>20</sup> The temporal axes analyze different distinct periods from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries to find shifts in elite and mass perceptions on both sides of the border, in order to build a systematic answer as to why such shifts happen.

Furthermore, case selection is justified by lack of a systemic analysis in conceptualizing border shifts and its current relevance to the present day.<sup>21</sup> Another consideration, are the theoretical insights that can be derived in the relatively new scholarship on territorial and identity borders under the combined straightjacket of systemic factors and idiosyncratic actors, in order to provide added value to the existing theories that explain national boundaries. In addition, the variation in the dependent variable, offers valuable opportunity to explore the drivers of national border mapping/construction.

I have chosen the Albanian case partly because of my language skills, and partly because it has interesting variation on both international constraints and domestic competition, with lots of fluctuation in terms of how the communities inside and outside the national unit view the borders: *expansively versus narrowly*. On the other hand, this case reflects the general problematic problem with the ‘nation-state’, which implies congruence of state borders with symbolic national map. In fact, modern states, have

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<sup>20</sup> The most notable case of this is the creation of Republic of Macedonia by Tito in 1945 and the separation of a particular territory inhabited by Albanian people from Kosovo, in order to join the new state.

<sup>21</sup> With a process of redefinition of identity and borders under way in Kosovo for example.

achieved such congruence only in paper, while the reality is different. Most ‘nation-states’ have small or large minority groups within their administrative divisions, as well as ‘external homelands’ by ethnic kin living in nearby states. As D. Welsh notes, out of approximately 200 states, “fewer than 20 are ethnically homogeneous, in the sense that minorities account for less than 5 percent of population” (Brown 2011: 83). The ‘internal’ and ‘external’ minorities/communities most often have a different perception of where the real and virtual borders of their imagined homeland are. The perception of symbolic boundaries of the nation matters because it simultaneously fuels political agendas (i.e. irredentist goals, expansionist maps etc), while it is instrumentalized in the first place by elites to serve their short-term political goals.

None of the main theories discussed in the next chapter can fully explain the simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of these ‘virtual’ borders and its complex relationship with changing geopolitical realities and shifts in ‘hard’ borders. Thus, I have selected this case, which captures this dichotomy and following Walsham (1995) who suggests that “the most appropriate method for conducting empirical research in the interpretative tradition is the in-depth case study,” I use both longitudinal lenses and process-tracing (Pierson 2004)<sup>22</sup> to account for such temporal and spatial shifts in imagined borders and to unpack the causal mechanisms that produce these shifts. Also, this research fits with comparative historical analysis by focusing on specific critical junctures when opportunities for map changing arise, which are shrewdly used by knowledgeable actors in view of foreign constraints. Such actors, through education,

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<sup>22</sup> In a more recent formulation process-tracing has been defined as the “method [that] attempts to identify the intervening causal process - the causal chain and causal mechanism - between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George and Bennett 2005: 206).



symbol manipulation, framing of discourse in a certain way and other means in disposal, make possible a different kind of environment which can be receptive of competitive maps. Moreover, the study also offers lucid empirical inferences in a region where (national) identities are nested and ‘hard’ and ‘virtual’ borders intermingle to (re)create new realities. It also has practical importance with ongoing border changes in the region, showing how elites and masses interact in the reimagination of national boundaries.

I conduct this analysis using content analysis of textbooks and other literature and educational materials. This dissertation project focuses *inter alia* on the representation of Albanian nation in various textbooks, as well as in graphic maps, museums, newspapers, folk songs and oral tales during different historical periods.<sup>23</sup> I show how elite competition at the domestic level has led to reimagining of the Albania map by using empirical evidence in the case chapters, including political rhetoric, archival materials, interviews and memoirs. These materials illustrate why such maps were used during critical junctures when opportunities for elites opened up, who benefited and how it happened.

I look upon the educational venues, curriculum development and texts, particularly those that concern the humanities as sources of national and identity-building. The Albanian nation is represented as organic by nationalizing elites. This is almost always the case, across countries. It is the way nations are imagined and therefore a fundamental aspect of nationalism. This is why education is a critical mechanism for nation-building. But in addition, the changes in curriculum, the redesigning of maps that were used in geography classes, the changes or rather the continuity in history texts, or literary

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<sup>23</sup> View for more detail on this particular kind of methodology, the German-French research project <http://www.gei.de/en/research/the-european-schoolhouse/europe-and-the-national-factor/competition-and-convergence.html>

creations with a strong nationalist vocation, altogether played a powerful role in ‘rememorization’ of the nation, its mental map and virtual boundaries. The elites have played a crucial role in it because they not only imagine or simply invent their nation, “they are also at work to create a system of representation for the geographical and spatial location of both culture and nation” (Kürti 2001: 6).

The fact remains that in most of the period taken into analysis in this dissertation, the mass public in both sides of borders have been largely illiterate and living in isolated communities, thus not being able to create the critical mass of social movements (Tilly 2004). Also masses tend to be more conservative and usually trail elites’ decisions of where the borders are. Thus, people on both sides of border have generally followed elites on the shape that map of the nation should have. This has been changing only in the last decade or so in Albania, when the combination of internet access and alternative (social) media has democratized the public space and pluralized the polis.

The way I intend to proceed is to first define and measure the concepts. I then conduct comparative and case study research to test the predictions of my arguments, conduct archival research and work with texts, as well as analyze qualitative data. In-depth discourse and content analyses<sup>24</sup> are two of the main tools I use to carefully trace the shifts and therein offer an explanation of why have happened.

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<sup>24</sup> I side here with scholars that recognize the utility of discourse analyses in positivist projects, like the present study that builds on a causal explanatory model-- although I admit the disagreement on this point in the literature-- because I think that it brings added value to in-depth case-study research and reinforces the empirical ground base of theoretical framework. Seen from a slightly different perspective: “the study of discourses is very much the study of conceptions of causal relations among a set, or sets, of agents” (Lynggaard 2011). In both cases, I consider a method that is more typically used in anti-foundational epistemologies/ontologies to be equally compatible with a positivist frame. I thank Matteo Fumagalli for pointing this out to me and kindly advising to be explicit about my position in this debate.

Realizing the scarcity of published materials that is closely related to my research interest, I rely mainly on proximate sources, such as archival documents (notably those of Foreign Ministry, State Archives, Historical Institute), interviews, and humanities textbooks. Relevant biographical narratives are also scrutinized in order to have a fuller picture of the events and how borders changed in the perception of leading elites.

To measure the border shifts of the imagined Albanian nation in the dominant discourse within each Albanian community, I also focus on cultural artifacts that reflect the dominant discourse at certain time periods. That is why textbooks, children's songs, maps, museums, censuses,<sup>25</sup> and national poems are taken as good indicators--because they tend to reflect dominant images of the nation--which is expected to change along with official conceptions of the nation. I also find clues of an explanation (IVs) for this variation in these songs, maps, poems, history textbooks, etc. By juxtaposing various sources, each slightly differing in his account of how the events proceeded, it enables me to corroborate sources independently. Thus using the method of triangulation, by looking at many sources to construct a more accurate and nuanced picture of how changes have occurred, I strengthen my subsequent argument.

## **1.6 Plan of the Dissertation/ Conclusion**

This opening chapter delineated the playing field where this dissertation is situated and how it is informed by various theoretical and political debates, as well as how it

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<sup>25</sup> Even though for the Albanian case, we have to recognize the idiosyncrasy of censuses, which are not self-generated, but mostly organized and kept by Ottoman officials, or neighboring countries at later periods. Albanian censuses sponsored by central government are of much later period as it will be discussed in a lengthier manner below.

affects public agendas and geopolitical realities. Borrowing from both constructivists and instrumentalist's concepts, it lays down the proposition that the elites engineer and manipulate real and virtual borders in order to create and perpetuate the necessary environment for political gains. In the next chapter I delineate the theoretical argument where I differentiate myself from much of the (classic) constructivist literature (i.e. Anderson 1991; Gellner 1996; Brubaker 1996), because while constructivists suggest that identities shift and national borders are constructed, they often do not talk about the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing borders in national imagination. In this, they are as teleological and deterministic as the modernists in imagining that something is rooted and then is consolidated. Virtual borders are fluid, perpetually reinstated and in need for reconfirmation. They also serve as a mean for providing political legitimacy in general public discourse/rhetoric and are often used shrewdly by politicians in need for recapturing public trust and overcoming difficult situations. Masses tend to respond positively, following elites' lead as a way to overcome economic fears, social insecurities, or cultural threats and because the leadership is particularly strong amongst isolated, largely illiterate communities with a large percentage of peasantry, such as the ones taken into analyses in this project. Instrumentalists, while stressing the functional use of borders by elites, often ignore the external intervention which often conditions the elites' action domestically. I advance the argument that elites (de)construct and reconstruct borders' discourse by shaping national imagination and informing certain policy choices (ranging from contractionary map models to expansionist ones that in its most extreme form lead to irredentism), always in tandem with geopolitical realities and third-party interventions.

The project is inter-disciplinary and draws on insights from a variety of fields, like political geography, nationalism and boundaries literature. It is also comparative, though it seems like in-depth case-study at first glance, because it undertakes both a temporal and a spatial analysis of a case that does not lie in a particularly fixed territory, while tracing periodic changes as well. It also has both theoretical and empirical relevance because of its implications and scope of study. While, the theoretical salience lies in the inter-disciplinary efforts to develop a framework that capture virtual border shifts, the practical importance has to do with the actuality that it has in the volatile region of Western Balkans, often considered to be the ‘powder keg’ of Europe, where a new geopolitical reality (Kosovo state) has signaled new mapping shifts amongst Albanian communities in and out each (state) unit.<sup>26</sup> An additional contribution is that it aids in the processes of debunking myths in history, geography or literature texts—in Albanian case and more generally. Thus, this project seeks to offer an understanding of how mental mapping territorialized a particular area that constituted the nation (at that specific time) and how this changed over time. In the following chapter, the argument is fully delineated and a theoretical framework is provided to explain the changeable nature of national ‘virtual’ borders over time and across different segments of the same national group.

The ultimate goal of this dissertation, therefore, is to systematically explain shifts in virtual borders by constructing a model that can have a broad explanatory application and that is general enough to explain similar cases, like say the Russian nation, Kurdish

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<sup>26</sup> Border changes are not simply limited to this however, as signals for map shifts range from Southern Serbia to Northern Kosovo, from Republica Serbska in B-H, to Western Macedonia and Northern Greece. This has given rise to both academic discussions and political urges and prescriptions.

nation, the Serbian nation, etc.<sup>27</sup> Based on the overall findings of research, I find that the intrinsic relationship between border expansion/contraction designs of the political and cultural elite, conditioned by geo-political circumstances, plays the upper hand in constructing a dominant nationalist discourse of where (as well as when) is the nation. In other words, boundary engineering elites are a crucial factor for deciding the location of the nation, while external influence, particularly direct interventions, are critical in determining the domestic discourse and constraining or enabling the fulfillment of national(ist) designs. Thus, the project looks at both endogenous and exogenous independent variables and is based on the assumption that they shape the nation-building agenda of elites, which in turn (re)configurates the nation's mapping in folk imagination. Nation can be inclusive or exclusive based on social, cultural, political and economic interests of the domestic elite, which positions itself in light of different strategies applied by foreign allies, (invented) enemies, or great powers.

Interestingly enough, explicit nationalist rhetoric has been the exception in Albania's politics, especially during 1990s, notwithstanding the general mood in neighboring Yugoslavia, while main political players have refrained from interfering on behalf of kin there. As I argue in empirical chapters, the anomaly lies in the relative lack of hyper-nationalist rhetoric by Albanian state elites in the first decade of post-communism given the regional context with ethnic and secessionist/irredentist wars in

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<sup>27</sup> In a way all these cases are similar in the variable that I am interested here, meaning that the administrative (physical) borders are not necessarily and consistently congruent with mental mapping of the nation. The nation is often imagined as overlapping the territorially confined state and many adjacent areas where ethnic kin live are often considered to be part of the indivisible nation, though this precondition rarely leads to irredentist policy designs. Other authors have pointed out at the often 'unfulfilled' status that is often bequeathed to kin which is often thought as being part of the nation but not a full member of it (i.e. Saideman and Ayres 2008).

neighboring Yugoslavia. Thus, initially nationalist parties failed to make a credible presence in mainstream politics and have not passed the parliament's threshold.<sup>28</sup> The political leadership has preferred to stress its constructive role in relations with its international partners in exchange for the carrot of integration and to get some formal support when faced with internal political crises. This influenced the mass public opinion that has generally been indifferent to nationalist agendas after more than five decades of isolation under the national-communist regime; while standing in considerable contrast to Albanian communities in neighboring Macedonia and Kosovo where the prevailing mode was that of expansionist nationalism. No doubt the nation and its boundaries were imagined quite differently on both sides of frontier and it has had a different trajectory as well, far from static, with occasional converging points, because different historical developments have produced different needs.

The present work systematically traces the important ruptures in mapping frames and the subsequent replacements, noted especially during regime changes<sup>29</sup> and uncovering the causal mechanism (elite struggles and international pressures) that have impacted these developments. The elite competing frames and the resulting *winner map* at a certain time, also reflect and indicates how peoples' attitudes, values and belief systems change, as they are constrained by elites' pedagogical role in the process. In addition and related to this, the sense of loyalty and attachment to a particular piece of territory and imagined community, usually is strongly related to changes in political projects. Some

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<sup>28</sup> This seems to be changing recently with the emergence of few parties that are expected to change the political landscape after 2013 parliamentary elections.

<sup>29</sup> I see regime changes as one of the primary indicators that give rise to contractionary or expansionist maps that configure the nation in its diminutive or enlarged versions.

ethnic communities imagine themselves as part of the same indivisible nation; others seek to create their own (separate) nation, while yet others merge easily with other nations in the hosting state. Often, these changes occur not only in spatial dimension but also in temporal axes, as the examples of various Albanian communities in former Yugoslavia testify. It is particularly of interest the different postcommunist trajectories that such ethnic communities took in the aftermath of disintegration of the Federation. The numerical strength and size not always play a role in a volatile region where realities are complex and often overlapping. I carefully trace the prevalence of each of the maps and subsequent replacements at certain periods especially amongst Albanian communities in Macedonia and Kosovo in order to cross-compare and empirically illustrate my thesis that these shifts are primarily based on elite competition, and conditioned by the degree and scale of external intervention, rather than casual/random or because of economic reasons, majority-minority rapports etc.

What is explored here is the national imagination of Albanians, both in elite and mass level, while foreign actors have consistently intervened to maintain the map that better suits geopolitical balances at a given moment. The question that remains is: *why the Albanians living in Albania or in adjacent countries, have championed different territorial mappings from one period to the next?* The overtime variance stands alongside spatial variance, meaning that Albanians inside and outside the present administrative borders of Albania have perceived each other variously as strangers or brethren. Furthermore, in different historical periods, the hub of Albanian nationalism has moved from Kosovo



(Prizren or Pristina), present day Macedonia (where the towns of Bitola<sup>30</sup> and Tetovo have been central) or Shkodra in northern Albania, Vlore in southern Albania and Tirana in central Albania. The latter has consistently been regarded not only as formal but also symbolic capital of the nation. The mid-point of the nation, what is mostly perceived as the administrative, political or spiritual centre is a direct consequence of how expansively or narrowly the nation has been mapped, determining where its boundaries have commonly been perceived. In other words, the focal point is not randomly chosen but often constitutes what is the middle of the compass in conjunction of where the borders are perceived, assuming that it is common that borders (North, South, East and West) have equidistance from the centre.<sup>31</sup> This seems to be also the case with the shifting capitals under analyses when the centrality of capital to the perceived nation's boundaries became crucial during meetings such as League of Prizren (1878), Monastir Meeting (1908) or Congress of Lushnja (1920). Notwithstanding the role of elites who decide on such matters, there is little doubt that their actions influence mass perceptions in turn. In the Albanian case, it seems that they have had incredible leeway in constructing the nation and its outer borders, chiefly in virtual dimension, since the state borders had been determined notwithstanding the domestic realities and primarily based on the interveners' plans, especially the Great (or interested) Powers. Therefore, this dissertation captures the elite dynamics and how they have (re)constructed two different versions of mapping, one expansionary that includes the concept of Greater Albania and one that fits the republican

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<sup>30</sup> Previously known as Monastir, this town used to be the primary hub of Albanian nationalist movement for quite some time, culminating with the Alphabet Congress in 1908.

<sup>31</sup> Of course I am not stating this as a general principle and there are notable exceptions to this.

borders and how these maps have replaced each other, taking into consideration the degree of pressures from external actors.

Next chapter *first* defines and operationalizes the main concepts such as territorial identity, virtual borders and mental mapping. *Second*, it outlines a general discussion of main trends on nationalism studies as it addresses national boundaries as well as an explanation of how these insights are applied to the selected case. Within this literature, I engage in the debate of the constitution of national boundaries by elites and how it is shaped in folk memory and popular imagination. *Third*, it outlines the main argument, which seeks to bring together the aforementioned debates. Although there is a plethora of theories in nationalism studies and a somewhat smaller scholarship that deals with boundaries,<sup>32</sup> there is little that connects the dots by trying to offer a parsimonious explanation of *what provokes variation over time and over space, where same ethnic group depending where they are situated in the nation(-state) map may be prone to embrace a larger project of nation, or are indifferent to size, depending on what periods such changes occur*. In addition, I contribute to elite theories of nationalism by exploring *why ‘internal’ and ‘external’ national elites sometimes have incompatible views on national boundaries as articulated by clashing projections at a given time*. Thus, it is more about what determines these national borders and why they change over time and this I argue is primarily elite-driven.

A more detailed account of shifts on popular imagining of national borders in the Albanian case will take up the following chapters. Thus, *chapter three* looks at the

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<sup>32</sup> Coming from various areas of studies such as anthropology, sociology, or ethnography.

historical construction of an imaginary identity amongst the Albanians and factors and actors that have shaped such process. It seeks to understand how these identity-building processes have been understood in relation to territory and delineation of borders and how competing elites have essentialized and championed certain maps in the initial nation-building period in order to secure certain privileges or secure power. *Chapter four* undertakes analysis of certain crucial years at different periods during the interwar period, in order to build a systematic account of major shifts that impacted the way (nationalist) discourse was modeled and virtual map/borders represented. Many changes, in the interwar period and the subsequent competing maps are duly traced in order to better understand such processes and to build a systematic account of what causes such variance. *Chapter five* focuses especially in the WWII period and Axis occupation period that created a *de jure* and *de facto* Greater Albania, as well as studying the ambivalence of the (wrongly) perceived monolithic Communist rule, its border discourse fluctuation, and the use of alternative maps to suit different domestic realities and various forms of external pressures. *Chapter six* deals with virtual border shifts in post-communist period-- prone to lots of fluctuations-- discussing them alongside changes in political realities and cultural perceptions, as manifested in various sites of (re)memorization, such as textbooks, media, monuments and museums. In the end, the conclusion tries to wrap up the argument that deals with a volatile question such as mapping of borders, given the nature of nationalist outbidding and underbidding amongst elites, as constrained by external pressures and reflected in community imagining.

## Chapter 2

## Boundary Mapping and Territorialization of Identity

*“Nationalism is both a process of border maintenance and creation. Hence, it is a process of definition” (Conversi 1995: 76).*

*“There are no boundary problems, there are only national problems” Jacques Ancel, Geography of Boundaries*

### Introduction

This chapter engages main scholarly debates in the field before developing my own argument, which discusses the processes of identity territorialization and national versus state map dynamics, when they are compatible or not, in order to understand the virtual and material dimensions of such maps and impact they have on how people perceive their countries. The implications are not only theoretical but also of much practical ramifications, given the myriad of boundary changes motivated by internal and external factors especially from early 1990s to present day.

Thus, this chapter first delineates the literature and engages in the debates of how nationalist schools perceive (national) borders. Second, it develops my theoretical framework that explains such shifts in virtual borders. Third, it discusses the two overlapping maps of the Albanian nations. It then proceeds in elaborating the external constraints, while mapping virtual borders and it follows with a discussion of domestic elite clashes and (re)drawing of national map.

### 2.1 Existing Theories of Nationalism and How They Explain Borders

The debate about nationalism as mobilizing force that seeks to connect national identity with territory covers a span of several decades, although it remains both fascinating and inconclusive in terms of synthesis of its theoretical insights and empirical manifestations. The nation-state, which presupposes final congruence of nation and state borders (Gellner 1983), is actually far from being realized anywhere. As Diener and Hagen recently put it: “[t]he idea of the nation-state, where the political borders of the state would coincide with the cultural boundaries of the nation, had become the ideal, although not the norm, by the beginning of the twentieth century” (Diener and Hagen 2010: 6). Thus, politically laden republican borders and virtual/cultural boundaries, seem not to coincide naturally as it is often taken for granted in everyday discourse on the nation.<sup>1</sup> National borders continue to resist the epochal changes that took place after the fall of iron curtain and the illusory belief that a post-national identity was rising amongst the ashes of nation-state. Some authors have repeatedly noted that: “boundaries continue to play an important role in the way territorial identities are formed and maintained” (Murphy 2002; Paasi 1996). Borders scholarship has flourished recently, focusing *inter alia* on “boundary-related topics, such as territorial identities and the perception of boundaries” (Newman 2005:321). The present project thus builds on this recent and still scarce scholarship on border construction and how it shapes political reality.

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<sup>1</sup> As Linz and Stepan correctly note, even the states that emerged in the aftermath of WWI were not in fact nation-state in the theoretically assumed sense. They observe that “[i]n Czechoslovakia, Czechs and Slovaks accounted for 64.8 percent of the population in the new republic, the Germans 23.6 percent, Ruthenians 3.5 percent, Jews 1.4 percent and “other” 6.7 percent. In Poland, the Poles were 69.2 percent, the Ukrainians 14.3 percent, the Jews 7.8 percent, the Germans 3.9 percent and the Russians 3.9 percent. In Latvia, “the titular nationality” was 73.4 percent, in Lithuania 80.1 percent, in Estonia 87.6 percent” (Linz and Stepan 1996: 23).

Rather than ‘natural’, such processes are (re)constructed in symbiosis with each other, shaping individual lives’ and communities’ existences, as various scholars have noted. For example, national territories are often viewed as historical products and not only in their physical dimension but also in their socio-cultural meanings. Paasi correctly remarks that: “territories are not eternal units but, as manifestations of various institutional practices, emerge, exist for some time and disappear” (Paasi 1995: 3). Moreover, borders themselves have their own historical weight, which depending on present circumstances affect socio-cultural and political understanding. Thus, all borders seem to have histories, “and these histories affect current realities of border regions and the states they bound” (Diener and Hagen 2010: 11). As such, the salience of territorialized identity has to be looked upon from the perspective of the present while taking into consideration the particular historical background, socio-cultural mechanisms and contemporary political debate in a given case. Below I engage into main theories of nationalism and how they conceptualize borders in general and specifically regarding the Albanian case.

*Primordialists* maintain that nations have always existed; therefore loyalty toward nation-states is something inherent in human beings. For primordialists, nations and their borders are natural outgrowths of pre-existing communal identities, *ethnies* and state boundaries may or may not line up with these identities. Thus they would argue that national and state borders can be often incongruent, because national borders are natural and cannot change. Therefore, what they cannot explain is how state borders change over time and why they are conceived of differently by different national communities. The

demarcation of nations for them follows that of the *ethnies* (i.e. Smith 1986),<sup>2</sup> in a contingent linear proto-national fashion. A primordialist sees the mental mapping of nation as something inherently given and always imagined in a consistent fashion. Thus variation (both temporal and spatial) that I am tracing here does not make any sense in the primordialist world. The primordialists are generally a minority amongst scholars of nationalism and their main criticism comes from the modernist and functionalist rival theories of nationalism who believe that nation-states are modern creations that followed the events of Napoleonic wars, French Revolution and most importantly structural changes associated with Industrial Revolution and birth of capitalism. Also the primordialist ‘given’ national identities and ‘frozen’ borders cannot really explain their social constructions. It has been convincingly argued that “far from being fixed, the boundaries are continuously negotiated and redefined in each generation as groups react or adapt to changing circumstances” (Özkirimli 2010: 61).<sup>3</sup>

*Modernization theoreticians* of nationalism, like Gellner (1996) or Nairn (1997) basically hold that nation-states of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century are byproducts of Industrial Revolution and capitalist mode of production. They state that national borders are in their current configuration due to differential rates of development/industrialization, leading national borders to correspond to developmental borders between backward and advanced regions. Modernists are structural and cannot account for the different perceptions that various

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<sup>2</sup> To simplify I have merged the categories of primordialists (like Harold Isaacs and Geertz who see nations as ‘natural’ entities with perennialists (like A. Smith and J. Armstrong) who see nations as mythic and rooted in the previous *ethnies*, because their similarities are more stressed than any particular nuances.

<sup>3</sup> Overall, the mainstream scholarly work in nationalism and borders largely departs from primordialist viewpoint. As Brubaker writes: “[n]o serious scholar today holds the view that is routinely attributed to primordialists in straw-man setups, namely that nations or ethnic groups are primordial, unchanging entities” Brubaker (1996: 15).

different segments of the same national group might hold, either objectively or subjectively. Modernism is also highly deterministic, teleological, goes only in one direction and cannot provide an answer as to why national borders in general and those of Albanian case in particular might shift over short periods of time.

The *ethnosymbolism*, which has often been seen as a “theoretical critique of modernism” (Özkirimli 2010: 143), gives a strong emphasizes “to the role of myths, symbols, memories, values and traditions in the formation, persistence and change of ethnicity and nationalism (Smith 2001d: 84). This approach seeks continuity with the past by stressing the link with the pre-existing ethnicity, which shaped modern day nationalism (Hutchinson 1994: 7). In the Albanian case this link is often symbolized by the stress on Pellasgian-Illyrian-Arber-Albanian connection, seen as an undivided, uninterrupted linear connection that stretches through times in order to keep an autochthonous Albanian community together, creating and perpetuating an expansionary version of map to which the nationalist elites return each time that an opportunity opens up. Their synthetic blend is conceptually vague, suffers from lack of coherence and overlooks the distinction between (modern) nations and pre-existing ethnies. Also by reifying nations, their explanation of border construction cannot really explain the associated shifts in imaginary mapping.

*Institutionalist theories* (i.e. Gorenburg 2003; Hale 2011; Roeder 2007) hold that the borders are often created by state and/or national elites and that these institutions basically construct nations. These institutions for example, evolve around pre-political entities such as what Philip Roeder call “the segment-state [which is] a jurisdiction defined by both human and territorial boundaries,” whose leaders use to invent and/or reinforce a kind of



hegemonic national identity (Roeder 2007). Such transitory belts as the ones Roeder mentions are necessary transitional mechanisms that connect center and periphery prior to independence and acquiring of sovereignty from emerging states. According to this logic, one might predict that there would now be an Albanian nation, a Kosovar Albanian nation, and a Macedonian/Albanian nation forming in the post-WWII period around the borders that were instituted during the communist period, thus three distinct communities with different conceptualization of national map. Developing in different historical and political trajectories, these nation-communities would have followed different pathways in nation-building, yielding distinct and differentiated national identities. But evidence, discards such seemingly deterministic view altogether, and the puzzle remains. Thus, institutionalist theories, though partially inconsistent with my arguments, would not expect much change in national conceptions, particularly after nations have been constructed. For them, nations and its borders, once constructed, cannot easily be unconstructed, although it can be done. They would simply not expect that it could happen so quickly.

Then there is *the instrumentalist* story (Snyder 2000; Gagnon 2001), which is all about the interests of elites determining where the borders lie based on personal incentives of elites, excluding more or less other factors/circumstances, like external intervention for example. As Conversi has argued: “[i]nstrumentalism conceives ethnicity as a dependent variable, externally controlled according to its strategic utility for achieving more secular goods (formally in the name of the group, in fact solely to the elites’ advantage” (Conversi 2006: 16). In other studies, instrumentalism is also often referred to as *constructivism* (i.e. Brown 2000), while ‘the claim that ethnic group boundaries are not primordial, but socially

constructed is now the dominant view' (Hechter and Okamoto 2001: 193). My position shares lots of insights with *instrumentalists*, although as it is argued in the theory chapter, I narrow the scope conditions, by setting the limitations of elites' interests and conditionalizing its actions with external intervention/ geopolitical circumstances.

Last but not least, are the *constructivists*, who see nations and borders as social constructions of elites and institutions engaged in constant social interactions. Anderson (2006: 6) has aptly defined the nation as "an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign", whereas Hobsbawm (1990) has conceptualized it as "invention of tradition." In both cases, the implication is clear that nation-states configured with present borders are a recent phenomenon and have been purposefully and consciously shaped as one of the most important modern-day identity-based units.

The constructivists and the modernists alike identify the pivotal role of vernacular language in creating nations, contrary to the perennialists static world. This is a fundamental distinction because it is often used in various societies to define and construct the 'legitimate' members of the society, based either on common ancestral links or common cultural traits, thus excluding the 'Others'.<sup>4</sup> In the case of the 'imagined nation' and its mental mapping that delineates the borders as generally perceived amongst the public,-- political and cultural elites play a powerful role in bringing together what Motyl calls triple characteristics: "building blocks, human agency, and novelty" (Motyl 1999:

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<sup>4</sup> A bone of contention between Anderson and Smith concerns how nation is narrated. According to Smith, Anderson focuses especially at literary products, but overlooks other forms of cultural expression, noticed from Herder and ranging from "folk ballads, ethnic dances, music, folklore..., powerful imaginary of visual arts, and not just the paintings and sculptures but of furnishings, ceramics, metalwork and above all architecture" (Smith 1993: 20). A criticism only partly founded because at least in his 2006 republishing version of *Imagined Communities*, Anderson addresses some of these other forms, particularly in the Southeast Asia context. Smith calls such manifestation in different varieties as "powerful images of the resurgent, but continuous nation," citing examples mostly from Europe and Russia (Smith 1993: 20).

59). Human agency is a very important part of this study, because as some renowned authors in the field have claimed in regard to intellectuals role-play, they have been instrumental “in the shaping of national understanding, propagating the values of the nation, disciplining the people internally, and enforcing the rules and boundaries of the constituent people” (Kennedy and Suny 1999:2). Furthermore, elites have usually come up with fundamental proposals for boundary change, which are especially based in “the principles of ethnicity, ‘natural boundaries’ and functional coherence (Rumley and Minghi 1991: 8-9).

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson examines the roots of national identity, emphasizing three institutions of power that the European colonizers employed to exercise control and territorialize identity over their domains: the census, the map and the museum (Anderson 2006: 163-64). These institutions created and disciplined borders where they did not previously exist.<sup>5</sup> Through these three institutions of power,<sup>6</sup> we also see the influence of the European powers in other regional and geographical contexts, such as the

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<sup>5</sup> Although Anderson’s focus lay elsewhere, his conclusions may apply to the Balkans, though taken with reservations because in Southeast Asia these institutions were created and served *only* colonial powers to create a homogenic effect (Spark 2005: 3). Second, the three institutions do not exist in my selected case in any consistently reliable form aside from those few attempts that have been half-heartedly produced by the Albanian state (unreliable statistics, static museums) or exist in the country as remnants of foreign intrigue (few detailed topographical and political maps). Third, because the censuses have often linked religion to nation, clearly not the Albanian case.

<sup>6</sup> These should be taken more as heuristic devices, together with novels, flags, anthems etc. The prevalence of a particular type of medium can change in different contextual settings. For example all Balkan countries with the exception of Greece had no museuming activities until Communist period. While censuses and maps seek to demarcate the boundaries of people and land, cultural institutions define what the people and land themselves represent. Regarding the heritage of a nation, “museums, and the museumizing imagination, are both profoundly political” (Anderson 2006: 178). Museums play an important role in the creation of the imagined national community and are a resource for governments, seeking to influence their peoples’ relationship to themselves and their neighbors. The only caveat here is that they are a fairly recent in Albanian history, thus allowing only for limited inference regarding their (re)constructive role in imagination of nation and its virtual boundaries. Therefore we can bear witness of the first museums only during Communist regime rule (after 1945), when the archeological frenzy also took place. It is important to note that the National Museum of Albania came into existence only in 28 October 1981 (i.e. compare this with the first Montenegro State Museum which was created as early as 1926).

Balkans. Their influence in Balkan politics and culture, attempted to subsume the newly-emerged nationalisms of the region into their own strained empires. Although the Ottoman Empire had demarcated soft borders for its various administrative districts,<sup>7</sup> the multiple nationalities in the Balkans were together under the authority of the High Porte in Istanbul. The ‘hard’ state borders drawn during the period leading up to the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century, broke the Balkans as a homogenous unit into various states. Rather than following the boundaries of national populations, these borders were designed to serve Great Power interests in the region. For example, after the First Balkan War (1912-1913), Kosovo was awarded to Serbia primarily in an effort to keep the peace between Russia and Austria-Hungary, a peace that lasted only a year before exploding into the Great War (Tomes 1999: 313).<sup>8</sup> Also we need to mention the more recent Yugoslav Wars that tore apart Tito’s Federation and resulted in external intervention (re)mapping the boundaries of the new secessionist republics.

In the Albanian case, they never had a state of their own in the past, an *era of former glory* into which they could return and various conquerors, especially the Ottoman Empire with its five centuries of occupation, deeply affected the understanding of boundaries in popular imagination. But, foreign intervention and geopolitical circumstances through their institutions of power, can tell us only half of the story. The other half, the endogenous perception of boundaries of the nation, especially when external pressures are lessened,

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, there were two kinds of boundaries: administrative and religious ones. The second case, refers to the organizational principle of *millet*, where nations were created based on religious affiliation and not the ethnic one.

<sup>8</sup> Tomes adds that: “[o]n the other hand, had the jealous Great Powers failed to intervene, it is unlikely that an independent Albania would ever have arisen, since the Serbs, Greeks, and Montenegrins had overrun all the Albanian districts of the Ottoman Empire and were preparing to annex the lot” (Tomes, 313-4).

remains to be discovered through careful analysis of public and political discourse, memorandums, treaties and textbooks that shape a certain understanding of visualization of territorial borders. Also no less important are folklore, archeology, poetry, music, folk tales and so on that reveal bottom-up perception of nation`s virtual boundaries conceptualization and how they change over time.

All in all, none of these arguments can fully explain why these ‘material’ and ‘virtual’ borders actually change back and forth. Also, they would not be able to explain the different borders in the minds of the different Albanian communities. Structural stories (modernization, primordialist) cannot explain variation in borders. Elite stories (instrumentalist and institutionalist) emphasize more the role of agency, but fail to grasp the nuances of identity territorialization processes and variation in visualization of territory that I seek to address here. In addition, they tend to ignore the structural conditions, such as geopolitical games and international pressures and intervention. See table below for a summary of main arguments given by each theory and how they interpret borders of the nation.

**Table 1.1 Summary of competing theories and how they inform virtual borders in the Albanian case**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Prediction</b>
<b>Primordialists</b>	Borders are immutable and traced back to Illyricum times, the closest era of former glory, with the exception of Scanderbeg`s medieval period. Thus we see a linear historical transcendence with an intermediary feudal state, united under an external threat to protect universal values (Christianity). According to this narrative, it was the Ottomans who created unnatural borders amongst the Albanians by forcefully or

<b>Modernists</b>	<p>indirect means converting people into Islam, according to the logic of millet system. Does not account for shifts in virtual borders in the Albanian case.</p> <p>Talk of the differential rates of development/industrialization, leading national borders to correspond to developmental borders between backward and advanced regions. This viewpoint is overly structural and cannot account for different perceptions of the three communities, nor why these borders might shift over short periods of time. Thus, it does not explain shifts in national boundaries in modern Albania which is my dependant variable. Also capitalism and industry development do not really explain this case.</p>
<b>Institutionalists</b>	<p>It holds that national borders are constructed by preexisting administrative borders. Therefore, according to this logic, there should be an Albanian nation, a Kosovar Albanian nation, and a Macedonian/Albanian nation forming in the post- WWII period around the borders that were previously instituted.</p>
<b>Instrumentalists</b>	<p>Although it accounts for some cross-spatial variation, it still does not explain rapid shifts in national identities over time. The instrumentalist story is all about the interests of elites determining where the borders lie based on personal incentives of elites, excluding other factors like external intervention for example. Although I am closer to this line of argument, it is utterly contingent in that it does not predict any endpoint unlike the other structural theories of nationalism and being somewhat teleological, they would not be able to explain the different borders in the minds of the different Albanian communities that are carefully traced in this project.</p>
<b>Constructivists</b>	<p>Nations and borders conceived accidental and contingent. (National) identities are constructed by conscious elite invention and imagination, rather than inherently given. Thus, far from immutable, the actions of agents (typically nationalist elites) are critical in their shaping. I share with constructivists the belief in the territory that gets nationalized by conscious agents, thus becoming the desired homeland, while the nation itself becomes territorialized, thus a two-way street in which we face mutual constitution. I depart from the constructivists, in their view that take such construction as final, thus being somewhat teleological and not accounting for perception shifts.</p>

This study draws on both instrumentalists, and particularly constructivists<sup>9</sup> who describe nations and borders as being accidental and contingent, created by people,

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<sup>9</sup> An author has labeled these two categories as “hard” and “soft” constructivists, where the first ask the question: “Why and how do elites construct national identity?” while the second asks primarily the question:

institutions and ideas. I share the assumption that (national) identities are constructed by conscious elite invention and imagination, rather than inherently given. Thus, far from immutable, the actions of agents (typically nationalist elites) are critical in the shaping of identity maps and ‘virtual borders’. This is complementary with what other authors have succinctly shown--that territory has a salient role-playing in the remaking of national identities (i.e. Kaiser 1994; Anssi 1998; Kürti 2001), thus describing a reconstruction of both (territory and identity) through a process of mutual shaping.

The process of nation creation and the delimitation of its physical, as well as mental borders may take many decades and even centuries. The modern concept of territoriality has often been accompanied with loyalty shifts. From the Westphalia in 1648 when the basic principles of territorial integrity were sanctioned, to 1848 when the symbolic birth of nation-states is witnessed, identity and borders meaning have constantly shifted. From the overlapping loyalty of the subjects to the concurring powers, individual attachments shifted toward the abstract notion of the nation in a gradual fashion. People started to primarily identify themselves in terms of nationality instead of religion, social status or some other affiliation. But these two processes, though complementary, did not necessarily evolve simultaneously. In Peter Sahlins words, “[t]he creation of the territorial state constituted one component of the modern nation-state; the emergence of national identity formed another” (Sahlins 1991: 7). Territorializing space is one of the first steps toward

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“Is national identity constructed historically?” (Motyl 1999:67). I prefer the *instrumentalist* and *constructivists* labels, expanding on the notion of identity to include virtual borders and mental map of the nation. Such reality is created by internal and external actors and cannot be simply assumed as given conditions, asking for further investigation to pinpoint at the conditions that favor particular map engineering. The other approaches mentioned here (i.e. primordialists/perennialists) have been dominant in the region’s historiographies, therefore I am making use of these other lenses to offer an unorthodox viewpoint on shifting identity maps and unfolding nationalist agenda, to better grasp the complexities of a malleable reality.

claiming sovereignty and starting building the nation, whereas national identity is much more malleable and as the same author puts it, “means replacing a sense of local territory by love of national territory” (Sahlins 1991: 8). However, the intrinsic link between national territory and national identity and the ways they constitute each other (Lustick 1993; Goddard 2009; Toft 2012),-- a process far more interconnected that is often treated (i.e. Herb and Kaplan 1999),-- is an overlooked but important dimension that needs to be informed by empirical studies in order to draw proper theoretical inferences.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of ‘homeland’ is central in understanding that emotional link that (re)configures territory and individuals and communities attitude toward it. It serves as a kind of “geographic mediator of sociopolitical behavior...” (Kaiser 1994:5). Also, it is strongly connected to the ‘sense of place’, which may be viewed as the subjective dimension through which a given national community identifies with a certain area as its ancestral homeland” (Kaiser 1994: 5). This kind of emotional attachment to a symbolic, imaginary ‘homeland’ has been noted by several scholars in the past (Connor 1986; Smith 1981; Anderson 1988 etc), which may also lead to different relationships with it. Some of the main authors that have dealt with territorial attachments and ‘homelands’ come from the field of political geography, such as Paasi (1999); Newman (1999); White (2000); Yiftachel (2001b) or Kaiser (1994), while others have dealt specifically with border delimitation, trying to either build formal rationalist accounts that are based either

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<sup>10</sup> For example, in the Albanian case the idea of territorial unification began to arise by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This was rather late even measured against the surrounding Balkan countries. There were two kinds of national awakening in fact: a cultural one that started in the years 30-40 of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and a political one in the last decades of the same century (Egro 2009a). Endogenously, this was associated with creation of an imaginary collective sense of belonging to the same nation and exogenously the creation of outer boundaries of what constituted the outer frame of territorial identity construction, in the wake of Ottoman decay.



primarily on external interferences, or vice-versa, focusing in internal factors in order to explain border decision-making. For example, while Schelling in 1960s focused on interstate bargaining over territory and treated borders as ‘focal points’, Goemans focuses exclusively “on the strategic interaction within the state” (Goemans 2006: 26), trying to build a rationalist causal mechanism that explains borders, thus focusing on the internal factors as the most salient ones. I build on them, to connect the dots and offer a parsimonious and solid account that explains shifts produced by various conceptualized maps in border delimitation. Differently from these accounts, which are overtly structural and deterministic, I focus more on agency and how elites shape certain (national) maps and how their drawing of borders influences the way borders are perceived by the population.

## 2.2 A Theoretical Framework of Virtual Border Shifts

I follow the assumption that nation(-state) is a political project, subject to revision, especially concerning its outer and internal boundaries. The boundaries of the nation may also be contingent to certain political realities of the day and may take various shapes at different times. Paraphrasing Renan *virtual borders* are a “daily plebiscite”, which are deliberately created and sustained through competing political projects. A nation cannot exist without its borders and territorial loyalty precedes the creation of modern nation-states. In order for the political process of nation-state to revolutionize world politics and the shape of international relations by end of 18<sup>th</sup> Century and onward, parallel processes of nation and state-building started to coalesce around the intellectual activity of ‘national(ist) patriots’, who dictated a whole new paradigm in the conceptualization of territory and territorialization of identity. The nation itself rather than being simply an

*imagined community of people* as Anderson indicates, is more than that, as Michael Billig rightly observes when he points out that “a homeland has also to be imagined” (Billig 1995: 74). Thus, we witness concurrent processes of imagination when people perceive each other as belonging to the same political unit that had in time taken precedence over former local, religious and/or other identities, coupled with imagining of a homeland that connects the dots of the nation. These processes of territorial imagination are in flux and need for constant (re)invention in response to geo-political opportunities or limitations, as well as the domestic political struggles and private interests of national elites.

Gradually, after the French Revolution and changes instigated by Napoleonic wars, the perception of soldier-citizen started to imbue the boundaries with a new meaning--- that of national understanding, while material borders have always had their symbolic alchemy. Often political (administrative) boundaries have not coincided with symbolic (imaginary) ones, despite the ideal of congruence of nation and state that led to dismemberment of former empires and toward the most solid political reality of the day. As shown in the previous chapter, national identities and the territorial state did not evolve simultaneously. *Thus, virtual borders have often failed to map onto material ones (the state/ republican borders).* As Sahlins has demonstrated in his discussions of boundaries, the adoption of label “French” and “Spanish” by inhabitants of the Cerdanya valley came as the result of the establishment of the interstate border in the Treaty of Pyrenees of 1659. Thus, border delineation creates identities, and not the other way around according to Sahlins (1989), although this is not always the case. Some identities resist material changes and are

dependent on the intrinsic relationship between the scale of external interference and ability and degree of freedom of internal actors (elites) to imprint their vision.

From the materials I could gather so far (archival sources, memorandums or biographies of some prominent figures in the Albanian case), one important finding that I have come across at certain periods, but not others, is a common belief that a nation with amputated ‘natural’ borders is not a nation at all. It is rather a ‘massacred’ nation, as envisioned both in popular imagination and elite discourse.<sup>11</sup> This is an important nationalist theme almost everywhere, especially in Central and Southeastern Europe, where border revisions have always led to grievances of some sort and remarkably culminated with secessionist and irredentist wars in the 1990s in rump Yugoslavia. Such resentment has often been for perceived injustices made for borders that need to be redeemed when conditions are apt. The changing nature of state/ republican borders,-- following ‘great’ events, such as major wars and international conventions and treaties that follow,-- has also had major ramifications in the visualization the homeland and its virtual borders.

There are some political implications that follow the border configurations in discourse. *First*, the nationalists favored the theme that *material borders* have created and shaped artificially the nation, thus perpetuating the idea of an artificial nation-state, with *virtual borders* that ‘naturally’ extend much further. *Secondly*, different branches of national communities have followed different historical trajectories, which have influenced their relationship to the nation, although this is something that has not sat comfortably with the nationalist elites’ logic. And the *third argument*, which follows from the second, is that

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<sup>11</sup> Discourse matters because creates and perpetuates realities that cannot exist objectively and independently of language.

more often than not, ethnic kin living in various neighboring states surrounding the nation-state are often considered as semi-developed national communities that should always keep as a point of reference the homeland and be educated in the proper national sentiment. These findings help us have a better understanding of shifting ground of national identities. In addition, they help in the (de)construction of inclusive and exclusive frames used in the intrinsic relationship between national communities/ ethnic groups that are divided by 'hard' borders. Far from being a fixed position settled by international treaties and conventions, these discursive processes are continuously (re)positioning themselves vis-à-vis the other, depending on competing elites' goals and strategy.

The fixation with the volatile nature of borders in the Albanian case and how it shapes certain narratives dates back to the London Ambassadors' Conference of 1913, when it was decided that almost half of Albanian-speaking lands were to be redistributed to the other Western Balkan countries. I am mentioning it here because it has survived being a favorite topic of nationalist elites and as the official version of history from time to time changing the virtual map dimensions in consistence with a common myth of a pre-existing Albanian nation. It has surfaced as part of mainstream discourse only when the opening opportunity structures of domestic ethnic outbidding have favored a nationalist radicalization rhetoric that has served as a (easy) way to secure political goals. The phenomenon of border revision can be also seen in the Hungarian case after Trianon Treaty or Romanian claims after its loss of Bessarabia (Király and Veszprémy ed. 1995). Also, the Greek argument that it lost constituent elements in Minor Asia, talk *strictu sensu* of similar 'massacred nations', desperately in need for revindication of lost territories from these

nations whose national mappings supposedly did not match the ‘feelings of the people’. And as it usually is the case, a small group of entrepreneurs always speaks on behalf of the people.

This project takes a *top-down approach*, arguing that (re)making of borders are engineered by clusters of men who possess the necessary political clout and social, economic and cultural capital. The rising bourgeois was key to the emergence of elite-driven nationalism, by the spread of education in vernacular and calls of patriotic agitation. Hobsbawm has rightly observed that the deciding role of “the lesser landowners or gentry and the emergence of a national middle class in numerous countries, the spokesmen of which being largely professional intellectuals... [and above all]... the *educated* classes...” (Hobsbawm 1962: 133-35; Nairn 1974: 63), which constituted the most important factor in nationalist awakening.<sup>12</sup> Here I subscribe to the dichotomy set forth by Seton-Watson when he distinguishes between two kinds of nations: the old and the new. He differentiates between them by stressing that “the old... acquired national identity or national consciousness before the formulation of the doctrine of nationalism. The new are those for whom two processes developed simultaneously: the formation of national consciousness and the creation of nationalist movements. Both processes were the work of small educated political elites” (Setton-Watson 1977: 6-7).

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<sup>12</sup> The new (social) middle class or bourgeois were actually the elite in inventing the traditions or leading the transformation process as nationalizing intellectuals. As Smith correctly observes: “[i]t is the intellectuals—poets, musicians, painters, sculptors, novelists, historians and archeologists, playwrights, philologists, anthropologists and folklorists—who have proposed and elaborated the concepts and language of the nation and nationalism and have, through their musings and research, given voice to wider aspirations that they have conveyed in appropriate images, myths and symbols (Smith 1991: 93).

These new elites, which broke the rigid lines of aristocracy and clergy on one hand, and mass of peasants on the other, were in general crucial for inventing the boundaries of the nation. This is the second side of the coin that Winichakul describes in the case of Siam *Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of the Nation* (1994,) because as he argues in the case of Thailand, it was clearly an external project, a “Western (Colonial) Mapping” of that new nation. In the case of Albania, the idiosyncratic element is the driving process led by a small indigenous elite who had received foreign education (mostly Western), but who grounded their ideas in a national-romantic movement that gave rise to the main principles of nation-building and state-formation. These nationalist (diaspora) intellectuals,<sup>13</sup> which included both expatriates and diaspora members who lived most of their lives abroad, were the prime shapers of popular imagination with regard to where the mental borders of the nation lay. Similar cases can be found almost everywhere. One is that of nineteenth century Catalan priest and poet Jacint Verdaguer, who largely helped to construct “a geographical narrative linking nation and territory” (Etherington 2010). Or as in the Central European context, where in both Poland and Czech Republic the role of intellectuals as nationalist entrepreneurs was indispensable for creating nations. In the case of the Czech nation, “[t]he role of individual ‘organizers of national imagination’ was even greater: the historian Frantisek Palacky, who defined the meaning of Czech history, deserved to be called ‘the father of the Czech nation’.” (Walicki 1999: 261). Such examples could not

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<sup>13</sup> I rely here on a definition of the term ‘nationalist intellectuals’ operationalized by two authors in following terms: “A nationalist intellectual is a social actor whose claim to distinction rests primarily on his/her claim to cultural competence and whose social consequence is indirect, through the use of their symbolic products as resources in other activities constructing the nation, whether through histories, poetry, or organizing pamphlets. Intellectuals may organize themselves in different ways- through associations, through coffeehouses, through political parties...” (Suny and Kennedy: 402-403). While Kaiser uses interchangeably the terms ‘nationalist intellectuals’, ‘nationalist intelligentsia’ and ‘nationalist elites’ term “nationalist elites” (Kaiser 1994:12-13).

have been lacking in Southeastern Balkan context where the role of prince, poet and priest Njegos of Montenegro, or the Serbian most celebrate linguist, lexicographer and folklorist, Vuk Karadžić (Clayer 2007, 181), were instrumental in both nation-building processes in their respective countries, as well as helped establish a mental map of nation's boundaries which had further political ramifications, especially when these nationalist intellectuals also maintained position of political power.

In the Albanian case, both 'internal' and 'external' elites impacted how the national geography shifted at critical junctures. I consider diasporic elites as one of the proxies of 'external' elite construction of virtual borders. The diaspora<sup>14</sup> has often been instrumental in in the construction of popular map imagining, border conceptualization and shifts, as well as policy initiation. In general, diasporas tend to be more active in expansinary nationalism than residents of a particular country.<sup>15</sup> The level of internal digestion of such diaspora-generated ideal that visualizes a maximalist map that spreads beyond the republican borders of nation-state, is prone to how much inclined domestic elites are to absorb such discourse or to act on its urges. When diasporic communities are seen and perceived as sources of moral legitimacy, financial support or mediating interlocutors with powerful and influential countries, the domestic elites are inclusive of their pan-nationalist

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<sup>14</sup> By diaspora here I refer to overseas diaspora, mostly in places like United States, Italy, Romania, Turkey, Greece and Egypt whose members have been forced exiles from the 'motherland' but whose impact has had a considerable weight in Albania's affairs.

<sup>15</sup> This may be because of the idealized picture they have nourished toward the nation(state), whose real picture may be totally different. On the other hand, while their rhetoric may sound archaic and old-fashioned nationalistic on first glance, their kin in the homeland may well be influenced by it in some periods. Or quite on the contrary, the people in the homeland can have altogether different priorities in setting up their (domestic) agendas, which may not be affected at all by diasporic discourse in other periods.

map projects that push for expansion of borders or (at least) tend to support their claims publicly.<sup>16</sup>

Both external and internal elites need to convince the people, though we must stress the caveat that ‘masses’ are not an empty vessel that awaits to be filled by first nationalist ideologue that comes along. Seen from this perspective, I share Conversi’s idea when she argues that though nationalist intellectuals clearly have the upper hand in mobilizing the “masses”, they nevertheless “must touch some chord, their message must reverberate amongst the people, it must even look familiar to them” (Conversi 1995: 77-78). Thus they make use of what she labels “*ethnic markers*”, which may be used selectively “by nationalist elites as the nation’s *core values*” (Conversi 1990: 52; Conversi 1995: 76). She has argued that “language is normally the most universal of these *ethnic markers*” (Conversi 1993: 190).

There is a gap in the existing literature that brings together the aforementioned debates. Although there is a plethora of theories in nationalism studies, a myriad others that deal with diaspora, and a somewhat scarcer research that deals with boundaries,<sup>17</sup> there is little that connects the dots and tries to offer a parsimonious explanation of why a national community might imagine its borders narrowly at some times and expansively at others. Also, why at the same historic periods do some ethnic groups favor including adjacent territories, while others resist such plans or adamantly oppose them. This

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<sup>16</sup> Examples of these in the Western Balkans region are for example Milan Panić in Serbia, the Croatian diasporic community which led the creation process of HDZ, the party that ruled Croatia in the major part of the last two decades of post-communist era etc.

<sup>17</sup> Coming from various areas of studies, such as political geography, anthropology, sociology and/ or ethnography.



dissertation, following Hroch,<sup>18</sup> Anderson, Gellner and other scholars of nationalism, builds on the *argument* that ‘internal’ and ‘external’ (diasporic) elites play the primary role in building political agendas of national border landscape, while configuring a certain essentialized territorial map. These competing elites may not necessarily have similar projects of nation-building and more importantly their visions of virtual borders do not necessarily match each other. This view builds on the logic that *the elites engineer and manipulate nationa(ist) symbols to create and perpetuate the necessary environment for personal political gains, which is mainly getting and retaining political power. In other words, these competing elites use expansionist/ contractionary versions of national map and imagined virtual borders that may or may not be congruent with internationally recognized ones.* The masses tend to embrace elite shifts in map projections much more easily when the level of isolation of communities, widespread illiteracy and percentage of peasantry in the population are high as the cases analyzed here testify.

In order to embrace one or the other map project, such elites take into account external pressures, which often condition domestic discourse and limit their course of action. Their actions thus reflect a cost-benefit calculation that seeks to maintain and keep certain gains when opportunities arise. Here, I depart from much of the (classic) constructivist literature, because while constructivists suggest that identities shift and

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<sup>18</sup> Miroslav Hroch has built a three phase typology of nationalist intellectuals role-playing in fomenting of modern nationalisms. Phase A is when their main activity is scholarly work to awake interests among the fellowmen in a new political project: *the nation*. It usually centers on language or other common bond that seeks to forge a common bond among people of disparate interests and personal identities. Phase B happens when these intellectuals turn these nationalist ideas into social movements through organized means (such as writings, editing newspapers, organizing clubs, leading marches and teachings). Phase C is when the masses generally speaking, become involved directly in nationalist politics and a broad nationalist consensus for a specific nationalist design gradually evolves (Hroch 1996: 79-80). Mosse (1975) has coined the term “nationalization of the masses” for this third phase, in his study of mass mobilization in Germany.

national borders are constructed, they often do not talk about the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing borders in national imagination. In this, they are as teleological as the modernists in imagining that something is rooted and then is consolidated (it goes in one direction).

### **2.3 Delineating borders in nationalist discourse and nation`s mental mapping**

There is a lot of discussion surrounding borders. They can be conceptualized as walls or bridges depending on who is included and who is left out. Boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘others’ are critical elements in establishing ‘us’ and excluding ‘others’, thus playing a powerful identity construction role both endogenously and exogenously.<sup>19</sup> In regard to Eastern European context and its historiographies, this has often been the issue. As Brunnbauer has noted: “[t]he history of national minorities outside the ‘mother state’ is included in the history of the nation, while, on the other hand, the history of minorities of the state`s territory is excluded.” (Brunnbauer 2004: 14). In addition, it has been convincingly argued that borders may bisect nationalities, or may follow national demographic divides. For example, Van Evera writes that: “[n]ation-bisecting borders are more troublesome, because they have the same effect as demographic intermingling: they entrap parts of nationalities within the boundaries of states dominated by other ethnic groups, giving rise to expansionism by the truncated nation (Van Evera 1994: 274). He

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<sup>19</sup> As Sahlins puts it: “[n]ational identity is a socially constructed and continuous process of defining “friend” and “enemy,” a logical extension of the process of maintaining boundaries between “us” and “them” within more local communities. National identities constructed on the basis of such oppositional structure do not depend on the existence of any objective linguistic or cultural differentiation but on the subjective experience of difference. In this sense, national identity, like ethnic or communal identity, is contingent and relational: it is defined by the social or territorial boundaries drawn to distinguish the collective self and its implicit negation, the other (Sahlins 1989: 270-271).

takes as illustrative of this, the example of Hungary's borders which bisect (and truncate) the Hungarian nation, giving rise to a (now dormant but still surviving) Hungarian revanchism against its neighbors Slovakia, Serbia, and Romania. Also, the Russian/Ukrainian border bisects both nationalities, creating the potential for movements to adjust borders in both countries and it actually fueled some of the political feud between Yushchenko/Timoshenko versus Januković in the events of Orange Revolution. This is in line with my argument that analyzing shifts in borders uncovers causes of shifts in national identity, because the borders themselves are indicators of the national identities.

Some authors agree that they are clear divisive lines, referring simultaneously to their double function: physical and mental. Political geographers, usually evoke 'boundaries' as a "precise, linear division, within a restrictive, political context", while understanding 'frontiers' as invoking more "zonal qualities, and a broader, social context" (Sahlins 1989: 4). For other authors, "[b]oundaries are understood as institutions and symbols that are produced and reproduced in social practices and discourses" (Paasi 1998: 670). This in turn leads to what others have pointed that: "[t]he demarcation of boundaries is fundamental to the spatial organization of people and social groups" (Berg and Oras 2000: 601). Fredrik Barth, whose pioneering work on ethnic groups and boundaries in late 1960s, paved the way for new and invigorating analysis in this direction, has noted that: "[t]he incentives to a change in identity are thus inherent in the change of circumstances" (Barth 1969; 1994: 25; Brubaker 2006; Tilly 2006).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Barth was referring more to borders between groups, often within a single society (Barth 1970: 1-3), while I am referring more to geo-identity boundaries, but the same logic applies nonetheless.

The construction of mental borders-- sometimes complementing and at other times conflicting the physical borders-- shape identities of people living on either side of the border. Often, people of same ethnic background cut by borders have belonged “to two different states- states whose development, moreover, has proceeded very differently.”<sup>21</sup> This was the case after the 1912 Conference of Ambassadors’ decision in London to recognize the independence of a free and sovereign Albania, which included only half of Albanian-speaking communities, leaving out chunks of territory inhabited by ethnic Albanians. This is not to say that these communities ever lived together under a common state-like entity, except for the organizational forms of Ottoman Empire vilayets, which were pre-national entities, grouping people alongside administrative concerns and sidestepping ethnic, religious inter-group differences or any other cleavages.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the people that remained on Albania’s side of border developed different narratives about who they were and where the borders of the nation lied, compared to the ethnic kin across the border. This fits the *narrative construction* that Anssi points out: “[n]arratives should not be comprehended only as modes of representation but also as discourses that crucially shape social practice and life... and great importance has to be attached to public narratives associated with cultural and institutional formations and inter-subjective networks and institutions.., and that narratives connected with institutions of state, nations and territory are of vital importance” (Anssi 1999: 75). The state and other institutions that were consolidated much earlier in Albania, played a ‘patriotic pedagogical’ role that sought to

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted from P. Vilar in the foreword of Sahlins’ book.

<sup>22</sup> Within the state-like borders of Ottoman Empire that ignored ethnic, religious, cultural logic and opposed the concept of nation, a pre-national religious affiliation was used as criteria to form the *Millets*, grouping nations according to religious affiliation and overlooking language and other differences.

weave together a narrative about the indivisibility of nation and creation of an imaginary map with enlarged virtual borders. This map has been a useful tool by elites that tried to consolidate their grip in power or secure ruling in the first place.

While ‘hard’ administrative borders are often decided by international treaties or conventions and follow a major shift in geo-political circumstances, the ‘virtual’ borders are often engineered domestically in order to favor a particular discourse that helps retain of grasp power by competing elites. As N. Megoran puts it, “it has been underlined that boundaries do not simply exist as legal and cartographic entities. They are produced by people, generally elites, and may have enormous consequences on people” (Megoran 2010: 48). Smith (1986) sees nation-building as an ongoing process that does not end in a specific historical period. This process often involves discursive debates on alternative mapping of the nation, depending on political gains and external pressures, which is manifested for example in the Albanian case, where the elite struggles played the most salient role in shaping certain understanding of territory and map expansion/ contraction. But, in the Albanian case we seem to have a somewhat different situation to what Megoran observed in his study on Uzbek- Kyrgystan borderline, where “‘The border’ acted as both a material and discursive site where elites struggled to gain or retain control of power and to imprint their own geopolitical visions” (Megoran 2002). Quite the opposite, the borders in the Albanian case have changed not only due to elite vision differences, but also because of geopolitical considerations that often constrained domestic choices and were determinant of the map shape. The borders have not been the source of clashes per se, but the result/ outcome of elite struggles to maintain power and ethnically outbid each other through

expansionist schemes or showing indifference to national map in accordance with power calculations and opportunity openings.<sup>23</sup> For example, Mikić writes when he mentions that: “[the] Albanian leadership in the Kosovo *vilayet* at this time opposed all attempts by Albanians in the south [the location of government] to tie them to their own and larger Albanian interests. Bairam Tsur and Riza-bey, leaders from Djakovica, were especially hostile toward the South” (Mikić 1986: 165). It seems that national(ist) elites are not as compact as they seem at first glance and often clashes of elites are manifested in making and breaking mental borders that serve their political gains.

## 2.4 The two overlapping maps of the Albanian nations

There are two main mental maps of Albania over the past a century, which have been variously manipulated by leaders to respond to environmental challenges. At times, these challenges are domestic, as when competing politicians mobilize upon a different national map in order to attract greater popular support and thereby unseat the incumbent politicians. The second driver is international constraints, which at times limit the extent to which expansive borders can be championed by state leaders. The first map is that which traces the borders of the state and which normally predominates during ‘normal’ politics/

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<sup>23</sup> A case that bears similarity is what Kürti (2001) describes when referring to Hungarian elites involved in mental mapping of Transylvania. He writes that: “it reveals how elites have imagined this region for the purpose of fashioning powerful images and ideal to remake the national self and the neighboring others; and it points to the ways in which a region is clothed with specific characteristics, meaning, and symbols that in turn serve the center in its argumentation for entitlement for that land. The Transylvanian case illustrates how Transylvania has acquired the meaning of a faraway border culture in the Hungarian mentality and how in turn it has helped the nation’s elites to produce an enduring, powerful message about its importance for the nation” (Kürti 2001: ix). This essentialization of a particular remote border zone endowed with quasi-mythical importance for nation-building processes, kept and nourished in a cohesive manner by elites in order to create a homogeneous narrative goes opposite way from my argument that elite action and continuous clashes produces different narratives that change at certain critical junctures.

policy-making. The second is the revisionist, expansionist map that envisions an imagined nation with virtual borders that spread beyond the state, during ‘critical junctures’ (i.e. periods of crises, regime change, nation-building or institutional build up).<sup>24</sup> An example of this is manifested from the example of map below which dates back from 1891, a time where nationalist movement to unify Albanian-speaking territory in a single administrative unit started.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Since these maps reveal how people perceive a certain area and what kind of mental images they have of a particular place (Gould and White: 1974: 174), I share the view that they bring interesting insights to the field of ethno-politics, borders and nationalism because they represent “qualitative assessments of two key issues in ethno-territorial studies: individuals’ attitudes towards territoriality and the process of homeland-making in general” (Akçali 2010). But for this project I use this term as a simple heuristic device that helps to grasp the visualization of mapping the territory at a given time and space and processes of identity territorialization as they are engineered by elites, rather than in the more complex form that is used by political geographers.

<sup>25</sup> This map as many others in the text have been kindly provided from personal archive of Artan Lame and retrieved in Vienna archives (H vj 1891). It shows the maximalist scope of what the nationalists wanted to include in their visualized (forthcoming) Albanian state.





Map 5

Map of 1891 of Albanian-dominated vilayets<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Private collection of A. Lame, originally retrieved from Vienna archives. Interesting because the spelling of names of cities etc, in Albanian.



At times, the map shifts abruptly, such as with the declamation of A. Zog as King of the Albanians, rather than Albania, a move that infuriated the neighboring countries, especially Serbia and Montenegro which in fact had contributed to his return to power after the revolution of 1924. By claiming to represent Albanians wherever they were, Albania as a geo-political (closed) entity was enlarged to that of the *Greater Albania*, albeit for a short period because later through concessions to Yugoslavs and cooperation with them, Zog reversed any maximalist aims and punished the irredentists, thus drawing the wrath of nationalists from both sides of the border.

At other periods there is only one predominant map in the political domain, such as most of the time during communism in Albania, when there was not easy to make claims on other states-- because the international constraints were too high-- and where there was no real political competition internally, where anyone could benefit from using subordinated mental maps to gain political points. In other words, the dominant frame may at times exclude other real competing frames, because of lack of political competition. This is not to say that during communism in Albania, there was not any articulation of various maps at certain critical junctures, where Tirana regime saw any openings in the geopolitical kaleidoscope. But it was rarely done in a strategic manner to respond to internal pressures, as is elaborated in detail in Chapter Four. Thus we note in this period the ambivalence of the communist regime that went from advocating a Kosovo-Albanian unification right after the WWII, to swiftly change approach toward an abstract cosmopolitan ideal. What followed was an unequivocal withdrawal of claims from 1948 and onward vis-à-vis the Albanian inhabited regions in Yugoslavia. While some

communication channels remained open with Belgrade, there was some ambivalence at crucial years that are identified accordingly in chapter five. In the late 1980s, took place the indirect inciting of the idea of Kosovo republic, following the rift with Belgrade's regime. Furthermore, the predecessors and founders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (the ideologues, the financiers and the political leaders) were former Marxist groups (thus nominally cosmopolitans), financed and heavily influenced by the national-communist Tirana regime in the 1980s.

This story continues in the post- communist era, with the first opposition call for finally joining their Kosovar brethren in a single state, then we witness sort of ambiguity, to follow with a strong call for a Kosovar independent state, as a partner junior (natural) ally of the more consolidated Albanian one. In this period, sharp variation in configuring the virtual map of the nation, is noted among the publics in Albania, in Kosovo and amongst the sizeable Albanian community in Macedonia. The story of shifting borders in national imagination, is not so linear and a thoroughly process-tracing to observe the nuanced changes in public perception as carefully engineered by the elites is going to be used in the respective chapters.

The model presented here predicts that the competition is more likely to be fierce during times of political transition when international constraints are in flux and when political competition increases domestically. This is in line with other authors that have argued for the role of international norms in affecting domestic political change (i.e. Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Weir 1992). Thus national identities are used by challengers

to overturn the existing political establishment, as in the interwar and post-communist periods.

During politically turbulent times (i.e., during new nation-building projects or in contested states like Macedonia), the national boundaries often become politicized and carry a symbolic loyalty that is tradable. In exchange for giving their loyalty to the newly found nation-state and respecting certain borders associated with it, people are offered a sense of inclusion in the new community. The nation then becomes a trademark and its borders constitute the physical and mental barrier of who is included and who is left out. This is what Katherine Verdery calls: “the political utilization of the symbol nation through discourse and political activity, as well as the sentiment that draws people into responding to this symbol’s use” (Verdery 1993). This becomes particularly a necessity in times of regime change, transition periods or when the domestic and international changes are in great flux. This opens up the opportunity for masses to be much more receptive to appeals of elite to increase community coherence and social capital by applying map maximization as a sort of remedy to weakness of that present situation.

#### **2.4.1 External constraints during the mapping of virtual borders**

In the first chapter, I posed the hypothesis that when foreign leverage increases, domestic agendas tend to comply with pressures inflicted by third-party actors. This means that if certain geopolitical realities involve the interests of certain powerful states with stakes in the region (or even more powerful neighboring countries which impose their blueprint), domestic elites tend to offer a much de-escalated (national) map that envisions the nation(-state) with borders coinciding with the official administrative unit. When

foreign leverage decreases due to other emerging priorities, the national agenda becomes more focused on nationalist discourse that invokes visualization of a greater national map that see the nation enlarged. This happens because of political calculation of elites that are either trying to remain in power, or to come in power through such ‘ethnic outbidding’ maps. In other words, boundary engineering elites are the primary factor for deciding the location of the nation, while external influence, particularly hegemonic interventions, are critical factors that condition the domestic discourse and constrain or enable the fulfillment of national(ist) designs. Thus, the project looks at both endogenous and exogenous causes and is based on the assumption that both of these factors shape the nation-building agenda of elites, which in turn shapes the mapping of the nation in folk imagination. The nation can be inclusive or exclusive based on clashing social, cultural, political and economic interests of the domestic elite,<sup>27</sup> which positions itself in light of different strategies applied by foreign allies, (invented) enemies, or great powers.

The external intervention, which in her study, Jenne (2007) has aptly defined as “lobby actor”, intervenes not only in minority-majority relations and how it is framed in domestic discourse as the author has convincingly argued (Jenne 2007: 39), but also touches upon how borders are visualized by affecting various conceptualization of how large or small nation is imagined at a particular point of time and why such changes occur. Some other authors have built a conceptual framework that captures the roles that interested and powerful third actors play in resolving disputes. For example, the

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<sup>27</sup> Here I mean homogenous elite divided on various interest representations. In my view, this is a general characteristic of Eastern European countries where such cleavages are more noticeable than say, Western Europe, US and other developed countries where a spirit of capitalism based on profit and concurrence, clear separation of powers and a high degree of specialization have provided room for more complex and sometimes antagonistic, or at least competing elites.

“intervention role grid”, of Watkins and Winters (1997) is used to shed light on the difficult choices that confront interveners with interests and power. In other words, they intervene only when it suits them (Carment and James 2004), and by their mingling, the interveners influence domestic decision-making. They do so by constraining the choices of local actors (Putnam 1988). The tools they use range from pointed rhetoric under some institutional guise, to arm-twisting and outright sanctions, which may include economic or even military schemes. Most usually though, interested powers do not resort to violence but abide to certain norm-developing or persuasion.

In small countries and weak states, like in the case of Albania, it is easy to constrain the degree of freedom of agenda-setting of local players, in a relatively low-cost way, since the governments of these countries are highly dependent on foreign aid and are prone to embrace certain geopolitical designs that add to their overall security. Also, they tend to be highly sensitive to risk, not wanting to antagonize more powerful neighbors or ‘Great Powers’ with a stake in that particular region. Thus, they listen and closely follow the advice and recommendation of those external actors (state, international organizations, and even multi-national corporations) that have a certain arm-twisting capability and an invested interest in the area. Furthermore, because of long-lasting tradition of international norm, such as sanctity of sovereignty and non-intervention, they tend not to act aggressively on behalf of kin or advocating any kind of irredentist schemes, since that is highly improbable to get supported or recognized as legitimate aim. Only in extreme conditions will small states articulate goals that seek to antagonize a more powerful state. Or when windows of opportunity open up in the advent of a federation’s dismemberment

or epochal changes, like the ones in 1989. When faced with external intervention of any kind, the domestic elites tend to comply with their imposed will, or else they trade their pretensions on some bargaining deals that offset the otherwise risky undertakings.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Domestic political competitions and (re)drawing of national map

The other working hypothesis is that *elite interests* have a primary impact on how the national geography has shifted at critical junctures. The competing elite struggles explain why national geography differed between diasporic Albanians versus Albania proper, especially when external pressures are weak or missing and it is important to inform this discussion by referring to the concept of “ethnic outbidding” (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972), where elites outperform each other by becoming vociferously nationalist like in the case of Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s (Gagnon 2004). In such a loaded environment, the elites are backing up nationalist schemes that are based primarily on expansionist maps that imagine the nation’s borders in an enlarged version and radicalize vis-à-vis each other in order to increase the support base. Such elites tend to be more parochial, when *windows of opportunity* spring up, meaning when external pressures soften up.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This may well explain why for example the first post-communist government in Albania went from fully supporting nationalist goals and a discourse that was based on possible unification with Kosovo toward amiable cooperation with Montenegro (at the time part of rump Yugoslavia together with Serbia in a joint Serbian-Montenegrin federation), to break the (economic) sanctions of UN and furnish gasoline and other necessity goods in the midst of Yugoslavian wars. All this is recorded in Momir Bulatović, former president of Montenegro (1990-1998) and prime minister of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1998-2000) and a staunch ally of Milošević, in his recently published memoirs: *The Rules of Keeping Silent*.

<sup>29</sup> In my master thesis, I developed an explanation that focuses on the strength of domestic institutions that foster such kind of expansionary nationalism that upon certain triggers can transform itself into irredentist designs during critical moments (Kalemaj 2007).

Horowitz (2000) has argued that boundaries amongst groups are usually malleable, prone to change when opportunities proliferate due to political context. The domestic elites usually profit under such circumstances and jump to occasion by purposefully instrumentalizing (ethnic) emotions and attitudes and turning them into powerful magnets and symbols in a quest for power. V. P. Gagnon for example, has introduced the concept of "demobilization" where the (conservative) elites discourage the masses from active political participation while "ethnically outbidding" the opposition in the context of Yugoslav conflict (Gagnon 2004). They did so by constructing images of external threats and inciting ethnic-based violence in order to shift political discourse away from issues of economic reform or other more salient matters. Thus, borders were quickly redrawn in that case to immediately create a *Greater Serbia* or *Greater Croatia* that would 'rise like a phoenix in the ashes' of the doomed Federation. Such mapping had powerful effect on the ground, since it did not remain in the level of rhetoric, but soon became an operating apparatus and driver of policy, informed by rationalist calculations, where the main goal was surviving power by the existing leaders.

In the Albanian case, the elite have constructed an expansionary map of Greater Albania each time that has found it convenient and with little bearing costs. Such map has been championed by internal and external elites, although often not in tandem with each other. A general trend that is witnessed particularly in the postcommunist period is that often opposition parties/leaders tend to be more in favor of such (expansionist) map, while the ruling ones are less prone to antagonize the international factors and other domestic political factors. This may be because the opposition forces have nothing to loose and

much to gain from advocating expansionary borders, while the government is always constrained by external pressures. Such pressures sometimes come in form of economic sanctions or direct military intervention which were both experienced in former Yugoslavia, or in the form of ‘sticks and carrots’ policy that European Union applies to its prospective members.

All in all the conditions that together lead to expansionist versus contractionary versus ambiguous or status quo borders in the form of hypotheses can be listed as follow:

1. *When international intervention is encouraging expansion and elite struggles domestically are low, we expect expansionist borders;*
2. *When international intervention is constraining, and elite struggles low, we get contractionary borders and map extraction;*
3. *When external constraints are low and elite struggles high, it leads to ethnic outbidding and as a result we face map expansion;*
4. *When external constraints are low, but so is internal elite competition, then map remains neutral;<sup>30</sup>*
5. *When both international constraints are high, but so are elite struggles and map competition, we expect map ambiguity.<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> By map remaining neutral I imply that map projection remains largely unchanged.

<sup>31</sup> By ambiguity I mean map vagueness which can be interpreted slightly different from different angles.



## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter sought first to introduce the phenomena of mental mapping shifts and construction of virtual borders, situating itself in the broader constructivist scholarship in nationalism studies, thus reviewing the field and outlining the specific contribution I seek to make with this dissertation. After engaging into a particular debate, that of borders, and how they are conceptualized by various approaches, I built up a theoretical apparatus that is needed to answer the empirical puzzles from which this project was informed. In addition, it undertakes to answer the more general question of understanding why (national) borders change and why they are perceived differently, at different times, inside versus outside of the administrative national unit, by the same ethnic group. The thesis argument elaborated in this chapter *builds on the logic of clashing elites that use competitive maps in order to secure power gains when domestic environment seems receptive, taking into account the scale and degree of external interventions*. As argued above and will show in the subsequent empirical chapters, the argument builds on a systematic study of the selected case in temporal and spatial dimensions, in order to be able to offer a general and parsimonious account of why such maps are used (strategically) at some periods and places and not in others. The next chapter looks at factors and actors that have shaped the historical construction of an imaginary identity amongst the Albanians in pre-1800 era as background information, before it goes to analyze critical junctures of interest in the nation-building periods of 1878-1899 and 1911-1912. Then state-formation period of 1912-1914 and WWI period of 1914-1918 are analyzed to study the national mapping shifts in both sides of borders that were formalized in 1913 by the

Great Powers in London Conference, but acquired legitimacy and broad international recognition only in 1921. Overall, chapter three uncovers how identity-building processes have been understood in relation to territory and delineation of borders and how competing elites have essentialized and championed certain maps in different periods in order to secure certain privileges or secure power.

## Chapter 3

### **From nation-building to state formation: how virtual mapping intersected with recognized borders in the Albanian imagination**

*“The crucial mechanism of border conservation is opposition. By definition, borders are oppositional and rely on otherness” (Conversi 1995: 76).*

*“...all borders and territories, even those that appear “normal” or “natural”, are social construction.” (Diener and Hagen 2010: 4).*

#### **Introduction**

This chapter delineates a structure that constitutes the basis of consequent empirical chapters, testing the hypotheses and following closely the model I introduced earlier. The evidence that is analyzed here concerns some of the earliest textbooks to date, additional primary sources, such as customary law, folklore and other ethnographic sources that give evidence of how a certain map was weaved by elites in the last decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued well to (post)-sovereignty era of Albania. The selection of the sources and their analysis was done with the specific aim of answering the following proxy questions that follow from the main (empirical) research question(s): (1) how was the Albanian imagined geography constructed in the pre-independence period and what changes took place in the post-sovereignty one? (2) What role did the demarcation of borders play in reconfiguring the Albanian imagined community? (3) How did the historical background inform these modern developments and how was memory shaped to configure a certain map in both sides of border? And lastly, (4) what motivated such changes and what are the primarily actors/ factors that generate these differential perceptions of the masses?

This chapter shows how elite struggles, combined with presence/absence of active external interventions, produce different maps of the nation that are afterwards used to inform state policy. We tend to have the expansionist versus smaller national maps even within the same ruler/political elite, like the example of map variation during King Zog's reign in late 1920s and throughout 1930s, as it is broken down in detail below. Such changes have occurred whenever the perceived external threats overtook domestic calculations or vice-versa. Tracing such events longitudinally is important for my model and its predictions that show how elite instrumentalization plays the upper part in the absence of external threats, while they scale down rhetoric and restrict actions when geopolitical constraints signal direct pressure upon them.

I briefly delineate a pre-1880 history, which is important for understanding how the national map was later constructed so that it was prone to continuous changes in conjunction with rising opportunity openings, before I discuss map shifts from 1878 to WWI. The chapter then states the model's hypotheses and predictions, while focusing on international constraints, and elite struggles. This chapter is broken into several sections that delineate important ruptures when major shifts happened. Such periods concentrate particularly at League of Prizren in 1878 and the initial delineation of national map to 1912 and the new state creation with internationally agreed demarcation and impacts on border imagination. The last section is drawn from the public sphere--poems, literature, textbooks, songs and anything else that gives evidence of the borders expanding and/or contracting). The section that follows does the same analysis on Albanians outside Albania (Yugoslavia), prior to the conclusion.

### 3.1 Albanian identity construction and how it mapped onto territory in pre-1880 era

There are two main ethnographic groups that make up the composition of what is called the Albanian nation. The first is *Toskërie* and lies south of present-day Albania. The other, *Gegënie*, is in the North, including the Albanian-inhabited lands that lie outside of the administrative borders (Zojzi 1976: 9). The common label *shqiptar* and the name of the entity *Shqipëri* [Albania] were mentioned for the first time circa 1774 by two foreign scholars, Zmajević in the North and Thunmann in the South (Xhufi 2006). Internally the word “Shqipëri” is first documented in a poem of Hasan Zyko Kamberi in second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is also of interest to note here that even the first usage of the “Albanian” label in its modern ethnic meaning dates from early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, where from provincial Council documents we face the expression “gjuhë e Shqiptarëvet”, [language of the Albanians] (Doja 2000:431). This is in stark contrast with the official historiography in Albania which maintains a perennial view of uninterrupted lineage from ancient Illyrians to present Albanians in the territory they occupy today but assuming that it was much more expansive. See below one the earlier recorded maps in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, by a colonel of Austro-Hungarian Empire Count Fedor Karaczay as it is imprinted within the map itself, which is probably the earlier traced record of maximalist Albania.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I thank A. Lame for providing this map and his valuable comments regarding the time when it was published.



Map 6 (H vj 1842)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Albania's boundary line is in yellow, while the boundary line of Austro-Hungarian Empire is in red and Bosnia and Serbia in green.

Others trace its origins much earlier and further in time. For example, Xhufi puts the origins of the ethnic term back in the early 11<sup>th</sup> Century. The author has several chapters for what he calls “Albania during the rule of “Hohenshtaufen and Carl I and II Anzhu” and “Byzantine Albania in the XIII and XIV centuries,” and he argues that this label has existed in its ethnic meaning from these Early Middle Ages (Xhufi 2006). In addition he argues that Medieval Albania had at least twice as much territory as present. For example, he mentions “that territories in the south of Albania that include present Northern Greece were included in the ethno-geographic notion Albania that substitutes for earlier politico-administrative notions” (Xhufi 2006: 305). He uses the same arguments for northern territories as well when he argues that Albanians of the South helped their co-nationals of the north to defeat the Turks in the battle of Kosovo (Xhufi 2006: 323). Such constructions, seem to be de-contextualized (i.e. applying today’s terminology way into the past), in order to project an imaginary reality with fixed borders, albeit mental ones, not politico-administrative units. This kind of perennial map is then used to support a certain political claim that Albanians are autochthonous in the region, were here before the others came, and occupied their land implying that they have the right to claim neighboring territories which were unjustly taken from them. *This data reinforces my thesis of a modern effort to construct historical borders of Albania for political purposes and the changing variation of the map based on elite calculation of power.*

The importance of boundaries is also reflected in popular memory and the strongest evidence for that in the case of Albanians in both sides of Albanian state northern borders comes from a highly regarded pre-political social institution, the Kanun. Kanun is the

traditional pre-political customary law of the Albanians. In the words of Leonard Fox, “[it] presents the fundamental customary law employed in the Middle Ages in almost all areas of Albanian settlements” (Fox 1989). It regulated the collective life of people in the absence of a central or local government. Kanun existed particularly in highlands of north of Albania for more than five hundred centuries, time when the rest of the territory was under Ottoman rule. In the Kanun, chapter 13, which exclusively deals with the importance and sanctity of the boundaries, it states in the title: “Land Boundaries are not Movable”. Then article 242, explicitly states: “Once boundaries are fixed, they are never moved again.” Article 243 continues: “[i]n the view of the Kanun, the bones of the dead and the boundary stones are equal. To move a boundary is like moving the bones of the dead” (Fox 1989: 74). This language, which *essentializes the boundaries, illustrating the thesis that they are perennial, given and non-changeable*, has proved to be very influential amongst the people in northeast of Albania, Dukagjini plateau and Kosovo, where this customary code of ethics has continued for centuries to shape behavior and norms of the community. In fact this has not been exclusive for Albanian territories, because other Balkan territories, such as Macedonia, Thessaly etc have had similar characteristics in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and onwards (Magocsi 1993, 2003).

The Albanian language, which testifies the bond between Tosks and Gheghs, emphasizes also the differences, because of different dialects (Zojzi 1976: 9). This is why the first move toward territorial unification went hand in hand with nationalists` efforts to promote the use of vernacular on one hand, and to erase the differences in dialects on the other. This is in line with what scholars of the field have called “the golden age of



vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs, [where] language became the essential element in the definition of national identity, while the recovery of “submerged” languages became the claim of nationalist parties” (Seton-Watson 1977; Anderson 1991: 69; Sahlins 1989: 268). The codification of literary language in Albania happened much later than all of the countries in the region (Skendi 2010). Albania had a codification of grammar and syntax only in 1972 when a literary congress set up by the communist regime, agreed on the Tosk dialect, although Geg was the spoken and literary language of three-fourths of Albanians, including ethnic kin in Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. Geg exclusion was done for several reasons. First, the communist elite was primarily coming from south of Albania. Second, the persecution of Catholic clergy in north of the country, regarded as under heavy influence of Vatican, though it had highly influenced the Albanian cultural awakening under the influence of Austro-Hungarian Kultursprotektorat. Third, various scholars argued that repression of Geg dialect was a deliberative aim of Tirana regime to break ethnic ties with the ethnic kin leaving in Yugoslavia, the most important partner in the region and a strategic ally (i.e. Pipa 1989).

But the main differences were that of Volk Kultur, a legacy which is region based and can be observed easily to the present day. This is manifested in different venues, for example, in music.<sup>3</sup> Physical barriers, such as mountains, separate Albanians of Albania with those of Kosovo. But on the other hand they also share same epics concentrated

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<sup>3</sup> The general folk music in the North of country is monophonic, while Southerner music has polyphonic characteristics. The North used to sing its epics, which centered on popular myths such as battles of ‘Albanian- the hero’ against the ‘Slav- the enemy’ with *lahute* or *cifteli* [sort of mandolin], whereas southerners used the flute as the main instruments and lyrics were more widespread here (Zojzi 1976: 10).

primarily to common venues, like Bjeshket e Nemuna (Accursed Mountains), which lies in both territories and has been the primary source of most of the epic oral poetry and legends. A prime example of this is the poem “Lahuta e Malcise” [The Highland Lute] of the Catholic Priest Gjergj Fishta, which became the main epic that not only glorified the Albanians and their warrior skills, but most importantly for our discussion, it played a major role in constructing the dividing lines between the Montenegrin and Serbian neighbors. This was done while simultaneously trying to eradicate the existing multilayered language and religious borders amongst the Albanians on both sides of the official frontier, thus erecting borders with ‘the Others’, while erasing the internal borders that dissected the nation in many ways. Durham observes: “[s]o is it in the Debatable Lands. The Serbs have a converted Albanian as head of their monastery, and conversely, one of the most patriotic Albanian priests at Djakova was a Serb by birth- had spoken Serb only as a child, and now had almost forgotten it” (Durham 1909; 1985: 254). This reflects the shifts of identity boundaries which (re)constructed virtual borders in everyday life, especially in what the author calls “Debatable Lands”, the frontier territories. Furthermore, Durham writes of two particular tribes in mountainous north, one in Montenegro, the other in Albanian soil. The Kuchi tribe which lived on Montenegro’s side of border, had become “entirely Serbophone and Orthodox,” though as Durham traces in her research they were ethnic Albanians and Catholics previously. Meanwhile the other tribe that lies in Albanian side of frontier, “are all now Catholic or Moslem, and Albanophone but Serb names, notably Popovich, show they have not always been so” (Durham 1909; 1985: 43). In addition, she remarks that most of the renowned leaders of Montenegro and Northern

Albania were of mixed Serbo-Albanian blood (Durham 1909; 1985: 44).<sup>4</sup> Such shifting mental frames and redefinition of borders was not uncommon in daily practices, though it contradicts the generalizations made often by historians while discussing the formation of nations as a linear, inevitable process with shifting loyalties only in one direction (from local/religious to national). It seems that identities were truly a ‘daily plebiscite’, where people claimed new loyalties according to arising opportunities (domestic and geo-political both), and in turn, (re)constructed the mental frame of their *habitat* (nation/community of belonging). This process may have been more plastic than earlier believed.

Poetry has been the main fixation in literature both on Albanian communities in both sides of the border, contrary to trends in Western Europe. This characteristic that they share with the South Slavs neighbors, especially Montenegro, draws from the long tradition of oral poetry and cultivated folk myths, which in many instances recall heroic traditions and serve to distinguish between who is part of the group and who is left out. In such way mental borders are constituted and reconstituted perpetually, establishing imaginary inclusive and exclusive boundaries, which serve to reinforce each other. Long transmitted oral epics, such as *Eposi i Kreshnikeve* or *Mujo and Halili*, tell tales of long living animosities with Slav neighbors, while simultaneously reflecting a common heritage and tradition amongst the Albanians, notwithstanding the fact that the two sides of borders have never lived in a single politically territorial unit, which could have been remembered

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<sup>4</sup> In page 68, Durham gives a full picture of four large tribes of common origins, two of which lies in Montenegrion side, and who are “bitter foe to the Albanophone tribes on its borders”. While of the two Albanophone tribes, one is Moslem, the other Roman Catholic. She concludes in the next page: “[w]hat turned two tribes into Serbs and two into Albanians, and which was their original tongue, I cannot say; but probably they were of mixed Serbo-Illyrian blood, and their language was influenced by the Church to which either chose to adhere. It is said that the Albanophone Krasnichi were Catholic before turning Turk” (Durham 1909; 1985: 69).

as an era of former glory. At the same time, although same epics talk about the tradition of inter-marriage between Albanian and Montenegrin or Serbian, as well as the tradition of *vellam*,<sup>5</sup> later critical studies, tend to deliberately stress differences, in line with the political logic of the day. For example, a subjective study by Kadare titled: *Mbi Eposin e Kreshnikeve*, gets into the commonly found argument “I got there first!” which is not a rarity in the Balkans (Elsie 1995: 557). Such instrumentalization reached its peak especially during the King Zog`s state building processes in 1920s-30s and culminated during the communist rule where the political elites through ultimate ideologizing of humanities and social science helped socially engineer a certain projection of borders. Thus, “the state started to shape social identities, or they may have emerged as a result of, or in response to the state`s attempt to define or redefine its outer limit” as Eiki Berg has noted in another context (Berg 2003: 9).

Zojsi also gives an interesting account of the formation of *Gegënie* as a geo-political entity, where the Bushatllinj vassal principality under the Ottomans, united the Albanian Northern territories, including present day Kosovo, with some Montenegrin ones. The similarity these regions had in popular customs and lifestyle, more often than not was more visible among Montenegrin and Albanian highlanders than the Albanians of North and those of South.<sup>6</sup> The extent to which Albanian people recalled these close relationships with their Slav neighbors is expressed in a statement by one Albanian, which was noted by

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<sup>5</sup> Brother by choice, common to the tradition of Southeastern Europe when two warriors from different tribes/*ethnies* decided to drink a drop of blood mixed with wine from each other and this signified their brotherhood for life.

<sup>6</sup> This is also because at certain historical periods, administrative borders were different from the present. For example, during the ruling family of Balsać (in Serbian)/Balsha (in Albanian) reign the north of Albania and Montenegro were governed by the same person, which is claimed either as Albanian--by Albanian historiography, or Montenegrin--by Montenegrin counterpart (Rastoder 2004: 212).

Dositej Obradović on his journey through Albania: “together with the Serbs we form one family and clan” (Tucović 1914). Furthermore, as Mikić observes “... according to the writings of Marko Miljanov and others, the Albanian and Serbian peoples had close ties in peacetime. They shared strong social similarities expressed in numerous common customs, traditions, and awareness of past history, and in their mutual efforts against Turkish authorities; they often had even blood ties” (Mikić 1986: 113-114). This is not to say that *Gegënie* were a unified entity with no differences among its various regions. But these differences were minor compared to what they had with their co-nationals in the South.

Prior to nationalist age, the two earliest protonationalist manifestations were the Shkodra *vilayet* under the Bushatllinj rule and Ali Pashe Tepelena of Yoannina as the epicenters that resisted for decades to Ottomans and created a legacy which had long lasting effects in nation-building later on. Although these periods are largely ignored by scholars as having nothing to do with nationalist breeding and were most often viewed as territorial feuds within the Ottoman framework, in fact they were important for two main reasons. *First*, because they challenged both the administrative borders of Ottoman Empire expanding the frontiers of the established *vilayets* to increase their power vis-à-vis the Ottoman authority. *Second*, because they left a legacy in forging imagined national communities first amongst the territorially cultural units of Gegenie and Toskerie and then between these two in forging common battle against the double enemy: the Ottoman Empire on one hand and the newly established neighboring states on the other. This section was important to introduce the basis of identity construction and early map weaving that is going to shift many times over the following century.

### 3.2 The map resulting from the Albanian elite struggles during the years 1878-1899 and 1911-1912: Hypotheses and Predictions

Here I discuss the initial period of nation-building in years 1878-1899 and important shifts in conceptualization of national borders, as well as state building processes of 1911-1912 and its effects on Albanian imagined geography.<sup>7</sup> It is in these particular critical junctures that fierce elite competition over the shape and inclusive nature of the new nation-state and its corresponding borders first started to gain foothold in public discourse and took over the initiative in 1912 to establish the new state. There are many possible explanations of why the perception of a certain map gained the upper hand in elite thinking and mass perception at certain critical junctures such as League of Prizren or years 1911-1912 when proclamation of independence of Albania was made possible. These rival theories may apply as well to explain why different action to make the national and state borders congruent in practical terms or to negotiate over them was taken at different junctures. These approaches range from economic and social downturn which was becoming even worse with the declining Empire and the further stay within the Ottoman framework would be costly to both elite and common Albanian folk, whereas the creation of a new state with expansive borders would create the potential feasibility of the new unit. Other potential explanations include cultural ones, where the continuous suppression of autonomy in language rights, schooling etc., radicalized Albanians against the Ottomans. Or of strictly exogenous nature, meaning that internal shifts were decidedly influenced by foreign intervention and Great Powers play and Albanian elites just complied with the tide.

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<sup>7</sup> I am excluding the decade from 1900-1910 does not signal any shifts either in conceptualization of a virtual national map, nor in efforts to get it materialized through political or military acts.

The maps below are indications of geopolitics of Great Powers and their respective spheres of influence in the Balkan region, including Albanian-speaking territories.



Map 7

H Vj 1878 Eastern Europe<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Eastern Europe as divided by treaty of Berlin. Albanian territory recognized under the naming: Illyrians or Albanians. Private archive of A. Lame, originally retrieved from Vienna archives. As the legend of the map shows Montenegro got Antivari from Albanian territories.





Map 8 (H Vj1882)<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 1882 Map from the private archive of A. Lame, originally retrieved from Vienna archives (English map, but place names often in Alb, Greek, Slav, thus demarcating territory). In addition, outer borders delineate the projected Albania to foreign cartographer.



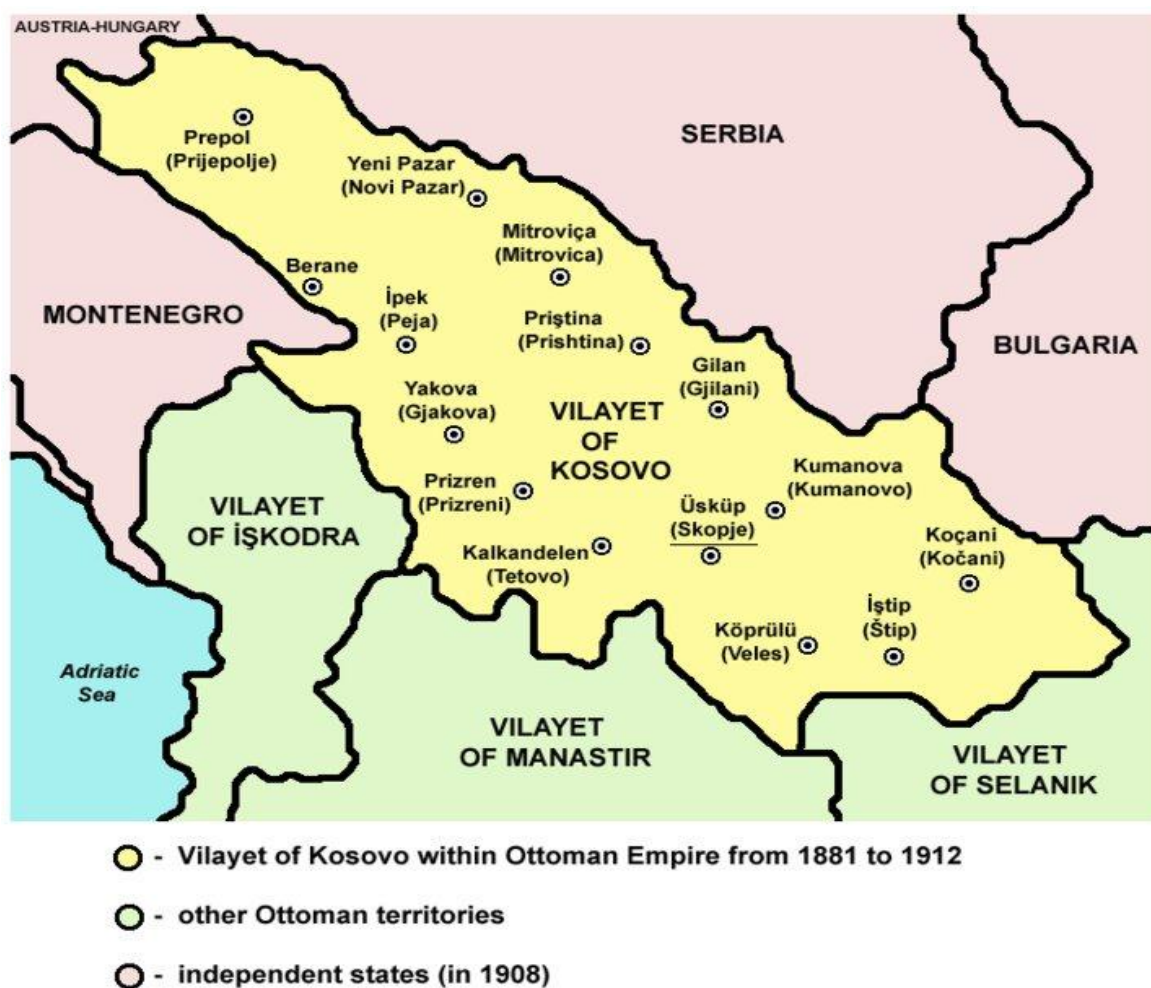
While all these factors may have played at least a partial role, none of them explains in entirety the exact timing of how and when the Albanian nation-building started, why it pursued an ambivalent action course until 1911 and why at critical junctures during this period we notice fluctuations in elite positions and map shape. Elite struggles, in conjunction with external pressures, were the main motivating factor that best explains the events and the creation of two rival maps, one of expansionary and the other of contractionary nature that have continued replacing each other in various junctures throughout 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

My model explains the shifting shape of Albanian nation over time in a chronological way. Below I break down the periodization and critical junctures that I am investigating in order to confirm my hypotheses. These are the main time periods, which I have identified that bear considerate geopolitical (and/or domestic) flux and when border reconfiguration or contestation has become possible. Each of these periods is thus treated to measure (1) the level of elite competition (2) and the degree of external pressures/constraints and how the two of them combine to produce contractionary/expansionary maps in both sides of borders.

### **3.3 The Mapping of Albanian Boundaries from the League of Prizren to Independence**

I first start the empirical discussion with the period from 1878, with the meeting of the League of Prizren that brought together Albanian representatives from the four *vilayets* with a majority of Albanian population to provide a response to the Treaty of San Stefano

that re-modeled the Balkan borders (Jelavich 1983) and that signaled the beginning of first nationalist awakening calls, while drawing up for a first time, a coherent and contiguous map of the nation. *See map below for a visualization.*



In this period, the influence of Ottoman Empire and its pressures were high and we see the development of a political thinking that sought to unify Albanian territories. Thus, the symbolic meeting of Prizren that took place amongst Albanian elite, to discuss the idea

of autonomy for Albanian inhabited lands, was accompanied with a process that started to delineate the ‘symbolic borders’ of the new entity, overlooking the existing administrative borders. Sami Frasheri, the scholar that wrote the politico-ideological platform “Albania what it has been, what it is, and what it will be?” as early as 1899, while proposing administrative divisions for an eventual Albanian nation, had located their centers at Shkodra, Ipek, Prizren, Prishtina, Uskup (Skopje), Monastir, Dibra, Elbasan, Tirana, Berat, Korcha, Kosturi, Yanina, Gjirokastra and Preveza, cities located in the four administrative regions ethnically dominated by Albanian ethnic kin (Frasheri 1924: 101-2). Furthermore, Frasheri’s proposal was for the new state of Albania to be spread in 80.000 km<sup>2</sup>, almost three times the present territory, and composed of the four regions (vilayets): Yoannina, Shkodra, Shkup and Monastir, where Albanians constituted a majority of population. This initial map (*see below*) has had long-term implications for the way the new nation-state was conceptualized by nationalizing intellectuals, as well as policy and cultural ramifications on the long-term.



Map 1

**The 4 Ottoman Vilayets (Kosovo, Shkodër, Monastir and Janina), Proposed to Merge in a Single Administrative Autonomous Unit by the League of Prizren in 1878<sup>10</sup>**

But as a French scholar observed: “[h]ow ironic that of these 15 Albanian centers [that Frasheri had identified], eight were awarded to either Greece or Yugoslavia!” (Jacques 1995: 337). This happened after the recognition of the new state by London Ambassadors Conference in 1913, when most of these regional centers were handed to neighboring countries in a compromise deal. For Albanian nationalists, this was a national dismemberment and reconfiguration of its natural borders, though such a nation-(state) did

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Albanian\\_vilayet.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Albanian_vilayet.jpg)

not have any predecessors. This was in line with the upheld views of nationalists agitators at the time that state borders should coincide with members of nationality.<sup>11</sup>

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the hub of Albanian nationalism was in Kosovo and there the main revolts against Ottoman Empire started. Since the leadership was in its majority from northern territories of Albania and they were in its most part conservative, rich landowners, clerical and with strong links with Istanbul, they imposed their image of an autonomous Albania under the authority of Sultan (Clayer 2007). The competing view of a sovereign Albania was defended only by the minority, a combination of Southern intellectuals and expatriates that had embraced romantic ideals of nationalism and was deeply influenced by Western Enlightenment. One of the most important elements that created a majority-minority bridge at the League was the issue of borders, where the four regions of Albanian-speaking population agreed to join in a single autonomous unit under Sultan's authority.

In 1908, an important meeting to decide for a common alphabet and written vernacular took place in Bitola/Monastir, which lies in present day Macedonia. It was a symbolically chosen place because it was regarded by the nationalists as the (geographical) center of the Albanian nation that included the four vilayets inhabited predominantly by Albanian-speaking folk, which extended East to Thessaloniki in Greece and West up to the shores of Adriatic Sea. It was at this Congress that the delegates from all these administrative districts agreed on a common alphabet. This lasted until 1912 with the creation of the Albanian state, when we witness a transfer inward and a shifting of the

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<sup>11</sup> For a similar argument with reference to the early German nationalists see Diener and Hagen 2010: 7.

centrality of ‘motherland’ in Vlora, south of Albania and later Tirana in 1920, which after Congress of Lushnja became the capital of the Albanian state. The choice of Tirana was based on the centrality that it posed in the new administrative center. Thus in a period of approximately two decades, we witness a continuous shift of the geo-symbolic center of the nation,<sup>12</sup> which enables us to draw some inferences about the imaginary proportion of where the nation’s outer borders were for the average folk. The reasons for such shifting were complex. This happened *first*, because territorial imagination was reinvented based on rationalist strategic calculations of domestic elites, who constrained from new geopolitical realities, tried to contract the map and shift the center of nation to coincide with the center of the new nation-state of Albania. *Second*, the selected sites were places where prominent leaders thought they would risk less because of better security measures against any foreign interventions, thus seen them as safe havens.

Although Kosovo more often than not was referred to as the territory unjustly separated from the ‘mother trunk’ and waiting to be redeemed by political leaders in charge of governance in the sovereign Albania through envisioned irredentist schemes, Kosovo shifted from being the ‘heart’ of the nation to the periphery. This is because state-formation activity in Albania conditioned the nation-building processes, where elite choices favored that particular border design that best suited its interest, obviously within the prevailing geopolitical constraints of the time.

The symbolic nation’s center, often being the geographical middle point, tells a lot about where the boundaries lie and how big or small the nation is imagined by elites and

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<sup>12</sup> In the post-1990s, some authors have convincingly argued that the epicenter of Albanian nationalism has once again shifted, this time from Tirana to Pristina (Kola 2003).

general public though it is usually the former who takes such decision and people follow. The leaders have based such decisional shifts on rational calculations that measure up the degree of third-party interventions and how prone they have been vis-à-vis domestic pressures and internal competition. The resulting (projected) map has been either inclusive of adjacent territories based mostly on ethnic markers, or a realistic one with the national borders fitting state`s internationally demarcated ones.

Thus, the national map sometimes takes a configuration of a homeland that extends to include all of Albanian-speaking communities territories, while in other periods the territorial scope is limited only to administrative Albania in both elite discourse and mass perception. This seeming ambiguity is a function of competing identities that are used instrumentally by whoever happens to be in power at the time. The political/economic/cultural elites are therefore crucial agents who engineer and shape the mapping of nation and its boundaries, fully complying and constrained by geopolitics of the day. The elites tend to comply with external constraints, particularly in weak states like Albania, whose geographical location is in a volatile region (Western Balkans) that has often become the playground of Great Power contestation.

A few noteworthy critical junctures start with post 1913 era when approximately half of ethnic kin and territory associated with living space of the Albanian community was awarded to Albania`s immediate neighbors.<sup>13</sup> As one author remarks: “[f]or years thereafter, maps on Albanian post office walls displayed those shaded areas of “Enslaved

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<sup>13</sup> Even the most recent official historiography source in Albania maintains that “the ethnic trunk was composed of approximately 52 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, with 1.550.000 inhabitants, of which 1.330.000 Albanians”. From this, “only 28.000 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of only 740.000 inhabitants were handled to the newly formed Albania.” See *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar III. Periudha e Pavarësisë 28 Nëntor 1912-7 Prill 1939*. Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë: Instituti i Historisë, Toena 2007. P. 4

Albania” occupied by Yugoslavia to the north and east and by Greece to the south” (Jacques 1995: 338).<sup>14</sup> Thus, perpetuation of mental borders of this twice the size imagined country were deliberately maintained in state institutions (such as post office official maps) nourishing the false hope that it was a temporary situation, soon to be corrected by new political openings/ opportunities.

The nationalist elite toward the end of 19th century up to 1911 was not interested in creating an independent Albania, but to secure the preservation of the Albanian-speaking communities, possibly in a single cohesive territorial entity under the nominal rule of Sultan. Thus, their oft-repeated demands on autonomy would have included four *vilayets* where Albanians claimed majority under a single entity. Only later, when they saw that Ottoman ship was sinking fast did their rhetoric turn overnight toward calls for full sovereignty. A second reason is that most newly nationalist elite maintained high posts in Ottoman administration, such as Ismail Kemal who was a high-ranking figure in the Empire (Kemal 1920).

Therefore, with the gradual degradation of the Empire, the political thinking amongst the Albanian elite evolved combined with raising patriotic agitation and inciting rebellions in order to develop a single Albanian entity with borders that would include all ethnic Albanians. Here we start witnessing a hegemonic struggle over the borders, where

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<sup>14</sup> This brings in mind at least two other examples from a different context. One concerns the Ecuadorian government issuing a postage stamp with a map showing Ecuador’s boundaries extending deep into Peru and the other that of the Argentine government which accompanied a map of the Malvinas/Falkland islands with a slogan that they are in fact Argentinean, not British (Glassner and Fahrer 2004: 88-89). These examples testify the tools used during state-formation periods for nation-building because as White reminds us: “they are an appropriate medium for inculcating particular understandings of territorial arrangements into the minds of their citizens (White 2004:64). Another author points out how another medium, newspaper maps “had a strong impact on defining Finland, its territory and borders in the minds of the general public, especially since 1899” (Kosonen 1999: 91).



the international constraints are high and elite-led map contestation becomes more likely because of domestic proxy battles over the borders (reflecting the struggle between Ottoman Empire and the Western Powers over the Balkans). In this context, we have Albanian elites divided in half between the ones who supported the Ottoman side and those who supported the Western side, while they each have their own preferred border. The turning point started with the so-called **Memorandum of Gerce**,<sup>15</sup> signed in 23 June 1911, which decided to send several demands to the Ottoman Empire authorities, where the main point (among the twelve) was “the territorial administrative autonomy for *all the territories inhabited from the Albanians*, under the warranty of the Great Powers” (Frasheri and Pollo 1973: 111). I underlined *all the territories inhabited from Albanians* not only from its vague meaning at a time when the population mixing was very vague at this part of the Balkan peninsula, but more importantly because it meant that the headmasters of the revolt against the Ottoman Empire, representing various parts of Albanian communities, had already created a politically meaningful imagining of an enlarged ‘motherland’ at this stage and had a clear goal of unification that pursued through continuous demands to Istanbul. This finds support in the original texts of their memorandums such as the ones mentioned above (Gerce, Prizren, Monastir etc), where representatives from Albanian-speaking communities as far from each other as Chameria in the South (present-day Greece) and Nish in the North (present-day Serbia), agreed on common texts that would seek a great degree of autonomy for a single administrative-territorial unit under the formal sovereignty of Sultan. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that the community heads were

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<sup>15</sup> A small village in present day Montenegro.

representing the wishes of their constituencies at this point in time, as well as education the masses through patriotic agitation, thus deliberately creating an image of the nation embedded in political terms. The cultural legacy of Renaissance era had thus slowly emerged in a political dimension. The political elite found out that they could retain former positions of power by reinventing themselves in the suddenly found homeland, which they depicted with inclusive national borders.

With the gaining of upper hand of the Western-leaning nationalists and sinking of the Ottomans, a territorial map was purposefully invented, which had already extended virtual borders to include all the previous four vilayets with a majority of Albanian-speaking population. In 1912 when they achieved the independence of what back then was only a fraction of Albanian-speaking territories and again in 1913, when the Ottoman army was driven away from a Balkan coalition, these nationalist elites were quick in deciding that the best way to preserve territorial unity, while retaining their power privileges (albeit in a new context), was to proclaim a sovereign Albania.

These elites, having served the Ottoman Empire for all their life in places of prominence, found themselves not quite incidentally in the lead. We can mention a few of the most distinguished examples. The first is Ismail Kemal, a deputy, former minister of foreign affairs and governor, later became one of the opposition leaders in Ottoman politics, because of change of fortune. He proclaimed Albania an independent and sovereign state and became its first prime minister after he loss previous positions of power, as his own memoirs testify. The Kemal case is interesting also for another matter. This is because he resigned fourteen months after he founded the new state due to

pressures from Great Powers, after they discovered that he became part of the Bulgarian-Turkish alliance that sought border revindication in the Balkans. Albania was promised the region of Chameria in the South and Kosovo in the North if it could join and the key person in this affair was somebody called Beqir Grebeneja, who was simultaneously an Ottoman army officer and an Albanian nationalist (Puto 2009). In exchange for receiving such foreign aid, Albania had to consent that the crown prince would be a Turkish official, rather than a Western prince as the Great Powers had agreed.<sup>16</sup> Thus, we can safely argue that the first prime minister of Albania was deposed because he conspired to replace a map of Albania with its 'hard' borders recognized from London Conference in 1913, with an Albania that would extend south to include Northern Greece and north to include Southern Serbia. Because of timely intervention of Great Powers, which were represented in Albania by the so-called International Commission Committee, -- also based in Vlora where the government had its headquarters, -- such design failed and Kemal was forced to resign.

Another example was Turhan Permeti, who served as foreign affairs minister for Ottoman Empire and was elected primer in Albania during Prince Vid administration. He did not even know Albanian when appointed as a prime minister and chosen to represent the country at the Versailles Conference (Macmillan 2002) in a compromise deal after the departure of Kemal. Similar cases were many of the other nationalists who jumped a sinking ship (the rump Empire) to embark a new one in the making (new sovereign Albania). Examples, in addition to Permeti and Kemal, ranged from Hasan Prishtina, a well-known deputy of Ottoman parliament who later served as minister and prime minister

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<sup>16</sup> New archival evidence has shown the briefly described events, juxtaposing previous stories that Kemal voluntarily stepped out of office because he completed his tasks and after it was established that Prince Vid was coming.

in Albania, to Esad Toptani who after serving the Empire, became Minister of War and Foreign Affairs during Vidi's regime in 1914. The case of Prishtina is especially telling because he was the typical member of the 'external' elite who continuously strived for power in the 'mainland'. As his last name clearly shows he was from Kosovo, similarly as other Kosovar leaders who were key players in Tirana politics throughout the period, such as Boletini, Curri or Mitrovica.<sup>17</sup> He frequently used the alternate map of *Greater Albania* and advocated for full participation of 'external' elites in the homeland politics, most of whom shared this vocation for an enlarged version of Albania that would accommodate their power demands, which could not possibly be served in a province of Serbia, such as Kosovo. Having been a minister in the first Albanian government in 1912, he became prime minister (albeit for only two weeks), after forcing another prime minister to resign in 1914.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the Albanian-speaking former Ottoman elites clearly stood to gain a lot from a situation when alternatives looked grim. On one side there was the option of sliding into obscurity with an Empire-in-the-breaking ready to dissolve, while on the other stood the opportunity of regaining the former positions of power and privilege in a new context. They decided to take the second route like their Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian counterparts decades earlier and it worked out, although they had to get rid of maximalist mapping

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<sup>17</sup> It is telling that in 1918, some Kosovar-Albanian leaders, such as Hasan Prishtina, Hoxhë Kadriu and Bajram Curri and many others created the **Committee for the National Defense of Kosovo** and had their representatives in several European metropolitan centers. It is interesting to observe how on one hand they were fighting for liberation of Kosovo, while on the other they were active in Albanian domestic politics having important state functions in government and legislative body.

<sup>18</sup> The story goes that he went with some fellow supporters from his native town to the hotel room where the prime minister Pandeli Evangjeli was sleeping in the middle of night, threatening him to offer a resignation letter and next day was decreed prime minister in December 1921. See Jacques (1995), or Fischer (1984) for this episode and a general panorama of frequent political moves of the turbulent times in Albanian politics in those years.

schemes on the way, and be satisfied with a much reduced Albania to rule that they longed for.

### **3.4 Great Powers geopolitics and its effect on shaping the newly created Albania`s borders: the shifts in the periods 1912 to 1917**

It is my assertion that ‘virtual boundaries’, which affect the way that nation is visualized in its territorial dimension by people, is foremost influenced by elite struggles and incentives they have to retain power. Using map engineering as a way to strategically manipulate peoples` beliefs, emotions, and divert their attention from more pressing matters (i.e. economic issues of the day), can be one of the most effective means in a political handbook in new states, contested states or even new regimes, often used by shrewd politicians. But the main impediments to elites taking a jingoist pathway to increase their chances of success are the *external interventions* that come in various disguises. Such forms can take economic incentives or sanctions, military threats or military interventions, geopolitical schemes which go beyond the limited power of local and parochial elites. In the previous chapter, we saw some expected outcomes as the result of elites’ interaction with each other in the presence/ absence of foreign mingling. In line with expected findings in the period from 1912 to 1914, we see a high degree of direct international control of Albanian sovereignty and territory control, exercised chiefly through local leaders.

It was in this initial period that Great Powers, which had created the International Commission Control (of Albania), achieved through the boundary engineering processes the map that suited their purposes. From 1912 to 1914, because of a combination of high

external constraints, as the result of power transfers to the newly appointed Albanian Crowned Prince, Wilhelm Von Vid and active presence of elite struggle, we witness a map extraction with some local leaders fighting to create their own small principalities where they could rule under the protection of one of neighboring Balkan countries.

On the other side of the border, in Kosovo, the real interferences for domestic elites border designing has continuously come from external sources, like geopolitics of Great Powers or assimilation processes and demographic shifts due to one reason or another. However, often the historians have made selected use of foreign sources, which justify internal claims or provide grounding for such simplified versions of official history. For example, Albanian historians cite the Austrian documentation which brings data that testify that Kosovo lands were inhabited by Albanian population and they were included in the concept 'Albania'. Such sources reveal amongst other things that: "Pristina is located in Albania (dok.3, 129); Prizren is the capital of Albania', their [Austrian] consideration that 'Kosovo was part of Albania' (dok. 114, 126, p. 35b; Zamputi and Pulaha 1990). These historians tend to ignore the context of such dubious sources which often refer to geopolitical realities of the day, rather than a continuous homogeneous nation with immutable borders. Also the choice of Prizren as the capital was probably due to the fact of the Prizren League which in itself was not a bold political decision to call for sovereignty but only greater autonomy for local leadership under the official rule of the Ottoman Empire.

It is important how Great Powers imagined the Albanian nation, because their 'imagination' served for manipulating borders to suit their interests and this allows room

for analysis of when compatibility or discrepancy is witnessed vis-à-vis the national elites. Each of the Powers moved with the intention of either including these territories in their own sphere of influence or at least using certain mapping of territory for their own strategic purposes. For example, a telegram of Austro-Hungarian ambassador Pallavicini from Istanbul for Foreign Ministry in Vienna, regarding the stance of Ottoman Empire versus Albania in Istanbul, November 25, 1912 clearly reveals the will of the Great Powers to concede to Albanian sovereignty, albeit a limited one: "...For Albanian Question, the Grand Vezir told me that Turkey will insist on the creation of an autonomous Albania with a prince from Turkish kings..."<sup>19</sup> The Istanbul position shifted in 1912, when after years of futile attempts to crush the Albanian revolts, finally joined in Austro-Hungarian idea for the creation of an autonomous Albanian state and allowing its proclamation of sovereignty.

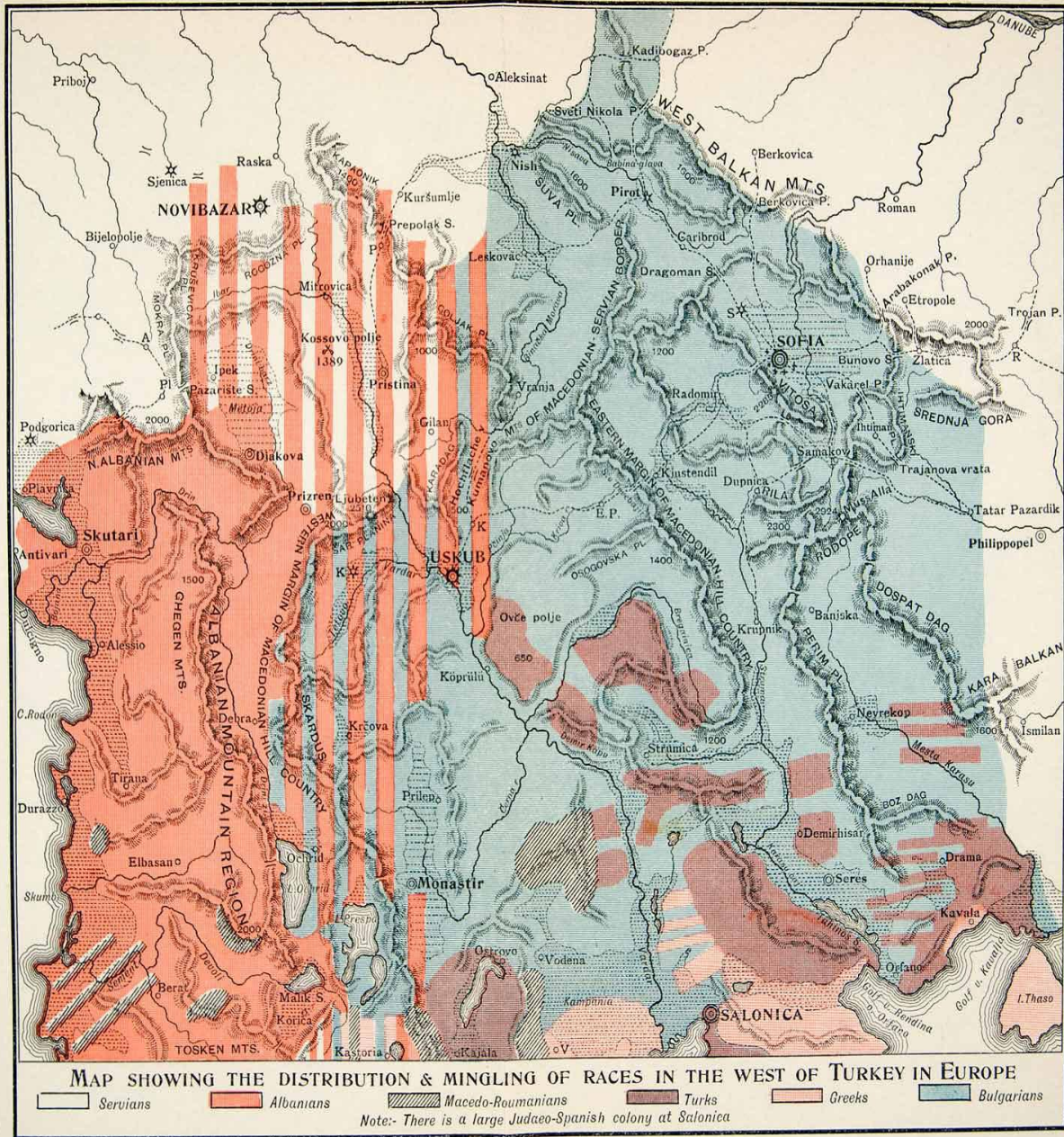
From the documents we see that Austro-Hungarian Empire was steadily supporting an independent and sovereign Albania and was working toward this goal with pro-Austrians, such as Syrja Vlora or Dom Nikoll Kaçorri, who became vice-primer of the newly created Albania. The vice-council of Vienna, Rudnei, caught in the frenzy of giving support to an Albanian national council and facing the fear that maybe it would not be possible its organization and flag raising, found support at Kacorri to find some delegates in his native city Durres, who could sign a declaration, which stated that Vienna was to take under wing the Albanian nation aspirations (Verli 2012). *All this serves as empirical evidence that elite border (re)construction is much more successful when it is compatible with favorable geopolitical conditions and much less so when external intervention*

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<sup>19</sup>See Pallavicini AIH. Vienna. 22-25-2515 (HHSt.A.PA.A, Nr. 4610.Nr. 651)

*narrows the degree of freedom of the internal players.* See maps below for a graphic view of alternate Great Powers mapping of the Albanian state at various critical junctures that I have identified in this study. This tells us how each of the Great Powers had its version of favorite Albanian map that suited its interests and the result was often a compromise based on the strength of each Power and how strategic considered it for its ‘vital’ interest.



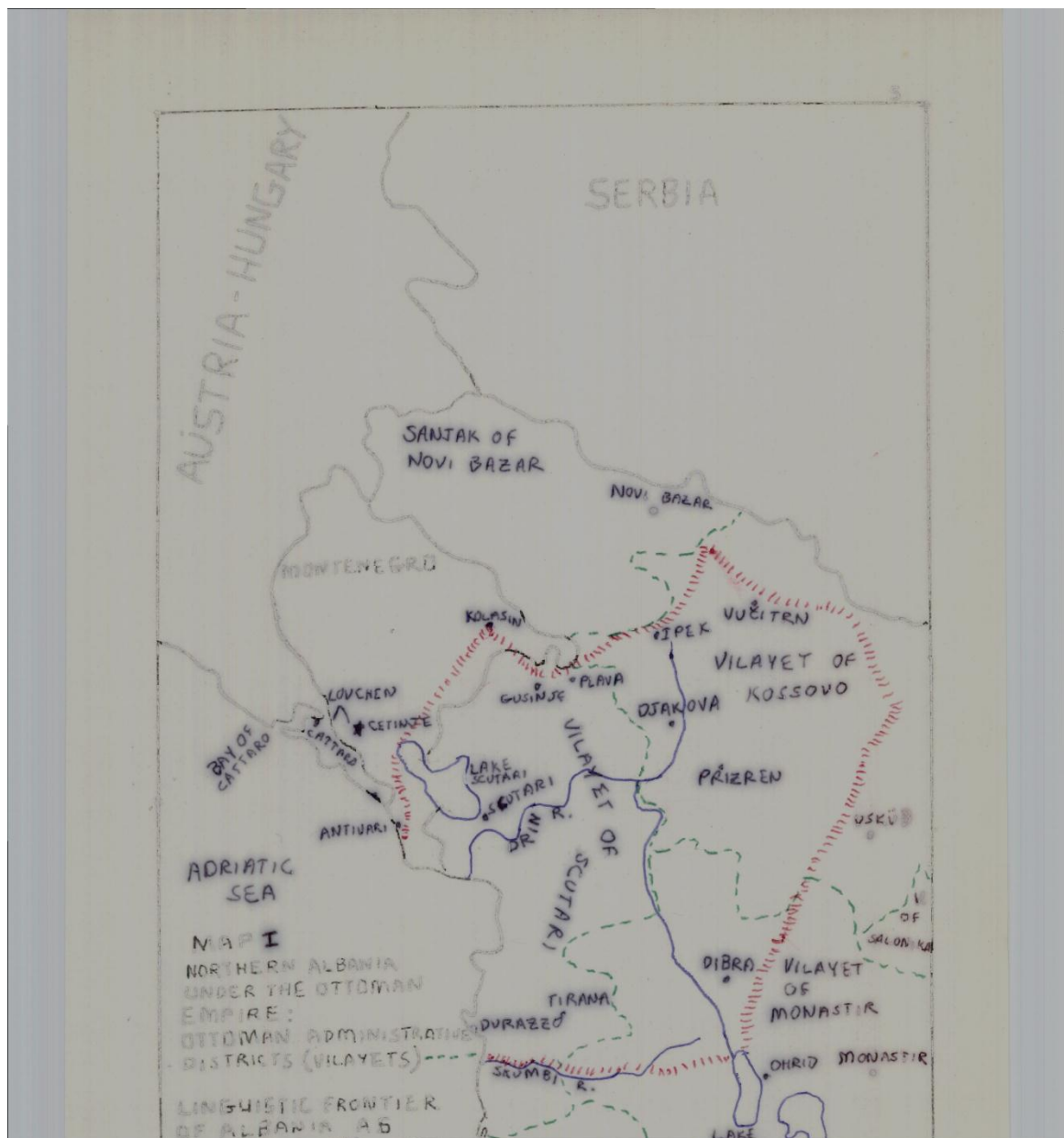
Map 9 (H Vj 018)<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> With the kind permission of A. Lame, (private collection).



Map 10

*Albania: alternate boundaries (as proposed by various Great Powers in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century). Sources: Helmreich (1938: 256); Lendvai (1969: 174)*

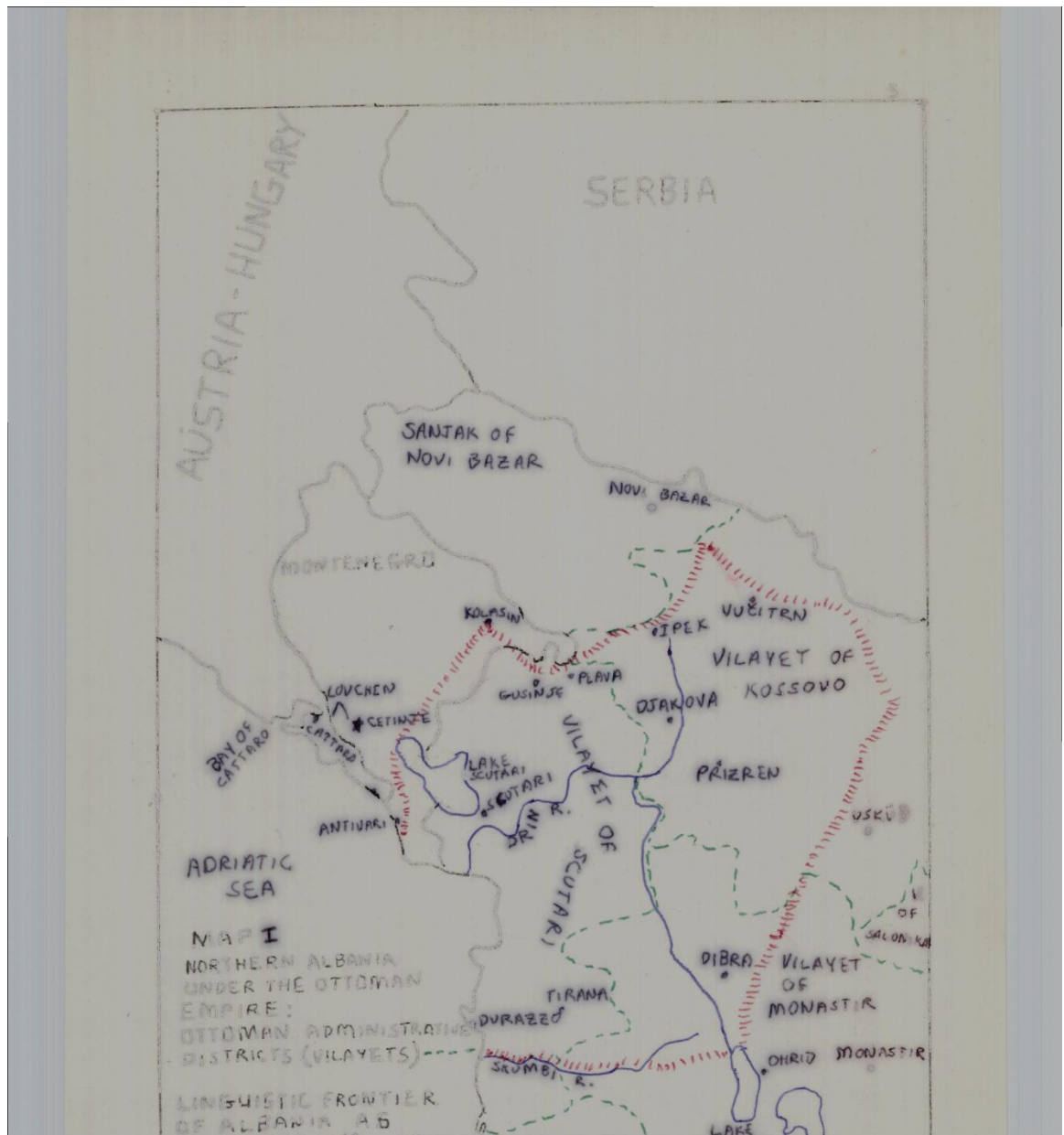


**Map 11**

**Austro-Hungarian Map of Northern Albania that shows how national borders should have followed linguistic/ethnic borders<sup>21</sup>**

<sup>21</sup> Cooper Hall, *Austria-Hungary and the Northern Albanian Frontier 1912-1913*. Ohio State University, 1974. F. 5.

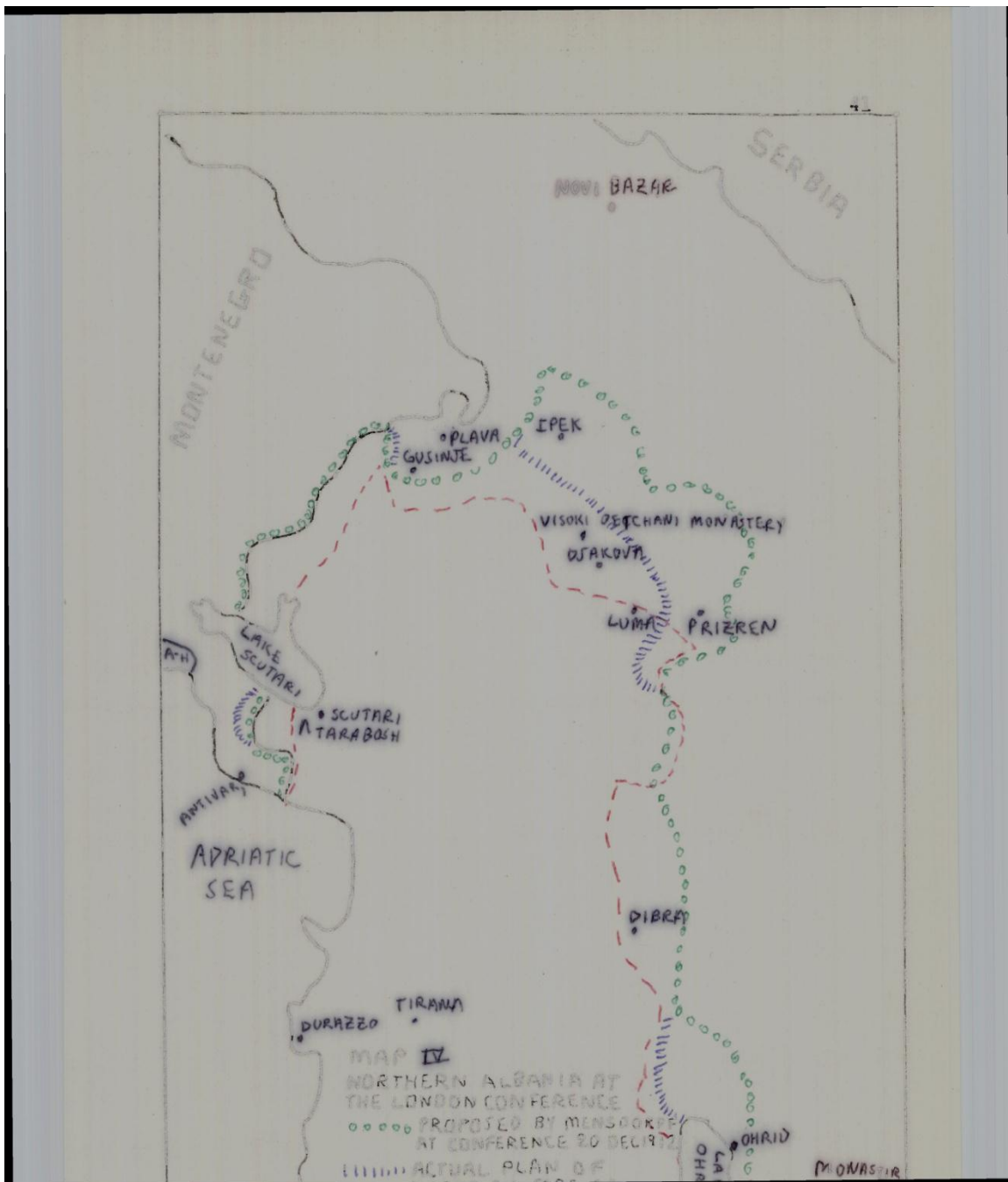




Map12

Austro-Hungarian Map<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, f. 21



Map 13

Austro-Hungarian Map<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, f. 41

### 3.5 Elite struggles, ethnic underbidding and map contraction during 1912-1917 period in Albania

In 1912-1913, while state-building in Albania was taking place, the virtual map gradually shrank, because of elite clashes over visions of nation and its borders, with many local leaders opposing national-scale projects. Instead they were rather favoring local autonomy, because the newly created Albanian state did not have the capacity or incentive to expand. Bernd Fisher aptly describes this period as one where “local pride was the only form of nationalism existent in most of the country” (Fisher 1984: 306). Thus we see a contraction of competing maps, mostly because of international constraints, with some local leaders fighting to create their own small principalities where they could rule under the protection of one of neighboring Balkan countries.

In line with expected outcomes, from 1912 to 1914 we see a high degree of direct international control of Albanian sovereignty and territorial control, exercised chiefly through local leaders. It was in this period that Great Powers, which had created the International Commission Control (of Albania), achieved through the boundary engineering processes the map that suited their purposes. From 1914 to 1917, because of a combination of low external constraints, as the result of power transfers to the newly appointed Albanian Crowned Prince, Wilhelm Von Vid and active presence of elite struggle, we witness *map contraction versus map expansion projects clashing regularly*, depending on which side was scoring small political victories of the day. In this period, a shift is witnessed toward ethnic outbidding to create pan-nationalist visions and we see a growing national(ist) *border expansion* as prevalent rhetoric from 1917 until end of WWI. Thus the concept of ‘Greater Albania’ becomes one of the dominating themes in the WWI

period where direct external intervention took place. Then we have a period of ambivalence of elites, strongly conditioned by external intervention (because of WWI) and because this ambiguity lasted for at least three years (from 1914 to 1917), each map project championed by the two rival camps could not secure a knock down victory, thus projecting a neutral map as the outcome of these elite clashes. In other words, the map did not change, and neither version of the map gained much popularity on either side of the border.

In accordance to predictions offered by the model presented in the previous chapter, the combination of the internal and external factors would produce the effects presented schematically below.

**Table 1. Predictions for border outcomes from proclamation of sovereignty to WWI**

Situation in Albania	Competing Elite games	International Constraints	Border Outcome
(1912-1914)	High level of competitiveness, the nationalist leadership gains the upper hand in internal struggle, leading to a direction toward ethnic outbidding and creation of pan-nationalist visions.	Generally low to medium external pressures in this period. Ambassadors Conference agreed to recognize independence, including half of territories that nationalists sought to attain.	National(ist) border expansion as prevalent rhetoric from 1912 to early 1914, the concept of ‘Greater Albania’ one of the dominating themes.

(1914-1917)	Elite clashes over visions of the nation and its borders, with many local leaders opposing national-scale projects. Rather favoring local autonomy. The removal of Kemal by international commission opened up the opportunity for the local leaders such as Esad Pasha, who had done several deals with Serbs, to concede much of the existing Albania in return for autonomy of Middle Albania government which he himself had established.	High international direct pressures, culminating with Vidi's appointment as Albanian king, and border control by International Border Control Commission.	A contraction of map, with some local leaders fighting to create their own turfs/small principalities where they could rule under the protection of one of neighboring Balkan countries.
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### 3.6 National borders as perceived by the masses in both sides of border from the period 1878 to beginning of WWI

Some historical events are more salient than others. In these critical junctures, noticeable ruptures in public imagination of national map can be discerned. The years from 1878 with the meeting of League of Prizren to 1912 with the declaration of sovereignty of Albania, have witnessed certain configuration of a mental map that influenced border imagining in both sides of border. Up to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the territory of present-day Kosovo had the highest influence in dictating the political agenda amongst Albanians, as well as being the hotbed of national epics and preservation of ancient customary rules.<sup>24</sup> In

<sup>24</sup> The most important being the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini (Albanian main source of customary law), which has been the guiding text on all the mountain regions, impenetrable from Ottoman armies. Up to the era of King Zog, with the introduction of first Civil Code in 1928 (modeled after French Civil Code), in all these



many aspects, including both cultural and socio-economic condition was similar to neighboring Montenegro that was an exception to the Ottoman rule, the only country in the Balkans to retain full independence due to its particular geographic position, which made it impossible to subdue.

The first delineation of imaginary boundaries, as shown *inter alia* from various petitions of the nationalist leaders to Great Powers, included all four vilayets with a majority of Albanian population. Kosovo *vilayet* served as a hub of nationalism and Prizren as the epicenter of the nationalist activity (*see map below*). It has been noted that: “in the later decades of the nineteenth century, Kosovo emerged as the cradle of an Albanian rebirth, the seat of literary inspiration and political will to pursue national freedom, and after five centuries of Turkish domination, Prizren was certainly the most active one in expressing Albanian nationalist sentiment” (Prifti 1978: 223; Hall and Danta 1996: 123).

In the Prizren League the bulk of representatives were Muslims from Northern Albania and Kosovo territory, although some high-profile members were from South of Albania, like its chairperson, Abdul Frasheri. Textbook representations of this event in various periods can be understood as prime examples of mental mapping since they impact how education affects the understanding of homeland construction and visualization of borders in the peoples' minds.<sup>25</sup> Thus, this occasion was depicted as a first step toward a common future and unification of territorial lands of Albanian-speaking community into a

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regions (Dukagjin plateau lies both on Albanian and Kosovo side), the Kanun was the main rule-making and rule-enforcing authority.

<sup>25</sup> For example, during the communist era, Prizren League was portrayed as a culmination of a long and arduous journey to free itself from foreign yoke.

single independent and sovereign state. As a 1973 history textbook for high schools notes, this League was projected to gather the “[Albanian] delegates from all the Albanian-inhabited territories as a single unified political body to oppose the cutting of the country” (Frasheri and Pollo 1973: 89). The League, which actually met only a single time, was later reconceptualized as a national opposition movement with a clear goal of Albanian independence, full sovereignty and an elite vision of a much enlarged nation that would possibly include all the territories where Albanian ethnic groups resided. But although Prizren League is clearly established in collective memory, some contemporary views argue that national question did not emerge until 1899 with S. Frasheri political manifesto (Clayer 2007). This manifesto has been described by mainstream Albanian historiography as the moment which defined the ethno-cultural essence of the nation, because in the foundations of its ideological program was the principle that national map includes all territories inhabited by ethnic group, thus advocating a maximalist approach (Frasheri 1988: 31-32). Since nationalism preceded the formation of the state, it seemed likely that “... the absent state [was] likely to become the focus of an identity- the dream of a nationalist movement, the inspiration of a Risorgimento” (Boerner 1986: 35).

Starting with 1878, nation`s maximalist virtual mapping expanded as far as Arta and Yoannina in South,<sup>26</sup> including the Chameria with its compact Muslim population, to Skopje in East and all of Kosovo in North and the Prizren League gathered together representatives of four vilayets, Kosovo, Monastir, Yoannina and Shkodra, where the first

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<sup>26</sup> Territorial parts of Northern Greece.

three lie outside the present Albania state borders.<sup>27</sup> Being part of the Ottoman Empire for more than five-hundred years and the last Balkan country to gain independence from it, Albania lagged behind most of its neighbors in developing common myths and symbols from which a common sense of national belonging could emerge. Helped by the notion of *millet*, where nation and religion were fused and the Albanian Muslims were commonly called Turks from neighboring countries, while the Orthodox *millet* were referred to as Greeks, the Albanian nation remained divided and borders could not easily configure around a joint political concept.<sup>28</sup> The exception was the Catholic community which developed a stronger sense of national identity, mainly because they did not have a [Catholic] neighboring country that could easily assimilate them. Also in their favor was the mountainous location which could not get easily penetrated by the Ottoman armies.

The decision to hold the meeting in a Kosovar town had two major implications. First, it pointed out at “the significance of the Kosovo lands for Albanian cultural and political aspirations...,” (Hall 1994: 9) and second, it reinstated the leading role that Kosovo had in fomenting the Albanian nationalism. The decision was made by the ‘patriot agitators’, who were the nationalist intellectuals that lived in the most part abroad. They originally came from various parts of this imaginary nation and got to know each other first through the writings and then when the meeting materialized also in person. They

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<sup>27</sup> In popular memory, the national imagination about League of Prizren, is witnessed for example in the song: *Kenge popullore te Laberise* where the anonymous folk author writes that Albanians of three *vilayets* “from Brizden to Himara” gathered and gave their *Besa* [code of honour] that without Chameria in the South and northern territories (not included in Albanian state), there could not be one free independent country. The ethnographer brings together such orally transmitted stories and songs about national memory to show how people imagined nation’s geography and its border in early twentieth century (Rrapaj 1991). Such sources tend to offer a bottom-up perspective of peoples’ imagination of the boundaries of nation at a specific point in time.

<sup>28</sup> The Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church did not come until mid-interwar period.

wanted to hold such a general meeting because of the need to build communication routes, to agree on a general blueprint for future action and to erase substantial differences.

In many regards, Kosovar elites were the most active nationalistic voices among the Albanian people, by leading revolts and organizing *kachak* movements against the Ottoman Empire, because they were relatively autonomous under Ottoman Empire compared to their counterparts in the *vilayets* down South. This had long term implications because it served as a perpetual remembrance of an ‘era of golden age’ when the Albanians were all united, with Kosovo as the foremost region in the fight against common enemies and nourished by various expansionist myths. The League was a first call for national awakening and a rare political move that stressed on one hand the primary identification of the *ethnos*, not religion and second the territorial contiguity of Albanian territory, rather than divided into four different units. On 13 June 1878, the League submitted an eighteen-page memorandum to Benjamin Disraeli, the British representative at the Congress of Berlin, announcing: “[j]ust as we are not and do not want to be Turks, so we shall oppose with all our might anyone who would like to turn us into Slavs or Austrians or Greeks. We want to be Albanians” (Pollo & Pulaha 1978: 40-48).

In the same spirit, representatives of Albanian populations from Shkodra and today’s Montenegrin regions such as Ulcin, Hot, Grude and Tivar send to the French ambassador in 08.05.1878 a protest, where they write *inter alia*: “We Catholics and Muslimans, brothers from centuries that live in shared interests and common customs, have always been united to face the brigandage of Montenegrins...” (Pollo & Pulaha 1878: 12-13). The same authors record also the protest of Prizren citizens on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the same

month and year which writing to the French ambassador in Istanbul say that Serbians and Bulgarians have committed large-scale atrocities in the recently occupied Albanian territories and that it is unjust to leave these territories to the hands of people “that have no ethnic relations to us and have demonstrated their enmity time and again” (Pollo & Pulaha 1978: 16). Whereas in the protest of Albanian diasporic community that lived in Istanbul in a letter sent to Berlin Congress against Greek territorial pretensions they write: “[w]e protest against the dismemberment of our fatherland. The lost of sacred places of our national being, like Yoannina, Narta and Preveza,<sup>29</sup> is nothing else but capital punishment for us. We, the Albanian people, rather die than give away even a sole piece of our land” (Pollo & Pulaha 1978: 37-38). These were first steps toward a unified nation-state with its own political consciousness advocating a maximalist map that would include the perceived ‘Ethnic Albania’.

Nevertheless, the ‘Prizren League’ was short-lived and soon crushed by the might of the Ottoman army. Paulin Kola has called this moment as “the end of the Albanians’ first exercise at nation-building since the epoch of Scanderbeg” (Kola 2003: 10). While, the historian Stefanaq Pollo, has written that this moment gave rise to a new autonomous Albanian state (Pollo 1993: 89) that asked for a greater autonomy from Ottoman Empire to run domestic affairs, recognizing in the meantime the legitimacy of the Sultan as the highest authority. This was done mainly because of the pragmatism of the Albanian leaders at the time, which took a realistic path to achieve a minimum obtainable goal, rather than have illusions of impracticable solutions at the time. This view was clearly shown in the

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<sup>29</sup> All three of them were left to Greece by the Great Powers.

advent of the first Balkan War, when the Albanians, “[f]ollowing the old dogma ‘better the devil you know’ ..., fought with the Empire against the Balkan armies.” (Vickers 1998: 76).

It is important to show here also the resolution of some notable leaders of the League, which made possible sending of several memoranda to different political offices throughout Europe to defend the right of self-determination and most importantly to prevent the newly neighbor states from carving up the Albanian-speaking territory. These developments can be traced in oral poetry such as the texts below by an anonymous author show:

Please be careful  
Of Albania  
Don't tear it up in pieces<sup>30</sup>  
As if it were an orphan  
We are not Greeks, or Bulgarians  
Not even Montenegrins  
We are just Albanians  
And we want freedom... (Brahimi, p. 62.)<sup>31</sup>

Along the same lines is a petition that the inhabitants of Shkodra-- a city particularly noted for its religious multiconfessionality and strong religious identities-- sent to the Congress of Berlin organizers to firmly express their desire to ‘remain Albanian’, and thus not included in any other state that claimed them based on religious identities.<sup>32</sup> Or when they expressed the need for reunification of the ‘dismembered’ parts of nation: “[w]e want only what every nation wants: a separate state for ourselves, where all the

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<sup>30</sup> As it was already a single homogeneous recognized unit.

<sup>31</sup> Nations and States in Southeast Europe. Workbook 2. Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe. Downloaded from: [http://cdsee.org/pdf/workbook2\\_eng\\_ed2.pdf](http://cdsee.org/pdf/workbook2_eng_ed2.pdf) p.24. Also a map of Balkans after the Berlin Congress is featured in this text. The implications here are that the Congress of Berlin should do hand out Albanian territories to neighboring countries which were more consolidated politically and had the backing of one or another Great Power of the time.

<sup>32</sup> I thank the director of Tirana State Archive, Dr. Nevila Nika for drawing my attention to this point.

people of the same blood gather around as the members of a family gather in a home” (Kondo, p. 126). The stress on the congruence of ethnic and political borders is a recurrent thematic reference that we find it dominating the public discourse, especially during ruptures associated with identity and nation-building.

This becomes also evident in Pashko Vasa’s poem “Oh Albania, poor Albania” which as Elsie informs us, “gradually instilled in the Glegs a sentiment of Pan-Albanian nationalism”. The lines that close this poem are as follows:

From Bar down to Preveza  
 Everywhere let the sun spend its warmth and rays,  
 This is our land, left to us by our forefathers,  
 Let no one touch us for we are all to die!  
 Let us die like men as our forefathers once did  
 And not bring shame upon ourselves before God!<sup>33</sup>

It should be noted that Bar cited above lies in present-day Montenegro, while the second (Preveza) is part of Northern Greece. This is probably the most oft-quoted poem in Albanian literature. It became like an anthem of Renaissance in the country and was memorized by the common folk, so it has been crucial in shaping mental national borders in popular imagination at that time. It is still one of the required texts to be memorized in primary and secondary schools in Albanian literature classes. This poem also contained the lines mentioned earlier, about the “faith of the Albanian is Albanianism” (a commonly found line during Communism), as an urge to get rid of the religious factor which was seen as divisible, because of the multi-confessionalism of the Albanian-speaking communities.

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<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, it sounds very similar to the Magyar Creed, following loss of territory after WWI, decided at Trianon Treaty signed in Versaille: “I believe in one God/I believe in one Fatherland/I believe in one divine, eternal Truth/I believe in the resurrection of Hungary/Hungary dismembered is no country/Hungary united is Heaven. Amen” (Pearson 1983: 176; Kaiser 1994: 23).

Another influential verse was written by Hil Mosi, a poet, and later a Minister of Education, who wrote a poem called “Kosovo in war” in 1910, which was later composed also as a song with the title “Albania, this is not your end”. He published it in Istanbul when he was living at the time but was sang and was very popular in Pristina at this period of time. The verse below is a telling example:

Ah, Albania is not over,  
 `cause your sons are alive!  
 Kosovo is in your forefront  
 and keeps fighting for your freedom.  
 And in Pristina beforehand,  
 The first weapons went off  
 There the blood of Albanians  
 First started to shed.<sup>34</sup>

Also N. Mjeda, a politician, legislator and poet wrote some interesting verse that tried to erase ‘internal’ administrative and ‘hard’ borders, conceptualizing a virtual map that would stretch to cover most territories in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire demise. His “The Albanian Language” poem, as part of his poetry cycle “Freedom” which is quoted in length in the History of Albanian Literature and written around years 1910-1911, became a powerful inciter for general rebellion that led to sudden demands changing from autonomy toward complete independence and unity of Albanian-speaking land into a single sovereign Albania. To quote Mjeda below:

Geg and Tosk from plain and hill  
 One folk we are united  
 Our common tongue, our common will  
 Shall keep us undivided....  
 O brothers close your ranks, unite  
 Under Albania`s flag

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<sup>34</sup> My translation.



A common origin you share,  
A common tongue you speak, a single heart beats in your chest  
In either side of border you live (Bihiku 1980: 50-51).

Thus the message is clear, independence and sovereignty are not enough if the new nation-state does not include all territorial parts where Albanian-speaking communities live and the author here overlooks tribal, religious and other divisions, calling for unity across ‘material’ administrative borders. The people heard these poems and similar verses read aloud in town cafés or village centers (Blumi 2003) and they affected not only their imaginary view of where did the nation’s outer borders lie (while erasing domestic dividing lines), but also their patriotic duty to rise in defense of a motherland-in-the-making. Thus, it seems that on one hand these “patriotic agitators” were calling for the removal of divisive borders between an *ethnie* that shared a language, but not much else, and on the other were systematically building up new borders with the ‘Other’, in this context, the Slav neighbors.

General popular mood after 1913, in both sides of state borders initially was pro unification projects, seeing the London Conference border outcome only as temporary. This is because the recent memories of an *Ethnic Albania* survived and served to keep alive the irredentist race that called for potential unification and drove the political elite to outbid each other in the process. As a result, we seem to have a border expansion rhetoric that favored the concept of ‘Greater Albania’, where (the maximal) borders of nation and state should have been compatible in order for the nation-state to thrive.

### **3.7 Elite struggles, ethnic underbidding and map contraction from 1912 to WWI period amongst Albanian elite in Yugoslavia**

While in Albania we see the ambivalence of elites and shifts in national imagining noted above, in Kosovo we have a more consistent expansionary map during this period. Kosovar leadership seemed impervious to external constraints, because of the repression from Belgrade and had little to lose from advocating irredentist goals. As a result of this, we notice elites getting their own preferred borders to become the dominant national borders in the minds of ordinary Albanians using poetry, textbooks, anthems etc., for the next several years or decades. While, in Albania the map went continuously in shrinking/expansionary phases according to the level and degree of external pressures and level of elite struggles in the period from 1912 to 1917, in Kosovo the dominant textbooks and discourse were those that depicted a *Greater Albania* as a political ideal which persisted in shaping the national imagining there accordingly. Therefore, Kosovo's elite, coherently seeking the expansionary map version based on partly fictional idea of Kosovo as epicenter of the Albanian nation was more successful in weaving a consistent maximalist map amongst the Albanian kin than in Albania proper. See maps below for a graphic representation of it.



Map 12

Albanian territories in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.toulanguages.org/artpublic/bibliotheque/Image/Cartes/800px-Albanian\\_language\\_map.jpg](http://www.toulanguages.org/artpublic/bibliotheque/Image/Cartes/800px-Albanian_language_map.jpg)



Map 13

Maximalist scope of 'Greater Albania' in this nationalistic-loaded map that includes territories of Serbia in North, Macedonia in the East and Greece in the South<sup>36</sup>

Although half of Albanian-speaking population and the territories they inhabited were allocated to Serbia, the national liberation movement, incited by Kosovar-Albanian leadership in a quest to join Albania did not cease for almost a decade. In fact, some of the

<sup>36</sup> [http://farm2.staticflickr.com/1133/5107101636\\_963fc5b743\\_z.jpg](http://farm2.staticflickr.com/1133/5107101636_963fc5b743_z.jpg)

renowned nationalist leaders that were thinking of London Conference outcome as temporary and had expressed belief that borders would shift again in order to realize the unification of Albanian lands were coming from adjacent diaspora. They were putting words into action, meaning that they were combining patriotic agitation (mostly the cultural elite) with warfare (political and military elite). Differently from neighboring Albania, who caught in domestic elite struggles especially from 1914-1917, thus adopting reductionary map versions and minding their own politics, the Kosovar leadership's main goal was consistently unification with 'motherland' during this entire period. In accordance to predictions offered by the model presented in the previous chapter, the combination of the internal and external factors would produce the effects presented schematically below.

Albanian kin	Competing Elite games	International Constraints	Border Outcome
(1912 -1914)	Elite unified around a maximalist map project which sought to conceive a single political entity. General popular mood was also pro unification projects, seeing the London Conference border outcome only as temporary.	High external pressures, combining those coming from Belgrade which adopted repression as a way to deal with Albanian nationalists, with allies such as Austrians which (in)directly helped fuel resistance amongst leadership of Albanian kin in Yugoslavia.	Thus, border contraction that went against the maximalist goal of 'Ethnic Albania', where borders of nation and state would become congruent, because of resistance of international actors.
(1914- 1917)	Lack of elite clashes that resulted because many of previous elite had either emigrated, was exiled or was out of power mechanisms.	Low external constraints in this period, nothing particularly noted in respect to international intervention.	Map remains neutral, without enlarging or extracting until the WWI, changed the de facto situation in the ground.

### 3.8 Conclusion

The chapter's first part delineated a historical background of how identity had become intrinsically linked to a specific land with imagined borders and imbued with symbolic values, which in turn is a precondition of essentialization of territory and how territory is perceived by the people. This serves as basis for the other sections that followed, as well as the other chapters. Then, we traced border shifts in elite levels, caused by repeated clashes and conditioned by Great Power politics first in the period from League of Prizren to proclamation of independence. Afterwards, we measured the public perception of virtual map and analyzed how, when and why we had certain ruptures in various critical junctures. The chapter then continued with an analysis of elite clashes and international intervention in Albania and Albanian kin in Yugoslavia in the period from 1912 to WWI.

Next chapter deals with the interwar period, what shifts took place in interwar period amongst the co-ethnics in sides of borders, how the model captures and predicts such shifts and what actually happened. This period, which is strongly identified with state formation activities, it produced much different effects in the two sides of borders; effects which inevitably influenced the national imagination process and imaginary boundaries of the nation.

## Chapter 4

### Interwar Period and Various Shifts in the Configuration of Boundaries in Elite Level and National Imagining Amongst Albanian in Albania and Kin Abroad: From Contractionary to Expansionary and Vice Versa

*“The existence of neighbors is the only guarantee a nation has against perpetual civil war.” Paul Valéry*

#### Introduction

This chapter shows that the main drivers of mental shifts in the interwar period were the *competing elites*, who through various projects that suit their political calculations dictate the expansionary/contractionary maps of the Albanian nation. As it is shown here, the first political demands for full sovereignty started much later (around the end of 1911, beginning of 1912) and the best causal explanation based on empirical analysis, leads to the argument of competing elites in order to secure political power. The ‘external’ elites, which included ‘overseas’ diasporas who were mostly individuals that were serving Ottoman Empire in high levels of power (including such positions as foreign minister, governors or deputies of the Parliament), saw the existing structures of power suddenly collapsing and tried to embark into a new venture project, which was the leading of the process of nation-building that culminated with the new Albanian state. These efforts paid off since they succeeded in securing their former positions, albeit in a different context. Thus it seems that assuming political power through the kind of mapping of nation and



borders that would facilitate such goal, has been the main drive of rhetoric and actions of the elite as it is argued in detail below.

#### **4.1 External Constraints in Interwar Years for Albanians and the Effects it Produced in Map Weaving**

In the early Balkan processes of nation-building and state-formation, the Great Powers were the main actors that “defined borders and adjusted territories at diplomatic conferences and imposed their wishes on all parties through gunboat diplomacy and economic arm-twisting” (Mazower 2002: 95-96). Their undisputed and often conflicting role left its imprint in the overall development of national processes and border constructions with long-lasting effects. In such light of events, the Albanian new state relationship to some of the neighboring countries immediately after proclamation of independence is of interest because of it tells a lot about power struggles and map shifts. This is because the surrounding countries were already in the way of creating a wide Balkan front against the Empire that excluded Albania because part of the deal amongst the other Balcan countries was to carve Albanian afterwards. Thus Albania was pushed toward declaring neutrality, making itself highly vulnerable. It is ironic that just before these events started to roll out, Balugdzić, who was Serbian special emissary sent by Pasić to Albania in early 1913, “informed Kemal verbally of Serbia’s staunch support of Albania and requested a written proof of his stand on the borders of a future autonomous Albania, on the issue of Serbian access to the Adriatic, and on the nature of political ties between Albania and Serbia” (Mikić 1986: 181). Thus, demarcation of borders went beyond the strictly physical separation and was laden with symbolic value that conceptualized the

borders as identity markers, as well as crucial feature of the new realpolitique in the region. In the past, during Ottoman Empire five-century rule, borders simply meant administrative units irrelevant of ethnic and religious cleavages. The Albanian state choice of not interfering with the war as a way to preserve at least the existing border, proved to be fatal because with the triumph of the Balkan coalition, Albanian lands were viewed as a price tag for its northern and southern neighbors, according to the logic that spoils belong to the victors. Despite its self-proclaimed neutrality, only the interference of two of the Great Powers of the time, Austro-Hungarian Empire and Italy saved the new state from total dismemberment, although some borders lands were sacrificed in the process.

Thus, the Balkan triple alliance of Serbs, Greeks and Montenegrins were successful in sharing some of the territorial spoils of Albanian-speaking communities which they kept unaffected by WWI and later events. After WWI the countries that were positioned in the defeated alliance, lost territory to neighboring states, while others gained, which was made possible under the auspices of Treaty of Versailles and a new international relations order. For example, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Carpathian Ruthenia and adjoining territories formed the new Czechoslovakia. Galicia, the eastern part of Cieszyn, parts of County of Orava and Spisz were transferred to Poland. Bolzano-Bozen and Trieste were granted to Italy, while Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, and Vojvodina were joined with Serbia to form the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (MacMillan 2002). On the other hand, Hungary lost approximately one third of its territory to Slovakia and Romania with the Trianon Treaty. Romania gained the much cherished Transylvania and Bukovina but lost Bessarabia, while Ottoman Empire, not only lost all of

the remaining possessions, but also was dismantled in a move that gave rise to modern Turkey. Although Albania as a state had been officially neutral during WWI and Albanians in the Balkan Peninsula had generally supported the Allies victory, it came as a bitter surprise not to be rewarded with a state-nation that would include its historical territories.

In the interwar period, the Albanian new and yet fragile state was continuously prone to shifting geopolitics, which in various degrees in different times, constrained the freedom of action of internal political elite. Paradoxically, these limitations to sovereignty and particularly in regard to territorial mapping were happening in the very same period that Albania was seen as consolidating its international recognition (i.e. getting accepted as full member of League of Nations), strengthening its state consolidation and reforming institutions and generally increasing its credentials through multiple diplomatic channels and by securing external borders.

The turmoil of these years culminated when the former primer Zog, ousted in early 1924 as a result of a revolution led by Bishop Fan Noli, made a comeback later that year, through the direct help of Pasić's Belgrade. The regular Yugoslav troopers and remnants of Russia's White Army irregulars joined Zog's own supporter ranks in a deliberative action that aimed to secure once again the ruler's position of Albania. The deal was that immediately after seizing power, Zog would agree to a frontier line with the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and he followed through the bargain swiftly as soon as coming back to office. The result was an exchange of territory, or rather a gift to Pasić of territories that included several villages and the highly prized Saint Naum Island and monastery (which today is

part of Republic of Macedonia).<sup>1</sup> This helped secure the northern border of Albania while gaining him enough time to quell internal rebellions and to cooperate again with Pasić to jointly fight the Albanian nationalists and irredentists in Kosovo (the so-called *Kachak* movement). As Fisher claims, “Zogu had always been considered to be pro-Belgrade because of his consistent opposition to the cry of irredentism while the irredentists, like Hasan Prishtina, received considerable financial support from Rome” (Fisher 1984: 87), thus showing the degree and effect of surrounding states in dictating leadership choice and national map shape simultaneously in Albania.

After he had already fully secured the internal power and having proclaimed himself a King of the Albanians,<sup>2</sup> Zog turned the back to the increasing demands of Yugoslavs, whose interference was becoming more and more disturbing. In order to quickly secure a new backer and financial supporter, Zog turned toward Mussolini’s Italy, thus becoming increasingly dependent on it in the due course. He went as far as in a secret military treaty Zog signed with Mussolini,<sup>3</sup> amongst other matters, Italy was bound “to guarantee that Albanian speaking areas would be incorporated into Albania” if territorial shifts were forced by wars, conflict or agreement (Fisher 1984: 93). But in exchange for

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<sup>1</sup> In fact the deal was much bigger than this, although it never materialized, because Zog was a private citizen when co-signed and once in power did not follow suit. According to the full treaty text of 1924 found in Albanian State Archive (p. 251, dossier no. 105), Zog and Pasić had agreed that in exchange for Belgrade helping Zog to secure power in Tirana, Albania should join Yugoslavia in a later date, Albania should abolish the Ministry of War and National Army, a full custom union should take effect, Albania should have Yugoslav representatives abroad, the Orthodox Church and Muslim Community should be under the direct authority of their counterpart in Belgrade, Albania would have been represented abroad by Yugoslav emissaries and areas of Saint Naum and Vermosh should be ceded to Yugoslavs. The events later indicate that Zog backtracked from all obligations of this treaty with the exception of last point where the two aforementioned areas were handed to Pasić.

<sup>2</sup> A disputed label from Belgrade since ‘King of Albanians’ (in)directly makes reference to all Albanian-speaking populations, although Zog shied away from any irredentist aims and rhetoric.

<sup>3</sup> It was secret because it happened through an exchange of letters between the two leaders and Zog never submitted it to ratification from Parliament. See Fischer (1984) for details.

that Albania had to offer unconditional access Italy to its territory, natural resources and main state institutions.

The resulted Italian occupation in 1939 and Zog`s abdication before fleeing into exile, were directly influenced by external intervention rather than personal choice. Therefore, he was not able to save political skin by continuously advocating a reductionist map of Albania, although often he played ambiguity with the nationalist card in order to get popular support. Such ambiguity was for example manifested when internally he took such steps as: closing down all foreign-language schools in Albania, restricting minority rights through a highly discussed and disputed national census, erecting monuments and other commemorative acts that hinted at an interrupted ancestral line of present Albanians that could possibly be traced to the Illyrians (Chekrezi 1921).

Thus an increasingly contractionist map was given preference based on three primarily consideration. *First*, the imposed limitations of internal maneuvering by Belgrade, and later by Rome, made it impossible for Zog and the rest of political and cultural elite to voice an expansionist map that would seek a redrawing of existing borders. *Second*, Greece, and especially Yugoslavia, the two immediate border countries, against which Albania could stake any territorial or diasporic claims, were much economically stronger and military powerful than Albania, and with much more friends and allies abroad. Thus it would have seemed completely irrational for the ruling elite of Albania to behave otherwise as my model predicts. *Third*, because Zog had already secured domestic political dominance with relative ease,<sup>4</sup> he was not much interested in attracting popular

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<sup>4</sup> This happened because of a combination of factors that included clan loyalty, a system of granting privileges in an increasing centralized way, the training of a professional army and police, modeled after

sympathy through the an expansionist map that would actually include more adversaries than supporters to his regime.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.3 Elite Struggles and the Outcome of Albanian Map from Independence to WWI

The Vlora Convention, which made possible the proclamation of Albanian independence and the constitution of the Provisional Government in 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1912, had amongst its 63 delegates, 16 from Kosovo, from Skopje<sup>6</sup> and other cities, while seven delegates came from the Albanian-speaking region of Chameria.<sup>7</sup> It seems that the percentage of ethnic Albanians that attended the Convention, which after the London Ambassadors` Conference were left outside the newly recognized state of Albania, corresponded to the percentage of the ethnic kin of those territories. Moreover, they received a proper representation in the aftermath of convention and in the government proper. For example, the minister of Defense, the Minister of Agriculture and the head of

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British and Italian armies and French gendarmerie that sent their own instructors to help modernize these institutions and other similar factors.

<sup>5</sup> It is clearer below, when I discuss Zog`s powerbase. It seems from evidence that although Noli and some key opposition political leadership were from South of Albania, they generated much more support from Albanians of Yugoslavia and their nationalist elite there. It was chiefly because of their help that Noli and his government could come to power after the revolution of 1924, while Zog persecuted the Kosovar leadership in a very fierce way, killing some of its main leaders such as Prishtina and Curri as soon as he came back to power. Thus, although a Geg from northern Albania, Zog was much less interested in advocating an expansionist map that would deeply increase the number of his opponents.

<sup>6</sup> Skopje became officially the capital of a new Macedonian entity only after WWII. From 1879 to 1893, the capital city of Kosovo *vilayet* has been Pristina, while from 1893 to 1912 has been Skopje (İnalçık 1969). This shows a maximalist map of virtual borders of what constituted the imaginary nation(-state) for the Albanian nationalists at the time. As it is argued below, such expansionist design was going to shrink not longer than a year later when Great Powers intervened and decided to recognize the new Albanian state within the administrative borders where it exercised effective control.

<sup>7</sup> Chameria is a region geographically located in present day Greece, which was inhabited by ethnically Albanian of mostly Muslim religion. After the Greek-Turkish War in the inter-war period, and later after WWII, the Chams were collectively deported to Albania and Turkey. In the later case they were part of the Greek-Turkish agreement for a mass deportation and inter-ethnic exchange in order to create stable homogeneous nation-states (Vickers 2007).

the consultative body all were coming from Kosovo.<sup>8</sup> This shows two things: first, a persistence of an expansionary mapping of the nation with virtual borders that did not correspond to the newly created political realities of the day. Second, the ‘internal’ (officially-recognized) elites were trying to co-opt distinguished members of ‘external’ political elite. One justification for this might have been the need to pacify any resistance from Albanian-speaking territories outside Albanian state. *Thus, fusing state and nation in one homogeneous entity, with ‘virtual borders’ overlapping the ‘material’ ones, was more a deliberate choice of ‘internal’ and ‘diasporic’ elites, agreeing on a political pact to preserve positions of power, rather than they being ex ante united in their conception of the Albanian national form.* In the meantime, after the reality of the new Albanian state in 1912, up to the Ambassadors’ Conference in London a year later where the fate and shape of the new nation-state would be sealed, different accounts of where the Albanian nation lied started to be vividly discussed and we can draw various interpretations based on data and facts.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in the immediate period that followed the proclamation of independence, the elite struggles (born out of seemingly unified elite at the moment of declaration of independence), were starting to gradually evolve both in internal and external axes. Domestically, Kemal’s government was fiercely opposed by Esat Toptani’s parallel

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<sup>8</sup> The data regarding the number of delegates in the Convention and the political appointees that came from districts outside of Albanian state are collected from History Institute archives.

<sup>9</sup> A nationalist thesis persistent topic in Albania has been that while administrative Albania had only 28.750 km<sup>2</sup>, the natural length of the nation includes Kosova with its 10.887km<sup>2</sup>, Cameria with its 15.674km<sup>2</sup>, Ilirida (Macedonia) with its 15.074km<sup>2</sup>, Malesi with its 6.482km<sup>2</sup>, Sanxhak with its 4.504km<sup>2</sup>, and Toplice (Lugina Presheves) 6.645km<sup>2</sup>, the last two being part of present-day Serbia. The whole of “Natural” Shqiperia is 87.981km<sup>2</sup>. Interview with Koco Danaj, November 2011.

‘Government of Middle Albania’<sup>10</sup> and the half-autonomous principality of Mirdita, which had a tradition of self-governance (Myzyri 1994). Thus, the legitimate and internationally recognized government of Albania, had no choice but to pursue a limited territorial policy, thus pursuing a reductionist map. This was also the case with the other power centers in Albania, each wanting to control a small and safe piece of territory undisturbed and maximizing territorial autonomy, rather than advocate unobtainable irredentist goals. The Kosovar leaders differed with the Albania`s rulers at the time and were actively pursuing an expansionist map that clashed with the interests of political leadership in the homeland (AAS 2007).

An author has observed that: “Albanian leadership in the Kosovo *vilayet* at this time opposed all attempts by Albanians in the South and by Ismail Kemal to tie them to their own and larger Albanian interests. Bairam Tsur and Riza-bey, leaders from Djakovica, were especially hostile toward the South” (Mikić 1986: 165). Thus, *we start getting the impression that fragmented stories of national imagining were under process, engineered by clashing elites, trying to occupy a place for themselves in this period of political entrepreneurship opportunities. This is in line with my argument of ‘internal’ versus ‘external’ elites and their often competing views regarding the mental frame of the nation.*

The creation of the new nation-state in 1912 and recognized by international community in 1913 had a legal, political and symbolic significance on later events. In a

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<sup>10</sup> The official name in Albanian of this parallel government was ‘Pleqnia e Shqipnise se Mesme’ [Government of Middle Albania]. It had *de facto* power on most of present-day Albanian state territory and was in open opposition to Vlora government headed by Kemal. Externally it was openly supported by Belgrade, both in financial as well as military trainings etc (Kristo and Pollo 1973).



way it shattered the cohesiveness of an uninterrupted national imagining, although the homogenization of nation also depended on engineering of the *Other*. Some critics have argued that Kosovar identity for example has had a completely different trajectory from the Albanians of Albania proper and this because of the two different realities that they had to face. As F. Lubonja puts it: “The Albanians of Kosovo for a period were feeling more Yugoslav than Albanian. The national awakening, even then [in Kosovo] has been a process” (Konomi 2009: 14). Considering the weakening of the Albanian-speaking political elites in the inter-war period until early 1970s, when a national(ist) reawakening was witnessed, I agree in part with the above statement. After all, it is a process yet to be fulfilled, that is why even today nation-building and identity formation debates are still very vivid in Kosovo’s public sphere, as it is elaborated in chapter six.

From the Albanian political elite that succeeded each other in the period prior to and after World War I, the Harvard educated bishop, Fan Noli, was the highest profile leader in voicing some concerns for the fate of Kosovo and tried to raise the issue in the international forums. The support of Noli is explained by the fact that the bulk of his supporters, especially in the revolution which brought him to power, were drawn from members of the Kosovo Committee created in Shkoder, Albania by notable leaders from both Albania and Kosovo. This Committee, a clandestine organization “which drew its membership from both sides of the border, was formed in 1918 to promote a more aggressive Albanian policy on Kosovo. It sought the national unification of all Albanians” (Austin 2004: 241). However, not only Noli failed to reverse any borders, but also his support for Kosovar uprising leaders earned him the enmity of his Yugoslavian neighbors,

who went to help his adversary, Ahmet Zog to recapture the government from where he was once forced out.<sup>11</sup> Hence, Noli government lasted only for a few months, thus failing to properly intervene on behalf of Kosovo Albanians, in any way which could significantly help them out in the long run. His help would have consisted in financing both education and guerilla separatist movements-- as the example of open support for Azem and Shote Galica *kachak* movement shows<sup>12</sup>-- and would have definitely involve changing the mapping of the nation.

Zog, who then maintained the power for the next fourteen years, first as a President and then as elected king of the Albanians, came in power with the crucial help of the Yugoslavs, whom he soon rewarded by ceding parts of the Albanian territory to their benefit. His main threat to power was the opposition led by “disgruntled Kosovars who expected more concern from Tirana, and judged Zogu as pro-Yugoslav” (Austin 2004: 241). This in turn led Zog to radicalize his stance toward the Kosovars and even help the Serbs to put an end to the *kachak* uprising<sup>13</sup> that was taking place in Serbia at the time. Not only did Zog not bother to rescue its ethnic kin in Kosovo, “leaving the Albanians of Kosovo to their fate,” (Vickers 2004: 101) but he saw their leaders as the most dangerous adversaries to his power. His fear, in fact, was well-founded, because not further that March 1922 “Bajram Curri, Hasan Prishtina and Elez Isufi, an important Kachak leader, tried to overthrow the Tirana government, but failed” (Vickers 2004: 100). Later on, all these prominent Kosovo Albanian leaders were killed by Zog’s agents on his orders.

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<sup>11</sup> Ahmet Zog was first ousted from the Internal Ministry which he was heading, by a Revolution led by Noli.

<sup>12</sup> Later crushed by Yugoslavs with the help of Zog.

<sup>13</sup> Vickers (2004: 99) writes that “the Kachak movement was made up predominantly of Albanian emigrants from Kosovo, and was referred to by the Serbs as an outlaw organization and by the Albanians as a national-liberation movement.”

The evidence here can be analyzed from different perspectives. First we may assume that the new ‘Kosovar’ elite were becoming more active in its perception as a different and distinct entity, not in line with mainstream political conceptualization in Albania at the time. This rivalry would later lead to a different perception of relationship with motherland which was conceptualized as fragmentation of the congruence of state and nation in popular imagination amongst ethnic Albanians that lived in Yugoslavia. While in the other hand, it looks like this whole antagonistic affair was an *invented and instant tradition*, fought for simply achieving political power by competing elites and with little effect on changing (mass) perception of an imaginary Albanian nation, at least perceived as such by the common folk on both sides of the border.

I share the view that events unfolding in the ground signaled a break with the homogenizing conceptualization of the nation. Nation and state mapped closely to each other borders in the post-1925 era with Zog’s return to power. The reasons for this were multiple. For example, the new political and cultural elite in Yugoslavia, was educated and affected mostly by Belgrade. On the other hand, the dual efforts of Pasić and Zog to eradicate the last sources of irredentist warfare by crushing the *kachak* movement and killing or exiling some of the notable irredentist leaders such as Curri, Gurakuqi, Prishtina and Boletini, paid off. Zog antagonized some Albanian nationalists by never pressing an irredentist cause against Yugoslavia and Greece beyond formally portraying himself King of the Albanians (Rothschild 1974: 366).

Thus, the symbolic of the above label was not translated into political actions as his deliberative actions clearly show. In addition, it cannot be denied that once Zog resumed

power with the help of Yugoslavs, with whom he maintained an initial strategic partnership, coupled with the common perceived enemies (of both Tirana and Belgrade at the time), which were Kosovo Albanian nationalists/irredentists, the fate of such nationalist elites in Kosovo was doomed to go down the hill. This, in turn, greatly affected the way common folk perceived nations' borders in the subsequent years, until the Italian and German invasions which came a decade later.

The historical evidence thus shows that Albanian nationalist movement under the Ottoman Empire had rather limited goals, asking only for a wide autonomy under the Sultan's authority. This limitation of purpose flowed from a rationalist calculation of the Albanian leaders at the time, which saw the Ottomans as the lesser 'evil', given the territorial ambitions that Albania's more powerful neighbors Serbia and Greece, were feeding. While, in the aftermath of the Ottoman rule, the Albanian leaders were either too weak to act on behalf of the rights of their Kosovo Albanian brethren, or they were strong, but uninterested in pursuing any nationalist cause. One of the foremost ones was Ismail Kemal, the first Albanian premier in its history, who was forced to resign not long after he came to power, because he was challenged both in domestic politics by one of the shrewdest Albanian politicians of the time, Esat Toptani and new geo-political conditions, which favored putting Albania under an international protectorate. Although Kemal managed to keep Albania neutral during the first Balkan war, the country did not gain much as the result of this policy. Kemal did not gain anything either, when he soon saw himself replaced with the German Prince Wilhelm Vidi, as the result of Great Powers' scheming.

Kemal or Noli were in power only for brief periods of time and under constant international and national pressures, thus making them unable to come in any way to the rescue of the Kosovo kin. In contrast, Zog, who exercised power for more than a decade, saw Kosovo as a hub of nationalist movement, whose leaders were a direct threat to his rule in Albania. Therefore, he chose to cooperate with Yugoslavs in crushing the nationalist movement in Kosovo, rather than back them up.<sup>14</sup> Although Zog's policy was mainly driven by simple political calculation of holding the grip to power and eliminating the potential adversaries, the long term effects were an isolation of the resistance nationalist movement in Kosovo and later its elimination by joint forces of Serbian army and King Zog's forces (Malcolm 1998). In turn, this brought a general weakness of 'patriotic agitation' in Kosovo, especially of thesis of unification of the nation and with the demise of the nationalist elite (some died, others fled into exile), the nationalist cause of 'Greater Albania', or independence and full sovereignty of Kosovo, faded away.

We can see awkward representations of the nation's width and direct claims to nearby territories based on population criteria, in old and new geography texts, which shows a particular myth in a repeated pattern. For example, back in 1939, an author writes in one geography textbook: "[t]he capital city of Yugoslav Kingdom is Belgrade over Danube. The other most important cities are: Monastir, Skopje, Dibra, Prizren and Mitrovica that have been historically part of Albania..." (Como 1939: 52). On the other hand, while giving an account of the 10 Albanian prefectures at the time, very interestingly the author starts with the prefecture of Kosovo. He defines it as "having its center in

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<sup>14</sup> The fact that Kemal and Noli were from South of Albania and Zog from the North would normally lead to the opposite expectation in their behavior toward kin in adjacent territories.

Kukes, includes vice-prefecture of Luma and the highlands of Gjakova”<sup>15</sup> and he adds *ad litteram* that: “this prefecture is nothing else but a small part of the Great Prefecture of Kosovo that has remained under Yugoslav reign.”<sup>16</sup> (Como 1939: 33). These repeated expansionary references in *school texts* can no doubt create and perpetuate a certain configuration of national map that is not compatible with the political reality.

Predictions offered by the competing elite games and how domestic shifts have been conditioned by external constraints in Albania, thus leading to certain border outcome in the interwar period going up to the end of World War II are presented schematically below. In this way the table consolidates and clarifies the data that was presented above.

**Table 2. Predictions for border outcomes in the interwar period**

Situation in Albania	Competing Elite games	International Constraints	Border Outcome
(1918 to early 1924)	Political domestic competition escalated with one part of elite opposing any unification projects and strongly cooperating with Yugoslavs (headed by Zog and Kryeziu) and the other vocally irredentist in nature, urging the pursuit of unification goal much	High external constraints, with events such as Congress of Versailles, then international recognition of Albanian borders in 1921 and its admittance in LoN as a country with settled boundaries and not in pursuit of an irredentist	Map ambiguity, because high elite struggles at home, coupled with limits from external powers, leads to a situation with no clear end at sight, at least until 1924 when a forced regime change happened in Albania. The map visualization

<sup>15</sup> These highlands normally would have lied under Yugoslav jurisdiction, since Gjakova is one of the major Kosovar cities.

<sup>16</sup> What makes it even more paradoxical is the fact that this textbook has a note upfront that clearly states the approval of Ministry of Education to be used as school primary textbook for elementary school.

	vigorously (headed by Fan Noli, H. Prishtina and the rest of Kosovar lobby in Albanian politics).	agenda.	bottom-up also fuzzy during this period.
(1925-1939)	Political competition de-escalated. Thus, more uniformity amongst members of political class around a single project that is based on existing internationally recognized borders.	High external conditionality that limits the outer boundaries of nation in line with official recognition.	In line with predictions, we witness a map contraction here.

#### 4.3 Imagined National Borders: Bottom-up Changes of (Map) Perception and Mental Shifts in Interwar Period in Albania

From 1912 to 1920s, Albania's political elite were fluctuating in their mapping goals and the bulk of energy was directed toward maintaining internal stability rather than maximization of territorial scope. This was particularly motivated by the fact that Albanian state borders were finally delimited and internationally recognized only in late 1920s (Fisher 1986) and the weakness of state institutions to extend its authority.<sup>17</sup> The notable exception were Kosovar Albanians who became directly involved in Albania's politics and who relentlessly advocated a political agenda that would have as primary aim, revindication of territory, which they continued to perceive lost because of intransigency of the Great Powers.

<sup>17</sup> Mazower captures well this dynamic when he writes that 'Albania, whose borders were formally agreed upon in the early 1920s, looked to its irredenta in Greece and Yugoslavia' (Mazower 2002: 125-126).

But despite nationalist rhetoric primarily motivated by power-competition of the former Ottoman officials of Albanian origin, the public perception in Albania was not very receptive. This was mainly because the absolute majority of the people were out of touch with nationalists' writings and goals, simply because the population was largely agrarian, lived in isolated communities with little infrastructure that would bring them closer together and were for the most part illiterate. In his memoirs, (re)published recently, the renaissance cleric Ibrahim Dalliu writes that in Tirana of beginning of twentieth century, the majority of people were actually indifferent to this newly created Albania, calling "Albanians" only the activists of national movement (Dalliu 2000). This is first-hand evidence, coming from an intellectual figure of that era, of how these nationalizing elites were seen as foreign elements that first had to be educated in vernacular about this new idea of a unitary Albanian nation-state. Other evidence shows that shortly after the first government came into existence under Kemal, opposing masses were grouping in their request to back the rump Empire, a system they knew well because of more than five centuries of co-existence. This opposing nature, culminated first with Esat Toptan's parallel government of Middle Albania, and a bit later with the reactionary movement of Haxhi Qamil in 1914, who opposing the appointment of a German prince to the royal house of Albania, led a massive surge that was defeated with great difficulty with the intervention of external patrons.

Thus, the newly emerging elites were competing with nationalizing projects. Some were based on expansionist all-inclusive maps and led to an ethnic outbidding and radicalization of territorial projects such as pan-Albanianism with the ultimate goal of



reunification of Albanian lands into a single political unit. This was especially manifested by the Vlorë (officially recognized) government in the immediate period after the declaration of independence in 1912, which had as the ultimate goal the unification of Albanian-speaking territories. Others parallel and local initiatives were very parochial and sought to create small principalities where the power appetite of some chieftain would be satisfied as the example of Toptan's short-lived government of Middle Albania shows. Expansionist maps win when elite struggles are high and foreign limitations low, while when external intervention rises, then we often see contraction of map as the examples traced here testify. The version of the map that attracted the majority of populace in WWI years was officially drawn and recognized as such by the Control Commission, which was an *ad hoc* commission created by Great Powers, with the sole purpose of supervision of the newly delimited territory (preventing expansionist schemes, while limiting the neighboring states territorial ambitions).

The first Albanian government that emerged after the declaration of independence was not powerful enough to defend and include all the Albanian territories in a single state,<sup>18</sup> although it secured the internationally recognized independence, in the Conference of the Ambassadors in London in 1913. Nevertheless, the international recognition had a price to pay and the one that Albania's new state had to pay at this juncture was to leave out half of the Albanian inhabited lands. This simply happened because Balkans were heavily influenced by geopolitical games that Great Powers rivalry produced and various external patrons, like Russia in the case of supporting Serb expansion on expense of

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<sup>18</sup> Not to mention the already established presence of the Serbs in the area and the strength of Serbian army and state, much to the detriment of the fragile Albanian state.

Albania. Kola has argued that with the creation of this new Albanian state, “the big powers had ensured that the Albanian nation was cut in half, with consequences that were to haunt Europe throughout the ensuing century” (Kola 2003: 16). Especially remarkable is the resentment felt by Kosovars, who felt ignored and betrayed once more by the Great Powers. Nevertheless, the embittered Kosovar elite saw the solution offered by the Ambassadors` Conference only as temporary and promised to revenge this unjust decision in their eyes. In the words of their most renowned leader at the time, Isa Boletini: “[w]hen spring comes, we will manure the plains of Kosovo with the bones of Serbs, for us Albanians have suffered too much to forget” (Vickers 1998: 85). After Ambassadors` Conference decision, patterns of thinking alongside an imagined national and single cohesive community, an Albanian nation divided unjustly in two parts, seem to (re)emerge.<sup>19</sup>

The energetic protest against such division and the continuous perpetuation of a mental map that included virtual borders in an enlarged Albania thought to be forcefully divided was done at least partially by the *external elite*, which was soon confronted with the missing power accommodation opportunities. Coming from the nation`s periphery, leaders such as I. Boletini, B. Curri or H. Prishtina could not normally retain the same position of power in their still ‘occupied’ territories as their brethren in Albania. In these conditions, the only way out was either to get fully involved in Albanian domestic politics (the case of Prishtina and Curri) and radicalize it by consistently referring to Albanian ethnic kin as part same undivided nation that allowed possible political border revisions

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<sup>19</sup> This situation resembles among others Hungarian case after Trianon.

when conditions were apt, or by organizing violent uprising in nearby territories as the case of Boletini or Azem and Shote Galica and their *kachak* movement. Curri, Prishtina and others that remained deputies in Albanian government decided to help Noli's 1924 revolution to overthrow Zog's regime. When six-month later, Zog through a counter-revolution supported by Yugoslavs came back in power, most of Kosovo Albanians in high position of power in Tirana took flight. After establishing good relations with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes of 1922, Zog started to openly persecute these members of 'external' elite, who proved to be a liability and threat to his own power position. In the end of February 1923, Prishtina and Curri organized a rebellion of Albanians in Kosovo, against the Serbian troops installed there. This uprising was crushed, jointly by Yugoslav and Zog's forces sent there to support Belgrade's regime. After this, several persecutions of Albanians in Kosovo followed. Most importantly, Zog has consistently been accused as responsible for border exchanges agreed with Pasić, the Yugoslav premier, when St. Naum and several other villages, were given as a gift to the Yugoslavs in exchange for their earlier support.<sup>20</sup> This delayed the final delimitation of borders and as result also their international recognition. Mehdi Frasheri, who was appointed as the Albanian member of the International Border Commission, in his Memoirs republished only recently in Albania

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<sup>20</sup> Zog has been straightforwardly accused for a so-called Memorandum co-signed with Pasic in which the most important points he agreed to were: 1. Albania should join Yugoslavia in a Federation; 2. Zog would have been still the Albanian head of state but under the authority of Karagjorgjevic dynasty; 3. Custom unification, police and army joint forces, similar foreign policy etc. *State National Archive, F. 251, dossier 105, 1924*. But this material has been widely disregarded from historians because the text founded in the archives is not the Agreement itself but a citation of it from an Italian observer in Albania in those years. And secondly Zog was ousted from power in Albania when signed this agreement and none of these points materialized when he came in power with Yugoslav assistance, with the sole exception of sovereignty over Saint Naum, which has been greatly contested afterwards.

pushes the date as far as 1925 as the year when Albania could get its borders finally recognized (Frasheri 2005).

Although the historical texts refer only to elite discourse and rhetoric, as Boletini's words cited above, there is little doubt that these were the general feelings of population at the time, with its 95 percent illiteracy rate that existed (Myzyri 1978; Blumi 2002: 54-55) who led by such popular leaders, perceived the end of colonial reign as finally having the chance of getting united in a single Albanian nation- state (Vllamasi & Verli 2000). Such literates were more of a transmission belt of new patriotic ideas and nationalist agitators that would see nation and state ideally matching together perfectly, thus maximizing their territorial ambitions. In other words, they were more shapers of public opinion, than simply readers of neutral news. The evidence for this comes from the fact that more often than not, these political/cultural elite were the same people that were printing alphabets, books and periodicals abroad and bringing them back to the native land, distributing them among diligent disciples and doing the patriotic agitations themselves. Examples of the later were P. Luarasi, Naum Veqilharxhi, the brothers Frasheri etc, to mention only a few names of diaspora leading figures. The consequence of London Ambassadors Conference which left approximately half of the Albanian-speaking communities out of the new states,<sup>21</sup> was perceived as a betrayal to the Albanian cause and fight for freedom and was

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<sup>21</sup> The London Conference of Ambassadors was a secret meeting of representatives of Great Powers which reached a compromise that would maintain the 'balance of power' and 'spheres of influence' in Balkans. With regard to decisions concerning the recognition of Albanian sovereign entity, we have some evidence from the "Handbook for the Diplomatic History of Europe, Asia, and Africa 1870-1914," prepared for the *National Board for Historical Service*, which states that: "[t]he principality of Albania was established by act of the powers at the London Conference of Ambassadors at the special instigation of Austria and Italy. Its boundaries were to be established on ethnographic lines by an international commission. The new situation inherited two problems from the one previous to 1912. (1) The hostile relations between Serbia and the Albanians owing to the incursions into Serbian territory of Albanian bands and the soreness in Serbia on

expressed in verse by national poets such as Fishta, who called Europe “an ageing whore” in his epic *Lahuta e Malcis* (Elsie 1995) to the simple borderlands folks, many of which saw their tribe or family suddenly divided in different states.

A detail that is important in our discussion of mental envisioning of the nation in this period comes from the first history textbooks in circulation. For example, the first such text for pupils, which is dated from 1921 and is called *History of Albania*, when discussing the ramifications of the Congress of Berlin, literally says that: “[t]he Congress decided to enlarge the lands of Montenegro, Serbia and Greece, giving them lands of Albania. Montenegro would receive Gusinje, Plave and Triepshe; Serbia would take Krumsheline and Vranje; Greece was recognized the right to take the most part of Toskerie region” (Çekrezi 1921: 190). The period when such text surfaced, early 1920s, was a period when effort of state-building were under way, immediately after the WWI, when Albania although kept its neutrality status, was occupied by various belligerents powers. It is therefore no surprise, that first ‘professional’ history textbook written by an Albanian in native language, opens up with a need to map the homeland with its ‘natural’ frontiers and how it had unjustly lost them due to external intervention. Thus, nationalist intellectuals were trying to memorize a virtual map that did not correspond with political realities of the day, where mainstream political activities were directed primarily to state-building and did not evoke any border revision in their rhetoric. This means that popular conceptions were somewhat expansionist, influenced as they were by the nationalist intellectuals

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account of the refusal of the Conference of Ambassadors to grant her access to the Adriatic through Albania. (2) The status of the Greeks in Epirus, provisionally included in Albania and constituting a source of difficulty between Greece, Albania, and the powers.”

against political elite conceptions of contractions dictated by limitations imposed by external interferences.

Textbooks such as the one mentioned above, are crucial in developing a sort of mental mapping amongst the pupils and future citizens by creating the reality of a nation (unjustly) divided in several parts. Thus, a *Greater Albania* that has never existed as such in the political-administrative sense, started to be imagined, nourished and perpetuated, developing consecutively another myth, that of victimhood and forging an unobtainable dream of national unification. A dream that has been activated by nationalist elites only at specific junctures, in order to mobilize the masses by championing an expansionist map, despite the fact that historical, socio-economic, cultural and political factors seem to have taken a trajectory that is different in various parts of this imaginary nation.<sup>22</sup>

Such clichés can be found throughout this text, such as: “under Scanderbeg reign, Albania was recognized as one of the most powerful countries in Europe” (Cekrezi 1921: 105- 106), or “[a]s is easily seen, in this time, Albania was all free, but separated in half: one part was under the reign of Mustafa Pasha, and the other under Ali Pasha” (Cekrezi 1921: 159-160). Thus, talking about a unit called Albania through time, imagining that it is perennial in temporal axes, notwithstanding the centuries in between, cultivated and served to maintain a strong popular imagination about thus supra-territorial state with reduced (political) boundaries.

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<sup>22</sup> As N. Spahiu has put it recently: “[i]n terms of ethnicity, we [the Albanians in both sides of borders] have the same identity because we speak the same language and have common traditions. But we have had different histories and this has created two distinct identities – separated from one another in the political sense of the word” (Konomi 2009).

When the internal of the country started to stabilize around 1920 with the Congress of Lushnja and reached a level of general political understanding, we start witnessing a gradual evolving consensus around a greater map of the nation(-state) first amongst the cultural elite. Thus virtual borders once again were fluctuating between the institutionalist position that mapped the nations` borders around republican symbols of the new state and the concurrent one that strove to fulfill maximalist designs. These cultural elites and notable intellectuals, started to build a new expansionist map that would be realized with possible help of external patrons when conditions would be apt but were resisted from political elite that was aware of external pressures. An example of nationalizing intellectuals we can see at the poem “Free Albania” of the Franceskan father, poet and politician Gjergj Fishta. He writes:

Tomorrow with the help of God,  
Will make again Albania free  
From Preveza to Hoti,  
From Tivar to Monastir.  
In Kaçanik will fly  
The black and red flag of Albanians,  
Because in all these lands  
This is Albanian land,  
That we have inherited from our forefathers (Fishta 1921).<sup>23</sup>

Here we see an expansionist map that reactivates the old nationalist dreams of patriotic agitators to create an *Ethnic Albania*. Fishta is careful to give *an exact map of territorial ambition* of what he calls in the title symbolically “Free Albania”<sup>24</sup> that ranges Preveza in northern Greece to Hoti and Tivar in Montenegro and Monastir (Bitola) in

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<sup>23</sup> My translation.

<sup>24</sup> Implying indirectly that an Albania without these ‘lost’ territories would never be completely free and sovereign.

Macedonia. Symbolically the red and black flag national flag will be raised in Kaçanik, Kosovo, as the epicenter of this new redeemed nation-state.<sup>25</sup>

Cultural reawakening was a precondition for a different kind of nationalist renewal witnessed in political scene in late 1920s and early 30s. Literature and science were not yet starting to develop in native Albanian, with only scarce materials published by expatriates in United States, Romania, Italy, Greece, Egypt and elsewhere where diaspora communities flourished. But the press in Albania proper started to flourish. Young, foreign educated publicists, such as Vangjel Koça, Branko Merxhani or Mit`hat Frasheri started a movement called “Neo-Shqiptarizem” [New Albanianism] in which they proclaimed that nation-building and state-formation should clearly be separated from myths of origins, such as that of an ‘era of former glory’ or myths of descent. For example, Merxhani in one of his most famous articles clearly expresses this view when he writes:

We are not either grand nephews of mythological Pellasgians, or descendants of ancient Illyrians: we are Albanians- a new nation. The pellasgical folktale is a null hypothesis, an absurdity. We should feel only contempt for this sophism. To the day, we cannot find a single Turkish or Greek national with a rational mind believing old myths about direct linear connection with their predecessors. Even Romans have forgotten long time now their origin... Yes! We are Albanians and we are a new nation (Merxhani 1933: 154).

Merxhani and his fellow-in-arms go on to fully express a need for a separation of this new nationalist movement from any Romantic old dogma and talk of nation and identity-building processes as strongly connected to state and institutional building activities. Thus, we see a shift toward map contraction that would closely focus on the

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<sup>25</sup> Kaçanik is noted as a place where many Albanian resistance movements had started and some notable leaders that sought unification with the imagined homeland were from.



present territorial unit, and not nourish false ambitions of Greater Albania that has been based on a myth of former glorious days when all of these territories were united under Illyrian or Pellasgian rule and as direct descendants, Albanians had the right to (re)unite such lost territories. Instead, they professed the role of education as having a critical part to play in fomenting the new societal consciousness and moving toward rationalist thinking and scientific developments as forces of new progressivism. They would serve as a natural barrier to anachronic nationalism which had been a constant variable used in political rhetoric before and after this brief moment of lucidity.<sup>26</sup>

#### **4.4 The Imagined Nation amongst the Ethnic Kin: Expansionary Map in Kosovo in Interwar Period**

The Albanians in the Kingdom of Serbs-Croats and Slovenes<sup>27</sup> in the interwar period, with the exception of the ones in the border zones, had little or no information about the Albanians within administrative Albania.<sup>28</sup> The only active political, military and cultural organization in Yugoslavia, was a mixed party of Muslim feudal lords (Albanians

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<sup>26</sup> Right after this discourse rose to prominence and established itself as the mainstream one in press and publications and policy-making, Albania was invaded by Italy and design of a Greater Albania were put in motion as it will be argued below.

<sup>27</sup> It was established in 1918 and it preceded Yugoslavia. It changed the name to the later only in 1928.

<sup>28</sup> At the time there was not a political division amongst Albanians of Yugoslavia, since Republic of Macedonia was a creation of only post-WWII period. The official numbers about the Albanians vary but the official numbers in 1921 were 439, 657 or 3.67 percent of total population and 505, 259 in 1931, or in terms of percentage 3.63 (Rothchild 1974: 203). Compare this to data given from censuses during Communist period, when in 1953 the Albanians were 754, 245 and in 1961 their number was increased to 914, 760 (Schöpflin: 121). However a caveat needs stressing here because not only these censuses often deliberately conflated religion with nationality and when often national identification was either hindered or instrumentally dictated. It seems that whenever the minority group shares same religion with the majority of the host society, the process of assimilation has been successful. The cases of Orthodox Albanians in both Macedonia and Greece, the case of Turkish in Kosovo and Macedonia and others can testify to this. The opposite has happened when the minorities preserved their religious identification, notwithstanding the pressures, when such preservice has helped to remain a distinct national identity as well. Such is the case of Sanjak in Serbia (where Bosniaks have retained their distinct identity), Turkish Pomaks in Bulgaria, Greeks in Albania, Serbs and Croatians in Bosnia-Herzegovina etc.

and Turks) called *Xhemiyet* (Rothchild 1974), but it did not play any significant role in national awakening amongst the Albanians.<sup>29</sup> The religious element took over the national feelings in this particular organization. An evidence of this is that Punisa Racić, a deputy from Montenegro, infamous for killing Stepjan Radić, a Croatian nationalist leader in the parliament of tripartite Kingdom and later used for ethnic cleansing in Kosovo on behalf of Belgrade regime, was paradoxically elected by the joint voters of Radical Party and *Xhemiyet*, which clearly shows the low political consciousness of Albanian community in the interwar period. A secular Albania could not have been seen with a benevolent eye from these radicals.<sup>30</sup> Thus the falling out of Albanians in Albania with their ethnic kin and the gap that was characterizing their cultural upbringing and political formation was becoming wider.

In the absence of the historical precedent of a unified Albania and considering the lack of political and cultural elite, (the primarily ones were killed or migrated prior to 1927), the Albanians of Yugoslavia had a rough imagination of their connection to homeland. Although history books often speak of unbreakable bonds that have immutably stayed put, archival and biographies of some political leaders of different periods show they did not share the sense of a unified imagined community in a mental mapping of modern nationhood as it is chiefly conceptualized today, or taken for granted. Especially the decade from second return of Zog in Tirana (in 1924) with the help of Pasić

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<sup>29</sup> Although it was first created as an Albanian political party in December 18, 1918 with 64 delegates from Albanians of Yugoslavia, with time a large proportion of its members declared themselves as Muslims (thus fusing ethnic with religious identity), especially after its Second Party Congress in 1921 after the death of N. Draga, the most vocal Albanian leader in the Party. See for more History of Albanian People, Vol. 3, 2007, pp. 469-473.

<sup>30</sup> For a similar argument see also Krasniqi 2009.

government in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia after 1929) and the fight against Albanian nationalists operating in border zones of Kosovo and Albania,<sup>31</sup> as well as the near extinction of nationalist breed in Kosovo, combined with lack of information about Albania there and lack of education in Albanian vernacular, made possible for nationalist feelings to lay dormant until late 1930s. Most of them were still remembering in despair the old Ottoman Empire as the home country which suddenly ceased to exist and were in despair for a return of this golden age.

Even within Albania, the people had such mixed feelings that culminated with the upheaval of Haxhi Qamili in central Albania, overthrowing the Vidi's legitimate and recognized government and asking for a Turkish prince to take the Albanian throne. Furthermore, this is the only bottom-up initiative when the self-organized masses started a rebellion with a parochial agenda that sought the self-governance under formal Turkish authority of only a limited piece of territory in the middle of Albania. The exception reinforces the rule and the revolt's life that sought the creation of a reductionist map with confined borders was very short, it lasted only few weeks and it was crushed by central government swiftly.

Thus we witness a sharp divide between a large percentage of Albanian Muslim population, who differently from the political and cultural elite, both domestic and in

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<sup>31</sup> Some of the prominent nationalists were either shot or imprisoned by either Albania's army or Yugoslavian one who often shared intelligence sources to fight what they perceived as common enemy to both regimes' stability. Zog persecuted them since they were the most vocal opposition against his newly found regime, while Belgrade government in order to crush nationalist and irredentist calls for possible unification with Albania. Some of the most notable leaders that were killed were Bajram Curri in borderland, Hasan Prishtina (Kosovar and former Albania's minister) who was killed in Thessaloniki by Zog's agents, Luigj Gurakuqi killed in Italy and Avni Rustemi. Nehat Draga, the most prominent Albanian political leader in Yugoslavia, was imprisoned, while Azem and Shote Galica, the leading nationalist and irredentist leaders in Kosovo were finally shot after long fighting between their supporters and Zog's and Pasić's armies.

diaspora, nourished deep amicable feelings toward the Ottoman Empire to the point of opposing an independent entity. We can make the same argument for the prevailing mood in Albanians of Yugoslavia who were largely unacquainted with nationalist ideas, because of lack of knowledge about a written vernacular, limited or no information about state of affairs in Albania, little state support from Tirana government and the prevailing religious identification over the nationalist one, during the interwar period. Thus, the Albanians in Yugoslavia seem not to have had much information of the events going on in Albania and were gradually losing the attachment to it. With the exception of limited information distributed to them by the Albania's consular office in Belgrade and the work done by small cultural and political organizations that spread nationalist ideas amongst the small percentage of literates, there was little significant mobilization that would make the Albanians there aware of a homeland to which they would seek to join.<sup>32</sup>

They had a rather limited sense of belonging to a larger pan-Albanian nation during most of the interwar period, because after 1924 most of their (Albanian) nationalist leaders were killed, imprisoned or exiled. Lack of nationalist mobilization and a continuing affiliation with religious identity as the primary source of identification, made possible for a growing alienation of the two sides of border. In early 1920s, the Kosovo-Albanian border was very porous and the frontier more than real was treated as a marginal and artificial device engineered by external forces and thus, interaction was very much habitual

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<sup>32</sup> It was very hard to find much, if any primary sources (i.e. songs, poetry or maps) that reflect a reinvigorated cooperation with Belgrade. I can derive such thesis based on the opposite logic: the almost total lack of mobilization amongst Kosovo Albanians in the late 1920s around a project that would seek maximalist territorial ambition and any source of unification with the perceived homeland, continuing until arrival of Italian occupation of Albania in 1939. It seems that Albania was mentioned rarely and figured little in the internal Kosovo discourse (both mass and elite), during this time frame.

between both sides of border.<sup>33</sup> This strong attachment to the religious identity as the ultimate preserver of the ethnic identity that enabled them to resist assimilation, on the other hand alienated them from kin in Albania who in this period were facing a large-scale secularization process in order to Westernize.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, Albanian state at the same period had different objectives and goals stimulated both by international constraints and domestic leaderships' power struggle. After Albania was accepted in the League of Nation in 1920s, mostly as the result of successful Albanian diaspora lobbyists to President Wilson, settling the border delineation in its northern frontier became a matter of high importance. This was realized after Zog's came to power in the counter-revolution of December 1924 with the help of Yugoslavs and soon afterwards he came to an agreement on "the final borders between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and Albania [which] were arbitrated in Florence, on July 2, 1926, by an International Commission's Protocol on Borders" (Čanak 1998: 24). That coincided with the time period where the connection between Albanian ethnic communities in both sides of border were weaker than ever and most nationalist leaders were gone as mentioned above. Since Yugoslavia was not just main political supporter of Zog, but also biggest financial donor, maintaining a solid relationship with this powerful

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<sup>33</sup> I am indebted to Gezim Krasniqi for driving my attention to this fact (email correspondence June 2011). This allowed for a persistence of a map expansion that would reverse only in the late 1920s and throughout 1930s with the combination of certain factors that opened up the possibility for such change. Such factors were *inter alia*: the forced exile and persecution of Albanian nationalist elites of Kosovo, the closing of any Albanian schools that were opened in the past by Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Zog regime in Albania who joined forces with Yugoslavs to combat the *Kachak* irredentist movement in Kosovo and other less important reasons.

<sup>34</sup> Such programs became especially noted under Zog's reign when explicit rules against *hijab* and enforcing a new Westernized code of dress were established by law. Also similar processes were set in motion in education, where principles of clear separation of state and religious institutions were made possible in a relative short time.

neighbor was a better panacea for Albanian political elite than risky costs of engagement in advocating an expansionist map that would seek revindication of territories. *This is in line with my hypothesis that when external constraints increase, nationalist agendas are pushed into sidelines from elites because of perceived costs that outrun benefits and border contraction follows.*

Auxiliary identification with a local and village community of belonging based on the notion of *fis*, a resemblance with Montenegrin *zadrugas*, further increased the gap between the Albanian speaking communities in the two sides of borders. The impact that Austro-Hungarian schools in native language had in Albania, was too small because they did not last long. Thus we can safely deduce a confined sense of community with a limited sense of belonging (local, village or tribal based) or supranational (religious identification), which in any case were far from nationalism as a principle that sought the territorial congruence between nation and state.

Paradoxically, it was with the Italian and later German occupations during WWII that Albanians had a general nationalist awakening which made possible the alternative map of *Greater Albania* to gain widespread consensus in a short span of time.<sup>35</sup> While in interwar years, the Albanians within administrative Albania, especially the Catholics north of the country, as well as Muslim and Orthodox political and cultural elites in central and south Albania had a more significant rate of success in mobilizing Albanians around a cultural project that envisioned a *Greater Albania* than their co-ethnics in Yugoslavia. The

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<sup>35</sup> This situation is similar to Croats trying to drive Serbs out of Krajina region, seizing in the opportunity of Ustasha collaborationist regime seizing power with support of the Germans (Schöpflin 1973: 123f). The Albanians in Kosovo, supported by Axis Power did the same and tried in frenzy to reverse the previous 'ethnic cleansing' that Serbs had done in the population exchange treaty with Turkey, where most of the 'exchanged' persons were Albanians, rather than Turks.

non-compatibility of visions during interwar period was facilitated by external interference, which culminated with WWII, which tried to create perplexing realities in the Southeast Europe. It was at this time that the projected 'Greater Croatia', 'Greater Bulgaria' and 'Greater Albania' came in existence as short-lived political realities that came with a cost to neighboring countries (especially Serbia and Greece), although such projects were only selectively backed by local populations as it is explained in the next chapter.

Overall, the Kosovar Albanian attitude toward a perceived homeland outside its border has known lots of variation in the interwar period, due to the real or perceived factors. By this I mean, socio-political variables, both objective and subjective which have played a hand in constructing such variation vis-à-vis Albania. One of the foremost objective factors is the mass expulsion of Kosovar Albanians to Turkey after Cubrilović 1937 memorandum on expulsion of Albanians from Yugoslavia (Cubrilović 1938; Elsie 2002: 97). Historical evidence records that this memorandum soon became a state policy and the following course of events took place:

Turkey agrees to accept 200,000 Albanians, Turks, and Muslims from Kosovo and Macedonia, though the 1921 census counted only 50,000 Turkish speakers in Yugoslavia. Turkey wants to use them to increase the population of parts of Anatolia and around Kurdistan, especially Diyarbakir, Elazig, and Yozgat, which are worse for agriculture than the areas the deportees left. Some settle in Bursa, Istanbul, Tekirdag, Izmir, Kocaeli, and Ekisehir. Most are deported on the Skopje-Thessaloniki railroad, then by another train or ship to eastern Turkey...<sup>36</sup> (Vickers 1998: pp. 117-120; Kola 2003: pp. 21- 102).

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<sup>36</sup> In 1944 Yugoslav historian Vaso Cubrilović, again in the position of power after taking sides with the Communists writes yet another memorandum, *The Problem of Minorities in the New Yugoslavia*, and says that, "to establish peace, Yugoslavia must be "ethnically pure," because the issue of minorities creates conflicts with neighboring countries. Cubrilović calls for the removal of Yugoslav Germans, Hungarians, Albanians, Italians, and Romanians, who "deserved to lose their civil rights in this country."

Such policy blueprints and practices led to a growing alienation of the majority of the Albanian population from Belgrade regime, which is reflected amongst else in poetry such as Esad Mekuli's "A asht fajtor shqiptari? (Is it the Albanian's fault?), which as Elsie tells us "was written in 1938 on hearing of the infamous Cubrilović Memorandum of 7 March 1937 which called for the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo to Turkey" (Cubrilović 1938; Elsie 2002: 97), when he asks in its beginning:

Is it the Albanian's fault that he lives under this sky,  
Under this sky, in the land of ancestors? (Elsie 1995, vol. 2,: 635).

Such verse was not uncommon in the period and was memorized even by illiterates who comprised most of the population and had little or no contact with Albania.<sup>37</sup> However, due to growing pressure from the Belgrade centralized policies, forced mass migration, lack of forceful local political elites and poor socio-economic conditions, coupled with a faint or no knowledge of state of affairs in neighboring Albania, made most of the people grow increasingly detached toward Albania. See table below for a summary of endogenous and exogenous factors interplay and visualization of map amongst the Albanian kin in this period.

### **Table 3. Predictions for border outcomes amongst kin the interwar period**

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Elsie points out at numbers that show a much larger percentage of poetry over prose, which was scant and rarely published. In my analysis, this is because a generally illiterate population could memorize much more easy verse through repeated exercises than prose. A second reason may be the affinity to the customary oral epics which is a characteristic common to Southern Slavs.



Situation in Albania	Competing Elite games	International Constraints	Border Outcome
(1918 to early 1924)	Political domestic competition escalated with one part of elite opposing any unification projects and strongly cooperating with Yugoslavs (headed by Zog and Kryeziu) and the other vocally irredentist in nature, urging the pursuit of unification goal much vigorously (headed by Fan Noli, H. Prishtina and the rest of Kosovar lobby in Albanian politics).	High external constraints, with events such as Congress of Versailles, then international recognition of Albanian borders in 1921 and its admittance in LoN as a country with settled boundaries and not in pursuit of an irredentist agenda.	Map ambiguity, because high elite struggles at home, coupled with limits from external powers, leads to a situation with no clear end at sight, at least until 1924 when a forced regime change happened in Albania. The map visualization bottom-up also fuzzy during this period.
(1925-1939)	Political competition de-escalated. Thus, more uniformity amongst members of political class around a single project that is based on existing internationally recognized borders.	High external conditionality that limits the outer boundaries of nation in line with official recognition.	In line with predictions, we witness a map contraction here.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter focused in the pre-WWI and interwar periods, as two of the most unstable periods in the regional and European contexts, affected mostly by the concept of self-determination of small nations that broke away from former Empires and created their own states. To use a modernist` parlance, this was the period where the state started to expand its infrastructure, through various institutions such as the army, the education and political propaganda, which sought to replace the sense of local and sub-national identities with that of a cohesive national identity. This process extended to remote areas of the country, including those in the borderlands, where interesting changes were noticed with regard to map imagination amongst the co-ethnics living within or out of homeland.

The period after the Treaty of Versailles, is especially telling for borders, which remained in a state of constant change, with notable fluctuations that understandably affected the case of Albanian lands. Since the state came rather late for Albanians, the period 1912-1928 was a period where the territorial/state map saw multiple changes which affected and overlapped with the ethnic map of national imagining since at times shrunk or expanded according to elites` games and international intervention. The years 1924-1925 were especially critical as well, which fluctuated from covert irredentist attempts under Fan Noli`s regime to borders` contraction policy of Zog, who saw the path of cooperation with Belgrade as the only feasible way to return to power.

The next chapter, focuses particularly on the Axis power occupation, which started in 1939 with Italy`s occupation of Albania, opened up the possibility for the creation of the `Greater Albania`, which was made possible by territorial (re)adjustments and joining of

the most part of Kosovo`s territory and Western Macedonia to Albania, who maintained a formal autonomous rule. This continued well under the Germans, who returned formal sovereignty to a puppet Tirana regime, whose collaborationist prime minister was from Mitrovica town in Kosovo. This ‘Greater Albania’ created for certain geopolitical calculations by the part of the Axis Power, in a similar fashion with the ‘Greater Croatia’ of Ante Pavelić, found no widespread mass support in Albania proper but was hugely popular in Kosovo and Macedonian populations as evidence cited in the next chapter shows.

## Chapter 5

### From Greater Albania during WWII to Contractionary Borders in Communist Era

*“Greater Serbia and Greater Albania are not only slogans of post- World War I era, but remain relevant ethnonational symbols in our supposedly borderless world and bring, yet again, identity boundaries to the fore of the territorial discourse in these regions” (Newman 2005: 334).*

#### Introduction

This chapter shows how regional destabilization caused by extreme outside intervention, which culminated with direct occupation by the Axis Powers, first Italy and later Germany, provoked a renewed elite clash, with nationalists in their majority switching their loyalty to Rome and Berlin, while Communists were firstly fighting the occupation forces, with the help of the Allies, and especially Tito`s emissaries. These elite clashes however saw several amplitudes during a span time of five years that are duly traced here. The elite struggles and the dominance of one versus the other party led to the creation of *Greater Albania* and not only in its symbolic and imaginative angle, but also in a very concrete form.

During early Communist years, when the Yugoslav-Albanian era was in its honeymoon, the map takes an interesting form, with Albanian leadership scaling down any rhetoric that assumed territorial pretensions. While at other times, the perceived change of geopolitical conditions, coupled with domestic calculations, has made possible a reversal of discourse, though not of any action that at least directly aimed at any form of map expansion. In certain critical junctures, such as after 1974 constitutional changes in

Yugoslavia, we seem to have a deliberate cultivation of larger map framework that would strategically serve Tirana in case it needed to mobilize its external minorities as a way to optimize internal security or get additional concessions. This *ambivalence* is in tandem with my hypotheses about the internal versus external restrictions/opportunity openings that allow elite competition to maximize its goals through manipulation of national map and how it urges or discourages a certain version of map over the other in order to secure its aims.

### **5.1 Direct International Intervention during WWII and Redrawing of Map to Create the “Greater Albania”**

Toward the end of 1930s and the advent of WWII, the Albanians in Yugoslavia started to harden the imaginary borders with their Serbian co-citizens and increasingly started longing for a possible unification with Albania, thus nourishing an expansionist imagination. This was primarily motivated by the raising presence of Italian influence in Albania, which culminated with the 1939 occupation of the country from Italy. This happened because the ever-growing presence and impact of Italy, which used the carrot of *Greater Albania* discourse in order to pacify any Albanian resistance to its annexation goals. Italy's general expansion blueprint envisioned Albania as a stepping stone toward building the renewed Roman Empire under Mussolini's fascist rule. Viewed in such light, Albania served as a crucial geographical territory to dominate the Balkans and Albanians coming in handy as natural allies if the Italians would properly appeal to the opportunity of unification in a single state, albeit under direct control of Rome.

The act of occupation itself further encouraged an expansionist map, which took a constitutional form in the trait of a materialized *Greater Albania*. It continued under the German occupation when the collaborationist regency, ruled the new enlarged Albanian state that extended from Mitrovica in the North to Saranda in South and from current Western Macedonia in East to Durres in the Adriatic Sea. This made possible the redesigning of ‘hard’ borders that matched the ‘virtual’ borders, when for the first time ever, the Albanians of Yugoslavia saw themselves united to the administrative trunk of Albania in a similar fashion with that of other quisling regimes, loyal to the Axis Powers elsewhere in Europe (Hibert 1991: 91). See the Italian map below (in Albanian) for a manifestation of this and indications of how the Albanian-speaking territories added to the Albanian lands were called “liberation lands” with the clear assumptions that they were liberated from foreign (Serb) occupiers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I thank A. Lame for providing me with this map of the day, which in its yellow parts has indicated “the liberated parts” (in Alb. ‘tokat e lirueme’).



Map 14 (H Vj 1941 Albania WWII)<sup>2</sup>

Thus, as Zolo summarizes: "[i]t was under the Italian and German occupation of 1939-1944 that the project of Greater Albania... was conceived" (Zolo 2002: 24), because this was the first time that such an administrative entity came into existence in a united format. A Serbian historian adds that: "[w]ith the outset of the Second World War and the subsequent Axis attack on Yugoslavia, the realization of the project of a "Greater Albania" was in full swing. A larger part of Kosovo (except for the Podujevo, Vucitern, and

<sup>2</sup> Map of 1941. Private archive of A. Lame, originally retrieved from Vienna archives.

Kosovska Mitrovica counties) and the whole of Metohija were joined to the fascist Greater Albania... Regions in western Macedonia, including Tetovo, Gostivar, Kicevo, Debar, Struga and St. Naum, were also given to the “Greater Albania” (Čanak 1998: 31). With the April 1941 Vienna Agreement, a demarcation line between Greater Bulgaria and Greater Albania was drawn, on expense of Yugoslavia, leaving only the Bulgarians not entirely satisfied with it. This was basically the materialization of pre-1913 Albania maximalist nationalists` goals, minus Southern territories that could not be retrieved due to a loss suffered by the Italian forces in their attempted occupation of Greece. Thus, this newly created geopolitical reality suited the nationalists (in both sides of border),<sup>3</sup> who became collaborationists (to Axis Power), in order to help fulfill this expansionist map.

Though the effect was what Albanian nationalist elites were waiting for a long time, the cause (for border shifting) was altogether different. From the diary of Count Ciano, the foreign minister of Italy and the primary official responsible for Italy`s Albania policy during occupation, come some interesting observations. He clearly states in his memoirs and correspondence that “Greater Albania” was an Italian political project similar to Hitler`s Sudetenland, in order to expand its sphere of influence and turn the occupied Albania into a focal point in the region. For example, in the correspondence with the Italian ambassador in Belgrade he explicitly writes that Kosovo population reaches

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<sup>3</sup> The nationalists in both Albania and Yugoslavia formed unified political groups and parties, such as *Legaliteti* and *Balli Kombetar* (National Front), whose goal was to create an “Ethnic Albania”. The only difference was that *Legaliteti* sought such unification under the already exiled monarch King Zog I, *Balli Kombetar* supported a republican form of regime for the new expanded Albanian state. Thus I am talking here of political elites of both Albanians in Albania and the ones in Yugoslavia who encouraged by Italian and later German geo-strategic plans, were quick to embrace the new expansionist map. Meanwhile the Communists in both sides of border (openly supported from the Yugoslav counterparts), also acted as a single political body, but fiercely opposed such designs and consistently favored a contractionary map version.



850.000 inhabitants, “very strong physically, morally stable and *enthusiastic for joining the mother country*... and this will serve to maintain alive a problem of irredentism in the Balkans.” He adds that “this will be twofold important: to keep alive the attention of the Albanians to this question, as well as to keep Yugoslavs under pressure” (Ciano 1939: 286-287). Also Mussolini himself seem to be particularly interested in the issue of reinforcing the weak links of Albania to territories of Chameria in the South and Kosovo in the North in order “to keep alive the national feelings of the Albanians” (Ciano 1939: 306). Ciano also recalls a meeting with Hitler when he mentions that “Führer is enthusiastic about our program to make Albania a castle [roccaforte] that will dominate the whole Balkans” (Ciano 1939: 209). Ciano made good of his words by creating the Office for Irredentism at the Undersecretariate for Albanian Affairs, where Ciano asked one of the Albanian collaborators, Koliqi, to come up with a program of detailed irredentism consisting of three phases that would unite Albanians on both sides of border: “(1) general broad propaganda laying stress on culture and religion, (2) same as to the management of public welfare, and (3) clandestine military organization to be ready for the moment when the inevitable Yugoslav crisis came to a head” (Fischer 1999: 71; Ciano 1953: 112).

On the other hand, the Germans seem to have been more genuinely interested in a *Greater Albania* project than the Italians, or at least they tried hard to build that perception. As Fischer (1999) puts it: “Italy’s role was dismissed as a simple act of colonialist annexation, the culmination of a long-standing Italian policy of controlling their ‘fifth shore’. The Germans created the impression that only now, with the coming of the Germans, would Kosovo’s real union with Albania be achieved” (Fischer 1999: 167).

Since the Allies coalition was silent on the issue of any redrawing of borders, the perception was gradually built that the only way for realization of unification goals of Albanian nationalists from both sides of border, would be a full and open support to the Third Reich. Both Italians and Germans were successful in attracting distinguished members of political and cultural leadership in Albania and Albanian diaspora in their side, and were highly optimistic that masses (especially peasantry which made up for the absolute majority of population at the time), would quickly follow their leaders' support and (Greater) Albania thus would be a secure step in establishing an initial loyal base in the Balkan Peninsula.

Thus it looks like direct intervention, based on geopolitical calculations, was the main driver of border reconfiguration and Albanian map expansion in early 1940s, helped by the consistent policy of Axis Power and their long term strategy of making inroads in the Balkans through similar projects (i.e. Greater Croatia). When the Axis Power started to gain control over the Balkan Peninsula, Hitler's Germany agreed to give a free reign to Mussolini's Italy to incorporate Kosovo, and make Albania the first country to occupy, its epicenter.<sup>4</sup> In addition, after the occupation by Germany, Yugoslavia was divided. Borders were fundamentally redrawn. Serbia was made a protectorate under the rule of General Milan Nedić. Kosovo was incorporated in the Italian occupied Albania, Montenegro was handed to Italy, Hungary took a couple of northwestern provinces of Serbia, and Macedonia was divided between Bulgaria and Albanian 'protectorate'. Also Slovenia was divided between Italy and Germany, while Croatia remaining nominally an independent

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<sup>4</sup> See for more on this the archive files: PRO.HS.7.70, S.O.E.History, File number 37/B, Allied Military Mission in Albania, 1942-1945, p.3.

country (NDH) under the rule of Pavelić and incorporating within it the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina (Crampton 2002: 11:12). The Italians, under the guise of encouraging self-administration of this ‘Greater Albania’, also created the “Albanian National Guard” under the command of Prenk Previzi, made of Albanian Kosovar recruits and the “Committee for Kosovo Protection” under the collective presidency of Ferhat Draga, Bedri Pejani and Iliaz Agushi. Before the armistice with Italy, Iliaz Agushi has been vice-prime minister of Albania, while the other two have been before deputies in the Yugoslav parliament.”<sup>5</sup>

It was during this time that we witness the meeting of *First Conference of National-Liberation Front for Kosovo and Dukagjin Plateau 31 December 1943-1-2-January 1944*, when it was decided *inter alia* that:

...Kosovo and Dukagjin plateau (Metohija in Serbian) is a region inhabited in the most part by the Albanian people, *which as always want to join the rest of the mother country*. This is why we feel that we should tell the people the way forward. The only such way for the people of Kosovo and Dukagjin plateau to join Albania is the common war with the other people of Yugoslavia against the Nazi occupation and its domestic allies and in the end, all the nations [of Yugoslavia], thus including the Albanian people can effectively ask for secession through self-determination (Korkuti 2003: 190).<sup>6</sup>

This Conference was taking place in early 1944 where Germany had already started to loose ground in the broad European theatre of war and the position of Kosovar elite seems to quickly shift from alliance with the Germans toward denouncing the Nazi occupation. Despite the change of tactics, the strategy remained the same, which was preserving the Greater Albania after the end of war.

<sup>5</sup> PRO. WO.204.9428, From Captain Vandeleur Robinson to Miss Barker, 20 March 1944. Reference: Force 133's B8/GSP/6?68 of 5<sup>th</sup> March. Enclisure, Draft “Kosove”.

<sup>6</sup> From the Resolute of First Conference of National-Liberation Front for Kosovo and Dukagjin Plateau 31 december 1943-1-2- January 1944.



**Map 15**  
**The Italian Protectorate of Albania established by Italy in August 1941<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>7</sup> Downloaded from: <http://kosovoholocaust.com/page66/files/page66-kosovo-as-a-part-of-greater-albania.png>

## 5.2 Elite Struggles and the Irredentist Outcome

After the passivity in the interwar period amongst Albanians in Yugoslavia, we witness a slow reawakening in the following decade, which was helped a great deal by discriminatory [Yugoslav] policies, such as forced deportation toward Turkey, poor socio-economic circumstances, and lack of information about state of affairs in neighboring Albania. This produced domestic resonance amongst the Albanian kin by constructing an idealized picture there in the minds of the common folk and a re-awakened interest in Albania, spurred by a new generation of cultural elite. During WWII, not surprisingly Kosovar Albanians were amongst the most friendly populations toward the Axis Powers in the region (together with the Croats and Bulgarians and Hungarians), and Communist propaganda both from Belgrade and Tirana had to overcome such difficulties to prevent the people from joining military divisions under German command (like the infamous Scanderbeg division) and get a mobilization of youth to close ranks behind partisan warfare. The fact that a prominent Kosovar, R. Mitrovica, was appointed by the Germans as Albania's prime minister during war, and this move was rapidly accompanied by redrawing of the administrative map to create a 'Greater Albania' and open thousands of schools in Kosovo region, as well as install all (Albania's) state symbols there, made possible a growing acceptance of an expansionist map that sought unification of Kosovo with Albania.

While in Albania, the situation at least during WWII was different, because the non-nationalist Communists had the largest appeal. Thus, the prevailing mood was not a pan-nationalist one, but rather a parochial one, where majority of the people joined the

liberation guerrilla warfare to defeat the Nazi-Fascist occupiers. This was especially affected by the fact that Albanian communist party was helped in its creation by the Yugoslavs, who also appointed its leaders. Communist forces failed to reach a consensus with the nationalist element at *Mukje meeting*, an Albanian village where they had met to join forces to fight the occupiers. After the delegates agreed in principle to a *modus vivendi* for a common front, the meeting was soon rebuked by communist leadership as an outright treason to the liberation cause, albeit in an attempt to preserve the monopoly of power by communists after the seemingly end of occupation in horizons (Fevziu 2011: 100-103). Recent archival evidence show that Enver Hoxha was under pressure by the Yugoslav emissaries Dushan Mugosha and Miladin Popović not to accept any compromise with the nationalist element, which first had shown a general passivity toward the Italians and Germans and secondly, had the redrawing of borders after war as their top priority and the communists fought the nationalist as fervently as the foreign occupiers. *This is important for my argument that foreign intervention heavily influences the parameters of the conception of the nation.* In Albania itself the foreign intervention did not in fact lead the Albanian citizenry to think in expansionist ways, which was much different from the Albanian general public in Yugoslavia. In fact, there were two foreign interventions going on at the same time. The first one was by communists - externally supported by Tito's communists and USSR - in Albania. While the second was by the Italians/ Germans although in Albania the communists were the more successful in shaping the national

imagination, whereas at the same time in Kosovo, the Italian/German intervention was the one that got most sympathy from local populace.<sup>8</sup>

The empirical evidence also showed that the absolute majority of population in Albania supported the communists which were much more active in combat and propaganda. Furthermore, it shows that Hoxha and Albanian communist leadership went as far as to adopt a similar approach to the Yugoslav one regarding Albanian ethnic kin in Yugoslavia. When Albanian military divisions joined Yugoslav ranks to fight the fleeing Germans in Yugoslav territory in early 1945, Tito shrewdly used them more to crush Kosovar resistance than actually engaging into direct confrontation with the Germans (Jacques 1995: 466). The most evident move of this was the *Tivar Massacre* of April 1, 1945 (Bislimi 2003: 209; Hoti 2003: 18, 186), which followed that of Drenica when Sh. Polluzha and its nationalist backers were surrounded, killed and persecuted by the joint partisan forces of Albanian and Yugoslav Communists (Butka 2011: 50-52). In Tivar (located in present day Montenegro), the Albanian communist military units helped crush an ethnic Albanian resistance movement and killed or imprisoned most of the irredentist rebels (Fevziu 2011: 175). As an author has observed recently, by referring to documents found in Kosovo State Archives and Albanian Interior Ministry Archives, the Albanian Communists has fully and knowledgably cooperated with the Yugoslav counterparts to deliberately and treacherously kill half of Kosovar recruits that were in their way to Trieste war front (Butka 2011). This joint effort has been revealed only recently, after the opening

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<sup>8</sup> This explains why in Kosovo we have the creation of Scanderbeg division, which was an auxiliary of Germans army. In general Kosovar were the less supporters of Yugoslav communist party in the whole of Yugoslphere while giving one of the warmest welcomes to the Italo-German 'liberators'.

of secret archives<sup>9</sup> in the post-communist period. It has thrown a different light to Tirana-Belgrade relationship in the immediate years after liberation.

### 5.3 Main Map Shifts During the Early Communist Period in Albania and its Impact on Visualizing the Nation's Borders

The nationalist discourse that communists weaved during the four decades of power was not something constant and without variation. During WWII, in order to grab power away from the nationalist political groups and to increase support for its troops while fighting alongside the Yugoslavs in Kosovo territory,<sup>10</sup> the Communist leadership of Albania backed calls for a unification of Albanian lands after the war, depending on the outcomes of a referendum.<sup>11</sup> It also indirectly backed the results of the *Bujan Conference* and *Kacanik Meeting*, mentioned above, which came out with such resolutions. As a result of increasing pressure of Yugoslav emissaries that helped constitute the Communist party and strongly support Hoxha as its leader, the ruling elite in Albania gradually started to undermine any expansionist nationalist projects. Also, the prevailing rhetoric domestically was an anti-nationalist one during the first years after the end of WWII. Many texts, speeches and publishing were concentrated on a supra-nationalist Communist ideal, with cosmopolitan roots. This created the opportunity for Albanian leaders to be enthusiastic of joining in as a seventh republic of Yugoslavia or a tripartite Federation with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, alternative projects that were later fiercely criticized by Stalin (Mazower

<sup>9</sup> See for the full documentation: *Albanian State Archives, The General Headquarters, 1944, d. 136, as well as the Archives of National-Liberation War of Yugoslavia, nr. 9-4. K. 1411.*

<sup>10</sup> At the time, Albanians of Macedonia were still united with that of Kosovo in a single administrative unit, which was to change immediately after WWII.

<sup>11</sup> This was Tito's promise to Hoxha during WWII, based in the principle of self-determination. A different kind of proposal from what was going to happen only a few later when talks of ultimately incorporating Albania to Yugoslavia were under process.



2002). After new Stalin`s position, Tirana quickly backed from any such steps, turned abruptly against Titos` designs, increased the nationalist discourse internally and quickly secured the support of the new promising supporter, the Soviet Union.

This period was associated with the purge of some notable political figures, starting with number two in the Party, Koci Xoxe and several others that were blamed for being infiltrated agents of Yugoslavia. This is one of the ‘critical junctures’ that opened up revisiting and altering of history, geography, ethnography texts in order to stress the animosity rather than friendly relations with the Slav neighbors, which would justify the weaving of the oft-repeated theme of autochthony, resistance and singularity of body politic amongst Albanians in the Balkans, despite present territorial borders. It was in this period that there was a frenzied archeological excavation to prove the Pellasgian and Illyrian ancestry of Albanian nation began in Albania.<sup>12</sup> From this, followed a newly concentration on folklore especially on nationalist epics that quickly projected the Slav ‘Other’, often in the shape of a Serb or Montenegrin, started to get the backing of the Party and political and cultural elite. The most notable of these were the cycles of ‘Muji and Halili’, or the “Legend of Gjergj Elez Alia”, epics similar to that of neighboring Montenegro or Bosnian epics, but as a scholar indicates, with their roles switched (Skendi 1980: 75). This folklore tales are a cycle of lengthy epic poems that describe the continual struggle of the two brothers, with supernatural powers against the Krajl (King) of Montenegro.<sup>13</sup> Such ethnography served as a manifestation of a supposed eternal

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<sup>12</sup> This evolved around new ‘scientific’ institutes that were urgently created, such as Institute of Folklore and Ethnology, Institute of Archeology, Institute of Anthropology and Cultural Studies etc.

<sup>13</sup> See for a detailed view of this: Academy of Science of Albania. 1998. *Albanian Folklor Issues*. Tirane. For a critical view see Lambertz 1958.

antagonism that differentiates on ethnic lines in two sides of borders and is portrayed (speculatively) as centuries-long struggle. This in itself has perpetuated a new way of conceiving self and other while (re)constructing virtual borders in the collective imagination of Albanians.

This kind of invented folklore, in the footsteps of *invented traditions* as a characteristic of the newborn nationalism, had a deep effect on perception of the masses, for several reasons. First, because of the utter impact they had on borderline people where the source of these epics had assumedly generated. The old-time Montenegrin neighbors with whom the mountainous people of Malesia have shared for centuries similar customs, music, eating and even inter-married, were suddenly depicted as the eternal foe with whom a continuous and never-ending battle has been fighting.

Secondly, these epics, which presumably passed down through oral transmission from times immemorial, were quickly picked up by mainstream history textbooks and mainstream literature of the socio-realist writers. Ismail Kadare was one such writer, with books such as “Broken April”, when highlanders’ old epics were transformed into the modern novel of 20<sup>th</sup> century. These former oral myths became very important in mental border reconstruction, after incorporation in official historical narrative, because they referred to the customary law mentioned earlier, where borders were sacred and thought to be unmovable. This recreation and legitimization of myths that divide, by stressing some territorial divisions, such as the ethnic lines that became essentialized, while dismissing internationally recognized borders as simple ‘lines on the ground’ without much symbolic attire, was a deliberative policy that sought to create a new defense line against what was

perceived as the “Northern” threat in the wake of break-up of relations with Tito’s Yugoslavia.

Thirdly, because the new pupils, students and people *en masse* were being educated with these new fabricated nationalist myths, sponsored by the Communist regime in order to build xenophobic feelings among the population, this elite-led narrative became widespread in a short span of time. This in turn provided the regime with the legitimacy and backup they needed in the advent of subsequent breaks with neighboring countries and growing isolation in international arena.

In addition to the resurgence of folklore, pop traditions and other mechanisms of such packet, marketed and distributed by the government, new and more important developments were witnessed in the field of language. In 1967, a new draft on “Orthography Rules of the Albanian Language,” was published by the Institute of history and Linguistics. As it is stated in a recent encyclopedia, “[t]his draft was applied in all Albanian territories, the Republic of Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro. Meanwhile, efforts were also made in Kosovo for the unification of the literary language and its orthography (Myftiu and Dalipi 2000). The events unfolded rather quickly because by the next year, “[a]t a Consultation on Language in Prishtina, the Albanians of Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro in Yugoslavia decided to abandon the literary use of Geg dialect and use only the official Tosk form in all their publications and schools (Dielli 1989: 3). After it went additional revisions, it was finally adapted in 1972 Congress on orthography held in Tirana. This Congress “attracted 87 delegates from Albania, Yugoslavia and Italy. The decisions reached there, resulted in the standardized publication of 1973, Orthography of

the Albanian Language” (Jacques 1995: 494). This congress has major ramifications and: “[i]t has gone down in the history of the Albanian language and culture as the Congress of the Unification of the National Literary Language” (Myftiu and Dalipi 2000). One of the resolutions of Congress was *inter alia* that: “the Albanian people now have a unified literary (standard) language,” with the clear understatement on the Albanian people, not citizens, thus including ethnic Albanians in neighboring countries and overseas diasporas that up to that moment used various dialects.<sup>14</sup> This 1972 event in Albania preceded by a couple of years the newly granted constitutional freedoms gained by Albanians of Kosovo and the two factors combined produced a widespread nationalist literary production to reach Pristina in real time. This created a newly imagined reconceptualization of nation and its mental frame which in turn led to demands for territorial changes (i.e. the unification thesis was a popular one amongst students at the protests of 1981, whose main hub was University of Pristina campus).

#### **5.4 Consolidation of National-Communism in Albania and its Effects on the Imagined Map and Visualization of Borders**

During communist era, Albania started out building on cosmopolitan ideas and values of socialism, became a strong supporter of intergovernmental agencies, such as COMITERN and Warsaw Pact, as well as supported supranationalist goals that culminated with Balkan federation ideas at the time of the honeymoon with the Yugoslavs. Later, especially after the break with the Soviets and the Chinese, it grew increasingly isolated

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<sup>14</sup> For example, the old Albanian diaspora of Italy in 1968 “expressed its ethnic identity with the rest of Albanian world by adopting Albanian as the language of its liturgy in place of the Greek of Eastern rite (Jacques 1995: 484) and in 1977 that “the present literary form would be the only form of Albanian to be used” (Jacques 1995: 507).

and on par with this, the nationalist rhetoric and xenophobia grew accordingly. It ended up being a national-socialist regime, paranoiac of outsiders and committed to survive in an autarchic fashion. This section discusses the (nationalist) politics of the regime, as a proxy for elite behavior, while the next section concentrates on the impact that it had on perception from below, how students and other segments of the society perceived the nation and its boundaries during this period.

Seen ideologically, the Albanian communist regime tried to show itself as the successor, fulfiller and more faithful than previous regimes to the ideology of romantic-nationalism of Renaissance era (Sulstarova 2004: 125). One could find manifestations of the national-communist spirit in the imprint that it left in architecture, monuments, public discourse etc. According to some scholars, Hoxha's Albania was the most nationalist Communist regime in Europe, on par with that of Ceausescu in Rumania.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the nation was not only narrated in temporal axes to show its autochthony. It was also related to a spatial dimension, where landscape and discourse at various stages, conditioned by inter-elite competition and external interferences/geopolitical situation, invented *instant traditions* while nourishing ideas of a unit greater than the current (and impoverished) nation-state.

Thus it seems a speculation to actually paint this in a linear, black and white way. In fact, there has been great variation in the five decades of Communism regarding the state-building processes, nationalist propaganda and action discrepancy. Regarding this last point, the Communist regime notwithstanding the nationalist discourse, did not follow up

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<sup>15</sup> I recall here one discussion with Florian Bieber in one of his seminars, regarding the Communist period and the internationalist/ nationalist outlook as reflected in both discourse and landscape. Spring 2009.

with any concrete irredentist blueprint, given the incapability to materialize it anyhow. But it remained ambivalent in nourishing any particular historical interpretations that would have mismatched with the factual border situation. In other words, the regime was careful not to help create domestically a kind of expansionist nationalist feeling that would have led to a different imagination of the scope of territory and its outer boundaries, though it helped (in)directly these processes in Kosovo to serve its geopolitical interests. Thus, in one hand, Hoxha was careful not to encourage open secessionist revolts from Albanian-speaking population in Kosovo, while on the other it needed a general satisfaction of the Albanian element there that could be shrewdly used at opportune moments. This *strategic ambivalence* could serve the regime to play a two-level game (Putnam 1988), in each of the domestic and international layers. For example, the violation of Albanian human rights by Belgrade regime was often used by Tirana in international forums when concessions were sought afterwards. On the other hand, when domestic frustrations grew *in extremis* due to slow economic development and growing isolation, Hoxha could speak more openly about an expansionist model that would treat Kosovar ‘brethren’ as natural part of Albania. These ‘Janus-faced’ deliberate policy, which has led to a lot of ambivalence regarding the way ethnic Albanians in Kosovo looked and perceived Hoxha’s regime, is very telling of our story of map expansion/contraction that serves or comes as a result of elite competition, with an open eye for changing geopolitical environment and (lack of) external intervention that condition internal policy/discourse changes.

The Communist regime that took hold of power after the end of the World War II was established with the help of Yugoslav emissaries, Dushan Mugosha and Miladin

Popović.<sup>16</sup> This happened because Stalin agreed that Albania should fall on Tito's Yugoslavia sphere of influence<sup>17</sup> and although there were some vague promises in the beginning, during war, mostly for mobilization purposes, Tirana refrained from any openly nationalist or irredentist policy toward Kosovo, from its inception.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, in order to draw the Kosovars to the Communist side, the Yugoslavs offered Kosovo a potential self-determination perspective, based on Marxist-Leninist ideology.<sup>19</sup> This implied *inter alia*, the right to secede. Only under such conditions, the Kosovars would be willing to fight on the side of the Communists against the German aggressor, who in fact has been very supportive of the claims of Greater Albania, as a way to gain the sympathies and possible collaboration of the local Albanian inhabitants.<sup>20</sup>

After the war, the cooperation among Albanian and Yugoslav communists continued as before, mostly due to the great reliance that Hoxha and his associates had on their Yugoslav 'comrades'. An observer notes that Hoxha even sent his partisans in Kosovo "to prepare the way for the resumption of Yugoslav control" (Pano 1968: 18). No wonder that Kosovars felt betrayed at this period; "[th]eir leaders could not understand

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<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless Hoxha himself has disputed this, by writing that Mugoša had no role at all, while Miladin served only as an adviser to the founding members of the Albanian Communist Party.

<sup>17</sup> See Milovan Djilas memoirs *Meeting with Stalin* for more details on this.

<sup>18</sup> A writer has argued in a post-1990 essay that: "[s]ince the 1961 break with the Soviet Union, the Albanian regime began a process of isolationism that led to a *sui generis* nationalism. The main difference between this new Albanian nationalism and "classic" bourgeois nationalism was that the Albanian version lacked territorial claims or concern for large Albanian communities in the neighboring countries. Instead, Albanian nationalism was characterized by its promotion of national exclusiveness and superiority within borders that existed" (Shehu 1997: 85).

<sup>19</sup> Shehu writes here: "[t]he Albanian communist regime exhibited different attitudes at different times towards the problem of Kosovo. Even though nationalism had permeated Albanian communism since the early 1960s, Tirana never had a consistent policy towards the three million Albanians in neighboring Yugoslavia. On those occasions-- when Tirana did venture to criticize Belgrade-- its condemnations were general and always based upon alleged abuses of Marxist-Leninist ideology" (Shehu 1997: 87).

<sup>20</sup> For a similar argument see Costa 1995: 59-60.

why they were not uniting with Albania- to achieve this, after all, was the reason why they had agreed to fight with the Partisans” (Vickers 2004: 101) in the first place.

Hoxha himself, in his memoirs, writes that he brought up the issue of Kosovo in a meeting with Tito in 1946, asking the Yugoslav leader to allow Kosovo to join the Albanian state, based on pre-war discussions (Hoxha 1982: 260). Tito, according to Hoxha replied that while his request sounded all right, the timing was not appropriate, because it would have been hard to convince the Serbs, which “would not understand” (Hoxha 1982: 260).<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, Tito mentioned the idea of a Balcanic Federation, where Albania would join Yugoslavia as a seventh republic, with Kosovo joining Albania inside the Yugoslav borders on the meantime (Hoxha 1982: 261). A further documented proposal of the Yugoslav view came by Tito’s right hand and number two in Politburo, Edvard Kardejl: “The best solution,” he told a Central Committee meeting, “would be if Kosovo were to be united with Albania, but because neither foreign nor domestic factors favor this, it must remain a compact province within the framework of Serbia” (Malcolm 1998: 315). This view corresponded with Communist leadership in Albania, where Hoxha in a meeting of the Communist Party in December 1946 said: “Is it in our interests to ask for Kosovo? That is not a progressive thing to do. No, in this situation, on the contrary, we must do whatever is possible to ensure that the Kosovars become brothers with the Yugoslavs” (Malcolm 1998: 318).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> However Hoxha’s account of such conversation is not corroborated by Yugoslav historiography, which does not mention such conversation to have taken place. Other authors have gone to the firm conclusion that “Hoxha never actually had any pretensions on Kosovo” (i.e. Fevziu 2011: 182).

<sup>22</sup> Original quote cited from Enver Hoxha in a referee kept in *Extraordinary Plenum of Central Committee of Albanian Communist Party, 18-20 December 1946*. Albanian State Archive.



In fact, many Yugoslav communist leaders considered that “unification- with the truly voluntary agreement of the Albanian leaders- would not only be of direct value to both Yugoslavia and Albania, but would also finally put an end to the traditional intolerance and conflict between Serbs and Albanians” (Djilas 1962: 144). But Hoxha was skeptical of the proposal, seeing it as a threat to his political existence,<sup>23</sup> which a scholar has put it as “ample proof of the late Albanian leader’s non-nationalist leanings.” (Kola 2003: 95). Furthermore, the same author writes:

For, even if one were to accept Hoxha’s argument that the rejection of the Balkan Federation project also saved Albania from disappearing from the map of Europe, that, in turn, meant the abandonment of nearly half of the Albanian nation; hence, it was a truncated or halfway form of nationalism. Hoxha’s subsequent claims, as well as attempting to throw a mantle of nationalism over his rule as a whole, ring hollow in the light of his position at the time, which resembled anything but nationalism. On the contrary, underlying Hoxha’s decisions and political somersaults there appeared to be one single motive: political survival (Kola 2003: 1995).

I agree with this authors’ viewpoint about political survival as the ultimate goal. However, this does not show that Hoxha has not been the nationalist leader that he later claimed to be, because he did press the Kosovo issue after his break with Yugoslavs in 1948, when he could achieve limited political goals in exchange. One such goal is to keep Yugoslavs away from meddling in Albanian domestic politics where they used to play a pivotal role

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<sup>23</sup> One of the fears was that in such scenario, the predominantly Tosk leadership of Albania, would be threatened by twice the size Gegs in case such idea was going to be put into effect. Also, the communist ‘internal’ elite would have faced direct competition from the incorporated ‘external’ Kosovar elite, which would have naturally sought its proportional share in the governance elite of the country. This is in tandem with my thesis that elite competition dictates the (desired) map outcome of the (nation)-state and in this case, the Tosk-ruling communists of Albania did not have any interest at all in expansionary projects that would see the two parts joining in a single republic. Quite the opposite, they viewed it as a direct threat to their position of power, which becomes even more so, if we consider that their main adversaries in war period were the nationalists, whose main bases were north of the country, while Hoxha himself and other communists were placed in power with the undeserving help of Yugoslav communists.

and Hoxha had lost their confidence for good by 1948. On the other hand, he was careful not to bring the Kosovo question in international forums, like in the United Nations<sup>24</sup> and evidence shows that it did not raise the issue up, even in bilateral talks. This may be interpreted as ambivalence on his side, because although he could use the nationalist question to create and perpetuate a visual map that would gain him political points and support at home when challenges arouse,<sup>25</sup> he did not need or desired to attract much international attention or pressure, because costs would have been high.

Different political observers hold different opinions about the reasons that drove Hoxha's foreign policy toward Kosovo. For example, Albanian analyst, Hysamedin Feraj, stresses that Hoxha's foreign policy claims in the UN were always in line with Moscow's stances, even when he had already severed ties with Khrushchev.<sup>26</sup> While, the Kosovar Albanian political scientist, Muhamedin Kullashi, explains Albanian policy toward Kosovo, as a simple rationalist one that took into account the geo-political circumstances of the time. According to Kullashi, the Albanian government did not raise the issue of Kosovo up in the international forums-- especially after it had become completely isolated-- because that would have implied a series a negotiations with foreign powers, which Hoxha had already labeled as enemies. This in turn would have made Hoxha look weak

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<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Hoxha remained adamantly opposed to national unification elsewhere, such as the reunification of the two German states, which in the face of the deteriorating relations with Soviet Union and the precedence that could be used for a possible reunification of the Albanian nation, would seem as a reasonable request. I am indebted to Remzi Lani of the Albanian Institute of Media for pointing this out to me. April 12, 2009 interview.

<sup>25</sup> Especially after each of the breaks with powerful partners, such as Yugoslavs in the early 1950s, Soviets in the 1960s, and the Chinese in the 1970s, when internal challenges also surfaced, but were crushed immediately by delegating them the responsibility of being 'blind' to national interest. However this lingo was used only for domestic consumption and to make Hoxha appear as a patriotic leader rather than affected at all changes in policy or course of foreign policy.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Hysamedin Feraj, the chair of political science department at the Tirana University.

and vulnerable in the eyes of his constituency and might have incited a domestic revolt against the regime.<sup>27</sup>

Further evidence that Hoxha was a political strategist little interested in any direct or indirect support to the Kosovo cause, comes also from Kosovar communist leaders, such as Fadil Hoxha, the highest political leader in Kosovo-Metohija region who after a meeting with Enver in 1945 and asking for “sending of 100 teachers of Albanian language from Albania to Kosovo and a printing machine for usage of Latin letters for printing of school textbooks”,<sup>28</sup> not only did not find any support from Hoxha, but was called by UDB (Yugoslav Secret Police) upon returning back to Kosovo and put in front of the conversation that had taken place between the two of them, word by word. This showed that Hoxha had full disclosure to Belgrade, and was not interested in any nationalist goals, although he sought to maintain his cult amongst Kosovo Albanians that regarded Hoxha as a great patriotic leader. Furthermore, as F. Hoxha adds, he never actually visited Kosovo during his whole reign of power, although he had such opportunity when passing through to meet Tito in Belgrade.<sup>29</sup> This shows that political competition at home in conjunction with opportunity openings in geopolitics were what counted mostly in Hoxha’s calculations, not some abstract and linear position vis-à-vis Kosovo and “Albanian Question”.

The only period during Communism that Albania started getting involved in supporting Kosovo-- albeit in a limited way-- was during the years 1979-1981, when the

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Muhamedin Kullashi, professor of political science at the University Paris 2 in France, and one of the founding members of the Kosovo Committee in Paris. Actually serving as Kosovo ambassador in France.

<sup>28</sup> Fadil Hoxha, interview at *Opinion* in TV “Klan”, December 2000.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*

Albanian government was helping Kosovo with its new educational policies. This was partly made possible because of 1974 Yugoslav constitution, which granted Kosovo a wider autonomy. The changes in the Constitution that weaken the dominant power of Serbs in the Federation, made Serbian intervention in these two autonomous units impossible, without the prior consent of their respective legislative bodies (Vickers 2004: 178). Moreover, as Miranda Vickers has argued, changes in the Constitutions caused a “positive discrimination in favor of the Albanians in Kosovo: bilingualism became a condition for employment in public services; four-fifths of the available posts were reserved for the Albanians on a parity basis; and national quotas were strictly applied when nominations were made for public functions” (Vickers 2004: 180). But most importantly, the constitution helped making Kosovo, together with Vojvodina, an equal unit short of sovereignty, with the same right of vote in the federal system with the other Republics in Yugoslavia. It also allowed for the Albanian language to be freely introduced in schools’ curricula and a University to be founded in Pristina.

The University received an enormous amount of support from Albania, but this was done with the encouragement of Tito, who saw this as a way of quelling any unnecessary unrest that might have taken place in Kosovo, as well as to create a counter-hegemonic mechanism against Serbian dominance in the Federation.<sup>30</sup> According to the Tirana Vice-

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<sup>30</sup> Such unrest had already taken place in 1968, which led Tito on one end to firmly suppress the uprising, and in the other, to introduce the new constitution and purge Ranković, as a way of securing the federal system from both sides. In weakening both a potential Albanian nationalistic movement, while lessening Serbia’s grip on Kosovo, Tito in a way was strengthening the federal Yugoslavia, while keeping the necessary balances that allowed him to comfortably sit in his position as head of state. While allowing Albanian self-governance and changing the jurisdiction of Kosovo, Tito made sure that at least in the rhetoric level he remained steadfast against any possible border revision or exchanges of territory with neighboring Albania. The Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA) reported in June 10 of 1981, citing TANJUG (the Yugoslavian

Rector at the time, Professor Osman Kraja, the University of Pristina was receiving flows of regular funding from Albanian government that equaled to some 60 percent of Tirana University annual budget.<sup>31</sup> The aid consisted of books and other logistical materials, for which there was a great need in the fledgling Pristina University. In addition, more than three hundred professors were sent on short-term contracts, up to 1981, when the protests erupted and the professors were asked to leave by Belgrade authorities.<sup>32</sup> It is estimated that “[i]n the 1975-1980 period, 237 university professors and teachers from Albania lectured at the Pristina University and other schools throughout Kosovo and Metohija. Over sixty Albanian professors and teachers from Kosovo and Metohija in turn traveled continuously to Albania. 183 scientific researchers from the Pristina University obtained their higher degrees in Albania, while 62 of colleagues from Albania proper studied in Pristina. Over 20 percent of all textbooks, especially in the humanities, used in the Kosovo and Metohija schools, were imported from Enver Hoxha’s Albania” (Čanak 1998: 40; Lalaj 1993).

The University itself soon turned into a hub of Albanian nationalist re-awakening which would culminate in 1981 with protests that went as far as to ask for secession from

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News Broadcast) that “Tito and Kardejl were especially vocal after 1968 of emphasizing the necessity of a determinant war against Albanian nationalism and irredentism in Kosovo.”

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Osman Kraja, the former vice-Rector of University of Tirana for the period 1978-1984. The level of such high funding in a period not particularly good with Albanian economy was a shifting signal in Tirana’s policy vis-à-vis Kosovo that sought to be more inclusive and attentive toward adjacent Albanian co-ethnics.

<sup>32</sup> The former Albanian President, Professor Rexhep Mejdani, gives a vivid account of his four year experience of teaching in the Pristina University (1977-1981) in an interview for the periodical *Epoka e Re* in Kosovo in 2005. He mentions *inter alia* that the Albanian government of the time made possible for the best professors to be sent in Kosovo, as a way of counteracting the Serbian professors that were coming from Belgrade. However, Mejdani was explicit that no other support, to his knowledge, was given from Tirana, referring to some speculations that Tirana sent these professors as a way to incite unrest in Kosovo. Nor were the professors able to exercise such support independently, given the circumstances.

Yugoslavia and unification with Albania, thus redrawing borders at least in the level of imagination of the nation and political articulation. Anton Berishaj, a sociology lecturer, describes the rationale of University of Pristina's existence from its creation and onward in this way:

From its foundation until 1974, the UP was a national, romantic institution. From 1974 until 1981 it was an institution of enlightenment, while in the Eighties and early Nineties it became a fortress of nationalism. In the last decade of the last century, it turned into a fortress of resistance.<sup>33</sup>

Such metamorphosis grasps the *raison d'être* of its creation and the continuous transformations that served a certain political agenda, or posited a group of elites against other, each side trying to offset the other. On one side there were those professors and students, which in particular junctures (i.e. 1981) advocated a *Greater Albania* map as the only feasible and rational solution to the 'artificial federative project',<sup>34</sup> while on the other, the ones who were delegated (official) authority by Belgrade and were openly supportive of Kosovo's full integration in Yugoslavia.<sup>35</sup> The contestation that took place between these groups and the support that the latter had from Belgrade, made possible for the so-called *irredentists* to leave the country or face imprisonment, while the more moderate nationalists went latent. That basically left in position of power the ones who were deemed to be trustworthy by the central (communist) leadership and who were much in line with Yugoslav supranationalist model and ideas of co-existence and multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious cosmopolitanism. That created the propensity for the creation of a

<sup>33</sup> Interviewed from the Guardian. Shala and Gjuergjala (2004), *Kosovo losing its Faculties*. 28 July. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/jul/28/internationaleducationnews.highereducation?INTCMP=SRCH>

<sup>34</sup> Current prime minister Thaci, and other members of the current political and cultural establishment, were at that time students at UP, Marxist devotees (by default also supporters of Hoxha's regime) and later founding members of KLA.

<sup>35</sup> Such leaders included the mainstream political establishment of Kosovo at the time, such as Fadil Hoxha, Mahmud Bakalli etc.

contractionary map that would not favor any secessionist/ irredentist schemes and would be satisfied with the status quo, thus favoring a severing of links with their co-ethnics across border. That all changed with Milosević's coming to power and the infamous Memorandum of 1986, where mass environments become more supportive of a renewed Albanian nationalism, thus forcing the elites to either reverse their lingo or open the way for new energetic leadership.

However, Albania's help was almost exclusively limited to subsidizing of education and sending of Professors from Tirana University to the Pristina counterpart, without further pushing as far as to create potential irredentist movements inside Kosovo. This would have simply been inconvenient for Tirana, at a time when Yugoslavia was its main trading partner, however the ambiguity in political relations. Moreover, Kosovo Albanians were viewed as "national 'purists', whose intensifying nationalism was unsettling to the authorities in Tirana because it was not subject to their control." (Vickers 2004: 205). Also, the Kosovar's freedom of travel and free expression of their religion were perceived as threats to the Hoxha's Communist regime even if it was possible for the two countries to join in a single one (Vickers 2004: 205). Therefore, Tirana lacked the will to openly support any Kosovar nationalist movement, let alone support any irredentist movement at this stage.

But after the 1981 protests of Kosovo Albanian students of Pristina University, Tirana was in a way forced to take a defensive position on behalf of the rights of their Kosovar brethren and "accused Yugoslavia of keeping the Kosova population in poverty and misery and depriving it of its social and political rights" (Kola 2003: 158). In

Belgrade, such interference from Albania was perceived as a piece of evidence that showed that Tirana might have instigated the protests in Pristina and relations between the two countries arrived at an all time low, when Tirana reciprocated by radicalizing its accusations. As a matter of fact, there has been indeed some speculation even from foreign press<sup>36</sup> that Hoxha might have helped incite the protests in Kosovo as a way to divert its constituency's attention from economic problems in the country, toward a nationalist agenda. However, I have found no credible evidence that can back up, at least exclusively, such claims during the course of this research. It seems that a combination of political survival needs when faced with domestic opposition, coupled with growing isolation in the international scene, were the two most motivating factors in ruling Communist elite's calculations in this period that in turn shaped map projections amongst the people. Although Tirana has never-- officially at least-- requested an outright desire for unification with Kosovo, during the Communist period, in spite of the moral support that sometimes found it convenient to give, all this evidence is important for my overall argument because it informs the political considerations in constructing national boundaries. Predictions offered by the competing elite games and how domestic shifts have been conditioned by external constraints, thus leading to certain border outcome in the World War II and communist period in the Albania's case are presented schematically below, consolidating and clarifying the data presented above.

**Table 4. Predictions for border outcomes during WWII and communist period**

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<sup>36</sup> See Kola (2003) footnote on p.159.



Situation In Albania	Competing Elite games	International Constraints	Border Outcome
(1939-1944)	Two main competing frames that led to civil war: the nationalists and the communist. Elite struggles culminated in a civil war taking place simultaneously with resistance against occupation forces.	Direct occupation by Italy. Italy's main pacifier argument, through which tried to gain Albanian sympathy, was support for unification of Albanian-speaking lands in Yugoslavia and those of N. Greece (Chameria) with Albania. After the defeat by Greece, Chameria claim was withdrawn while unification with Albanian inhabited territories of Yugoslavia continued even after the Italians, with the Germans.	Border expansion as the reality of "Greater Albania" came into being, created by Axis Powers. The only time in history that Albanians in both sides of borders shared a common political entity.

(1945-1990)	<p>This period is divided in three main critical junctures. From 1945-48, excellent Tirana-Belgrade relationship brought a separation of Albania and Kosovo both in elite and mass levels. From 1948 to 1974 after a purge of pro-Yugoslav fraction in Albanian leadership we witness neutrality. One dominant elite in Albania all way until 1989, though regime started to look more favorably to ethnic kin in Kosovo and Macedonia Third period, started in 1974, where Hoxha saw an occasion to keep Belgrade under pressure through Albanian community there. However Tirana never pressed for any unification projects.</p>	<p>Three main foreign influences, which placed various limits also on its 'imagined geography' and how map was conceived and pursued. First Yugoslavs in three years pursuant to WWII which placed limits to expansionism, then the Soviets and Chinese which were mostly neutral to Albania`s goals in the adjacent areas inhabited by its kin.</p>	<p>1945-48: map shrinking; no contacts in two sides of border.</p> <p>1948-1974: map neutral, contact still very limited.</p> <p>1974-1981: map expanding and new imagined geography is shaped through distribution of textbooks, university professors and Albanian massmedia penetration in Kosovo.</p> <p>1981-1989: ambiguous since Hoxha and Tito both passed away in this period and there was a lack of elite struggles, coupled with limited foreign intermingling.</p>
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The following sections continues with political and cultural realities during Communist era in both sides of the border and how the political and cultural discourse has been fact changing and with abrupt variations, due to both domestic alterations and exogenous shocks. Changing of regimes, different political realities, foreign intervention

and processes of *rememorization* all influenced the variation of discourse, different imagining of boundaries and salience of the ‘Nation’ in different time periods.

### **5.5 Perception of Borders of the Ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia during Communist Period**

The geo-political circumstances no doubt have played the major role in shaping certain border configurations and placing limits on how nation was imagined amongst ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia during communist period and shifts that such visualization of territory took. Albania-Yugoslavia honeymoon during 1945-1948, the subsequent rift afterwards, or their re-approachment during early 70-s to jointly confront the threat coming from Soviet Union (felt especially in Central Europe), have all left their marks in the condition and political-cultural rights of ethnic Albanians living in different Yugoslav republics<sup>37</sup> and their perception of national identity, as well as mapping of territory and the corresponding mental borders. Since national identity is fluid, always in need to be reinstated and highly adaptable to political considerations of the day, I have posed the initial hypothesis that in accordance with the variation of different political variables, the Kosovar Albanians have showed an ambivalent attitude toward Albania during this period.

Considering that the elite had generally been literate and well versed in Albanian as

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<sup>37</sup> From 1945, we have the creation of Republic of Macedonia, which was done with the dual purpose of alienating the Bulgarian national identity and therefore Bulgarian claims over Macedonian territory and people and to recreate a map that would further secure Tito’s rule in the Federation and the Federation’s independence from Moscow. The Albanians were affected by such remaking of borders within the Federation, because the western part of Kosovo was separated from this province and joined to the newly formed republic of Macedonia. Other changes that affected Kosovo were some minor changes in the northern boundaries with Serbia (when a few Serbian municipalities joined) and with the border with Montenegro, but these were rather minor compared to the newly engineered border with Macedonia. This had long lasting effects because of multiple clan, religion and national ties that co-ethnics on both border sides had with each other and resurfaced especially after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The border issue was finally resolved in 2009 and it was one of the preconditions for recognition of Republic of Kosovo from FYROM.

primarily language, they have been inclined to support a *modus operandi* that would guarantee their position of power by Belgrade authorities, but also would get them the legitimacy from electorate, which was under the effect of newly introduced national-communism propaganda from Tirana. At other times, the irredentist labeling to the Kosovar Albanians by Belgrade authorities after 1981, may have produced a boomerang effect in actually reinforcing the separatist trends, increasing the alienation of a part of population that felt as second-class citizens in the Yugoslav Federation.<sup>38</sup>

Seen from this perspective, a large part of population and particularly the political elite of Kosovo Albanians seem to have favored a reunion with Albania both during the Italian and German occupation, as well as right after. The aforementioned two-days *Bujan Conference of early 1944* that asked for a Kosovo republic was the culmination of these trends. The conference decided to make possible the structures that would allow the unification of Kosovo to Albania.<sup>39</sup> The headquarters of Yugoslav Communist Party did not agree with this part of Resolution and Milovan Djilas and Tito, as well as Albanian

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<sup>38</sup> Two examples of this can be the labeling of Kosova and Vojvodina as *narodnost* according to 1974 Constitution instead of a nation. The legal justification was that both of these entities were “displaced bits of nation, the main part of which laid elsewhere” (Malcolm 1999: 328), although it had an effect of alienating the Albanian community, which perceived it as downgrading them vis-à-vis the other Republics, although numerically were the third in Yugoslavia. A second example was the labeling of the Albanians of Kosovo as irredentists by Belgrade media, although probably only a small percentage of population felt like this. Paradoxically such naming seems to have led to voicing of irredentist claims in early 1980s. An important reason was also the economic one, considering the fact that Kosovo had the lowest GDP per capita and highest levels of unemployment during this period.

<sup>39</sup> At this conference, the Kosovar communist resistance leaders passed a resolution on the postwar assignment of Kosovo to Albania, but their opinion was later disregarded (Malcolm 1998). This is highly telling of ‘external’ elite’ interest on shifting the ‘material’ borders in order to comply with a virtual map that was in high demand at the time, given the geo-political conditions. It is puzzling that this was happening during WWII when there was a major border change enforced by Axis Powers that had created a “Greater Albania” by forcibly joining the Albanian-speaking territory and people to this design. Thus, the puzzle is that Communist Kosovars were asking for such temporal design to be kept even after Germany’s defeat, thus not differing much from the nationalists in this matter. A complete different situation from what was happening in Albania proper during the same period, when communists and nationalists were locked in a civil war with each other, rather than fighting the occupation forces with full concentration.

communist leader Enver Hoxha, condemned the resolution (Rajović 1987: 439; Hibert 1991: 91). Hoxha went even further when as a recently discovered document cites a secret letter of his sent to Stalin which states that: “In the vigil of liberation of Yugoslavia and Albania, we again agreed that it was not the time for any projects of unification between Kosovo and Albania.”<sup>40</sup> Also a bit later, officially Hoxha would declare at the Peace Conference in Paris, August 1946 that Albania did not have any territorial claims to Yugoslavia. In addition, the Albanians Politburo, the highest political decision-taking body, where the majority was pro-Yugoslav, they went as far as to take the decision to jointly form a Federation with Yugoslavia. As an author notes: “[i]n 14 March 1948 the Political Bureau of Communist Party took the decision for the unification of Albania with Yugoslavia and in the Republics Headquarters, additional posts were getting prepared for the Seventh Republic. [Thus] Albania thus would have become the Seventh Republic with Stalin blessing as well, if something unexpected did not happen, which was the break of relations between Stalin and Tito in March 27<sup>th</sup>” (Fevziu 2011: 188).

Thus we observe a steady course of action in this initial stage, where the Albanian leadership, in full conjunction with its counterpart in Belgrade, saw the nationalist forces as separatists and fought them together. Hoxha, as a Tosk, most probably was not eager to see a unification of Geg territory from both sides of the border which would seriously endanger his own position of power in Albania proper. Two thirds of ethnic Albanians in the Balkans are Gegis, although only a third of them are situated within Albania proper.

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<sup>40</sup> Enver Hoxha. *Secret Letter to Stalin*. Russian State Archive, Moscow RCHIDNI.D. Op. 137, D. 68, L 64-73.

This was in stark contrast with the majority of Communist apparatus where the Tosks dominated rather fairly. Furthermore, as an author observes:

Non-communists spokesmen for Kosova Albanians called Hoxha's action the "Great Betrayal" and still hold him responsible for returning Kosova to Yugoslav control. To mollify his restless Albanians, Tito in September 1945 recognized Kosova as an "autonomous region," with Albanian as one of its official languages. He granted authorization for Kosovars to open Albanian-language elementary schools. But for several postwar years of partnership with Albania, the Yugoslav government resented this Albanian nationalism in Kosova and kept the restless population under the harsh control of the secret police (Jacques 1995: 466).

Elite struggles where ties with Belgrade secured political survival in Tirana, served to make things worse for co-ethnic relations on both sides of the border. This *ethnic underbidding* went as far as to take a rather radical position on Albanians of Yugoslavia, which culminated with open persecution of them, in full tandem with Ranković's position and far more radical than Tito's own philosophy. As one document from Albanian State Archives states:

Thousands of innocent Kosovars are killed by firing squads, illegally and without trial, during and after the war. In these massacres without precedent against Kosovo population, has participated the Yugoslav agent in the midst of Albanian government, traitor Koci Xoxe, where in 1945, being Minister of Interior, he authorized the UDB<sup>41</sup> officers to fire without trial in Albanian land, more than a 1000 innocent Kosovars.<sup>42</sup>

The Albanian chief prosecutor officer wanted to delegate all blame for collaboration in Kosovar mass killing of 1945 and atrocities of later years to Xoxe, making him a "scapegoat" (Butka 2011: 127-128), and thus re-positioning the Albanian leadership under Hoxha, as one that deeply sympathized with Kosovar cause, thus waving

<sup>41</sup> Yugoslav Intelligence Services

<sup>42</sup> The Foreign Ministry Archive, 1949, D. 191.

a hand to the co-ethnics and trying to get their sympathy after the break with Belgrade. Hoxha killed two birds with same stone in this move, since he was eliminating competition within the party, while clearly signaling the Yugoslavs not to interfere, otherwise ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia would mobilize against them on behalf of Tirana, thus precluding any Yugoslav direct intervention.

### **5.5.1 Vernacular Education and Nationalizing Textbooks Causing Bottom-up Shifts of Perception in Virtual Borders amongst Albanian kin in Yugoslavia**

The situation of schools and teachers can be taken into consideration as a *proxy* for a further analysis of the impact that it had on nationalist imagination and the way the Albanians of Kosovo imagined the nation during and right after the war. Here I am referring to some figures provided by Malcolm. If before World War II, “there had been just 252 schools in Kosovo, teaching only in Serbian., [b]y the end of 1945 there were 392, containing 357 classes in Serbian and 279 in Albanian” (Malcolm 1998:318). Furthermore, “[a] survey carried out in 1948 found that, thanks to the combined effects of Ottoman and pre-war Yugoslav policies, 74 percent of all Kosovo Albanians over the age of 10, were illiterate (Roux 1992; Braha 1991). There was a real shortage of teachers, and indeed of professionally qualified Albanians of all kinds. Just over 300 Albanian schoolteachers were employed in 1945; these were supplemented by nearly fifty recruited from Albania itself” (Malcolm 1998: 318). Even during the interwar period, while linguistic difference of Albanians was recognized, their linguistic rights were not, because of absence of Albanian language schools operating in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Krasniqi 2009: 19). The language used in school teaching and the influence of textbooks

in humanities, as well as the overall illiteracy rate, can help determine how the nation was conceptualized by the pupils and other inhabitants and offer an understanding of the nation's history and geography from below.

If right after War World I, the situation had been roughly the same in Montenegro and only a little better in Serbia in regard to the scale of illiterate inhabitants as a percentage of the whole population, the continuing persistence of the same phenomenon in Kosovo even decades later, poses a challenge on the conceptualization and instrumentalization of the nationhood, because the education in vernacular often correlates with the level of national awareness and map perception. In 1930, three Catholic priests from Kosovo testified before the League of Nation for more than 27 schools teaching in Albanian that were closed by authorities in Kosovo. "The truth, as the three priests explained with much supporting evidence, was that the Albanian language was energetically suppressed" (Malcolm 1998: 267). These was done in order to suppress the ethnic identity as mostly preserved by the language and reinforce instead a Yugoslav identity, in conformity with nation-building policies of the Belgrade regime.

From this and the other evidence that most of nationalist political and cultural elite had either died or had gone into exile, we can safely deduce that consequently, the younger generation of Kosovo Albanians was less aware of a political project built on the idea of 'Greater Albania'. The new political elite in Kosovo, being sandwiched between the two friendly regimes in the aftermath of World War II and nourished with the anti-nationalist communist ideology, refrained from any nationalist demands that would either have sought unification with Albanians trunk or proclamation of a Kosovo independent republic, thus



favoring a *parochial/contractionary* map version. Rather, they were trying to embrace politically neutral stances that would maintain the status quo. This in turn required building a new elite-led Yugoslav identity, to suit the new political realities. Nevertheless, I need to stress that this gradually changed to *ambivalence* in early 1970s, with the changes in Yugoslav Constitution and greater degree of freedom, coupled with native Albanian education mostly received from Tirana and with strong nationalist doses.

### **5.6 Mass Media in Albania and its Role in (Re)shaping Mental Boundaries in Both Sides of the State Borders during Communism**

Another proxy that shows the intrinsic relationship of how borders are depicted in national imagination is the media. This is a medium that did not play any role previously because of censure and lack of technology, but has been crucially important in shaping public opinion in the post-communist era. The mass media plays the role of the fourth estate and is a powerful voice both in shaping public opinion as well as channeling bottom-up feelings to the elite action considerations, thus performing the role of a catalyst in the society. Sometimes media seem to precede political action, at other times it follows suit, especially when it finds certain resonance with the public ear. Media manifestation of nationalist and border issues has varied, reflecting the political urgencies and the salience of particular agenda in light of political implications that they have.

During communism, the influence from Tirana audio (visual) media, first the radio and then the television has had a great impact on Albanian communities in Yugoslavia, as

well as the diaspora from these territories.<sup>43</sup> As one of the members of Kosovar political elites has put it: “[t]he first contact with Tirana came through Radio Tirana in 1960s.”<sup>44</sup> In 1970s-80s, the state television from Tirana that had the press monopoly in Albania, benefiting from the era of liberalization after the fall of Ranković and the Constitution of 1974, had a great impact in population there, especially through TV shows and documentaries such as “the Heroism of Albanian Nation through the Centuries,” which as the name itself suggests, was full of nationalist propaganda. *This and other similar media products, created a certain metanarrative that concentrated in showing the indivisibility of nation through time, thus creating and perpetuating a virtual map that overlapped with the present territorial realities, as a tool of national-communist regime of Tirana.* As the timing shows, this nationalist propaganda started after the break with the Yugoslavs and simultaneous opportunity opening structures in Kosovo proper after the changes procured with the Constitutional alterations of the 70s, which signaled an era of liberalization and emergence of parallel narratives in the province.

The Albanian communist propaganda that described Albania as a haven of economic wealth, did not fail to impress the great mass of Kosovar Albanian folk for whom it could not have arrived in a better moment, considering the degree of freedom

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<sup>43</sup> Situation was different with the Albanian expatriates from Albania proper, because in most case they fled in the first place because of the opposition to the Communist regime in Albania or because were persecuted by the Tirana government. Personal contacts and informal interviews with some of these diaspora (Albanian) members from Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro have surprised me how much they had cherished Hoxha's regime and this was because the only media that they could inform itself in Albanian were the frequencies abroad of Radio Tirana and later through satellite dishes, the Albanian TV. Thus they had a distorted view of what was happening in a country that they (re)started imagining as *motherland* and although few ever visited, they nourished newly founded hopes of reunification. The ones that had the chance to visit Albania in this period, were much disappointed but they did not dare to tell the folk back home, because they would quickly be labeled as traitors.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Hydajet Hyseni, a current member of Kosovar parliament in an Albanian show called “Déjà vu”, Top-Channel, 10 April 2010.

associated with change in Constitution in early 1970s. It was exactly matching with the timing when they have started to enjoy greater political and civic freedoms and mass emigration had contributed in their economic standards. Some recent testimonies testify for this period of time and the mixed feelings of the population there in 1970s and 1980s. For example, Sefer from Pristina in an interview for a recent study recalls: “[w]e used to see Albania as the land of our dreams [...] because it was an independent country and it was not occupied by others” (Konomi 2009: 14). Sefer, who in later emigrated to France, recalls that all they know about Albania came from Radio Tirana and that they witnessed a (cultural) shock when they saw the poverty and economic condition during mass exodus in the 1999, when more than 600.000 flew to Albania. He adds that “while we started to know each-other, we understood how far we were in reality.” (Konomi 2009: 14). An interesting account comes recently from well-known businessman Etem Ramadani<sup>45</sup> who recalls visiting Albania in February 1980 together with a group of engineers in a three-week visit. It is very telling what he says: “Albania that we found was 100 times worse and impoverished than imagined, but I was not disappointed. Because if you love your mothercountry, you never let yourself get disappointed.”<sup>46</sup> He continues with his story by telling that he never told anyone back in Kosovo because he was not able to “shatter their dreams about their (perceived) homeland.”<sup>47</sup> Such shocking witness bearing events were often repeated experience that many Kosovars faced when meeting their co-ethnics for the first time, and discovering the perceived motherland through reality lenses. These are

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<sup>45</sup> Mr. Ramadani is an Albanian of Kosovo but lives in Slovenia where he has a highly successful business.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Etem Ramadani. Opinion talk show with host Blendi Fevziu, 02 December 2011.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*

examples of views from below that show the virtual map shifts amongst the Albanian folk in Yugoslavia.

Thus, changes of geopolitical nature, in conjunction with domestic shifts produced a nationalist rhetoric which for some analysts was a *period of national-communism*, a weird symbiosis of the two dogmas that normally would make an oxymoron. The ignorance on the state of affairs in Albania, helped a great deal by communist propaganda machine and lack of personal communication, coupled with a growing literacy rate of Albanian vernacular and a school curricula largely based on humanities textbooks furnished from Tirana, made possible a growing expansionary nationalism that saw as an end goal either a full Republic within the Yugoslav Federation or a possible unification with Albania. This was the adverse effect of 1974 alterations of Constitution, although Tito did not foresee the empowerment of Albanians of Kosovo as a goal that could facilitate their secessionist/irredentist demands, but rather as a way to juxtapose Serbian hegemony in the Federation.

In Albania itself, the situation had some similarity in this regard only with Ceausescu's Romania, but because it was far more isolated from the international community (especially after the break with the Chinese), it had to rely more on consuming nation-building processes which were idiosyncratic and without parallels.<sup>48</sup> Low international intervention, combined with low elite competition led to map remaining *neutral* in Albania's case. While in Kosovo, in the decade of 1974 to 1981, map was *expansionary* as result of direct Albania's influence in spreading nationalist literature and

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<sup>48</sup> Such was the example of archeological frenzy to show the autochthony of the nation, emphasizes in folklore and ethnology and state subsidies for Albanological studies, which culminated with opening of a special school for foreign scholars in order to get recognition in foreign press.

revisionist history textbooks and its effective massmedia, while from 1981 to 1989 because of high external constraints and also high internal elite struggles,<sup>49</sup> the situation led to *border ambiguity* as predicted from my model (see table below).

### **5.7 Ideologizing History to Create a Perennial Map: National Hero's Instrumental Use in Textbooks and how it has Impacted Virtual Border Shifts**

The figure of George Castrioti Scanderbeg is taken into analysis here, as a proxy that testifies the level of manipulation of national map by shrewd elites that have deliberately and consecutively constructed a symbol that cuts across natural and political frontiers that divide the Albanian communities in the region, to serve expansionist aims when opportunities open up. This quintessential national hero, has thus been instrumentally used by the elites either to serve as a myth of resistance in a sea of hostile land and foreign invasions, or to foment a pan-Albanianism that creates and perpetuates a map of 'Greater Albania' especially during 'critical junctures' that I have identified in this study. Often has been used for both reasons. Even after the fall of Communism and the end of its romantic-nationalism era that culminated in early 1980s when Albania was in full isolation, the dominance of Scanderbeg as a full representative pan-Albanian hero has continued in full scale. His myth was equally nourished and venerated by Albanians everywhere in Balkans as one of the sole symbols that could represent all, notwithstanding the myriad of other differences. Born Orthodox, converted to Islam when hostage at Sultans' Court and then, re-converted to Catholicism for practical reasons (like the support of Papacy, Venetia and

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<sup>49</sup> Parts of the elites were favoring expansionary nationalism and unification with Albania, as case of Demaci demonstrates (imprisoned later for 28 years for advocating irredentism by Yugoslav identities), while others were staunchly pro-Yugoslav as Azem Vllasi, Tito's favorite, or Mahmud Bakalli and Fadil Hoxha, thus leading to intense elite competition and different and incompatible map projections.

Kingdom of Napoli), he represented all different faiths and his short-lived principality was the only remembrance of the ‘era of former glory’ (Schmitt 2008). It is of interest to note that for the first time the cult of Scanderbeg was used by the Albanian diaspora in Italy, the so-called Arberesh community which left Albania at the time of Ottoman conquest. As a scholar emphasizes: “[t]he cult of Scanderbeg was first created by Albanians of Italy, who enjoyed freedom and was used particularly to inspire them in the fight for reunification of Italy. Later it was transposed across the Adriatic Sea to become a source of inspiration also for their brethren in native soil. He thus served as a strong link between two bridges” (Skendi 1980: 228).

In history texts, he always was given semi-divine powers that recall the myth of Tsar Lazar of the Southern Slavs. For example, a history textbook for high schools in 1995 when writing for him, explicitly stated that: “the nature had equipped George Kastrioti with special gifts. He was very brave, tall and strong. He could fight on the back of the horse and on foot and he was a master in the usage of every weapon”<sup>50</sup> (Myzyri 1995: 51). As it can be seen, this is far from objective history and cold recounting of facts. The myth of Scanderbeg needed to remind the young pupils of a former era of glorious times when all the Albanians notwithstanding the present locations and various faiths and cultural backgrounds were united and fighting under a single leadership. This was a common myth that has survived from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, uninterrupted and that has played a powerful role

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<sup>50</sup> Some recent and hotly debated historical facts point out that Scanderbeg was of short stature (physically) and was more of *primus inter partes* kind of leader rather than the almighty leader that is portrayed in these history textbooks. His reign was weakened by internal dissent, his main opponents were the powerful Dukagjini tribe (geographically in borderlands between Albania and Kosovo) who had the backing of the Turks and even his own marriage was conjectural (by marrying the daughter of a rival clan family) to secure its fragile power in a very small part of present day Albania.

in erasing the complex and multilayered boundaries of religion, language and traditions amongst the Albanians, while simultaneously helping create [new] boundaries with the other surrounding nations. Not surprisingly, the surviving thesis, against all odds, has been a preferred symphony by the majority of political and cultural elite.

During national-communist era, his myth was recreated to serve the official ideology by the state. His image was engrafted in sculpture, squares, parks, museums, paintings etc. His main statue dominates the central square of Tirana, the capital city. Kadare, the country's foremost writer played an important role in (re)building up his myth in popular imagination, through his widespread novels, short stories and poetry. For example, in a paragraph of one of his novels, he writes: “[a]nd people murmured that Scanderbeg was one of the greatest men in European Renaissance, not only because he was a great strategist, but, foremost because he undertook a new action in his time: *the successful uprising of a state against a superstate*. And this according to them was not only a big idea, but a universal one” (Kadare 1981: 103). He continues in the same paragraph to contrast his work and deed to that of Ali Pasha Tepelena,<sup>51</sup> “who [also] had risen against the [Ottoman] emperor, but not for great idea, but for material interests and misty ideas (Kadare 1981: 103).

The construction of the myth of an Albanian state that dated back from Scanderbeg, or even centuries before, with clear references to Anzhuin's dominated Albania in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Century,<sup>52</sup> a state which has included all Albanian-speaking territories moreover, has

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<sup>51</sup> He was a picturesque feudal lord who tried to challenge the Sultan, by gaining an autonomous status for the administrative unit that he commanded, while also giving a great contribution to Greece's independence movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>52</sup> See Xhufi 2006 for an extensive coverage of this historical legacy.

been a repeated theme stressed more at some junctures than others. Such (critical) junctures have particularly been periods of nation-building and state-formation. It has been successfully evoked during King Zog reign in order to invent a linear descendance of the new king from Scanderbeg's era and legacy. During 1980s, with the country facing more isolation than ever in the international arena, references to history when all Albanians were united and a Greater Albania was all of the sudden re-configured in mental mapping through state-sponsored activity. Such activities included new interest in archeological research, new emphasizes in folklore, ethnology, visual art and popular music that would testify to such bond and alterations in textbooks that were unthinkable several decades ago during the honeymoon between the two communist parties (the Yugoslav and Albanian one). Then, in the post-communist transition, this picture has had its ups and downs, depending mostly on domestic political mood and geo-political events that took place.

The best synthesis regarding Scanderbeg's place and role in Albanian historiography is given by Kadare when he writes: "George Castrioti was need for Albania, not as a luxury, but as a founding stone. The time has told that he could live without Albania, but Albania *in all its natural length* could not live without him" (Kadare 2010). Here he uses his Christian name (the name of birth), and emphasizes the 'natural' scope of Ethnic Albania which lies much beyond its republican borders. Kadare is one of the primary shapers of Albanian national (re)unification under Scanderbeg leadership in the Communist rule and one of the primary advocates of necessity to continue maintaining such 'positive' myth that erase natural and symbolic borders among Albanians.



So much unified for the most part was the dominant frame under Hoxha`s regime that it did not allow competing frames even from external scholars that studied the history of Albania. This of course came mostly from the fact that they based their empirical analysis on the ideologized data that was served first hand from Tirana`s official history circles. For example in a book published in England right after the fall of communism, the editor writes: “[f]or twenty years Scanderbeg was leader of a *united*<sup>53</sup> and free Albania in a brief interlude after nearly 2,000 years of Greek, Byzantine, Bulgarian, Norman and Serbian occupation, and before the 400 years of Turkish rule, followed in turn by the period when the country was at the mercy of the Great Powers” (Winnfrith 1992: 3). It may sound futile to stress out that Scanderbeg has never been a leader of such non-existing territorial entity at that era, but it shows the persistence of these myths in the era of national-communism. Myths such as this, are built on the notion that once there was a territorial and national unity (the time of ‘golden age’), which expects the new nationalists to redeem. Predictions offered by the competing elite games and how domestic shifts have been conditioned by external constraints, thus leading to certain border outcome in the World War II and communist period amongst the Albanian kin in Yugoslavia are presented schematically below.

**Table 5. Predictions for border outcomes amongst kin in the WWII and Communist period**

Albanian Kin	Competing Elite games	International	Border Outcome
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<sup>53</sup> It is not clear what the authors imply by ‘united’ Albania here. Scanderbeg`s rule at the time encompassed only one third of today`s territory of the Albanian state.

		Constraints	
(1939-1944)	High external constraints, which lead to fierce elite struggles between communists and nationalists, in Kosovo as well as in Albania.	Direct foreign intervention (Axis occupation).	Development of an inclusive pan Albanian map, especially favored by Germans favoring a Kosovar leadership to take charge of Tirana quisling regime and openly advocate irredentism.
(1945-1990)	High repression of nationalist Albanian political and cultural elite up to the 1970s. Pristina-Tirana relations in aftermath of Rankovic purge and newly acquired freedoms of 1974 constitution. Irredentist calls in 1981 by part of Kosovar nationalist elite which seemed at this moment to start gaining the upper hand in internal struggle.	Changes are first separation of southeastern Kosovo to join Macedonia, thus forming an Alb minority of more than 20 percent there. Secondly, 1974 constitution and autonomous status. Thirdly, removal of status by Milosevics` regime. These were main `external` changes that produced effects in Tirana-Pristina relations.	<p>1945-48: map shrinking; no contacts in two sides of border.</p> <p>1948-1974: map neutral, contact still very limited.</p> <p>1974-1981: map expanding, contact intensifies and mass perception greatly in favor of a expansionary map, also fueled by import of textbooks and teachers from Albania.</p> <p>1981-1989: map somewhat ambiguous, as the result of combination of high external constraints and domestic elite</p>

			struggles.
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## 5.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to trace changes in political and cultural discourse in the early years of communism and later on, where processes of romantic-nationalism were fused with communist ideology to produce a mental map of a perennial nation, as reflected both in territorial landscape and language bond. This, at certain junctures (i.e., with growing isolation, each time there was a rupture with a foreign patron/ally, like with the Yugoslavs), nourished a dream of re-unification, which at some periods has been ambivalent and at others openly fed through strategic engineering that served political goals.

The following chapter focuses on post-communist realities and how mental map was recreated in early 1990s, when another ‘critical juncture’ opened new opportunities for shifts in political and public discourse. Mental borders understanding as manifested in official history, but also in popular memories (as manifested in various sites), is duly analyzed to derive important inferences about deconstruction and reconstruction of mental map of the nation and its imagined boundaries. The symbolic power of borders has on the other hand, greatly affected geo-political realities by also affecting administrative borders (i.e. the case of Kosovo and the ongoing developments there).

## Chapter 6

# Reimagining Territorial Landscape and Mental Borders in Post-Communist and Democratic Transition Era

- *A nation? Says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.*
- *By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years (James Joyce, Ulysses 1922).*

### Introduction

This chapter traces the main socio-political discourse regarding the virtual shift of nation's borders in post-communist years. An era that notwithstanding the globalization processes that seemed to erode national boundaries, served for the reaffirmation of the nation-state based identities built on primacy of congruence of national borders with state unit. This concept has been redefined almost everywhere, in order to fit with self-portrays of national and ethnic groups (Kürti and Langman 1997: 3), when federations were dismembering and often ethnic passions were stirred deliberately by elites to achieve political gains. In addition, foreign intervention has often altered the way that various minorities were trying to negotiate with their host countries in the new ideological vacuum that followed in the early transition years. Authors have recently trying to understand the strategic use of emotion in the conflicts and interventions occurring in the Western Balkans over the last two decades. The logic of 'rational' Western intervention using "material incentives ("sticks and carrots") to influence behavior", versus local entrepreneurial actors who used emotion as resources to mobilize electorates around populist, nationalist and xenophobic agenda have often stood in opposing sides (Petersen 2011).

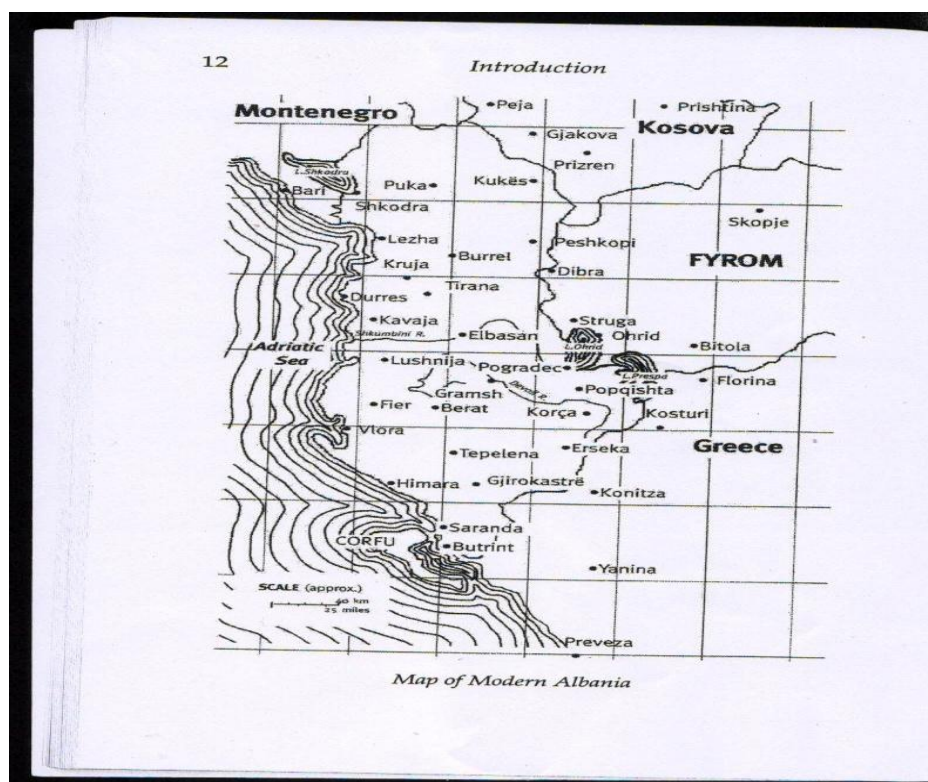
In the period after the fall of Iron Curtain that had imposed an ideological unified dogma in Eastern Europe, new legacies quickly started to fill the vacuum. One of the first phantoms most of these countries had to face in their triple transition toward democracy, market economy and state-building (Offe 1991), was the question of a new identity. An identity strongly connected to their nation-state, which sometimes brought to an end long decades of successful federations, such as the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Many newly established states found themselves to have little proportional numerical supremacy in the new state. This had ample consequences for everyday politics because it brought into existence the old forgotten phantom of ethnic markers which was especially problematic in the relations that newly nationalizing states created with minorities.

Thus a *triadic nexus* was set in motion with such minorities caught in intrinsic web of relations with these nationalizing states on one hand and external homelands on the other (Brubaker 1996). And as Jenne (2007) has demonstrated, the minority groups tend to correctly read the signals by the external homeland and mobilize accordingly, which means radicalizing their position if the signal is that the homeland intends to intervene on their behalf. This has brought a revision of how relations in the ‘historic’ homelands are perceived, (re)created and (re)invented. One such example is Russia’s relation to its ethnic kin that live in the republics that broke way from Soviet Union after the fall of Berlin Wall.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in the aftermath of communism and disintegration of former federations,

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<sup>1</sup> In this period Russians outside Russia were coded a diaspora. This meant essentially two things. First that Russia was no longer claiming a larger homeland beyond *Rossia*, the political homeland. Second, it also signals that “Russia has a clear part to play as the historic homeland (*rodina*) of the Russians, and for the *vykhodtsy* (literally, ‘those who have left’), Russia is their ‘natural’ homeland (*otechestvo*). The upshot is that

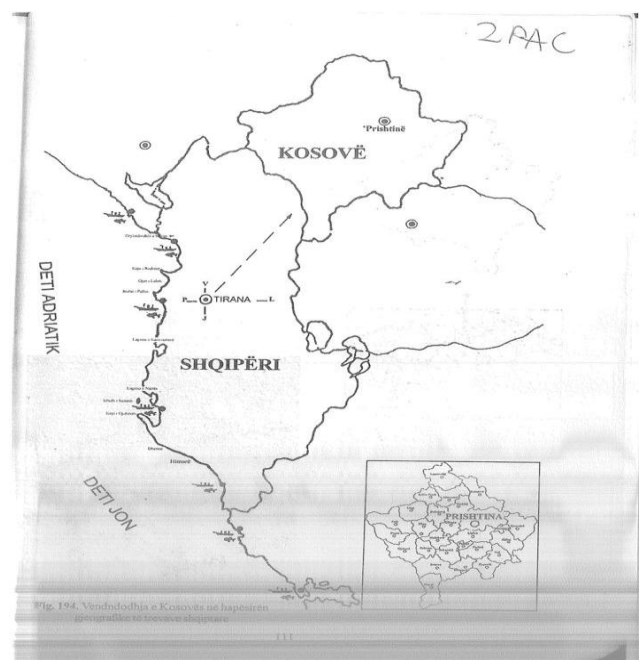
newly created geo-political realities started to delineate new borders and embed them with an altogether symbolic value. Virtual maps of territory have run concurrently with processes of constitution of 'hard' borders and national identity-building. Below are examples of both republican and virtual maps as they are manifested in Albanian geography textbooks. They clearly depict two concurrent models of how map is pictured and configured in these early transitioning years, in tandem with my hypothesis that high external constraints, coupled with internal elite competition, lead to border ambiguity.



**Map 16**

**Map of Official Albania (Myzyri 1994)**

the Russian diaspora have become a central concept in defining Russian national identity, as a Russia which is the 'historic homeland' of the Russian-speaking communities. In both senses, then, the idea of Russia has been reinvented in relation to its diaspora." (Smith et al. 1998: 12-13).



**Map 17**

**Geography textbook partial Balkan map that shows only the territories pretended by Albanian nationalist in a potential unification scheme<sup>2</sup>**

The early 1990s also served as an opportunity structure that opened up possibilities for possible revindication of borders or at least for the possibility to discuss such matters in public open and freely (see map below). Also it is a period associated with many other major revisions, from school curricula and general textbooks to changing national(ist) symbols, such as important historic dates, public commemorations or street (re)naming. As it has been noted: “[t]he question of nationalism and boundaries, both ethnonational and state, is crucial to the understanding of cultural identities in the new East and Central Europe. The roots of the native elite’s behavior and the specific discourses on nationalism

<sup>2</sup> Asllan Pushka. 1998. *Gjeografi per klasen e VI te shkolles fillore* [Geography for 6<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school]. Tirane: SHBLSH.

and nationality may also be found through the examination of historical factors which contributed to sensitizing border issues” (Kürti and Langman 1997: 5).

Deconstruction of some of the prevailing discourse and (re)emergence of old myths, while fomenting others, is important to weave a constructivist story together that shifts the ontology of facts to primary role of main actors: *the political and cultural elites which consciously created and perpetuated a new mental frame of the nation's boundaries*. To understand how they made use of various symbols or other tools is equally important in influencing our thinking about imagined borders that usually receive a scarce attention in the literature. Kaiser has drawn our attention to: “examine the ways in which images, myths and symbols have been used to nationalize space and territorialize national identity” (Kaiser 2002: 229). Nation-building is not a foundational act that ends when it culminates with state creation; it is rather a contiguous phenomenon that relies heavily in delineation of borders through ‘daily plebiscites’ and continuous re-direction of loyalty of the fellow co-nationals.

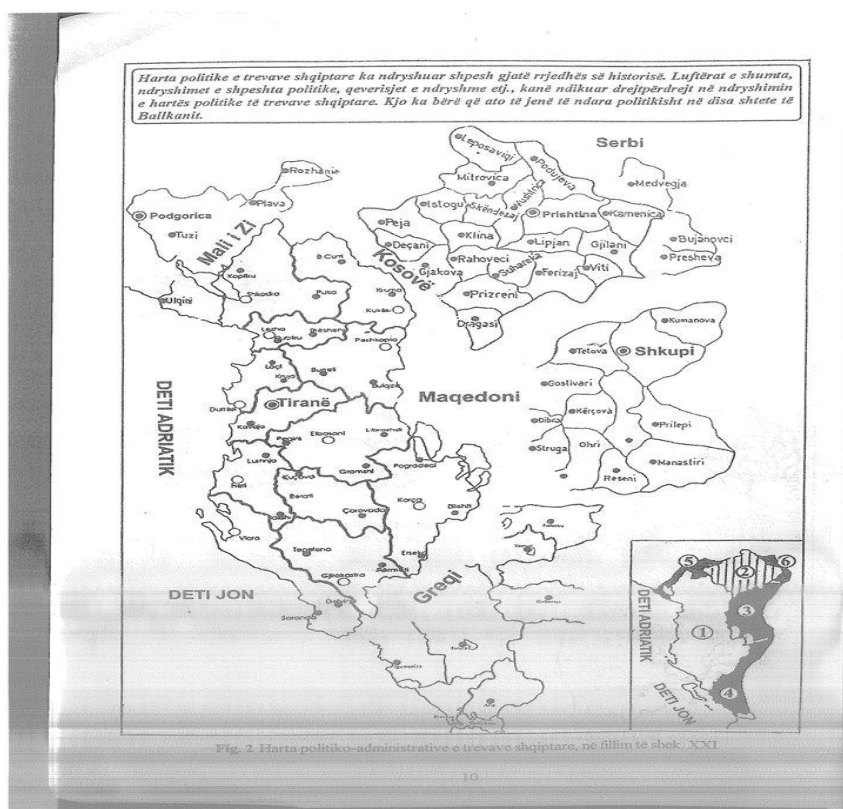
This chapter, analyzing the main events, factors and role playing of the elites in both sides of the administrative borders, enables me to grasp the internal dynamic of causes and effects, as well as deepens the understanding of such processes of mental border (re)making. The dyad of ‘space nationalization’ and ‘national identity territorialization’ in the last two decades has been an ongoing process that needs to simultaneously be explained and understood. Albania had the benefit of being a unitary and homogeneous state in its ethnic composition with some two percent of minorities and did not have to face a conflictual process of nation-building and after five decades of



isolation most people were intending to flee the country, rather than close ranks behind a nationalist agenda. This is the chief reason why nationalist parties have generally not been successful, never passing the threshold of parliamentary elections and why nationalist rhetoric has not caught up with the most part of population. Other difficulties on transition route have been the struggling to cope with international standards of enforcing rule of law, building a democratic system, and constant political clashes that have often taken all the attention of massmedia and public opinions. Also weak institutions and socio-economic problems have prevented it to assert itself forcefully on behalf of its ethnic kin which lie in adjacent areas in the neighboring countries, fitting the preconditions that would lead to different kind of predictions in the first place, especially if we consider the irredentist and secessionist battles in neighboring Yugoslavia.

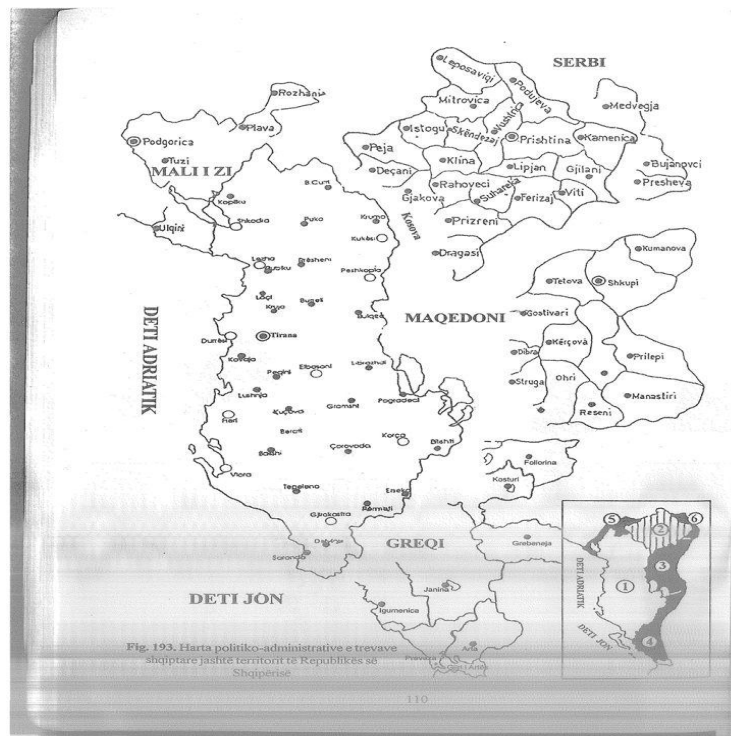
The data reveals that in 1992 in Albania, with the start of democratic transition and power shifts from the autocracy of communists to a multi-party system, a new opportunity for expanding the ‘virtual’ map of nation opened up. The Democratic Party leadership used an ethnically inclusive rhetoric that was addressed to Albanians inside and outside state borders with promises for its revindication and more active role-play of the ‘homeland’ to the affairs of ethnic kin, as well as allowing diaspora to actively take part in domestic politics. After coming to power however, the discourse was suddenly ‘normalized’ with nation and state mapping onto each other in political and cultural discourse, where dissent nationalist voices that visualized a pan-Albanian federation were marginalized. This mostly happened because of rising international actors’ pressures that could not tolerate such discourse in the eve of ethnic conflict ruptures in nearby rump Yugoslavia.

In 1997 to 1999, after the Socialist Party had come to power following an abrupt popular revolt and when Kosovar crises erupted with many fleeing to Albania to escape ethnic cleansing, we witness another critical juncture. The radical faction in Kosovar politics, KLA and Socialist that came to power in Tirana were allies, and the former openly advocated the alternative map of unification to the *imagined homeland*, in case the outcome of the guerilla-style war was successful. Thus, given the radicalization of conflict and favorable international community conditions which varied from ambiguity to open support for the separatist movement, the alternative map that would see border expansion came in a favorite light and seen possible in the advent of the new circumstances. This was to change once again, after a couple of years, when politics were back in ‘normalization’ process and external intervention had shifted. See *textbooks maps below* for capturing of such shifts. Such changes have been in both sides of borders with ‘internal’ and ‘external’ elites competing with different national programs that were based on different mental maps. Clashes of elite are contextualized in the due socio-political, economic and cultural processes, focusing particularly on the years that created opportunity openings.



Map 18

Interesting school textbook map which shows in wording above the map how the political map of Albanian territories has changed in history due to geopolitical shifts, different regime changes etc. According to the authors “this has made the Albanian territories to be divided as they currently are, in different states” (Korkuti et al. 2003)



**Map 19**

**In this similar map is shown the political-administrative map of Albanian territories outside Albania's state borders (Kristo and Pollo 1973)**

The next section focuses in delineating the elite competing projects on national boundaries during democratic transition. It then follows with delineation of external constraints to Albanian transition efforts and the resulting (nation-)state map, before going to political projects shaping the map amongst the Albanians of Yugoslavia. Then we continue with a discussion of alternative maps (as perceived by masses) in the pluralist period: Kosovo and other Albanian inhabited regions in Albania's textbooks during 1990s. Pursuant to this, I briefly discuss mass media and its role in (re)shaping mental boundaries in both sides of the state borders during post-communism. Afterwards we analyze the territorial shaping identity debate in Albania, Kosovo and amongst Albanian community in

Macedonia, while the following section gives a brief overview of general perception on nation and virtual borders as imagined from below before presenting the conclusions.

### **6.1 Elite Competing Projects on National Boundaries in Albania during Democratic Transition**

The end of the monocratic system in Albania and the emergence of political pluralism, made possible for a diversification of views regarding the Albanian national question, in particular with reference to Kosovo. Sali Berisha, who was soon to emerge as the Democratic Party's strongman, was initially concerned with the fate of the Albanians in Kosovo and the future relationship that he envisaged Albania of having with them. Coming from northeast of Albania, bordering Kosovo and belonging to a family with strong ties with Kosovo, Berisha and main leadership of Democratic Party had an altogether different approach to Hoxha and generally Tosk leadership of Communist era as regarding ethnic Albanians and territory in former Yugoslavia.

In one of his earliest speeches in front of general public, in December 12, 1990, while criticizing the Serbs for the growing repression in Kosovo, he explicitly said that: "The Democratic Party of Albania *cannot accept the division of the Albanian nation as eternal*; therefore, it will struggle by peaceful means and within the context of the processes of integration in Europe to realize their rights for progress and national unity" (Biberaj 1998: p.66). His nationalist rhetoric was even more explicit at another of his electoral speeches in 1992, when Berisha made the following promise to a large crowd in Scanderbeg square: "Our brothers living in their territories in former Yugoslavia and wherever they are: the DP *will not stop fighting until her great dream of uniting the*

*Albanian nation comes true*” (Kola 2003: 223). These calls seemed to have motivated at least in part the upheaval in Kosovo which culminated with a Kosovo Council gathering illegally in Kaçanik, a symbolic town of nationalist resistance, and in September 7, 1990, proclaimed the creation of Republic of Kosovo. In the same day, a draft Constitution of Kosovo was also agreed and came in circulation (Repishti 1966: 341).

Moreover, the moral support of Tirana was for instance exercised, when Kosovar prime minister in exile Bujar Bukoshi visited Tirana in 1991.<sup>3</sup> Bukoshi was promised that Albanian government was considering three main options for Kosovo, which could potentially serve as grounds for future policy action.<sup>4</sup> Later events nevertheless proved that Tirana government fell short of pressing for any of these options put forward in its international agenda. The only thing which Tirana could do and in fact did for the Bukoshi government, was to recognize the newly self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo on September 28, 1991,<sup>5</sup> albeit the only country to do so, with other countries failing to reciprocate such a move. But even this move was not that significant as it seems, given that it lacked any binding legal effects.<sup>6</sup> However, the political landscape in Albania at the time

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<sup>3</sup> At this time, the Communists were still in power in Albania, although a coalition government was formed by June 4, 1991. It is important to note that the Albanian government gave greater support than previously to the Kosovars, in tandem with the new geo-political circumstances. Muhamet Kapllani, the Albanian Foreign Minister at the time, had even warned in New York: “The Republic of Albania holds that representatives of the Albanian people in Yugoslavia can in no way be excluded from the peace conference on Yugoslavia and from the negotiations on the future of its people.” Quoted in Kola, 219.

<sup>4</sup> Albanian Foreign Ministry Archives (1991). These options were: (1) “Kosovo to be an independent and sovereign state, with the right to join the other Yugoslav states in a loose confederation.” (2) “The creation of a Kosovo Republic if the domestic borders of Yugoslavia were to change.” (3) “Kosovo to join Albania if the outside existing borders of Yugoslavia changed.”

<sup>5</sup> See the newspaper “Zeri i popullit,” September 29, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> It was later maintained by successive Albanian governments that the recognition of the parliament was not binding in any way for Albania, since legally speaking the government only has the right to formally recognize the sovereignty of another state. As specialists of international law, such as Ian Brownlie have argued: “...recognition of a state or government must come from the government of a country, as the recognized subject of the exercise of power” (Kola 2002: 282).

was fast changing, with the start of the anti-communist student protests and the emergence of the first opposition party, the Democratic Party.<sup>7</sup>

The political elite were not alone in manifesting such dramatic shift in public discourse. Cultural elite and notable intellectuals did the same in voicing openly their desire for the alternate map of *Greater Albania*. An example of this is R. Qosja, a Kosovo leading intellectual declaration on February 12, 1992, who in a conference organized by so-called “National Reconciliation and Unity Organization”, declared *verbatim*: “[t]hus, the same opponents that we faced in 1878 and in 1912-13, are once again against us. But today, neither our position nor theirs is as it used to be 115 and 80 years ago. With a proper resolution of the Albanian Question- that is, with the Albanian unification- one of the Europe’s great injustices will be removed.”<sup>8</sup> A fellow historian from Tirana, Ana Lalaj, in a joint conference of Kosovo and Albanian historians in 1993, made clear the views of mainstream historiography by stating that: “Prizren League (1878), Peja League (1899), Committee for National Kosovo Protection (1918) etc., are salient moments of the popular movement for national unification. At the same time they are testimony of the fact that Kosovo has been the hub of Albanian National Movement and from there we have most often received the signals of unification” (Lalaj 1993: 276).

References such as these helped generate a debate about where the nation lies and what borders correspond to its imagined map. A debate that simply did not exist during communism though occasionally, the regime was quick to make references to Albanian nation and strong bonds that cannot be broken [by borders] amongst brothers, when faced

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<sup>7</sup> The party was formed on 12 December of 1990.

<sup>8</sup> Quote retrieved by Albanian Telegraphic Agency, February 11, 1992.

with increasing antagonism from nearby neighbors. Nation is a political construction or project that can be taught in a pedagogical way as Bhabha puts it and an enlarged imagined community cannot be outside the reach of political rhetoric and influence. Political leaders that seek to gain power in moments when there is not a simple political rotation but more of regime changes, thus a critical juncture, often use nationalist rhetoric that seeks border revindication as a powerful tool to draw voters` support. Elites` interest to obtain power, coupled with the important fact of where does the leadership draw most of their votes and what are the perceived interests of their constituency, are reflected in a renewed interest in shifting frames and deliberative construction of such mental mapping.

Robert Austin identifies three core factors that might have had an impact on Berisha`s withdrawal from nationalist rhetoric, after he became President of the country. According to Austin, these reasons were:

Firstly, he was in no doubt warned by Albania`s patrons in Washington and Europe to avoid advocating *border changes*. Secondly, he realized that pan-Albanian nationalism was not something that unified Albanian voters, and it was especially useless among a population fed up with slogans and cut off from the outside world for so many years. Finally, Berisha sacrificed almost all his programs in favor of a devastating battle with the opposition Socialist Party that poisoned Albanian political life. As a result, Berisha softened his line on Kosovo once he was in power (Austin 2004: 244).

As early as 1993, Berisha took a U-turn on nationalist cause, by claiming the naivety of the ones that believed on a possible unification of Albanian lands and firmly stated: “*Albania has not sought, does not seek and will not seek any change in existing borders.*”<sup>9</sup> This abrupt change in Berisha`s political rhetoric, was unexpected in the face of present circumstances and either showed him to be an inexperienced and vulnerable leader,

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted from Rilindja Demokratike newspaper, 3 February 1993.



or that he consciously used earlier rhetoric for electoral consumption. Considering this shift of rhetoric, one rightly might be tempted to ask why Berisha proved so vulnerable in a moment when he was the most successful politician in the country, having scored a landslide victory in the March 1992 elections. Furthermore, no evidence proves that Berisha was facing any potential sanctions from international community if he was to continue with the nationalist talk. Based on circumstantial evidence there were two main reasons for such shift of discourse. *First*, Berisha backed down mainly for mainly because the new democratic government was in the process of undertaking some harsh and quick reforms in Albanian economy and state structures, which made it quickly unpopular among the majority of the Albanians, shortly after coming to power. Only seven months after winning by big margins in March elections, the Democratic Party lost the local elections, which signaled that something was not right. Therefore, Berisha needed to be shown as having strong support for his reforms from the West, particularly the US and wanted to capitalize on their support to gain strength back home. That explains why Berisha proved vulnerable even in the face of some short, but significant remarks from the Western donors. Moreover, Berisha was keen to look as moderate on nationalist issues, as he could, in order to attract Western sympathies and support. This is why, James Pettifer and Miranda Vickers, - while quoting London Guardian,- write that “Berisha earned Western tolerance by his resistance to any pan-Albanian tendency which might add to the problems in Serbian Kosovo and in Western Macedonia.” (Pettifer and Vickers 2007: 11). In line with this argument, Kola writes that:

Indeed, when, in September 1995, President Sali Berisha became Albania’s first head of state to be invited to the White House, he assumed he had passed the test of moderation

and restraint required of him vis-à-vis Kosova and the region. In fact, since Albania's 1992 insistence on removing references to Kosova's being part of Serbia in international documents, Tirana has been pressured to tone down its rhetoric, so much that, by mid-1993, Berisha had come up with the idea of a 'democratic space' in the Balkans that would facilitate direct integration in to Europe, regardless of international borders. (Kola 2003: 309).

*Second*, there was a kind of *ethnic underbidding* taking place in the Albanian politics from early 1993, with the main opposition party,- the Socialist party,- not voicing any concern at all for the fate of Kosovo and its Kosovo Albanian inhabitants. Moreover, when the Socialists came to succeed Berisha "in an international sponsored election in 1997, [they] made it clear that Greater Albania was not on their agenda" (Austin 2004: 245). Some observers have explained such a phenomenon, because the Socialist leadership came mostly from south of Albania that has had little historical roots and connections with Kosovars and other ethnic Albanians in the territories of ex-Yugoslavia (Austin 2004: 245). In contrast, the Democratic Party draws most of its followers from the North, with Berisha being himself a northerner from the town of Tropoja,<sup>10</sup> with family ties in Kosovo.

Nonetheless, with Berisha changing its rhetoric and priorities, not much concern was strongly voiced thereafter in Albanian political scene. Another piece of evidence, which proves that the first democratic government shifted its concerns away from Kosovo and ethnic Albanians in general, is a hundred-sixty pages document that illustrated the achievements of the Democratic Party in the first three years of governance, where "just a single page on the 'Internalization of the Albanian question'," (Kola 309) was reserved among Albania's foreign policy goals. Additional evidence comes after Kosovo unresolved

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<sup>10</sup> Tropoja lays in the border that Albania shares with Kosovo.

case was left out Dayton, when President Berisha in 1995 declared that he embraced the idea of a “democratic space of Albanians”, a formula that clearly scaled back the early expansionary nationalist demands. A year later he called for Albanian parties to join the Serbian opposition led by Drashković, reducing the so-called ‘Albanian question’ to an internal democratic problem of Serbia.

Thus, after Berisha and Democratic Party had used the mental mapping of *Greater Albania* as the dominant frame to win the elections and gain popular support; soon they shifted support away from such agenda, in light of increasing foreign limitations to its domestic agenda. Other reasons were the *ethnic underbidding* as the result of lack of nationalist opposition, but also because of the main preoccupation of Albanian general public who primarily wanted to flee their own country, rather than champion an alternative mapping that would seek border rectification. The ruling political elite faced with such little inner resistance, soon switched their rhetoric to scale down the mental map of the nation and to swiftly change the consumptive discourse mainly to EU and NATO Enlargement agenda as the top priorities of official Tirana policy. The reasons why domestic pressures were so low were in my view two: a) the fact that map maximization enshrined in the *Ethnic Albania* discourse did not have enough time to be internalized properly by mass public and b) most of the Albanians at this point wanted to flee the country and go as emigrants in the West rather than expand their homeland.

In view of such neglect and marginalization of the Albanian national question, the only criticism to the governments` shift of course, came from a group of politically non-aligned intellectuals. As Kola writes:

[i]t is, therefore, not coincidental that a group of seventy-six Albanian intellectuals, including Rexhep Mejdani, who was to succeed to the presidency in 1997, wrote an *aide mémoire* to President Berisha ahead of his Washington visit, urging him to: request President Clinton to ensure that any US peace plan on the Balkans should seek to endorse Kosova's expressed will for independence ('There should be no vacillation on this issue'); guarantee Macedonia's Albanians an equal constitutional position in their state; secure territorial autonomy for Montenegro's Albanian inhabitants as well as the Albanians of southern Serbia (Presheve, Medvegje, Bujanovć); and, significantly, to be 'resolute on the just solution of the issue of the return of Chams to their lands and proprieties in Chamëri' in Northern Greece." (Kola 2003: 310).<sup>11</sup>

I view this as a testimony of the expansionist role-playing of *nationalist intellectuals*, some of them later to be important political figures in the country<sup>12</sup> in favor of a patronizing role of Albania in nearby territories, putting forward an *expansionist agenda* that viewed Tirana as the main responsible spokesperson for the surrounding Albanian-speaking communities and territories. They obviously disagreed with shift of course from the ruling party and were disgruntled with political calculations of Berisha and the government. Either they did not fully grasp the political implications of such shifts, or they found it as an abhorrent practice to betray electoral promises and to 'betray' the ethnic kin who were suffering (according to them), in nearby republics. Thus, they urged Berisha to keep the course of intervention in domestic policies of neighboring countries, forcefully defending the rights of ethnic kin and in some cases (like in Kosovo one), to fully support its independence, without vacillation. As we can see from the memorandum, the map is quite complete, referring to presumed Albanian territories in four neighboring countries: Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Greece, thus not confining itself to former Yugoslavia.

<sup>11</sup> The author, being a high foreign ministry official at the time, also points out that the document was not legally binding and did not affect in any way the official agenda of Berisha in Washington.

<sup>12</sup> Including the next president Mjedani.

On the other hand, it is quite telling that when coming to power, the former nationalist opposition suddenly was becoming a beacon of ‘stability in the region’, a favorite catchword for any ruling political party and political leadership in the country.<sup>13</sup> For example, in November 1997, primer Nano meets in Crete with Miloshević, granting to him that Kosovo was an “internal human rights issue” of Serbia. Asked by a German newspaper for Kosovo, he replies: “what is the meaning of independence [for Kosovo] in a Europe without borders, if you are a European citizen?” (‘Der Spiegel’: 08/09/1997). In regard to Kosovar politicians establishing parallel institutions, he fires back: “parallel institutions do not give solutions, quite on the opposite polarize and radicalize the societies that create them” (‘Zëri i Popullit’: 07/02/1998). Later that year, Nano comes up with the idea of a “minus Republic”, implying the status of republic for Kosovo but within the Yugoslav Federation (‘Zëri i Popullit’: 31/03/1998), which of course came short of what Kosovar masses and elites were asking for, becoming thus an unwanted spokesperson for them.

All in all, elite interest, in the intersection of politics, media and society, seem to have a particular importance in shaping popular feelings and imagination, especially during transition times, such as this. It is also interesting to take into account here, the feelings of

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<sup>13</sup> Coincidentally this is also the case with Albanians leadership of Macedonia for example. When they are in opposition they become very radical, stressing the ethnic element and talking of joining the ‘motherland’ while dismissing Macedonian state as an artificial reality. On the other hand, once they come in power (governing in coalition with mainstream Macedonian political parties) they tend to be very cooperative and scale down any kind of nationalist discourse, talking of EU integration and NATO Enlargement as the only priorities to be in mind. That has been the case both with Ali Ahmeti, former KLA guerilla leader and now coalition partner of prime minister Gruevski, as well as Menduh Thaci’s Democratic Party which is currently in opposition and has radicalized the political discourse from the time it was ousted from power. Such evidence reinforces my thesis that mental mapping of nation, either when it comes from politicians in the center, or in the periphery (thus ‘internal’ or external’ elites), is prone to political survival as the main motivating factor in political calculations. Foreign pressure comes only second and becomes costly only when in power when they are faced with possibility of more direct costs.

some prominent Albanian voices from civil society, regarding the whole debate on the national question. One such voice was that of Fatos Arapi, a leading Albania writer and poet, who wrote in 1992 that the main concern was not the potential rise of nationalism; rather, it is what the author calls ‘lack of Albanianism’ (‘Zeri i Rinise’, 16 September 1992). While, regarding the policy recommendations that the intellectuals signed and handed to Berisha before his trip to the White House, the opinions of analysts vary in extremes, but join in its condemnation.<sup>14</sup>

## **6.2 External Constraints to Albanian Transition and the Resulting (Nation-)State Map**

Notwithstanding the electoral rhetoric, later Berisha was to backpedal from the electoral stated goals, because he came to realize “the responsibilities of the office, which dictated the need to abide by the norms of international law to which the Albanian state was a party” (Kola 2003: 223). Evidence of backpedaling can be seen when Berisha scaled down around the years 1993-94 the nationalist rhetoric to accept talking of Kosovo problem as a ‘basic human right’ for rump Yugoslavia in international forums rather as framed in nationalist framework that he used up to then (Kola 2003).<sup>15</sup> And as he frankly

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, in an interview that I had with Professor Hysamedin Ferraj, he denounced this policy paper as falling short of all expectations, because it took a minimalist stance (according to him) and did not advocate more radical options, like territorial autonomy for Albanians in Macedonia, or Kosovo joining Albania in a future unified state. Quite the opposite was the opinion of media analyst and the director of the Institute of Media, Mr. Remzi Lani. Lani dismissed this policy paper as “superfluous” and written by some “short-sighted radicals,” and was considerate of the fact that it was not taken into consideration from the government at the time. Interviews- April, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Being a foreign ministry director and high emissary in some main international organizations (such as CoE and OSCE), Kola has been in a favorable position to witness such shifts and they are minutely tracked in his 2003 book ‘the Myth of Greater Albania’. He shows citing documents and other archival materials of the era, how Berisha suddenly switched rhetoric in order to get international support that he really needed after he was defeated in local elections. Thus concessions in foreign policy and ‘virtual’ map contraction were parallel processes that happened as soon as the international interference started to get noticed and threats perceived.

admitted much later, in another example of his ambiguous stance toward Kosovar Albanians: “[i]n every kind of circumstance, the Kosovo question has not been a problem between Albania and Serbia and I have never accepted it to be a problem of these two countries. This is a problem of international community, of the citizens and Kosovar political leadership and of course Serbia who has taken an active part in it (Mekuli Press: 2008).<sup>16</sup>

Such ambivalent positions in the first half of 1990s were clearly dictated by the international pressures that were growing in the advent of Yugoslav conflict and dismemberment of the Federation there. A Greater Albania which would rival the Milosevic’s Greater Serbia as well as Greater Croatia projects was not what the Contact Group, EU, NATO or other international actors wanted. *High international intervention*, coupled with *internal elite struggles* and competing national projects, led to *border ambiguity* as predicted from my model. Later, after Dayton settlement, when Serbs turned the attention toward Kosovo and started to ethnically cleanse the province there, the mood of the majority of international community was increasingly influenced by atrocities shown by global media and having in mind previous scenarios of Ruanda and B-H. Some leaders, such as Tony Blair directly advocated a military conflict resolution and were successful in pursuing toward this track also the American President and majority of EU countries.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> This statement was of August 12, 2008. Two years later, Berisha stated that: “[i]n 1990, in my first public meeting addressed to 100.000 Albanian citizens, I declared to them that our guiding star would be the national question. That was [previously] a taboo. In this context, the opening of Albania, the pluralist era, made possible for the country to change its course into full support for the interests of Albanians in Kosovo.” Sali Berisha. Interview. 9 dhjetor 2010. *Opinion show*, KLAN TV. Here, we see his rhetoric becoming suddenly nationalist again, because local elections were going to happen soon and electoral calculations gain the upper hand, while external pressure is not strong enough to prevent the alternative mapping.

<sup>17</sup> See for a full account on measures initiated by Blair and his doctrine on ‘humanitarian intervention’ Blair 2010: 223-253.

When *direct external intervention* combined with a seemingly *elite pact* in Albania proper to work toward a unified agenda on Kosovo, then we have a *reductionist map* as my model predicts. Thus, the political rhetoric in Albania and general public discourse shifted into one that fully supported the actions undertaken by leading Western states, as well as their umbrella organizations such as UN, Contact Group, NATO etc.

Predictions offered by the competing elite games and how domestic shifts have been conditioned by external constraints, thus leading to certain map visualization in the post-communist period in Albania is presented schematically below. In this way the table consolidates and clarifies the data that was presented above.

**Table 5. Predictions for border outcomes in the post-communist period in Albania**

Situation in Albania	Competing Elite games	International Constraints	Border Outcome
1991-1997	A new opportunity opening in the aftermath of communism where Democratic opposition articulated irredentist calls openly. This was accompanied with textbook and other curricula changes to introduce the undivided nature of Albanian nation.	Low at first and then high, in the advent of ethnic conflict and irredentist (Serbian) wars in Yugoslavia which placed heavy limits on the Democratic Party government.	First an expansionary map, and then scaling down any territorial pretensions and considering the Albanian question in Yugoslavia a matter of minority rights, map got contracted.



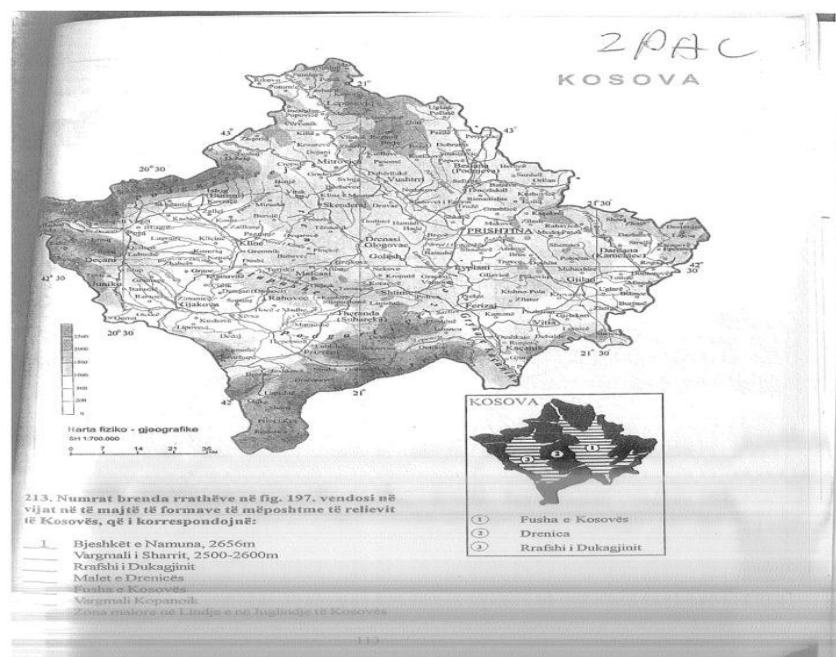
1998-2008	Domestic (elite and popular) clashes in Albania in 1997, created the opportunity for KLA to acquire weapons, ammunition and receive other direct and indirect help from home country in its struggle with the Serbian army and paramilitaries. Socialist government more supportive of radical Kosovar leadership (KLA) in this period.	International constraints went from high, precluding any aid from Albania that would lead to possible Kosovo secession/irredentism, toward supporting more Albanian intervention in Kosovo in the advent of ethnic cleansing processes that Milosevic started.	Map expansion high because allowed free flow of almost everything between Albania and Kosovo (and on the other hand Kosovo and Albanian community in Macedonia), which allowed a quick configuration of <i>Greater Albania</i> as a de facto reality and political possibility in the near future.
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### 6.3 Political projects shaping the map amongst the Albanians of Kosovo and Macedonia

Contrary to nationalist writing of history and general depiction in Albanian media, the Kosovo Albanians have had mixed feelings toward the fact that should Tirana be the center of a perceived homeland or rather Pristina should take its place as the political, cultural and spiritual center of a Kosovar nation-state. Should Kosovars maintain their ethnic Albanian identity or should they instead promote a post-national inclusive identity which would make all ethnic groups living within Kosovo to feel as belonging to the same imaginary community. Is Kosovo elite generally unified in these matters or rather very fragmented? Can such shifts be empirically demonstrated? These are some of the questions that touch not only the progress of political thinking in last two decades, but also can shed

light over future trajectory, informing our understanding of a non-linear history that has had much variation in terms of opposing viewpoints between elite and public.

The Kosovar elite lately has generally been very divisive in the crucial matter of maintaining the Albanian identity while developing new state symbols, or rather promoting a new, post-national and inclusive Kosovar identity that would include all of the ethnic groups currently living in the territory of Kosovo. This fragmentation is particularly visible in the post-independence era when the elite acted as a monolithic bloc and has generally been very united in matters of nationalist ideology. Education strategy, diaspora connection/ role-playing and political stances are the areas that are taken into analyses for an account of such variation and shifts in Kosovo public life and discourse, which has affected map shape there. See textbook maps below for an empirical illustration of this.



Map 20

Map of present-day Kosovo in history textbook (Korkuti et al 2003)



Map 21

Present-day Kosovo with different overlapping boundaries<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/kosovo\\_po198.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/kosovo_po198.jpg)



**Map 22**

**As this map indicates, the (national) eagle in the back testifies the maximalist goal of inverse irredenta, thus Kosovo`s ‘natural’ place within Albania<sup>19</sup>**

<sup>19</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo>



**Map 23**

**The map shows Albania and Kosovo unified (in red color) in a projected reshaping of Western Balkan<sup>20</sup>**

<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.erepublik.com/en/article/welcome-to-kosovo-albania-2068495/1/20>





Map 24<sup>21</sup>

In the field of education, a study of the effects of ‘parallel education’ and its effect on students and pupils’ perception of national map is important,<sup>22</sup> especially in history, geography and literature textbooks and how it is influenced by teachers ‘patriotic agitation’

<sup>21</sup> Demographic map that shows areas historically pretended by Albanians according to viable numerical percentage they have in Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. See for this illustrative map of Albanians outside Albania: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:AlbaniansOutsideAlbania.png>

<sup>22</sup> Thus a view from below, comparing it with elite rhetoric.

(Kostovicova 2005). Kostovicova is particularly interested in “the notion of a nation’s constructedness, the symbolic production and reproduction of nationhood, *after* the nation has come into being” (Kostovicova 2005: 11). This is necessary to show the map projection on a qualified public, such as pupils and students of today and active citizens of tomorrow and the role that cultural elites (teachers and textbook writers) have played in the process. *Albania’s direct influence through teaching network and distribution of the publishing materials in tandem with Belgrade’s high repression and low Kosovar elite struggles favored an expansionist mapping amongst the population in Kosovo at this period.*

If Blumi in his discussion of education in vernacular in 19<sup>th</sup> Century has defended the thesis that the role played by education has been overtly overestimated (Blumi 2002), Kostovicova in her account of post-Communist Kosovo shows how parallel education amongst the Albanian community there served both the coherence of national identity in construction and resistance toward the ‘Other’, conceptualized in the shape of the Serbian state. It is interesting to compare these two different time periods where challenges were the same, in the fact that at both periods the question of nation-building and creating a state for the nation was the primary urge. Blumi argues for example that contrary to the way that Albanian historiography and mainstream narrative tells about the unfailing role of education in vernacular as a awakening call, its effects in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were rather limited because of widespread illiteracy rate and most schools which were teaching in either Greek, Turkish or Latin. A more powerful role according to him was the accommodation of local elites, former servers of the Empire, which tried to precede the

breakdown of the Ottoman Empire and loss of power, by compensating with going local in order to still retain political privileges (Blumi 2002). A thesis I find disputable, mostly because of involvement of other local and diaphora actors in the process, but nevertheless has a point in emphasizing the accommodation of elites in post-imperial era.

Kostovicova also investigates the dynamic of the process of education, the shifts witnessed in curriculum design and content after segregation of education between Serbs and Albanians of Kosovo and the creation of parallel structures of education from the Albanians and how history, geography and literature texts created a new narrative of nationhood and perception of imaginary boundaries that recreated the nation in everyday life. As she succinctly put it: “[t]he Albanian sense of nationhood flourished in an unprecedented way in complete spatial segregation in Albanian home-schools in Kosovo. The assertion of nationhood was most explicit and meaningful in the rewriting of school textbooks, especially those in history and geography. In them Kosovo was celebrated as an independent state” (Kostovicova 2005, p. 215). If we were to critically analyze this evidence, we may safely summarize that in the case of Kosovo’s ‘parallel education’ system, the education (in vernacular) created a new nation and later, it was the nation that led to the concept of statehood. Sovereignty first conceptualized in popular imagination gave lead to political calls for state independence. In turn this created the ground for a promotion of a separate Kosovar identity, which was especially to develop after independence, in contrast with a pan-Albanianism view that would have tended to view Tirana as the epicenter of Albanian nation. This double paradox has often escaped many



scholars and political analysts in their study of trajectory that was noticed in Kosovar Albanian perception of where the nation and its epicenter lie.

Territory, homeland, nation`s visualized borders, ethnocentrism and exclusive forms of nationalism are all important components of shifts witnessed in Kosovo case, especially in the last two decades. If in 1981, there was a general crisis in Kosovo, started by the students for economic reasons, and later instrumentalized by isolated actors for political reasons<sup>23</sup> including irredentists' calls for unification with Albania-- in 1990s, as the result of educational shifts, Kosovo`s independence drive, became a constitutive element of political calls for a Kosovo Republic. The state came into existence later for this new nation under the pressure from newly reconstructed popular collective memories (as result mainly of a combination of elite-led parallel education, Serbian 'ethnic cleansing' and cultural influence from Tirana media), in conjunction with international intervention and changing geopolitical realities. The external factors were actually more decisive in the forthcoming of the new state than domestic climate. Lately, an inclusive identity of 'Kosovar' seems to have started competing with the ethnic Albanian identity, at least in the elite level.

The concept of 'ethnos' was thus separated from the nation, where the first was conceptualized as an inherited biological phenomenon and the second as a pure political project.<sup>24</sup> In a way, this is a replica of what had happened in reverse in medieval times,

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<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that the creation of Pristina University, education in vernacular, especially with imported textbooks, laden with national-communist ideology from Tirana, coupled with the fact that most students favored *Humanities* as main field of specialization, produced a high unemployment, which in turn triggered the crises.

<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that this was a view maintained by two leading analysts from Kosovo in a recent debate about nationalist identity in Kosovo today, in a talk show in Top Channel in Albania. According to

where a large part of Serbian community in Kosovo had conceptualized themselves as Kosovars, trying to distinguish themselves from a larger Serbian imagined community, with its spiritual and material center in Belgrade (Malcolm 1998). The other period where the two main communities living in Kosovo, Albanians and Serbs had come together and constituted a “united front” against the settlers (from Belgrade) was circa 1928 (Malcolm 1998: 281).<sup>25</sup> Kosovar identity in the making, domestically inclusive but conceptualized in terms of difference vis-à-vis a pan-Albanian or pan-Serbian, is actually manifested in Kosovo public discourse and embraced by a large part of political and cultural elite.

Also we should not underestimate the specific role-playing of Kosovar political elite in their relation to Albania, which was very active in urging, as well as in educating the political leadership in Tirana to take a certain course of action. For example, Veton Surroi, one of the foremost politicians and publishers of Kosovo in the past two decades, has given some interesting evidence of ethnic Albanians` elite in former Yugoslavia (which includes the Albanians of Kosovo, FYROM and Montenegro). In regard to developing situation in Albania, in a recent conference paper titled: “Westernized Albania as a common investment of the Albanians: How the politics of Kosovo versus Albania was constructed in 1990s” he writes:

We [Albanians` elites in Yugoslavia] understood that the situation in Albania helped us construct two important strategic points. First, that Albania was so weak of a country [after Communism fall] that it could not help itself, imagine us. This led to the conceptualization of ‘passive resistance’ on one hand and the development of the notion of ‘Albanian

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one of the participants, Halil Matoshi, the Kosovar nation can be traced in 1974 constitution, thus totally distinguishable from Albania and an Albanian nation, a radical depart from earlier observations on the issue.

<sup>25</sup> The colonization process initiated by Belgrade made possible a ‘great success’ in terms of demographic changes. According to Serbian official Djordje Krstić whereas the Serbs in Kosovo were “only 24 per cent of the population in 1919, the figure had now risen to 38 percent.” Quoted in Malcolm 1998: 282.

polycentrism' on the other. Kosovo and the Albanian question in former Yugoslavia were not going to search for its 'ethnic center' in Tirana, as it was the case with Serbs of Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo with Belgrade and Croats of Bosnia with Croatia. Instead of one unifying Albanian centers, impossible noting the state of weakness of Albania, we constructed the politics of three centers, or maybe four, if we take into consideration also the Albanians of Montenegro (Surroi 2010).

He adds that after a secret political parties meeting of Albanian ethnic groups in Croatia in beginning of 1990s, he was given the responsibility by these participating [Albanian] parties to go and meet various political representatives of Albanian governments and opposition and urge them to built a democratic image, which would serve Kosovo in long-term to gain support in international arena. This course of action is in line with what M. Kraja has recently written in a thought-provoking book, called "Kosovar Identity", where he stresses that: "the intellectual elite in Kosovo politically was autonomous, but had a thorough nationalist background" (Kraja 2011). This nationalist nurturing started to gradually build up after 1974, and culminated especially in the 1980s, reaching its maturity as Surroi explains in the early 1990s, where a more detailed political platform came to existence.

Then, after 1992, Surroi writes that they were to follow two main postulates with regard to Albania: "*one* was to show that we were not directed anyhow from Tirana that a project of 'Greater Albania' did not exist and that relations between the two were that of two friendly neighbor countries" (Surroi 2010). This was not just tactic but also based on strategic thinking that Albania was in a dire situation itself and attaching the Kosovar hopes to a weak Albania would be counter-productive. As the most influential Kosovar political thinking of 1990s U. Hoti tells its fellow citizens, they need not to hope any longer in the 'motherland', since: "...we Albanians of Kosovo that have played in the past

a crucial role in founding Albania, have left now the unification initiative to those that first need to modernize, and in the future, to unify!” (Hoti 1996: 197). Thus Albania in the minds of Kosovar activists needed first to be credible in the eyes of international community and only afterwards could lobby for potential unification with Kosovo.

*The other one*, was non-interference in political frictions of the day in Albanian fragmented political life, though as Surroi admits this was not entirely respected.<sup>26</sup> Kosovar elite thus conditioned the political rhetoric in Albania is an angle that has been underestimated and not taken into serious consideration until now. The few studies that have analyzed such conditioning have only discussed Tirana-Pristina causality vector (not only in political realm, but also in cultural policies and role-playing in national imagining), but almost never the opposite. Recent data such as the ones disclosed by Surroi can better inform our reasoning here. Deconstruction and reconstruction of mental borders moves not only from the center to periphery, but often the other way around as well. Nationalist intellectuals that have been a persistent factor in shaping the way nation is imagined, have also structured the rapports with homeland and nationalizing states, as well as have played a decisive role in shaping public memories of virtual maps that often go separate way with the logic that geo-politics dictate. The table below illustrates the dynamics of elite interplay with external constraints in the case of Albanian Kin in former Yugoslavia.

**Table 6. Predictions for border outcomes in the post-communist period amongst Ethnic Kin in Former Yugoslavia**

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<sup>26</sup> The pacifist group of Rugova entered into a close alliance with Democratic Party of Berisha, whereas the former Marxists, turned nationalist groups of KLA had strategic connection to the Socialist party.

Albanian kin	Competing Elite games	International Constraints	Border Outcome
1991- 1997	The pacifists headed by Rugova had the upper hand and they advocated more autonomy as the most obtainable goal and secession/ separation from Serbia as the maximum goal but through civil disobedience and quiet protesting as the only democratic means to achieve such goals.	External constraints were high in this period, because of what was happening with Serbo-Croatian and Bosnian wars. From beginning, int. community was united around the Badinter Commission recommendation that gave the right of secession only to republics, thus excluding Kosovo <i>a priori</i> .	First an expansionary map, and then with Rugova preferring autonomy within Yugoslavia, -- while Albania backing down from active support of any unification scheme (from 1991 when it was the first country to recognize a unilateral act of secession), -- a contractionary map started to prevail.
1998- 2008	High elite struggles where a fierce struggle between moderate Rugova`s LDK and KLA guerilla network took place, which saw this last one emerge as a victor.	High external constraints. Went from resisting any border changes and labeling KLA a terrorist group to naming them NLM and directly helping them.	In compliance with my initial predictions, a map ambiguity here as the result of combination of high domestic struggles and high foreign interferences.

### 6.3.1 The Albanians of Kosovo and Their Shifting Stance toward Albania in 1990s: A View From Below

Also borders may shift in popular imagination according to the logic of perception of political and administrative changes. Same street address may belong to different states (nations) at different junctures even separated by short spans of time. Such is the recollection of A. Kastrati, a theater director and film producent from Kosovo who describes how in different decades he had a constructed identity who did not match the feeling of belonging that he felt. For example, he writes:

In years '70-'80 I lived in The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. My address was: Street "Sava Kovacević," no. 5/A, Pristina, Kosovo. They called me Yugoslav. I felt Albanian, but nobody was calling me such. In the first half of 1990s, I lived in Yugoslav Republic. My address was: Ulica "Carica Milica," Br. 5, 38.000, Pristina, Kosovo I Metohija. They called me Yugoslav. I felt Albanian, but nobody was calling me such. In the beginning of new millennium, I lived in Serbian-Montenegron Union. My address was: Ulica "Car Lazar", Br. 40, 38.000, Pristina, Srbija. They called me Yugoslav. I felt Albanian, but nobody was calling me such. In the years 2000-2007, I lived in three different addresses:

- St. "Resolution", Nr. 1244, New York, Pristina, Kosovo, Serbia, UNMIK
- Ulica "Car Lazar", Br. 40, 38.000, Pristina, Kosovo i Metohija, Srbija
- Rr. "Adem Gashi", Nr. 42, 10.000, Prishtinë, Kosovë

I felt Albanian, but nobody was calling me such. I still live in the same house, without address, in the place called: Kosovo. Everybody calls me a Kosovar, nobody calls me an Albanian. It is still required from me to change the [national] identity, to live in a new address... I don't think that another country has changed so many [identity] addresses while still in the same place (Kastrati 2009).<sup>27</sup>

Stories such as this help in understanding the Kosovar view from below, how they perceived the identity in the 1990s, when an opportunity space was opened for the nationalist elites to come to power through an alternate map based on spatial expansion.

<sup>27</sup> This brings in mind an old joke which "tells a story of an old man who says he was born in Austria-Hungary, went to school in Czechoslovakia, married in Hungary, worked most of his life in the Soviet Union, and now lives in Ukraine. 'Traveled a lot,' comments an interviewer-- 'No, I never moved from Mukachevo,' (Garton Ash 1999; Quoted in Murphy 2002: 39-40) replies the man from Ruthenia, a disputed territory with overlapping identity and territorial disputes that bears similarity to the Kurdish nation.

We can see the manifestation of this, in the coordinated actions on both sides of Albania-Kosovar border. It seems that a twofold process was happening amongst the Kosovar Albanian: the borders were hardening more than ever with their Serb co-citizens, while the border with the Albanians on the other side of frontier, started to resemble more to a bridge, rather than a barrier. As Daniele Conversi puts it, this is the driving power of nationalism, which “simultaneously strives at the reinforcement of external border and the elimination of internal borders” (Conversi 1995: 77). It seems that at this particular juncture we have a *map expansion* driven by nationalist elites, whose interests on both sides of border converged.<sup>28</sup> This entails that borders may be inclusive, irrespective of administrative divide, in the same fashion that often are exclusive within the state, (i.e. exclusion/ shunning of national minorities which often are treated as a threat to national identity or as a fifth column of the external homeland). The pupils’ imagination of borders, as constructed mostly by education in humanities,<sup>29</sup> as well as citizens perceptions such as

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<sup>28</sup> The interests converged, because in Kosovo the advocates of military resistance needed the alternate map of border revision (meaning secession from Serbia and simultaneously joining the ‘mother country’), while in Albania socio-economic and political situation favored Socialists, which had a coalition with KLA, the radical wing of Kosovar politics. There is plenty of evidence that KLA fought in the name of unification with Albania rather than simple secession, although the last goal seemed more attainable. Such evidence ranges from ethno-symbols (i.e. the national Albanian flag, use of Albanian state anthem etc), to usage of Albanian direct support (flows of money, weapons and direct participation of former military men to organize the ranks of KLA and train them for combat). All actions that point toward a single conceptualization of a virtual map that had as a final goal, unification of Kosovo and Albania in case of success. It failed to get realized only because the international community was in unison against such designs. This evidence reinforces my hypothesis that *when external intervention increases to contradict a particular internally-generated action, domestic elites back down from radical/expansionary demands*.

<sup>29</sup> After independence in 2008, the tendency of state historiography has been the removal of most myths, while simultaneously had to cope with the representation of the ‘Other’, which were either the ‘Turkish hordes’, the ‘barbarian Slav’ or the ‘infidel Greek’. As Frasher Demaj, the secretary-general of Kosovo’s History Institute claims: “the former texts had depictions of Slav invaders of Illyricum lands in the period between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries. We should not give a poetic and emotional account of the events” (Musliu 2009). A history teacher, S. Veseli thinks that the new history school texts are much improved because they remove the language of hatred and tend to serve as bridges of reconciliation. On the other hand, such textbooks refer to the empirical data in a superfluous manner and then go into dubious interpretations that reflect a highly opinionated reality. In a recent Kosovar geography text, after the author refers to the 1991

the one mentioned above, are some of the proxies that help us understand shifts in national identity and how national map configuration is perceived from the bottom-up.

#### **6.4 Alternative Map Configuration And Virtual Borders Seen From Below: Kosovo and Other Albanian Inhabited Regions in Albania's Textbooks During 1990s**

In addition to political discourse, alterations were made in history and literature books in Albania, which tend to be particularly important in such abrupt regime changes. Changes were in methodology, as well as content. One of the first thing done was to include in the mainstream national history the Albanians left outside state borders after the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1913 (Duka 2004: 50), thus enlarging the way the nation was perceived and its imagined expansionary borders amongst the readers. For example, the Conference of Ambassadors of 1913 when representatives of the Great Powers of the continent decided on the legality of Albanian secession from Ottoman Empire, establishing its independence, singled out the territories that would constitute what would be part of a sovereign Albania and what would be its northern, southern and eastern borders. Albanian historiography sources have repeatedly stated that half of Albanian territory has been left out unjustly, thus helping construct a parallel virtual reality that has played a continuous role in education and cultural policies. Even one of the most recent and professional history texts has it clearly that: “[the] secession of Kosovo from Albania was the biggest lost of it [Albania]” (Puto 2009: 81). It goes on to further emphasize the point that only half of Albanian territory (28.000 kilometers) and half of its population

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Macedonian census and gives the official figures (Macedonians with 1.3 million comprised roughly 65% of population, while Albanians with 400.000 inhabitants, roughly 21%), the author ‘corrects’ such figures by assuming that Albanians should be at least double that number in the range of 40 percent of total population (Pushka 1999: 45). However, he does not tell us any source to corroborate it. Such examples serve to create a virtual reality that creates a different sense of belonging by delineating new borders while erasing others.



(800.000 inhabitants) were included in the new state. Another scholar has noted that according to Yugoslav statistics of 1954, Kosovo had 942.000 Albanians (Vlora: 39-40), giving the impression that even more than half of ethnic Albanians have remained outside its new borders. If we add here the Chams that were deported from Greece (around 58.000 Muslims and 14.000 Orthodox Albanians) (Puto 2009: 81), then it seems that only a minority of Albanians have remained within the (new) country. But if we are to consider that this was the first time that an Albanian state was recognized as such internationally and that all these ethnic Albanians have never lived in a single political entity before, then it seems that we have more a process of myth-making in motion than real and critical empirical analysis offered by the revised texts.

Another change, again in the realm of history and geography textbooks, was more emphasis put into socio-cultural and religious processes rather than strict political and military history which used to dominate history for more than five decades under Communism (Duka 2004: 50). In addition, some old myth-making trends seem to configure a mental ethnic landscape that creates imaginary borders on the expanse of real ones. For example, in a recent bilingual geography text while discussing the actual situation of territory inhabited by Albanians in the Western Balkans, the author explicitly states that: “the Albanian regions are currently divided in the Republic of Albania (Illyrian-Arber-Albanian core), Republic of Kosovo (Illyrian-Dardan-Albanian core), on the west of FYROM, on the northwest of Republic of Greece (Illyrian-Cham-Albanian core), in the south of Republic of Serbia and in the southeast of Republic of Montenegro” (Dollma 2008: 19). It seems that some of these aforementioned territories are either not recognized

as such by either official sources in both sides of the official borders, like the example of Northwest Greece,<sup>30</sup> or there is too much speculation in mentioning of the Illyrian-Dardan-Arber ethnic core, as predecessors of today's Albanians. This English-Albanian geography text can be taken not as a separate case in point but illustrative of the scholarly superfluity and myth-making stories that do not serve only the domestic consumption.

On the other hand, historical revisionism has mostly served to reflect the political outlook of the party in power, thus politicizing it, rather than trying to remove the ideological layers from historical narratives. An additional data is the fact that the biggest historical debates that have provoked noise in public arena have been those surrounding events during WWII,<sup>31</sup> rather than any contestation regarding the national borders in the post-communist period, which has been more or less the case with most of the neighboring countries. This is not to deny changes in historiography from Communist period where the history of ethnic kin and nearby territory was included regularly in the main narrative. Although normally one would expect political shifts dictated by such opportunity structures opening up, it is puzzling why Albanian political elite did not capitalize on this nationalist narrative to gain political support at some moments, while at others it has been the main instigator of such historical revision to expand the national map. What is

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<sup>30</sup> The deported Chams (during inter-war and WWII period), have only property claims (financial reparations from Greek government), not ethnic ones (i.e. revindication of territory) and neither does the Albanian government on their behalf. Many individual cases are already taken to Strasbourg Court of Human Rights and are waiting verdict.

<sup>31</sup> For example, a repeated bone of contention between right and left wing parties, which has divided the historians, media and public opinion in two camps, has been the date when Albania was liberated from occupation forces of Nazi-Fascism in 1944. The dates that are continuously disputed with a rekindled debate every year, are 28 and 29<sup>th</sup> of November when the left-wing parties defend the second and right-wing political forces the 28<sup>th</sup>, arguing that 29<sup>th</sup> was only a political decision to cope with Yugoslavia's date of liberation (29<sup>th</sup> of 1945), as part of an initial plan of Hoxha to unite Albania as a 7<sup>th</sup> Republic to Yugoslavia in the late years of 1940s. This is a prime example of politicization of history, which shifts in textbooks every time that there is a political rotation of power.

important to stress out however, is that this historical revisionism process failed to deliver a public response which would have resulted in any nationalist mobilization or lead to *ethnic outbidding* amongst political parties at this particular time. This is because after five decades of isolation, the mass public had little time to adjust to Greater Albania. Instead it wanted to flee the country and a particular effect on the projected reductionist map had the brain drain that took effect after most of the intelligentsia who could have mobilized the people around an expansionary nationalist project left Albania and emigrated abroad. This may explain why nationalist parties, although did exist, could not exert a minimalist influence, which could have enabled them to at least pass the parliamentary threshold.

Instead it seems that other matters, i.e. socio-economic concerns were more pressing for political class and a different discourse prevailed on public venue. ‘European integration’ came to be the favorite catch phrase of the political elite, which was not at all divided in matters of prioritization of needs, thus becoming an “empty signifier” (Mouffe and Laclau 1985) that was equated with progress, economic fulfillment and a future that promised the eradication of borders and thus the last source of hostility in the relation with the immediate neighbors. One interesting remark in relation to mental mapping that was associated with border change configuration once entering the European Union is that Albanian citizens perceived it as finally getting the visa liberalization process and freely moving to EU countries, as the primary benefit that was associated with European Integration.<sup>32</sup> Quite differently, the majority of Kosovars, especially prior to proclaiming the independence status and the Albanians of FYROM with similar oscillations, have

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<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.aiis-albania.org/areas.html#part1>

mostly perceived these processes as last removal of barriers with the ‘motherland’ and their ethnic brethren, thus interpreting such political decision through different lenses. For example, a poll realized by Kult Foundation found that 64% of the respondents were in favor of a Kosovo-Albanian Federation before the integration of both countries in EU, with 25% saying no and 11 percent expressing no opinion. But only 43% said that they thought it possible to happen while 42% were optimist.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, one of the persistent features in the Albanian schoolbooks in this period is the one that asserts that the Illyrians are the heirs of ancient Pelasgians (Kuri, Zekolli & Jubani 1995: 32-33) with the specific aim of “proving” the autochthony in the land and thus continuously building up in the minds of the pupils the myth of an Albanian territory that is twice as much in size compared to present Albania. This kind of territorial linearity, associated with a black and white picture of invasions that have often broken the ‘immemorial’ nation in different political units, (re)creates different borders in the minds of the pupils and students. However this does not suffice to mobilize the masses around an expansionist map project that would seek materialization of Greater Albania, although the language that accompanies such history and geography textbooks is such as “Slav invasion”, “chauvinistic designs of neighbors”, “break-up of the nation” etc, creates the effect of a heroic nation resisting the waves of history.

This continuous stream in Albanian historiography, focuses on nation’s continuity and along with it the essentialization of (ethnic/national) borders. This is especially noted in history and geography school textbooks, which point out the autochthony of its

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<sup>33</sup> See: <http://www.shqiptarja.com/politike/2732/sondazhi-64-e-te-anketuarve-i-thone-po-bashkimit-shqiperi-kosove-136972.html>

inhabitants, occupying the same territory of today and beyond. For example, in the first history textbook published in United States in 1921 and later distributed in Albania, the author emphasizes that the ancestors of the Albanians have been living in the present territory of today (including the kin that lives in neighboring countries) and are the oldest inhabitants in the region (Cekrezi 1921: 9-10).<sup>34</sup> In the early years of the interwar period, Christo Dako, another Albanian-American of prominence wrote that Albanians were one of the oldest race of the Balkan Peninsula and had, up to the Middle Ages, “occupied all Balkan countries, that their national consciousness was stronger than any of their neighbors” (Dako 1919: 2, 28, 31, 128, 171; Todorova 1997: 45). For comparison’s sake, in a recent geography text titled “Albanian regions”, when discussing the political map change of the Albanian regions, the author emphasizes that “[a]lthough Albanian regions are unique in the territorial, language and ethno-cultural meaning, in the historical flow they have several times changed their political borders. Due to wars, conquest and interests of the victorious powers, the political map of Albania shrank to the present form.” (Dollma 2008: 17).

We can easily glimpse a causal survey of these two different texts that are separated by almost a century, a repeated pattern of a coherent ethnic map that has existed continued unchanged, despite foreign interferences that have resulted in political divisions of the territory. Such description is perpetuated in similar texts, having a great impact in the way nation’s bordering is imagined. Furthermore, as the more recent texts notes, the catch

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<sup>34</sup> Traces of same historiography patterns could be traced earlier, like in the history text of 1917 of D. N. Nikaj “History of Albania”, published in Shkoder, Albania, but the 1921 text that I mentioned is the first history schoolbook that sets up an example for many to follow. This text contains many other myths, including for example that of famous general Phirrus who is attributed the naming of Albanians as *shqiptare* (meaning *sons of eagle*), a term that is used to identify the nation to the present-day (Chekrezi 1921: 3).

words “shrank to present territory” imply the possibility of a further enlargement when political borders would possibly achieve congruence with the presumed static mental map of the nation. The implication is that this wishful thinking remains to be completed by ‘responsible patriots’ with a duty feeling that seeks to correct the incongruence of the political map with the imaginary nation and its much extended virtual borders. These feelings, according to these official history and geography textbooks have not been affected by changes in geo-political landscape. This kind of myth persistence that configures a certain imagined community, that maps a territory not compatible to political realities is not at all random, but makes up a pattern in such texts that are regularly included in curricula of schools and universities. *It is my contention that in turn these texts establish an imagined territorial identity that perpetuates an expansionist map version, overlooking the dynamics of political variation, although this does not affect political realities unless used or instrumentalized by political elite when external conditionalities allow.*

Because of the ubiquitous presence of these Albanian textbooks uses in Kosovo and Macedonia, such views seem to create a different reality in perceptions from below, from the view of elite, which in post-communism period, forced by external constraints, have tended to be more moderate and restricted in pursuing any expansionary map. Thus history is told concentrated in particular events, *histoire événementielle*, rather than finding systematic patterns and long term structures which are characteristic of *longue duree*, the French school of Annales, which seek to construct broad explanations in a systematic fashion, based on revolution of certain ideas. This seems a common characteristic of

almost all the Southeastern Europe (Brunnbauer 2004). However, such textbooks are one of the determinant factors of creating a virtual national map in the minds of current pupils and future citizens, thus creating the opportunity for elites to instrumentalize on expansionary (virtual) borders when the opportunity emerges.

### **6.5 Mass Media and its Role in Reshaping Mental boundaries in both sides of the State Borders in Post-Communist Period**

During democratic transition, mass media has gone through various shifts and abrupt changes. Politicization of media can be traced in its editorial politics regarding actions of political elite, varying whenever the supported political base was in power or in opposition.<sup>35</sup> After 1997 media became more nuanced, coinciding with the end of monopoly of state television, with more than a dozen of national and private channels suddenly mushrooming, and more than thirty newspapers in daily circulation. The role of ‘pan-national’ media, such as Top-Channel and TV Klan, which first opened in Tirana and later established sister branches in Pristina and Macedonia, made possible for a cultural unification that has systematically urged changes that lead to potential political unification as well. In addition, these television studios have created various shows that tend to picture an expansionist map that views and treats Albanian regions in Macedonia, and whole of Kosovo, extending up to South Serbia (Presevo and Bujanovć municipalities), as

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<sup>35</sup> For example, there was much variation in regard to former Yugoslavia, when despite rhetoric, Albanian government deliberately broke the UN embargo and supplied vast amounts of oil and other illicit goods. This deliberate trade and goodwill cooperation between Belgrade and Tirana during the war on B-H, is reported in the memoirs of former Montenegro’s President, Momir Bulatović. However media did not pick this news up. The only explanation is complete politicization of media during this period, which was divided alongside political trenches and only reflected, rather than influenced political parties in their actions. However it is still important because it is one of the proxies that allow us to carefully study policy changes and what was the position of political groups in the matter.

‘perennial’ regions of the nation. Such TV shows range from political/cultural ones, such as *Shqip* [Albanian] in Top Channel, which has been ongoing for close to a decade now to variety shows, which have participants and audiences from Albanians living all the three countries. In addition, pan-national coverage of news is now common, where usually Kosovo or Albanian Macedonian community are regularly given half of the time in order to expand its market and “turn nationalism into a consumer good” (Rukaj 2013).

Publicist articles in printed media have consequently been a major factor that has shaped the public opinion. For example, some authors have argued that prior to the exchange population treaty between Turkey and Greece; most Albanian territories were amputated from the trunk of the new state. The new state that came in existence after the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was too weak and their protests were ignored in the diplomatic tables of Great Powers and as a result “many Albanians of Macedonia, Kosovo, Konitza, Grebene, Kostur, Follorin and Chameria were evicted and substituted with Serb settlers from Bosnia and Sanxhak and Greeks from Minor Asia. This is the primary reason of reduction of territorial space where Albanians constituted the majority when in 1913 were approximately 75.000 km<sup>2</sup> and today they are reduced in 45.000 km<sup>2</sup>”<sup>36</sup> (Koçi 2011; See also Kurti 2010).

Other influential authors in mediaspace have openly defended the project of *Greater Albania*, which according to its proponents, was facilitated by Kosovo’s declaration of independence. This raised expectancies amongst certain *nationalist intellectuals* for the two states to merge in a single one, following the German model in the

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<sup>36</sup> Since Republic of Albania is only 28.000 km<sup>2</sup>, the assumption is that 45.000 km<sup>2</sup> is the territorial space of ‘Ethnic Albania’.



aftermath of fall of Berlin Wall. For example, R. Qosja considers political movements of Albanians, from the last two decades of 20th century to the realization of Kosovo independence, as a second renaissance period. For him, the first ended up with the creation of the Albanian state. While the second with Kosovo state. But similarities are in the fact that “both are intellectual movements, both have in their epicenter the unification of nation, both are illuminist movements rather than religiously motivated, are centralized ideologies, rather than based on regions and modern rather than backward” (Qosja 2007). In the end, he also leaves open the possibility of a third one, yet to come, one that would culminate with the inevitable unification. Another author goes as far recently as to claim that: “[t]he external ‘hard’ borders are only imposed artificially by Great Power in 1913 and therefore do not fit the individual cognitive mapping of either individual or collective level. Furthermore, the Kosovo government cannot enter into negotiation with Serbia because it is only a local government, and as such cannot represent the whole territorial unity, Albania and Kosovo” (Ferraaj 2011).

Media effects in addition to shaping public opinion, has also served as a transparency source, which culminated with wikileaks revelations of what diplomats serving in Albania perceived in regard to politicians` behavior, their rhetoric and action especially in regard to delicate question of border expansion or vice-versa, which is what interests us particularly here. For example, Wikileaks publications of US Embassy cablegrams revealed *inter alia*, very interesting data in regard to perception of international actors, such as US ambassador, to the instrumental use that Albanian political class was making to the question of border revision, Kosovo independence and potential unification

with Albania in case such opportunity arouse. In the cablegram with the intriguing headline “Is Berisha flirting with the idea of ‘Greater Albania’?”, according to US Embassy sources, he suggests that Berisha seems to have played this game particularly well, using such border expansion and nationalist language every time that he was criticized by State Department or EU counterparts on his record on democracy, rule of law and human rights.<sup>37</sup> Right after, open criticism to Berisha from American and European partners for open encouragement noted in his speeches addressed to Kosovar and Albanian Macedonian politicians, Berisha seemed to backtrack immediately. His minister of foreign affairs, Lulzim Basha, quickly jumped in to clarify that the prime minister had in mind European space where Kosovo and Albania would share co-habitation, together with other European countries, not seeking the creation of a federation between the two, while vice-prime minister Ilir Meta was quickly dispatched to a visit in Belgrade to calm any kind of worries that Berisha`s declarations have caused.<sup>38</sup>

### **6.5.1 Recent Debate on the Territorial Shaping Identity in Albania, Kosovo and Amongst Albanian Community in Macedonia**

The identity debate, primarily national, but also religious one has been amongst the most discussed issues in both Albania and Kosovo especially in recent years. Borders seem to have been imagined differently during this period, with both elite and masses torn between a desire to push for unification toward a ‘Greater Albania’ where independence of

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<sup>37</sup> Reported by national TV Top Channel, citing Wikileaks cablegrams, dedicating lots of space in its news coverage to this information in September 7, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> These translated cablegrams have subsequently been published in the printed press, for example *Tema* daily. See for details described here: <http://www.gazetatema.net/web/?p=39852>

Kosovo is seen only as the first step toward final realization and the other half advocating an all-inclusive ‘civic citizenship’ in Kosovo and back up a full advocacy for a Kosovar distinct identity, starting with the language. To start with the last point, a series of thought-provoking debate opened up by weekly Java and its director M. Kelmendi, centered on two points. *First*, the need for a development of an inclusive civic identity of Kosovar, which had some legacies in the past as Malcolm and other historians have pointed out, to construct a typical multi-ethnic state, where Serbs, Albanians and other minorities would all share a newly patriotic allegiance to the new state. *Second* the simultaneous development of a distinct Kosovar identity from that of Albanians [from Albania] for the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo (Java 2004, pp. 1-24).<sup>39</sup> Regarding the first point of view, taking into considerations some recent surveys, it shows that absolute majority of Albanians and Serbs do not want a breakup of Kosovo, although they remain divided upon the fact if there is going to be soon a full recognition of the new state and subsequent admittance to international organizations and institutions, including UN.<sup>40</sup>

The second point, which connects directly to my thesis question of ‘virtual’ boundaries that not necessarily follow the logic of hard borders, centers on the argumentative logic of the differences in language and previous discrimination by Tosk-dominated Communist regime, which enforced a literary standard language that was based almost entirely on Tosk dialect, therefore neglecting the spoken and written Geg dialect of

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<sup>39</sup> Also directly linked to this debate is the 2004 *European Identity of Kosovars* conference proceedings with the participation of scholars, policy-makers and civil society in a general discussion about identity shifts in the verge of independence. I have secured all the papers presented at the conference, which highlight interesting viewpoints on the boundaries of identity in the making.

<sup>40</sup> Viktor Damjanović and John Chapman *Two Years In, Kosovo Albanians More Sober on Independence*. Three-quarters believe independence was a good thing, down from 93% in 2008. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/125978/two-years-kosovo-albanians-sober-independence.aspx>

the absolute majority of Albanians in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro who together encompass more than two thirds of entire Albanian-speaking community in the region. This view is vehemently opposed by most of old generation linguists and scholars of Kosovo, including Migjen Kelmendi`s own father, Ramiz Kelmendi, R. Qosja and others. They argue that the standard of 1972 should not be touched and grammatical rules based on a minority dialect have been the norm almost everywhere (citing the Italian, French, Serbo-Croatian and other examples). The debate on language standards is primarily a battle of two competing identities that are trying to shape national imagination and promote a prevalent mode of thinking amongst the Kosovar Albanians. On one hand, the one that argues that Albanian language standard based primarily in Southern Tosk dialect for obvious political reasons at the time, is long outdated and Kosovars need to develop a written language that corresponds closely to their spoken Geg dialect. The language choice is only the first step, because the ultimate goal is the creation of a new Kosovar identity, distinct from Albanians of Albania and inclusive for Serbs and other minorities of Kosovo state. Considering nation to be a political project this model of inclusive citizenship, based on Anglo-Saxon tradition, would enable Kosovo to grow stronger as an independent and sovereign state and thus, talks about a possible division of territory or reunification with neighboring Albania would be a talk of the past. It goes without saying that the opposite group, with some of the old guards as the main representatives, strongly opposes such ‘divisive’ ideas and advocates the ‘German model’ meaning two states, one nation, considering the German and Austrian state. They are staunchly against the promotion of a separate Kosovar identity. Qosja writes that

“Kosovarism replaces Albanianism by being counter-historical ideologies that would kill for good the idea that has put in motion the Albanian people history from the Prizren League to today: *the idea of national unification*” (Qosja: 2006: 49).

The debate on the ongoing status of national identity, which maps identity borders in an elite-engineered process has affected not only Kosovo, but has been widespread as well in Macedonia and Albania proper.<sup>41</sup> The debate rather than captures the conceptual differences between the aforementioned communities or implying an elite-mass level friction is more of different conceptual apparatuses spread horizontally in all these communities. Thus it looks more of a dichotomy between those who favor a ‘Greater Albania’ project and those who map nation and state borders separately by promoting distinct national identities, notwithstanding their social status. Such differences are particularly manifested in school textbooks, which remain crucial in their ability to foster a

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<sup>41</sup> A proxy of this is two thought-provoking books: a monograph by I. Kadare and a novel by B. Blushi. Kadare in his 2006 book *The European Identity of Albanians* strongly attacked any compatibility of religion with national identity of Albanians. Arguing to defend the European origins of the Albanian nation (without differentiating between current states), Kadare argued that any Albanian identification with Islam, notwithstanding its moderate form, is unacceptable in the face of apostolic Christian roots for more than fourteen centuries, Indo-European language, race, geography and history (Kadare 2006). This view was first criticized by Kosovar writer R. Qosja, who argued on behalf of multi-confessionalism and mixed identity of Albanian-Christian and Muslim” (Di Lellio 2009: 34), while different intellectuals in Kosovo and Albania soon followed. It is interesting to note that this debate centered on where to belong (including the geo-symbolic area) and indirectly provoked much debate about nation’s configuration. The involved debaters, notwithstanding their differences, had a similar perception that they were speaking of the same (greater) nation-state, which in fact was an imaginary federalized Union of Kosovo and Albania. While most agreed or criticized both, I could not find a single article that dealt critically about the (pan)national identity they addressed. In contrast, Blushi’s novel *Living in an Island*, was centered on mass religious conversion of Albanians in the 18th century. Blushi’s novel soon became a book which generated a widespread debate amongst the cultural, religious and national borders that have surrounded Albanians or between themselves. Often these borders made people strongly antagonistic to each other, like the ravaging of Voskopoja, where an inter-ethnic struggle took place (Blushi 2008). Also, it kind of indirectly showed that Southern Albanians had much of their connection with northern Greeks than Albanians of North, which is assumed to have more in common with Montenegrin clans, in tradition, music, clothes, epics and even inter-marriages. Thus, the administrative borders not only dissected nation but also failed to take notice of ‘borders as bridges’ with immediate neighbors with whom the Albanians often shared more in common than with the co-nationals. Blushi’s novel run contrary to general conviction that borders are immutable and that an Albanian nation has existed undivided without a state for millennia.

certain map in the imagination of young pupils. For example, in the Albanian Geography official textbook for high schools in Albania, the students learn the history of “Greater Albania” where “Albanian lands outside borders include Kosovo, part of Montenegro and Serbia, as well as northwestern Greece, Yoannina, Arta etc” (Jole: 2011). Regarding this last point, Greek media had a coverage recently, when it denounced the fact that “the map of Greater Albania that extends to Albanian zones in neighboring countries, is pictured not only in the textbooks for pupils, but also they are required as part of their homework and class assignments to draw Greek regions where Albanians live...”<sup>42</sup>. The persistence of such expansionist mapping of territory is very telling a competing projects that tend to be more salient when political opportunities arise. One such opportunity is for example, when former President Moisiu, in a visit to commemorate a fallen Albanian Kosovar soldier during the 1999 clashes, declared that “Kosovo is just another *region* [krahina] of Albania, similar to other regions within Albania, such as Mirdita or Laberia.”<sup>43</sup> This declaration, though not official, coming from a former president, who had only recently been in power, provoked a flurry of discussion which continued for a while.

Regarding the question of territorialization of identity-in-the-making, a journalist puts it well after conducting field research for investigating national identity in the making in these three Albanian communities. He writes that “[s]ome see the attempt to promote a specific Kosovar identity as imposed and invented and reject it as artificial. Others feel more positive. Either way, the question is a hot topic in Pristina, Tirana and Skopje, among intellectuals, politicians and ordinary people alike” (Konomi 2009). This ongoing debate,

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, cited in Balkanweb, 21 April 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in Express daily më 11 prill 2011. See for details:

<http://lajme.shqiperia.com/lajme/artikull/iden/1047020322/titulli/Moisiu-Kosova-eshte-krahine-e-Shqiperise>

most often than not engineered from above but with many repercussions that follow and implications for policy, is of interest to follow closely in order to understand political games and opportunity openings and closure in regard to border manipulation and overlapping of ‘virtual’ versus ‘hard’ territorial map.

## 6.6 General Perception on Virtual Borders as Imagined from Below in Both Sides of National Landscape

Recent events, like periodic polls and surveys, allow us to have a more complete picture of what is going on in the region. These late shifts are captured especially by a 2010 poll, conducted by Gallup in cooperation with the European Fund for the Balkans, which showed that 62% of respondents in Albania, 81% in Kosovo and 51.9% of respondents in Macedonia supported the formation of a *Greater Albania*.<sup>44</sup> It is important to stress though that in the Macedonian poll also the Slavic respondents were included, that is why the ratio is comparatively low. The percentage of Albanians there is 25.4% officially, prior to 2011 population census. If we include only the Albanian respondents in the Gallup polls and make a simple arithmetic exercise, the approval rate is 93% for secession from Macedonia and possible unification with Albania.<sup>45</sup> The vast majority of respondents, more than 95% overall in the three countries, said that if such a *Greater Albania* was created, it should include Albania, Kosovo and part of Macedonia. Support is much lower for the union only of Albania and Kosovo. Only 33.7% of respondents in Albania approved of this solution, as did 29.2% in Kosovo and a mere 7.2% in Macedonia

<sup>44</sup> See [http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/files/Gallup\\_Balkan\\_Monitor-Focus\\_On\\_Kosovo\\_Independence.pdf](http://www.balkan-monitor.eu/files/Gallup_Balkan_Monitor-Focus_On_Kosovo_Independence.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> I thank Koco Danaj for pointing this information in an interview I had with him in November 2012.

(see also Likmeta 2010). These new data serve both as a testimony of shifts noticed and analyzed in the present study, as well as empirical indications that (should) inform policy and taken into consideration by international organizations, EU structures and other interested third parties. Contradicting data from Gallup polls, a 2010 survey taken by Albanian Institute for International Relations (AIIS) reveal an altogether different picture: from the poll sample in Albania, 37 percent of the interviewed people think that the unification of Albania with Kosovo is neither positive, nor negative, 35 percent think that it is negative and only 9 percent think of it as positive. The majority (35 percent) think that the possibility of unification Albania-Kosovo is slim, 18 percent think of it in average terms and only 9 percent think it is possible. As it can be seen, there is a correlation of numbers between those that think that unification is desired and also possible, while it is slightly less for the other categories of possibility of odds that something like this will ever happen. The poll continues by emphasizing another empirical finding that if the organization for unification of Albania with Kosovo would happen sometime in the near future, then 39 percent of the people that were interviewed were going to vote in favor of reunification, 23 percent against, 21 percent would have abstained and 18 percent would not participate (Rrozhani 2010: 5). This data gives us an understanding of the perception of the nation and its mental borders from below. How nation is imagined, what are the chances of border shifts and potential reunification and how much this is desired by the common folk in both sides of the border? As it may be summarized from the above data, approximately same percentage of people (around 35-39 percent) believes that reunification is not possible, but that on the other hand would have voted for reunification



is a referendum is possible. This answers an often repeated issue, which is the fact that weakness of a particular state to assert geopolitical changes, not necessarily goes hand to hand with common imagination of the nation and its outer borders. Nation is narrated differently from what circumstances prescribe. Mental (virtual) borders shrink or grow according to internal factors, symbolic power and games elites play, rather than according to hard power mechanisms, such as strength of the military apparatus, army or strategic alliances, which affect mostly the shape of delineation of borders in international conventions and bilateral treaties.

On the other hand, we witness a discrepancy between the presently investigated communities. An observer has noted that: “[i]f in opinion polls and surveys in Kosovo and Macedonia, the number of people favoring unification with the [perceived] homeland is growing, in Albania it stills remains in the margins” (Surroi 2011: 15). This seems to go in line with the empirical trend that nationalist parties have never gained enough footing and legitimacy in post-communist Albania as to pass the parliamentary threshold and irredentist designs have largely failed to get any serious public ear, largely remaining in the era of speculation coming from isolated individuals. However we should not omit the fact that Albanian governments have always kept a more than benevolent attitude toward Albanian diasporic communities. This attitude is in fact rooted in constitutional framework and manifested in various enterprises. For example the Article 8, fraction 1 of the Albanian Constitution states that Republic of Albania defends the rights of the Albanian people living outside its borders, thus extending the nominal power of the state to include defense of external kin that is not part of a normal state’s duties. It continues with 8/2 when it

explicitly says that: “Republic of Albania defends the rights of Albanian ethnic community that live temporally or permanently outside state borders.” Whereas the art. 8/3 emphasizes “the support that the Albanian state gives to the Albanian diaspora to preserve and develop the connections with national cultural heritage.” The Albanian state went further than these simple constitutional provisions back in 1990, when it recognized the legitimacy of secession of the Republic of Kosovo, an illegitimate secession recognized by nobody else.

However, in their actions, the Albanian politicians have traditionally been careful to make clear that they have not territorial pretensions against neighboring countries and Albanian government does not have any agenda of ‘Greater Albania’, notwithstanding the fact that such repeated declarations from government officials antagonize the logic of the aforementioned Constitution which has it inscribed in its preamble: “We, the Albanian people, proud and knowledgeable for our history... with the centuries-long aspiration for identity and unity in a single entity [bashkim kombetar]..., proclaim such constitution.” On the other hand, Kosovo’s constitution, more exactly article 1/ 3, forbids explicitly its unification with any other state. While in Macedonia, the two (main) Albanian parties there refer to Ohrid Agreement framework. The party that is part of governing coalition (BDI) defends the Ohrid pact as the method of realizing the multiethnic state where Albanians would have equal access with ethnic Macedonians whereas the Albanian opposition party has declared the agreement failed and want to renegotiate a new treaty. Thus, there is a different story to tell in both side of the state border of Albania, with an important fluctuation in the past two decades.

It seems that Albanians of Albania have recently been growing in numbers to see a single united national map,<sup>46</sup> encouraged by constitutional provisions and helped by a consistent rhetoric that serves Albanian politicians as leverage against external conditionality (to use the ‘national card’ and border revision argument each time that the international actors are using the ‘sticks’ for domestic failures), in order to recuperate failing electorate support because of grim economic situation. While the Albanian elite of Kosovo and Macedonia seems to have grown weary of ‘babysitting’ advice from Tirana and of being used instrumentally from it. They refuse to serve as periphery of Albania, trying to be as independent as they can. E. Sulstarova succinctly generalizes that: “in all three states where the biggest chunks of Albanians live, the unification in a single entity is not part of politicians’ agenda.”<sup>47</sup> At least not yet, keeping in mind that the author is referring to mainstream politicians, but ignoring present political underdogs who champion alternative expansionist maps that seek unification as ultimate goal.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> That does not mean that they have surpassed in percentage the ethnic kin in the desire for unification as the polls show, but they are catching up quickly influenced by public rhetoric of politicians trying to obtain or remain in power, media instrumentalization and other openings that have been noted in the course of this chapter.

<sup>47</sup> A further evidence for this is a declaration by vice-chair of the Albanian party that is part of governing coalition, Teuta Arifi who explicitly says: “Albanians have to build multiple political identities, one in Albania, one in Kosovo, one in Macedonia. The best example is German identity where the Germans have built different identities in Germany, Switzerland, Austria” (Arifi 2009). Thus she suggests that Albanians should build three distinct Albanian nations based on the three different national identity shapes.

<sup>48</sup> Their popularity is growing as the example of *Vetvendosja* [Self-Determination] in Kosovo show, where they ranked as the third largest political force in the last parliamentary election, but also in Albania, where *Aleanca Kuqezj* [Red and Black Alliance] is now a political party. Or the *Natural List* party, which is going to run as a political formation in the upcoming general elections and has as its main theme the unification of Albania and Kosovo. One of the latest declarations of *Aleanca Kuqezj* was in reaction to President Tadić in Kosovo and it read as follows: “Kosova is for thousand years Albanian land. Ulqini dhe Tuzi are also red and black territories. Tirana has to break the silence and defend their (national) rights. They are not Albanian minorities living in neighboring states, but Albanian living in their own territory.” See: <http://www.top-channel.tv/artikull.php?id=226442>

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter dealt with post-communist variations in Albania and amongst the Albanian communities in former Yugoslavia. It has been one of the most fundamentally shaping periods in this regards, with both virtual and hard borders shifting. Such shifts have produced both changes in elite discourse and rhetoric, as well as have helped engineer certain events by deliberate political action of elites in power.

History's revisionism in favor of a somewhat more active pan-nationalist agenda has been one of the primary changes that accompanied the early 1990s transition. This 'critical juncture', externally inspired, which has affected all of Eastern Europe, served as an opportunity rising for shrewd politicians while playing an important role to shape some of the contingent actions that soon followed. The (dis)congruence of mental map with political *status quo*, coupled of course with the geopolitical openings and economic, cultural and political situation, provoked some major breakthroughs through the Albanian communities in former Yugoslavia, with the Albanians of Kosovo being successful in obtaining their goal of secession, while the one in Macedonia obtained only a degree of cultural autonomy and some political rights, notwithstanding the radicalization of political agendas that followed ethnic outbidding amongst Albanian politicians there.

Without deconstructing the carefully put together story of recent years, it is impossible to reconstruct the events and be able to tell a constructivist story of borders that shift in public discourse, public memories and official history. This chapter sought to provide some empirical evidence by process tracing some important events, analyzing

main actors and salient factors in order to understand such shifts and the impact they have on official policy.

In Albania proper, differently from Kosovo and the Albanian community in Macedonia, we have generally noticed a lack of a nationalist ‘grand design’, which taken together with the absence of strong national and religious institutions, made Albania more vulnerable to external intervention and constraints. Also given the fact that the carrot of EU integration and United States pressures have always been there, the Albanian leaders have been careful to heed toward moderating trends even when it went against its (perceived) national interests. It is then little wonder that Albania failed to grasp ‘the golden moment’ that the fall of Communism created, in pursuing any nationalist policies or jumping even a step forward vis-à-vis the international community in regard to regional policies and (any) expansionary maps. Moreover, the Albanian press has been mild and has “avoided a descent into nationalism and jingoism” (Austin 2004: 246). Also, the nationalist parties have failed to gain any real foothold in Albanian politics, with rarely any of them passing the necessary threshold in parliamentary elections. In addition Berisha, who is sometimes referred as nationalist leader, has even jailed some of the most prominent Kosovar leaders, during the course of his Presidency (Pettifer and Vickers 2006: 98).<sup>49</sup> This clearly shows Tirana’s absence of strong domestic factors in influencing foreign policy outcomes and its continuous reliability in the international factor. Therefore, Austin rightly concludes when he stresses that: “[i]n any case for Albania, even more so than in

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<sup>49</sup> Kosovar prominent leaders, like Adem Jashari, or Hashim Thaci were put to prison by Berisha’s orders, when the British intelligence services reported for a training camp set up for Kosovo guerilla fighting training. Berisha was reported to have been pressured by the international community to close the camp and arrest its leaders and surprisingly, without any sanctions threatening him directly, he quickly complied with these ‘suggestions’.

the past, Tirana is largely unable to influence events outside the country” (Austin 2004: 248).

A further matter that has direct policy implication is that border shifts seem to (re)create current geopolitical realities in the region. We can mention here the oft-repeated declarations of Serbian former President Tadić for Albania and Serbia to be negotiating partners in a new and final territorial divisions in the region that would seek the creation of a *Greater Albania* that includes much of Kosovo (with the exclusion of Northern Mitrovica) and a *Greater Serbia* that would include Republika Serbska (Balkanweb 28 May 2011). From the Albanian side, such shifting policies that have a similar ideological stratum can be observed. As Mal Berisha, the general regional director in Ministry of Foreign Affairs puts it recently: “Albania and Kosovo are becoming a closer unit with every passing day.”<sup>50</sup> He mentions as examples of such increasing homogeneity, the Nation`s Road (a new highway connecting Albania and Kosovo, coined so by primer Berisha), the unification of textbooks and gradual removal of border.<sup>51</sup> These practical shifts follow shifts in general discourse, which in itself is conditional to external pressures and domestic political outbidding that compete through different mapping projects.

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<sup>50</sup> Interview 03 June 2011

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*

## Conclusion

The relevance of borders, both in their material and virtual dimensions and the overlapping between the two, remains crucially important. Most disputes and conflicts take place because of border claims between groups and assertions over territory. A. Giddens once wrote that borders came into existence only with nation-states (Giddens, 1985: 50), and should be noted that currently are more than 313 land borders among nation-states (Donnan and Wilson 2011). Although looks like border significance has decreased due to supranationalist drives of European Union and globalization that seem to suppress the previous demarcations of territory, the opposite case can be equally valid, meaning their continuous persistence in today`s world. As it was asserted throughout this dissertation, and Rumford notes: “[b]orders can be created, shifted, and deconstructed by a range of actors” (Rumford 2006: 164). In other words, borderfield is no longer the exclusive domain of the nation-state, while, increasingly the border shaping identities and border imagination are constructing the so-called ‘global village’. Jan Nederveen Pieterse rightly observes that: “[a] global sociology is taking shape around notions such as social networks (rather than “societies”), border zones, boundary crossing, diaspora, and global society” (Pieterse 2004: 81). These notions are important to consider not only from purely theoretical interest, but above all for changes they inflict in this ever-changing world and political effects they produce.

This dissertation focused on explaining the shifts of virtual boundaries based on elite calculation, conditioned by geopolitical realities and how this has instigated popular mapping perception changes, even when such shifts are not congruent and do not coincide

with the internationally recognized borders. Empirically, this dissertation aimed to address the virtual concept of *Greater Albania*, as manifested in textbooks, historical memory and political discourse of the Albanian political space over a century and the effects it has had on each side of border.

Myths have often constituted and crystallized national boundaries, persisting long after the formal declarations of sovereignty or internationally recognized borders. However, as Kolstø notes: “only rarely have studies of historical myths taken into account their boundary-creating effects” (Kolstø 2005). This study, fitting with the general instrumentalist and constructivist theories of nationalism, sought to understand the competing narratives on border understanding and construct a systematic explanation of it, based on an unorthodox explanation of the Albanian case, analyzed in-depth, both synchronically and diachronically. More specifically, it tried to capture ‘virtual’ border shifts in national imagination as manifested both in elite discourse and mass-imagination of nation’s boundaries. I have investigated the dyad between Albanians living within Albania and ethnic kin that reside in former Yugoslavian republics to study shifts both in elite and mass perceptions in both sides of border concerning the mental maps and investigating why during certain critical junctures, the presupposed congruence of state and nation boundaries takes primacy over the internationally accepted political reality.

This project focused in a historic and comparative study amongst Albanian communities. The reason for such case(s) selection was justified by its variations seen in both temporal and spatial axes, lack of a systemic politico-historical analysis to understand the mapping of territory beyond its essentialization and the various competing national



images that have informed policy-making and other significant geo-political changes. This extends to current relevance in present-day matters, where for example, after secession and unilateral declaration of independence in Kosovo, the processes of re-definition of identity and territory are ongoing. Another consideration, are the theoretical insights that can be derived in this new scholarship on virtual borders under the straightjacket of systemic factors and idiosyncratic actors.

This research sought to answer the primary question that this dissertation asked: Why (national) borders are perceived differently inside versus outside of the internationally demarcated unit, what motivates such changes and what are the primarily actors/factors that shape groups mapping perception? This broad and general question was broken down into two specific empirical questions that asked why the understanding of the Albanian nation takes on different geographical borders over time--with some periods associated with the Albanian nation mapping onto Albania's state borders and other periods the Albanian nation taking on the broader geographical borders of "Greater Albania", and (2) why different Albanian communities (in Albania in one hand and Macedonia and Kosovo on the other) have sometimes imagined the borders of the Albanian nation differently at the same point in time? Such question(s) allowed for tracing the shifts of identity maps of the Albanian nation and why these borders are viewed differently from the perspective of different Albanian communities, which in turn, allows for a more comprehensive knowledge of how borders are (re)constructed, as well as when and why they shift. Thus, starting from an empirical puzzle such as the one pertaining to the Albanian case, I arrived at broader generalizations regarding the constitutiveness of virtual

boundaries and mental frame of the nation at a certain point in time. Following others in the field, who have started with similar case-studies to demonstrate the constitutive nature of boundaries-- albeit arriving at different conclusions-- I have argued that the driving force of border recreation have been the political and cultural elites who through calculated decisions upon geographical location of homeland, manipulation of national symbols and deliberative strategies, have engineered long-lasting processes that have impacted the way it maps in the imagination of people.

On the other hand, paraphrasing Marx, who says that “men make history but not according to their own choosing” (Hollis and Smith 1990), implying external leverages, the elite choices have been constrained by geopolitical circumstances and foreign intervention, which according to scale and degree have been decisive in the events and decision-making of national level. These findings are in line with my starting proposition that mental mapping of boundaries varies in time and space, with notable fluctuations during observable junctures. These critical junctures have served as opportunity openings for domestic elites to push forward a specific agenda embedded in a national project that furthers their interests. In this case, I have used them as moments when shifts are noticed in national imagining and mental bordering of the nation. These domestic agendas in turn, have continuously depended on geopolitical circumstances, which have allowed or constrained the degree of freedom of the internal players. These propositions which have followed primarily from findings from the Albanian case can be further analyzed in other settings to check for similar results. Evidence from Central Eastern European countries, Southeastern Europe, Baltic countries but also from distant regions in Africa and Asia tells

of border re-configurations and mental (re)mapping of territories, which are fashioned after a specific geopolitical circumstances (i.e. different international treaties and exchange of territories), which in conjunction with domestic reconfiguration (like elite engineered processes, ethnic outbidding competition and popular shifts of imagination), can have constitutive impact on territory. Such impact has produced real effects in border changes (i.e. secessionist or irredentist projects) in countries as diverse as Republic of Macedonia and Ethiopia-Eritrea, Moldova, Georgia and Somalia, where various competing maps has led to complex realities.

All in all, a central contribution of this project was to have a conceptual apparatus that helps to understand such shifts in mental mapping of the nation and its outer borders and how this is reflected both in elite discourse and the consequent effect that it has in the popular imagining in folk memory as enshrined in poetry, folklore, myths etc. I carefully traced mental maps used by competing elites built on specific political agendas that serve particular political interests, primarily the need to obtain power. As I argue throughout the chapters, the competition is most likely to be fierce during regime changes, rather than when it is simply political rotation that happens during ‘normal’ politics, as well as when international constraints are in flux. In such cases, competing maps are used by challengers to overturn the existing political establishments.

I thus advanced the argument that (re)making of mental borders are engineered by clusters of elite who possess the necessary political clout and social, economic and cultural capital and consciously invent or perpetuate border discourse to advance their personal agendas. Thus, if the creation of material borders (administrative, state borders) is a

process primarily resulting from third-party intervention and decided by the geopolitical circumstances, the creation of virtual boundaries that create a sense of communal belonging is largely driven by the internal actors, albeit in conjunction with external pressures. These competing elites favor different national projects to further their political projects at hand, but they succeed only when external pressure is weak and not able to bend their primary interest, political survival.

Various sources were critically analyzed here in order to deconstruct the virtual border construction, its shifts and to reconstruct a narrative that has both theoretical and practical salience. Textbooks, especially those in humanities, were especially chosen as a powerful shaper of perception, serving the pedagogical narrative of the elites to map the territory in a certain way. Other powerful devices that serve the same purpose are maps, which are crucial in territorializing the landscape. Same inferences can be drawn for similar tools that help configure a certain virtual notion of territoriality that influences bottom-up perceptions. Such example can be stamps, oral tales, customary law and others.

The starting point of empirical analyses was 1878, when the demarcation of a national territory in its visual form started with the League of Prizren that took place amongst the Albanian chieftains, when they got together to discuss for the first time the idea of autonomy for Albanian inhabited lands. This initial nation-building period was also accompanied with a process that started to delineate the ‘virtual’ borders of the future nation-state in-the-making. Various maps of national imagination clashed where maximalist goals included the whole territory of the four vilayets, while other leaders favored local ones which secured their personal rule over limited territorial chunks.

Thus, a fluctuation of geographical map was witnessed, one that sometimes took the shape of *Greater Albania*, encompassing all lands where Albanian-speaking communities and at other times restricted in scope, referring only to administrative Albania. This seemingly ambiguity, actually refers to the competing identities that are used instrumentally by whoever happens to be in power at the time. In turn, it was going to dominate the political and public discourse for more than a century, continuing even today with considerable variation in temporal, as well as spatial axes. The political-economic-cultural elite are therefore a crucial factor that engineer and shape the mapping of nation's boundaries.

I selected here the Albanian virtual borders as the main case, because it allowed for comparative in-depth analysis of this explanatory case-study, which has theory and policy implications and it discusses present circumstances, debates and issues. In this selected case, I have divided the Albanian communities in the ones within administrative state borders and the 'external' kin living in neighboring states. Furthermore, I have identified various 'critical junctures' that opened up opportunities for discourse change in border perception, which allowed for both longitudinal analysis and careful process tracing witnessing such shifts. An additional reason is that the case is also comparative in two different levels of analysis: spatial and temporal. The spatial analyzes focused on changes in virtual border perception of the Albanians living within Albania proper and ethnic kin living in neighboring states. It is also temporal because it analyzes different periods to find elite and mass perception shifts in both sides of the border and built a systematic answer of why they happen. In addition, it also offered lucid empirical inferences in a region where

identities are nested and ‘hard’ and ‘virtual’ borders intermingle to (re)create new realities. Furthermore, it is my contention that this study holds practical importance with ongoing border changes in the region, analyzing and understanding how elites discourse changes bottom-up realities in both sides of border.

The first chapter first defined and operationalized the main concepts such as territorial identity, virtual borders and mental mapping. It also outlined the field by engaging into debate and overviewing the literature. The second chapter first made a general discussion of how main theories of nationalism speak of border construction, coupled with few insights of how they inform our selected case. Within this literature, I engaged the debate of border constitution by elites and how it is shaped in folk memory and popular imagination. Then, it outlined the theoretical framework by building a conceptual dialogue between various approaches, in order to fulfill a lacuna in the existing literature and provide a systematic argument for border shifts.

The goal of this study was thus to explain such shifts and if this can have a broad explanatory application that is general enough to explain similar cases elsewhere. Based on the overall findings of research, main findings centered on the relationship between border expansion/contraction designs that came as the result of political and cultural elite competition, coupled with geo-political circumstances and external intervention in determining where nation lies. In other words, boundary engineering elite driven processes were considered as the primary factor for deciding the location of the nation, while external influences were also analyzed as a powerful leverage in conditionalizing domestic discourse and/or concrete action undertaken to fulfill border revision and contractions/

expansions of national map. Thus, the project looked at both endogenous and exogenous variables and was based on the assumption that the interplay of these factors have helped shape the nation configuration in folk imagination and delineated its virtual borders accordingly.

Interestingly enough, explicit nationalist rhetoric has been the exception, rather than the rule in Albanian politics, especially during 1990s, notwithstanding the ethnic conflict and concurrent expansionist projects in neighboring Yugoslavia, with the main political players having refrained from interfering on behalf of kin there. Furthermore nationalist parties have constantly failed to make a credible presence in mainstream politics and have not passed the threshold to be politically represented in the parliament. Also the “Ethnic Albania’ [label] as called by the Albanian nationalists themselves” (Loughlin and Bogdani 2007: 230), has failed to make any headway in mainstream political and public discourse during this time frame. Rather, the political leadership has preferred to stress its constructive role in front of European and American partners in exchange for the carrot of integration and to get some formal support and recognition when faced with internal political crises. This mainly reflects also the general mood of Albanian public opinion, which has generally been indifferent to nationalist agendas after more than five decades of isolation under the national-communist regime, thus contrasting deeply with Albanian communities in neighboring Macedonia and especially Kosovo where the prevailing mode has been that of a fervent expansionary nationalism built on KLA’s unification demands.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> However this is not to say that at some junctures, justifiable fears have not existed, especially in international reports. For example, external observers were concerned that Kosovo politicians might start speculating with the national issue. One such report observed that the “notions of pan-Albanianism are far more layered and complex than the usual broad brush characterizations of ethnic Albanians simply bent on

In the beginning of the first decade of the new millennium though, it seems that the tide is somewhat going the opposite way, at least in the societal level, with Albanians of Albania as well as those of Macedonia increasingly being interested in an expansionist map, while Albanians of Kosovo increasingly drifting away from this as the Gallup poll results above testify. My explanation for this is that increasing literacy, combined with economic difficulties particularly fueled by a parochial economy and facilitated mass communication through media space democratization because of increasing internet access have made possible the creation of infrastructure for more expansionary nationalism in Albania. The same argument is valid for Albanians of Macedonia, combined with the fact that they continue to feel discriminated by the Slav majority there and see unification with Albania as the only feasible pathway. Whereas, the Kosovars are split in the kind of borders they prefer, given the creation of the new state with its associated symbols, external constraints and stimuli for multi-ethnic co-existence and elite struggles which combined make the population split in their support for one version of the map or the other.

The popular culture have remained largely expansionist in the last two decades in Kosovo and Macedonia, especially during and after 2001 conflict there, which has

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achieving a greater Albania or a greater Kosovo." Nevertheless, the report stated that amongst Albanians "violence in the cause of a greater Albania, or of any shift of borders, is neither politically popular nor morally justified." Look for more details at: Pan-Albanianism: How Big a Threat to Balkan Stability?, Europe Report N°153, 25 February 2004 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2523&l=1>

On the other hand, although the recent independence of Kosovo could be interpreted as a degree of success in the creation of a 'Greater Albania' (which means its territory get annexed to Albania or a creation of a federal project), the United Nations has stated that if as a result Kosovo becomes independent, annexation to another state would not be possible. In a survey carried out by United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, and published in March 2007 only 2.5% of the Albanians in Kosovo thought unification with Albania is the best solution for Kosovo. 96% said they wanted Kosovo to become independent within its present borders. View UNDP: *Early Warning Report*. March 2007, p. 16.



constrained political elite into nationalist outbidding with opposition parties usually being more in favor of any unification/expansionary scheme and the ones in government largely more restrained as the result of external constraints, but in Albania the opposite has happened where we witness the elite struggles and political shifts to have much impacted popular grassroots culture. Recently it looks like an ethnic outbidding has started to take effect in Albania, with more than three new nationalist parties planning to take place in the parliamentary elections of 2013.<sup>53</sup>

This new surge in nationalist rhetoric, focusing particularly in advocating an expansionist map that asks for some kind of border redrawing and deliberately overlaps virtual borders with officially recognized ones, is something of a new phenomenon in Albania's politics, whose effects remain to be seen and its popularity tested in the forthcoming elections.<sup>54</sup> Even though, Albanian government's philosophy and policy on the matter is captured by a statement of Primer Berisha, when he reiterated recently the thesis that Albania opposes any kind of border shifts in current Western Balkan framework, while it will continue to support "one nation, two states" policy that has been consistent so far,<sup>55</sup> recently some disturbing shifts have been noticed. For example, in the

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<sup>53</sup> These new parties are the PDIU, a party whose main electoral base are Albanian Chams that ask for territorial revindication from Greece (claiming propriety that was expropriated from them after the exchange of populations and deportation following WWII), the *Natural List* of Koço Danaj which aspires the unification of Albanian –speaking lands in former Yugoslavia and the *Black and Red Alliance*, clearly an irredentist one.

<sup>54</sup> However this has yet to get tested in the upcoming elections, because as it stands, all parliamentary parties (with the exception of two Cham deputies) refrain from using revisionist nationalist language.

<sup>55</sup> Pronouncement by Berisha at Bugajski show, AS television, 19 January 2012. He had earlier reiterated same thesis in another statement in an auditorium with students of Pristina University, when he literally said: "The vital interest of Albanians is to safeguard the existing borders because any suggested change might mean risking losing another inch of territory, which Albanians should not accept under any condition. In another possible redrawing, I guarantee that it would signal further losses of Albanian territories. In our stance, we should be free, flexible, but not take any action that would endanger loss of territory. The Albanians should not accept in any kind of circumstances, to lose even a single meter square of their land."

event of 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Albanian independence in 28 November 2012, he stated verbatim: “[t]ogether with EU help, we will realize the project of unification of Albanians. I am telling them [the neighbors] not to be scared of Albanian national unification.” While continuing, “[t]oday the Albanians are free to live everywhere they please, they are more united than ever and every ethnic territorial piece of Albanians is in the national consciousness of every Albanian.”<sup>56</sup> He went even further by stating that “the Albanian founding fathers proclaimed the Albanian independence here [in Vlora]. The independence was of the ethnic Albania, from Presheva to Preveze, from Skopje to Podgorice.”<sup>57</sup> It was this sentence that provoked Greek immediate response that came in the form of Greek foreign minister Delavekruas and Macedonian President Ivanov to cancel their planned trip for the 100th Anniversary of the Albanian state.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Berisha used the notion of *Ethnic Albania*, which extends (according to him) “wherever the Albanians constitute the dominant *ethnie* and live without interruption.”<sup>59</sup> More restricted than him was premier Thaci who said that “the existence of two Albanian states has not been their choosing and that Kosova and Albania would have been better together.” While Ali Ahmeti, the chairman of the ruling Albanian party in Macedonia, said only that “the rights of Albanians should be constitutionally guaranteed and for inter-ethnic respect with Macedonians.”<sup>60</sup> The effects of such mutually shifting political discourse-- with Albanian elite growing more expansionist and Kosovo and Macedonian (Albanian) governing parties moving

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<sup>56</sup><http://www.lefigaro.fr/mon-figaro/2012/11/28/10001-20121128ARTFIG00684-berisha-aux-frontieres-de-la-grande-albanie.php>

<sup>57</sup><http://www.zeriamerikes.com/content/berisha-albania/1563671.html>

<sup>58</sup><http://www.gazetatema.net/web/2012/12/06/delavekouras-nacionalizmi-kercenim-real-per-ballkanin/>

<sup>59</sup><http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-s-berisha-becomes-born-again-nationalist>

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*

toward a reductionist frame-- remain to be seen for their impact over electorate with the approaching elections.

While referring to polls and surveys that measure shifts in mass-perceptions in Albanian populations in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, it is interesting to note that in the elite level in Kosovo we generally witness two different currents. The dominant one, mostly represented by the political forces that constitute the majority are firmly positioned in maintaining the existing map, which guarantees a fully sovereign Kosovo that has only diplomatic links with Albania. This is based on two primary considerations. The first being the pressure of international community, who adamantly opposes any changes in borders and second, the consideration of politicians in charge of ruling the country who risk losing (existing) power in the advent of any possible unification scheme. However, the main opposition *Vetvendosja*<sup>61</sup> has as primary goal the unification of Kosovo with Albania, including Northern Mitrovica and has called for a referendum for its realization. Currently, some new developments are happening in Kosovar politics where a group of deputies requested such unification to take place.<sup>62</sup> In another official pronouncement writing a column for Lama's daily Macedonian edition, deputy head of Kosovo Assembly Xhavit Haliti remarked that: "the change of Kosovo borders, be it even the exchange of territories between Kosovo and Serbia would open the 'Pandora's box' and first of all, the legitimate and historic request of Kosovo for the historic unit of former *vilayet* with its capital in Skopje." Macedonian media have reacted to the statement and have also criticized the

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<sup>61</sup> Third largest party represented in the parliament.

<sup>62</sup> A group of 12 deputies representing four parliamentary parties petitioned the Parliament with a unification request with Albania, though fell short gathering signatures amongst other colleagues. The goal of the initiators in the first phase was to draw the attention of international community and to achieve the end of negotiation with Belgrade. See for details: <http://www.alsat-m.tv/index.php/lajme/rajoni/116664.html>

silence of Skopje politicians towards it.<sup>63</sup> Approximately half of deputies of PDK the largest and governing party have spoken at least in one occasion for possible future unification with Albania (Danaj 2012), while authors like Serbian historian Dushan Bataković have lately expressed the view that what Albanian nationalists call "Natural Albania" is becoming a touching irredentist reality and is supported by mainstream politician in both sides of border.<sup>64</sup> The effects of such recent elite-led moves, coupled with primary drive of Tirana as the epicenter of the increasing expansionist nationalism creates unpredictability not only concerning the domestic elite choices, but also the effects of international constraints. According to Florian Bieber, Berisha is always been pragmatic, "he has changed his views and declarations in these two decades according to his needs."<sup>65</sup> Despite the fact that such speeches are opportunistic, Bieber thinks that "they can hamper the political capital that Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia have built with USA and EU."<sup>66</sup>

In fact, Albania has not yet received the candidacy status, which is blocked due to bitter domestic political rivalry and the sticks and carrots of EU do not work properly. The most influential international actor that plays an instrumental role in Albania is American Embassy, which has recently urged the most radical nationalist party Red and Black Alliance, to tone down its irredentist tones and change its electoral agenda. The American ambassador urged its chairman to avoid the temptation of slipping into nationalist rhetoric

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<sup>63</sup> See the February 2012 summaries from UNMIK official page: <http://www.unmikonline.org/pages/default.aspx>

<sup>64</sup> See: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politicsarticle.php?yyyy=2012&mm=10&dd=23&nav\\_id=82798](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politicsarticle.php?yyyy=2012&mm=10&dd=23&nav_id=82798)

<sup>65</sup> See <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/albania-s-berisha-becomes-born-again-nationalist>

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*

in platform and agenda, which can endanger the regional stability.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, in a bold and extremely rare move, the Embassy send a Memo to Albanian Foreign Ministry that specifically condemned outright the dangerous play with nationalist card in this pre-election period, which according to journalist S. Balla, “is the strongest act of the American line against the political declarations with nationalistic tones.”<sup>68</sup> The Memo said *inter alia*: “Albania should and must be a responsible and cooperating neighbor and its politicians must stay away from playing the nationalist card. *Do not force us to condemn you publicly.*”<sup>69</sup> This strong pronouncement came right after Berisha, caught up in the recent expansionist nationalism outbidding, in a recent speech in Munich accused neighboring states of Albanophobia<sup>70</sup> and condemned Serbia publicly for removal of KLA Memorial in Presevo valley. Several analysts believe that his rhetoric suddenly changed due to several party polls that show the Red and Black Alliance being a serious contender in the upcoming battle.

The European Commission as well has strongly commented the slip into nationalistic rhetoric in Albania recently: “[w]e must provide incentives for Albanian people. However, EU must take a strict stance against nationalistic statements such as the recent ones by the Albanian Prime minister. All those concerned must refrain from any actions that could trigger regional tensions,” said Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL, EL),

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<sup>67</sup> See <http://tirana.usembassy.gov/press-releases2/2013-press-releases/u.s.-ambassador-alexander-a.-arvizus-remarks-on-meeting-with-red-and-black-alliance-january-29-2013>

<sup>68</sup> See link in English: <http://www.top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=8272>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.top-channel.tv/artikull.php?id=251649>

<sup>70</sup> See for details of his recent speech in the Munich Security Conference: [http://news.albanianscreen.tv/pages/news\\_detail/56435/ENG](http://news.albanianscreen.tv/pages/news_detail/56435/ENG)

rapporteur for Albania's progress towards EU membership.<sup>71</sup> These warnings have proved to have considerable impact, especially those by American Embassy. For example, right after the meeting with the American ambassador in Tirana, the leader of the Red and Black Alliance in a joint press conference refrained from any mentioning of nationalist rhetoric and talked only of fight against corruption, organized crime, state capture etc.<sup>72</sup> *Secondly*, the same political party, starting as a populist movement, before getting registered in the Court as a political party in 2011, after its leader visited United States with an invitation from State Department, removed explicit irredentist calls from its Statute and Act of Registration in the Court. *Thirdly*, one day after the aforementioned Memo of the American Embassy, in a speech in Kosovo's Parliament in the date that signaled the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kosovo Republic, Berisha expressly said: "Our nationalism does not have any territorial pretensions."<sup>73</sup> In the same date, in an interview at Albanian Screen, Kosovo President Jahjaga was more explicit in declaring that: "Republic of Kosovo and Republic of Albania, should integrate in EU as two sovereign states. The destination of Albanians is Brussels. The borders will not change, but will be open for people and goods circulation, while being closed for contraband and organized crime."<sup>74</sup>

*Fourthly*, the only nationalist party with seats in parliament and that represents the Cham community in Albania, has refrained from using territorial pretensions lately and has confined itself only on requesting property rights seized from Greek state in the WWII

<sup>71</sup> See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20121207IPR04413/html/Albania-yes-to-EU-candidate-status-but-under-certain-conditions>

<sup>72</sup> The following link (in Alb) is illustrative of this: <http://www.tiranaobserver.al/2013/01/30/arvizu-i-jep-direktiv-at-orientues-ak-se-shmangni-frymen-nacionaliste/>

<sup>73</sup> See <http://www.gazetatema.net/web/2013/02/15/berisha-i-pergjigjet-shba-se-nacionalizmi-yne-qytetar-nuk-kem-pretendime-territorial/>

<sup>74</sup> See also: <http://www.gazetatema.net/web/2013/02/16/jahjaga-ideja-e-bashkimit-kombetar-i-takon-shekullit-te-kaluar/>

after Greece proclaimed the War Law to Albania, after the Italians invaded from Albanian territory. This law, which is still not abrogated by Greek parliament, makes impossible for Chams for revindication of lost property and thus they have currently submitted a Resolution in Parliament that has attracted much attention.<sup>75</sup> The other nationalist parties that seek unification of Albanian territories, such as *Natural List*, *Legality Party* and *National Front* are marginal and have no considerable electoral weight and therefore have not been addressed explicitly from US, EU, OSCE or other relevant external actors. Thus an expansionist mapping seems to have grown exponentially recently in Albania due to elite fierce competition and outbidding that has already set in motion the international constraints. The foreign actors have intervened broadly to prevent a slip into a dangerous irredentist path that can cause regional instability, in conjunction with other worrisome signs in the region, such as duo Nikolić-Dacic in Serbia that are stirring similar passions, primer Thaci in Kosovo who recently told EU to either liberalize the visas with Kosovo or otherwise Kosovo would seek unification with Albania,<sup>76</sup> the Golden Dawn extreme nationalists of Greece that have gained seven percent of the popular vote in Greece, Gruevski in Macedonia with his Skopje 2014 nationalist project and frictions with both Greece and Bulgaria etc.

The national boundaries have been imagined quite differently in both sides of border, having various trajectories, because different historical developments have produced different needs. They are still not imagined uniformly but that does not mean that a systematic pattern cannot be witnessed, analyzed and understood properly, which was the

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<sup>75</sup> See: <http://www.top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=7831>

<sup>76</sup> See: <http://www.top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=8273>

main scope of this research. The shifts happen because peoples' attitudes, values and belief systems change together with the sense of loyalty and attachment to a certain piece of territory, but this 'daily plebiscite' is greatly influenced from elite engineering and games leaders play in order to secure political survival. All in all, this dissertation sought to bring this dynamic and to offer a substantiated argument and theoretical apparatus that captured variation of such competitive maps that imagined the nation with contracted versus enlarged borders as perceived inside versus outside the national unit.

The implications of this study, especially in terms of the identification of future avenues for research are important for understanding the whole dynamic of expansionary nationalism, whose goals can threaten stability and endanger regional peace. Currently, it seems that expansionary nationalist radicalization is happening across Balkans and Eastern Europe in general and I think that the symptoms are similar to those noted in the Albanian case: the combination of economic decline, rising international pressures regarding states' debts etc., which has led to citizens' frustration and the use of populist, jingoist and irredentist vocabulary that seeks to outbid internal competition in a dangerous race for regional stability. Knowing when the geopolitical circumstances allow mainstream politicians to start advocating maximalist mapping and redemption of territory and people or hint on them, and how to counteract such discourse and/or actions, it is useful both in terms of replication of empirical analysis by scholars who may find the model presented here of some value, as well as concerns policy implications that arise.



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## Interviews

Interview with Muhamedin Kullashi, professor of political science at the University Paris 2 in France, and one of the founding members of the Kosovo Committee in Paris. Actually serving as Kosovo ambassador in France.

Interview with Hysamedin Feraj, the chair of political science department at the Tirana University.

Interview with Remzi Lani, the executive director of the Albanian Institute of Media, April 12, 2009.

Interview with Mal Berisha. Regional Director in Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Albania. 3 June 2011.

Interview with Hydajet Hyseni, a current member of Kosovar parliament in an Albanian show called "Déjà vu", Top-Channel, 10/04/2010.