

**MIKLÓS ZRÍNYI NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY**

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**SECURITY RISKS OF THE ALBANIAN QUESTION  
AND ITS POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

**PhD Thesis**

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## **I. Formulation of the academic problem**

Events after the cold war period caused a totally new security situation and earlier not experienced risks and challenges in Europe. It was not accidental that most serious hostilities evolved in the multinational Western-Balkans. After the South-Slavic wars (1991-1995) liberation endeavours of Albanians living in territories of foreign countries (Serbia and Montenegro /Kosova and Preševo Valley/ and Macedonia) became the most crucial security problem in the Western-Balkans. Armed conflicts were stopped in 2001, but in spite of the international efforts the Albanian question remained unresolved.

The Albanian question represents a complex problem. It includes nation-unification endeavours, the Albanians' controversial political, economic and social development and the Albanian attempts in order to reach European standards. Divided Albanians do not have a common platform about the solution of the Albanian question, however a certain kind of nation-unification ambition exists in the developing Albanian national identity.

In my PhD thesis – by the description of the historical and current Albanian political, economic and social situation – I try to emphasise the importance to find a solution to the Albanian question and to assess the options of the Albanian society's development. My aim is to answer the most uncertainties of the Albanian question.

## **II. Aims of research**

### **I have set the following aims of research:**

1. I would like to prove – by the presentation of the historic events, political and economic situation, social and cultural features and the special role of Albanians concerning the security of the Western-Balkans – that the Albanians' nation-unification endeavour is a consequence and inheritance of the late national identity.

2. I try to verify that Albanians are divided and they play a controversial role concerning the security and stability of the Western-Balkans. The description of the complicated historical process, the presentation of the very slow social development, the demonstration of the decided Euro-Atlantic endeavours of Albania and the deteriorating activities of the Ethnic Albanian Armed Groups will help me to prove my proposition.

3. Analysing the Albanian people's inner controversy and the external security policy environment I am looking for an answer to the question: Does the Great-Albania have reality or not?

4. By showing the Kosovar ethnic crisis, the armed conflict and the following international consolidation efforts, I would like to prove that Kosova is not ripe for full independence (sovereignty). Despite this, Kosova should get a certain kind of (conditional) independence, since the province under international protectorate is gaining growing self-determination. The reconstruction of the Serbian authority over Kosova would cause a new conflict.

5. I would like to verify my assumption that Albanians could enforce their rights and interests, if they were prepared for the Euro-Atlantic integration and after a successful stabilisation and association process they joined Euro-Atlantic institutions.

6. I try to underline, by the wide assessment of the Albanian question the security risks and challenges posed by the Albanian national problem and to find the possible optimal solution to the Albanian question.

### **III. Research methods**

I present by collecting, selecting, systematising and assessing the historical sources, the most important events of the Albanian question. The research of the Albanian historical, social and cultural traditions helps us to understand the Albanians' complicated and complex problem. Comparing the events in the past with the current occurrences and using the regional experiences I prove my proposition that the Albanian question is feasible, but new methods and measures should be accepted.

I verify by the help of the methods of induction and deduction that Albanians through centuries have always been weak to decide about their future. This is true even today since Albanians' political, economic and social development won't be successful without the help of the International Community. Analysing the Albanian history and last year events, I can assess that Albania started a democratic development at the end of the last century. However, the democratic transition was not painless.

Studying the role of Albanians in the Balkans I conclude that the Albanian people has a dual and controversial feature. Albanians simultaneously represent a stabilising and a deteriorating factor. The division of Albanians hinders the solution of the abstract and complex Albanian question. Generalising, I assess that the armed conflict in Kosova and its consequences have made of the Albanian question an international one, which has divided the International Community, but provisionally unified the traditionally divided Albanians in order to protect their most important national interests.

Analysing the domestic and foreign sources (books, studies and articles), using my personal experiences in Serbia and utilising the consultations with diplomats and officers serving in the region inhabited by Albanians, I outline the possible development of the Albanian society, which might be either stabilising or destabilising in the Western-Balkans.

#### **IV. Structure of the thesis and its short description**

In the introduction I outline the Albanian question and I put the academic problem into a place and time frame.

##### **1. Chapter: Establishment of the Albanian nation state and its ambitions**

In retrospect on the historic events I present the Albanian origins, the specific feature of the Ottoman Empire, the establishment of Albania and afterwards the destiny of the truncated state. I assess the reasons for the late Albanian identity and its consequences. I study what kind of historical changes the late democratic and civic development, the undeveloped political culture, economic backwardness, social division and international impacts caused.

##### **2. Chapter: Albanian national character, culture and religion**

I analyse the Albanian people's society, national character culture and religion. I prove that the ancient regulations, laws and customs and the clan system play an important role in everyday life of Albanians even today. I present that Albanians' pragmatism and flexibility have secured their survival during historical afflictions, wars and the following – sometimes unfair – decisions by the Great Powers. Albanians, who have been thinking in terms of the clan (big family), have got used to the suppression by foreign powers (for example Turks and Serbs). The division of Albanians is a consequence of the unfavourable historical changes that hinders the formation of the Albanian unity.

##### **3. Chapter: Albania's attempts to adopt democratic values**

At the beginning of the 90-ies Albania pledged itself to fulfil democratic reforms. I present the difficulties and controversy of the transition period; the Albanian people in the Western-Balkans and the Diaspora; economic collapse of the change of regime as well as the international help for Albania in that period. Analysing the current situation, I prove that the undeveloped Albania is not able to finish the democratic transition process without the help of the International Community.

##### **4. Chapter: Albanian independence struggles**

Analysing the Albanian independence struggles, I verify that Kosova always played a central role in order to realise the nation-unification aims. I assess the reasons for, the events

and the consequences of armed conflicts in Kosova, Preševo Valley and Macedonia. I compare these Albanian-Slavic ethnic crises and I draw lessons about the intervention of the International Community and about the experiences of the international crisis management.

### **5. Chapter: Controversial role of Albanians**

In my opinion, the divided Albanian people play a controversial role nowadays concerning the security and stability of the Western-Balkans. I prove that the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Albania, its good relationship with the neighbour countries and the participation in several international peace missions contribute to the stability of the region and Europe. However, the relative low level of state of political, economic and social development, social problems, organised crime affiliated to the above mentioned facts and the Ethnic Albanian Armed Groups fighting for liberation of Albanian territories pose security risks and challenges in the Western-Balkans.

### **6. Chapter: Possible solution of the Albanian question**

I prove that Kosova is in the centre of gravity and the province is the key of the solution of the Albanian question. The future status of Kosova should be decided as soon as possible in order to start real changes and reconciliation process. Considering the possible development of the Albanian society I would like to offer an alternative for the solution of the Albanian question. I present the experiences of the crisis management conducted by the International Community and I analyse the Albanian radicalism and separatism and their negative effects on the stability of the Western Balkans. I compare it to the importance and confidence building effect of the Euro-Atlantic endeavours. Forming suggestions I would like to contribute to the reassuring solution of the Albanian question.

At the end of my thesis I summarise my conclusions, I form my academic results and I present the usefulness of the thesis.

## **V. Final conclusions**

### **1. The Albanian question is the inheritance of the late Albanian identity**

In my thesis I presented historic events, which proved that the emergence of the Albanian identity was late not only in comparison with the European states but also with other less developed Balkan states. The relatively weak Albanian nation-building cohesion-power has not been able during centuries to protect national interests against the suppressers. The establishment of the nation state, Albania was a decision taken by Great Powers, who were fighting for influence zones in the Balkans. The Albanians' happiness could not be endless since territories inhabited by Albanians remained outside of the territory of Albania. The idea

for unification all Albanian territories always existed. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Albanians, who did not want to accept the historical injustice, launched a war in order to liberate Kosova, Preševo Valley and the Western part of Macedonia.

## **2. Albanians play a controversial role in the security of the Balkans**

Presenting historic events and social circumstances I emphasised many controversies, which burden the development of the Albanian society and the strengthening of the national identity. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century political, economic and social differences evolved among Albanians living in several countries in the Western-Balkans. The Albanian people could not get rid of these controversies, which is proved by the fact that Albanians are not unified in order to protect their national interest and to solve the so-called Albanian question. The political leadership of Albania and many Albanian politicians in neighbouring countries are committed to Euro-Atlantic integration, but Albanian radicals are ready to fight for the liberation of Albanian inhabited territories of other states. The Euro-Atlantic endeavour of Albania, the good relationship with neighbours and the participation in peace missions in all over the world can be regarded as a positive commitment to the stability of the Western-Balkans and peace in the world. However, the unstable political, economic and social situation in Albania, the organised crime and corruption are destabilisation factors. Organised crime is one of the biggest security challenges in Europe, in which Albanians are important players.

## **3. The Great-Albania idea does not have reality in the current security policy environment**

Analysing the problem, I proved that the establishment of Great-Albania did not have reality because of a missing common Albanian endeavour to create it. There is not an official governmental effort in Albania. Albanians in several neighbouring countries and the Diaspora went through different development, so they moved away from each other. Since there is not inner Albanian unity, the ideology cannot be realised. Establishment of Great-Albania has no chance because of the external reasons as well. Neighbour countries of Albania and the International Community refuse the changing of borders. According to my assessment, radicals, who have been struggling for their aims under the cover of Great-Albania ideology, have misused the Albanian national idea.

#### **4. Self-determination of Kosova is a just demand, which can be realised by European integration**

Final status of Kosova is the central element of the Albanian question. Kosova is a neuralgic point since both, Serbs and Albanians are committed to retain authority over the province. According to the current ethnic distribution of Kosova, Albanians' interests are favoured. The province goes towards independence, but knowing the political, economic and social situation there, I can state that Kosova is not ripe for full independence yet. Serbia's authority over Kosova should not be re-established as well, so a neutral solution should be found. The difficulties in consolidation process in the province prove that democratisation, implementation of constitutionality and market economy as well as setting up a proper social system need a long period. The province should be given a roadmap in order to retain the hope of the European integration and to enhance the relationship with neighbours. The independence of Kosova is a just demand, which will be fulfilled when the province is ripe for joining the European Union. Kosova should remain under international protectorate till the obtaining of sovereignty, when it might enter EU.

#### **5. The most optimal solution for the Albanians is the Euro-Atlantic integration**

According to the possible Albanian social developments, I can state that Albanians are at a crossroads. This is a historical moment when the International Community is ready to help Albanians in the Western-Balkans in order to get closer to the Euro-Atlantic integration. In my opinion this opportunity must not be missed. The pluralist European Union does not accept the nationalist radical policy. If Albanians chose this then they would confront with the International Community and they would isolate themselves from the positive progress in the Balkans. The International Community's (among them especially the EU's) interest is that Albanians will become a stabilising factor in the region. Albanians should close the past full of grievances and they should look ahead at the future. The future is the united Europe in which there will be common political, economic and partially social interests but different peoples might retain their cultural (religion, traditions, language and so on) values.

#### **VI. New academic results**

Outlining the possible Albanian social development I would like to present an alternative solution to the international reconciliation process concerning the Albanian question. After many years of research – in my opinion – I have reached the following academic results.

### **1. I extensively presented and analysed the security policy aspects of the Albanian question**

In my thesis I extensively analysed the security policy aspects of the Albanian question, its security risks and challenges and the possible development of the Albanian society. Working up the Albanian question I aimed at filling a gap with the presentation of a current security policy problem and offering a possible solution to this. Mostly foreign publications are available in this topic; in Hungarian there is no similar complex assessment about the Albanian question. I regard as academic result that I made a research and education material by working up the Albanian question. It might contribute to the better understanding of the security policy processes in the Western-Balkans that might be very useful for experts dealing with the same or similar ethnic topics.

### **2. I proved that the unresolved Albanian question is the inheritance of the late Albanian identity**

I proved by facts and conclusions that the Albanian question is a consequence and inheritance of the late Albanian identity, which causes the current controversial role of Albanians in the Western-Balkans. I emphasised that the so-called Great-Albania idea – despite the fact that Serbs and Macedonians predict an “Albanian trouble” – has no reality in the current security policy environment in the region. I presented that the Albanian national issue and Great-Albania are nearly synonyms, the majority of Albanians uses the first expression, while “threatened” Serbs and Macedonians use the second one. I proved that Greater-Albania might be created only with violent tools (drawing new borderlines) causing troubles for others, while the Albanian national issue is solvable by the opportunity of the international law and by the “demolishing” of state borders. I explored an interesting duality. Both, building up new borders or pulling down old borders might meet Albanians’ real goals, freedom of movement and keeping in touch with each other. I underlined that the European Union is interested in spiritualising of borders.

### **3. I outlined and formed the optimal future status of Kosova**

In my thesis I suggest a solution to the key element of the Albanian question. As for my assessment, neither Serbia’s authority over Kosova should be re-established, nor the province should get sovereignty and nor the ethnic

distribution of Kosova would bring a reassuring solution. Last case Albanians in the Preševo Valley and in Macedonia would claim for wider self-determination. Mentioning facts and arguments I proved that it might cause again armed clashes or a Domino effect. As far as the future status of Kosova and the solution of the Albanian question are concerned – In my opinion – the province should get conditional independence, which is in close connection with fulfilment of democratic standards. Kosova should remain under international protectorate and as a special state formation should prepare for the Euro-Atlantic integration and in the course of time it might join EU and probably NATO.

**4. In order to solve the Albanian question properly it is imperative to take into consideration the local characteristics, as well as to reach international consensus on the Albanian issue**

In my thesis I pointed at the fact that the achievements of the old Western democracy and civic society might not be implemented without the consideration of the local characteristics, traditions and culture of an undeveloped society. I proved that the International Community should not expect too big and fast results from young democracies because otherwise it might cause a contra-productive effect. The most important thing is that international advisers and supervisors should be patient and consistent. In my opinion the International Community should take into consideration the interests of the affected partners and it should take a wise and impartial decision in order to find a proper solution. In my view, the International Community should think about the organisation of a Kosova-conference where the standpoints of the member states could get closer in order to make a consensus concerning the Albanian issue.

**VII. Usefulness of the thesis**

In my thesis analysing a current ethnic question full of security risks and challenges, I found new and instructive academic conclusions and results, which might be useful for analysts dealing with political science, political history and security policy. The thesis offers a good background for researchers dealing with the topic-related questions and it is useable in the education at the Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University. The thesis is useful for diplomats or soldiers who serve in several missions in the Western-Balkans. The deeper knowledge of the Albanian question might contribute to the forming of the Hungarian foreign

policy in the Western-Balkans. The timeliness of the Albanian question would expect the writing of a book about the topic, in which several aspects might be assessed deeper.

#### **VIII. Academic activity**

##### Academic publications:

**Past and present of the Great-Albania ideology** (ISSN 1215-4121; Military Studies; 2000/2.; p. 28-38.)

**Difficulties of the democratic transition process in Yugoslavia** (ISSN 1588-242X; Military Intelligence Office /MIO/ Intelligence Review; I. Volume, 1. Number; September 2002; p. 87-104.)

**Definition of the future status of Kosova is the key of the solution to the Albanian question** (ISSN 1588-242X; MIO Intelligence Review; I. Volume, 2. Number; December 2002; p. 16-34.)

**A historical election in Kosova – Stake is the future of the Balkans** (ISSN 1417-7293 Society and National Defence; VI. Volume, 3-4. Number; 2002; p. 272-286.)

**Security risks of the Albanian question – Scenarios of the Albanian civilisation's development conception of the PhD thesis** (ISSN 1588-2233; National Defence University Doktorandorum; 4/2. Number; Budapest, 2002; p. 185-203.)

**Albanians controversial role in the international security system** (ISSN 1588-242X; MIO Intelligence Review; II. Volume, 2. Number; July 2003; p. 40-58.)

**Albanian people's characteristics, culture and social circumstances** (ISSN 1588-242X; MIO Intelligence Review; II. Volume, 3. Number; October 2003; p. 29-40.)

**Lessons of the crisis management in Kosova** (ISSN 1588-242X; MIO Intelligence Review; II. Volume, 4. Number; November 2003; p. 132-142.)

**Glowing embers under the ashes – Background of the Kosovar clashes** (HU ISSN 1585-4167; New Military Review; 2004/7.; p. 25-35.)

Lectures:

Nine lectures at the National Defence University for students between Mai 2003 and October 2004: **“Security policy situation in Serbia and Montenegro”, “Security policy aspects of the Kosovar crisis” and “Experiences of the Kosovar crisis management”.**

Studies:

**Albanians’ controversial role concerning the security status of the Balkans** (MIO Education Center; Budapest; 2001; 98 p.)

**Military assessment of crisis areas (Employment methods of foreign Armed Forces) – Kosovar crisis area** (Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University, Military Science Faculty; Budapest; 2004; p. 78-84.)

**Security and defence policy of Russia and some other important states – Serbia and Montenegro** (Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University and MIO; Budapest; 2004; p. 149-165.)

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