

# EU and US So Far Show No Interest in Renewed Threats to Merge Albania and Kosovo

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*The EU and U.S. seem oblivious to threats made last week by Kosovan political opposition leader Ramush Haradinaj to unite Kosovo with Albania if Serbia does not recognize Pristina’s self-proclaimed independence. This is mostly because the West are not united on the Kosovo issue.*

The EU attributes the threat to unify the breakaway Serbian province with Albania to the election campaign that was underway in Kosovo, but that is not a reason for Brussels to stay silent. The EU did not react strongly against these statements by Kosovo’s political leaders because it is convinced that it is only pre-election populist rhetoric that will quickly dissipate. An EU spokesman did comment on the statements, but it was more tokenistic and appeared to be a forced effort.

The European Commission and most of the EU believe that such statements must be seen as part of the election campaign in Kosovo because Haradinaj and so-called former Prime Minister Albin Kurti were fighting for power. It appears that Haradinaj’s populist rhetoric and ideas for a Greater Albania were popular, but not enough to project him into power as Kurti’s Vetëvendosje Party won Sunday’s parliamentary election.

However, even if we accept that such provocative statements should be tolerated because it was pre-election rhetoric, words are not chosen in such a way that the revival of ideas about a Greater Albania are only for the purpose of gaining votes. Such an idea does exist and has popular support as many Albanians would be very happy to see a Greater Albania emerge that would incorporate Kosovo, Albania, and other areas of Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Such a grand idea of incorporating the territory of so many countries is unattainable, but a merging of Albania and Kosovo could become a real prospect.

According to a [2010 Gallup Balkan Monitor report](#), 81% of Albanians in Kosovo supported a Greater Albania, up from 54% in 2008. 11 years on from the report, and although there is no official data, it can be expected this number is even higher. Although Haradinaj did not win the election, the idea of merging Kosovo and Albania enjoys widespread support among all political factions, including the Vetëvendosje Party that won Sunday’s elections. Kurti is a huge advocate for a referendum on unification and frequently criticizes the part of the constitution that forbids such a referendum.

It is unlikely that Western Powers would allow Kosovo and Albania to unite as it would unravel a quagmire in the Balkans – Croats and Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina would demand unification with Croatia and Serbia respectively, Greeks in Northern Epirus in southern Albania would demand unification with Greece, Bulgarians in North Macedonia would demand unification with Bulgaria, and these are just some of the many map redrawings of the Balkans that would be demanded by various ethnic groups.

It would not be surprising if the EU reacted to Pristina privately as they are proposing a dangerous idea at a time when Brussels is attempting to, albeit slowly, expand into the Western Balkans. However, if Brussels cares about peace and stability, as it supposedly champions, reactions should have been clearer and more explicit.

At the same time, if the West accepts Kosovo as an independent state, then they should have no authority from preventing two sovereign states, as they see them, from merging and becoming a single entity through a referendum and a constitutional amendment. This demonstrates weakness in EU foreign policy as they will not be able to prevent an occurrence that they want to avoid, or it demonstrates Kosovo's servitude to the West as it does not merge with Albania despite widespread support, or perhaps it demonstrates both prospects.

The problem is in the fact that the EU does not have a coherent position when it comes to the breakaway Serbian province because five of its members (Greece, Cyprus, Spain, Slovakia and Romania) have not recognized Kosovo's independence.

There are several factors why the EU does not see the reality in the West Balkans. Europe is dealing with internal interests of its member states out of fear of an economic crisis, explaining why for example, Turkey has not been sanctioned despite daily territorial violations against member states Greece and Cyprus. The EU does not have a common geopolitical position and because of this they miss opportunities to advance their own geostrategic interests, like those in the Balkans or even during last year's war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

A geopolitically weak Europe means that the U.S., under new President Joe Biden, will take advantage of the gap in influence to promote its own interests in the Balkans. If the U.S. and EU do not agree with each other and position themselves on opposite ends, then they could use the space for advancing their own ideas and influence. However, the EU has not made a clear position because of its own division over the Kosovo issue. If a merging of Albania and Kosovo is to the advantage of the U.S. as it weakens Serbia and thus Russian interests in the Balkans, then Biden will undoubtedly pursue it, even if Brussels is in opposition to this. This is because the EU is unable to prevent it due to its own geopolitical weakness and withdrawal from the region over a prolonged period of time.

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