

Geopolitical Perspectives On Diplomatic Dialogues: The Standardization Of The Albanian Language During The National Renaissance

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the era of the National Renaissance and the crucial role of the Albanian language in this transformative process from a geopolitical perspective. The National Renaissance, also known as the Albanian National Awakening, marked a pivotal moment in the evolution of the Albanian national identity and the struggle for independence, as it witnessed a cultural and intellectual revival. Central to this period was the unification of the Albanian written language, a geopolitical necessity for the successful formation of the Albanian state, the establishment of the national cause, and a significant step towards achieving independence.

During this era, Albanian intellectuals and revivalists played a fundamental role in advocating for the use of the Albanian language and developing a standardized alphabet and grammar. Through a historical analysis that considers the geopolitical landscape, including the attitudes of neighboring Balkan countries and European Powers towards the Albanian issue, it becomes clear that the unification of the Albanian written language was crucial for disseminating the national ideology among Albanians and fostering collaboration among revivalists. The paper also highlights how internal rivalries and foreign interests had previously hindered the resolution of the language unification matter. By examining the political and diplomatic circumstances of the time, it argues that the unification of the written language was a vital concern for the geopolitical interests of the Albanian people.

In conclusion, the National Revival in Albania was a multifaceted phenomenon that encompassed cultural, linguistic, geopolitical, and geographic dimensions. The unification of the written Albanian language was a strategic move that reflected the geopolitical aspirations of the Albanian people and their geographical position in the Balkans. The efforts of Albanian intellectuals and revivalists to develop a standardized Albanian language were intertwined with geopolitical considerations and geographic challenges, shaping the course of Albanian history and national identity.

Keywords: Albanian language, geopolitical perspective, diplomatic correspondence, sovereignty.

I. Introduction

The National Renaissance, also referred to as the Albanian National Awakening, marked a crucial turning point in the evolution of the Albanian national identity and the struggle for independence, as it witnessed a cultural and intellectual revival with profound geopolitical and geographic implications. The geopolitical landscape and geographic features of the region played a crucial role in shaping the events of this period. One of the pivotal aspects of this period was the unification of the Albanian written language, which was intricately linked to geopolitical considerations and geographic realities. The efforts of Albanian intellectuals and revivalists to advocate for the use of the Albanian language and develop a standardized alphabet and grammar were

influenced by the geopolitical dynamics of the time and the geographic diversity of the Albanian territories. By examining the historical context and the correspondence between the revivalists and European diplomats, it becomes evident that the unification of the Albanian written language was not only a cultural endeavor but also a strategic move in the geopolitical chessboard of the Balkans. The struggle for language unification was not just a matter of linguistic standardization but a geopolitical imperative for the Albanian people to assert their identity and secure their place on the map of Europe. The language served as a tool for national unity and resistance against external influences, taking into account the geopolitical interests of neighboring countries and the geographic boundaries that defined Albanian territories. This paper employs a comprehensive analysis that considers the attitudes of neighboring Balkan countries and European Powers towards the Albanian issue, highlighting the complex geopolitical and geographic factors that shape their interactions. The geographic location of Albania and the geopolitical interests of regional powers added layers of complexity to the language unification process.

The linguist and historian Stavro Skëndi rightly argues that the primary role of language in strengthening national consciousness could not be reflected in the concerns of the renaissance, since in the last 30 years the Young Turks had persistently denied education in their native language (Vlora, 2001). A detailed geographical analysis of the educational institutions in the late 19th century reveals a stark contrast, with an overwhelming presence of Turkish and Greek schools, while Albanian educational establishments were conspicuously absent in key regions. A quick observation of the situation during this period reveals that in 1878, there were 80 Turkish schools, 163 Greek schools, and no Albanian schools in the three sandjaks of Vlora, Berat, and Gjirokastra. The study of the Albanian language was only conducted in two Catholic institutions in Shkodër, where it appeared as a secondary subject in lessons taught in Italian (Castellan, 1994). The scarcity of Albanian language instruction underscored the urgency of unifying the Albanian language in its written form and was conceived by the renaissance as a cornerstone of the Albanian issue, a unifying element of national consciousness, and a prelude to the struggle for independence.

The efforts to establish a unified written form of the Albanian language had roots in earlier initiatives. A reflective synthesis of the most representative activities and movements that shaped the political and cultural trajectory of Albanians, and which have left their mark on their history, serves to evaluate the importance of the Congress of Manastir. The burgeoning political organization of Albanians in the latter half of the 19th century was accompanied by a burgeoning cultural renaissance, marked by the publication of Albanian newspapers in Constantinople and Athens under the leadership of figures like Sami Frashër. The establishment of the first Albanian school in Korça in 1887, a private institution catering to both Orthodox and Muslim children, signaled a tangible step towards linguistic unification. Support from influential figures like Francesco Crispi and the establishment of the Chair of Albanian Language and Literature at the Oriental Institute in Naples further underscored the geographical spread and significance of the language unification efforts.

A crucial event occurred in the United States of America with the establishment of the Albanian Orthodox Church.¹ Although theoretically under the jurisdiction of the Russian Metropolitan of the United States, the church was, in practice, independent, and its liturgy was conducted in the Albanian language (Castellan, 1994). The establishment of the Albanian Orthodox Church in the United States, with its liturgy conducted in Albanian, provided another layer of significance to the cultural and linguistic revival. Some of the most vocal revivalists of the National Renaissance, such as Sami Frashëri, Vaso Pasha, Jani Vreto, and many others, formed the first literary society in Istanbul called the "Society to Print Albanian Letters," also known as the "Society of Istanbul". This society studied the written Albanian language through the publication of the magazine "Drita," which later continued as "Dituria." The activities of prominent revivalists in forming literary societies and publishing magazines aimed at promoting the Albanian language not only reflected a deep-seated love for their homeland and language but also served as a beacon of hope for national unity and resilience. The German linguist, specialist in Balkan languages, Gustav Weigand, evaluated the activity and activism of this pleiades of patriots, who printed the first Albanian primer (1879) and chose to use Latin letters, as "*a feeling and proof of their love for great for homeland and language*" (AQSH, 1908).

The geopolitical landscape experienced a significant shift with the revolution of July 1908, offering new avenues for education, publication, and political engagement. The revolution forced the Sultan to restore the Constitution of 1876, in the text of which the equality of all nationalities was sanctioned. Albanians benefited and took advantage of the opportunities, opening schools, publishing newspapers, and creating patriotic clubs. Many omens rested on the declarations of the Young Turks, and the revivalists lost no time in opening schools, publishing newspapers, and participating in the new political life (Ivetic, 2008). The Young Turks, who considered themselves a moderate political element, presented the political platform, which apparently constituted an emancipated and favorable program for the centuries-old aspirations of the Albanians, but in reality it turned out to be a dismal disappointment, since the new state organization of modern Turkey was conceived on centralizing policies and the violent denial of the principle of nationality (Kolaneci, 2018). However, their true intentions became clear as they implemented centralizing policies and denied the principle

¹ On March 8, 1908, Fan Noli, who was called by the Albanian community in Egypt, was ordained by the Russian Archbishop of New York. This ordination was a response to the conflict between the Albanian community and the Greek clergy in Massachusetts.

of nationality. They soon ordered the closure of Albanian schools, dashing hopes for Albanian national autonomy within the reformed Ottoman state. In response, Albanians took matters into their own hands and rebelled against the neo-Ottoman modernization, Turkish language, and Arabic alphabet (Kolaneci, 2018; ASHSH, 2002). In this context, for the issue of the letters and alphabet that would be selected for the Albanian language in written form, in the city of Manastir, from 1 to 16 of the third autumn of 1908, the Congress of Manastir was held. Many Albanians participated in this nationwide gathering, where 32 delegates from 22 societies (AQSH, 1909) and cities enjoyed the right to make decisions, expressing their will and that of the communities they represented. The Congress of Manastir served as a crucial gathering for Albanians to assert their national identity and linguistic unity in the face of geopolitical threats and challenges to their cultural autonomy.

II. The Congress of Manastir and the Unifying Albanian Language: A Geopolitical Imperative

The unification of the written language in Albania was not only a linguistic necessity but also a crucial geopolitical maneuver for the establishment of the Albanian state and the advancement of national interests. This logical deduction is reinforced when we analyze the attitude of the Balkan neighbors and the European powers towards the Albanian issue, taking into account the complex political and diplomatic landscape in the region and beyond during that period.

In the correspondence exchanged between F. Turtulli and F. Zavalani in October 1908, it becomes evident that Albanians had a unified front concerning the decision-making process in the Congress (AQSH, 1909).² In the content of the letter, which begins with a spirit of enthusiasm “regarding the progress made on the alphabet issue” (AQSH, 1908), also emphasizes the importance of political rights. The Congress of Manastir received increased attention from the revivalists and all Albanians. It was also perceived as a political gathering, where political rights would be discussed. This is evidenced, among other things, in the notes of the Italian political agency, which concluded that “the Congress could potentially evolve into a Political Union, in which case the Albanians would pledge (Besa) to defend their rights with weapons”. Meanwhile, it is reasoned here that due to the regional developments, “as a result of Bulgarian independence and the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina”, heightened the urgency for Albanians to safeguard their political rights “if they were threatened” amidst changing geopolitical dynamics (AQSH, 1908).

The revivalists, committed to the “prosperity of the motherland” and the resolution of the Albanian national question in all its dimensions, had high expectations for the Congress. They viewed its success as a guiding compass towards European civilization, placing particular emphasis on education and learning, “as expressed by the words of the great French philosopher, Voltaire, after all, the alphabet is the key to knowledge”. Additionally, analyzing Turtulli’s letter, it turns out that the revivalists openly express their opposition to Greek politics, which promoted education in the Greek language. Turtulli suggests that Albanians should have their own schools where the Albanian language is taught, and that French or Italian could be offered as optional languages (AQSH, 1908). The idea of organizing and holding a nationwide rally for a common alphabet resonated widely, primarily because it encapsulated the rivalries expressed between internal factions driven by personal ambitions and foreign interests. The proposed nationwide struck a chord among Albanians, reflecting internal rivalries and external influences shaping their geopolitical landscape. This sentiment was well articulated by one of the most prominent albanologists of the time. A year ago, during the proceedings of the Congress of Manastir, Franz Baron Nopcsa succinctly summarized this problem with the expression that “there will probably be more alphabets in Albania than people who know how to read, little by little”.

In Gjergji Qiriazhi's report, vice-president of the Congress, the narrative of which begins with an assessment of the importance and positive effects of the restoration of the Constitution (1876)³ for the national interest of the Albanians, it is emphasized that until then there were 10 alphabets in use in the writing of the Albanian language (Hahn, 1854).⁴ As it is treated by many researchers, and as mentioned earlier, since the League of Prizren, the efforts of the Albanians to solve this handicap have been numerous, but not harmonized and

² In the Commission of A, b, c, which was created in the Congress, participated: Gjergj Fishta, Mid-hat Frashëri, Luigj Gurakuqi, Gj. Qiriazhi, Ndre Mieda, G. Cilka, Taqi Buda, Shahin Kolonja, Sotir Peci, Bajo Topolli, Nyzhet Vrioni.

³ The July 1908 revolution forced the sultan to restore the Constitution of 1876, in which the equality of all nationalities was sanctioned. Albanians took advantage of the opportunities and opened schools, published newspapers, and created patriotic clubs. However, the Young Turks quickly disregarded the implementation of constitutional principles and opposed and ordered the closure of Albanian schools. These actions were followed by conclusive and rejecting reactions from Albanians, taking control of the fate of their country.

⁴ Among the first alphabets on the Albanian language, we can mention the alphabet with 33 original letters created by Naum Veqilharxhi. This alphabet was used to publish the first Albanian primer in 1844, which was later reprinted in 1845, along with a preface. According to Johann Georg von Hahn, a prominent scholar in the field of Albanology, Naum’s alphabet was not primitive and crude, but rather aesthetically pleasing and elegant in style.

coordinated. This fact is clearly evident in Fan Noli's stance in 1906, who articulated the call in the newspaper "Kombi" in the language of national interest, "one alphabet for all Albanians and let it be as it wants". Furthermore, it can be deduced from the correspondence between Turtulli and Zavalani that this concern was present among the nationalists. Among other things, Turtulli would write from Cairo that "this issue of the alphabet is a great division among us... let us try to gather and reflect on this matter together... it is better to have a common mindset and not individual ones" (AQSH, 1908).

As the 20th century dawned, the issue of unifying the written Albanian language rose to the forefront of political discourse, reflecting the intricacies of geopolitics and national identity. The debates over Latin, Greek, or Arabic scripts were not merely about linguistic preferences but also intertwined with political aspirations and cultural heritage. Prominent figures like Jani Vreto and H. Tahsin engaged in discussions about the spiritual and practical implications of choosing an alphabet, recognizing its broader implications on Albania's geopolitical positioning and national unity. Jani Vreto, a contributor to the creation of the Albanian alphabet in the 19th century, in his work "Thoughts on the Writing of the Albanian Language," writes about his contemporary, H. Tahsin, who strongly argued against the use of Arabic letters for written Albanian. Among other things, H. Tahsin argued that the written language is closely linked to the spiritual interest of the entire nation and called for us to work on "how to write our language more easily... and it cannot be written using the Arabic alphabet" (Vreto, 1972). In his arguments, he strongly emphasized that in the name of the future and the good of the nation, the letters, "*the most powerful weapons of progress and knowledge*", should also be chosen free from "*political influences*" (Vreto, 1972).

Geopolitical considerations played a crucial role in the push for a unified written Albanian language during the Congress of Manastir. Advocates like Kristoforidhi stressed the significance of choosing letters free from political influences, viewing them as powerful tools for progress and knowledge. He believed that the unification of the Albanian language was essential for the survival of the Albanian state, asserting that without a standardized written language, the very existence of Albania would be at risk, erasing the Albanian identity from the world map. This geopolitical perspective underlined the urgency of the situation, emphasizing the need for a cohesive national identity grounded in a common written language. In the early 20th century, calls for a Congress to discuss the alphabet issue reverberated across different Albanian communities. From Vienna to Bucharest and Switzerland, intellectuals and patriots recognized the geopolitical significance of unifying the written language. In 1906, in a letter addressed to Kristo Dako, Pandeli Evangjeli emphasized the need for a Congress to be held in Vienna to discuss the alphabet issue. Similar divisions were also made by Albanians in Bucharest in 1907 for a similar organization, but it was proposed to be held in Switzerland. In 1908, the aspirations of the National Movement activists were crystallized. In the period from August to November, the demand of the intellectual and patriotic elite to unite intensified. Letters exchanged among key figures, like Luigj Gurakuqi and Fehmi Zavalani, underscored the importance of coming together in a joint Congress to address the alphabet issue. In a letter dated October 8, 1908, Luigj Gurakuqi addressed Fehmi Zavalani to reach an agreement on holding a joint Congress, proposing that it be held in Manastir, a city he considered "good enough, if not the best place". Similarly, Frashëri addressed Qiriazhi about the necessity and benefits of cooperation between Albanian clubs. Letters expressing solidarity for the holding of the Congress and its vital importance for the national cause were coming from everywhere. In the text of each of them, enthusiasm and belief were expressed that through the Congress, "all Albanians, through which our oppressed nation will find the path to civilization and happiness, will be blessed and honored by all" and this gathering for the alphabet issue would serve unity because "the Albanians showed great wisdom and, to the disappointment of enemies, by gathering in this place, they united their minds and gave an end to the dangerous issue for our nation, whose branches would be intertwined like this" (AQSH, 1908).

The potential for unity among Albanians was seen as a pathway to civilization and happiness, with the Congress serving as a crucial step towards national cohesion and progress. The correspondence among nationalists not only focused on organizing the Congress but also delved into the specifics of a unified alphabet. Proposals from activists like Dom Ndre Mjeda sought approval for their alphabet projects, highlighting the diversity of opinions within the Albanian nationalist movement. Dom Ndre Mjeda, in a letter addressed to Mit'hat Frashëri and Gjergj Qiriazhi, requested that his proposal for the alphabet be approved at the upcoming Congress, an initiative that did not find support. Similarly, other activists of the National Renaissance, members of clubs and societies created among Albanians in foreign countries, in letters addressed to Fehim Bey Zavalani, provided supportive arguments for their proposals or suggestions. In response to Zavalani's request to send a representative from Egypt, it is interesting to note the agreement of the Albanians there on the variant of "the alphabet of Shkodra... fulfilling the desires of our language" (AQSH, 1908). They considered the use of Latin letters as a "*modus vivendi*" and argued that they were used by the entire civilized world, even stating that "...the Serbs and Slavs also seek to return to Latin" (AQSH, 1908). Seeking to be as convincing as possible in their supportive stance for the adoption of Latin letters in the written Albanian language, and as an example, Western civilization should be taken into account, "we must be practical like the English", the content of this correspondence highlights that "Albanians must be more open-minded and take hold of the practical aspects in the world" (AQSH, 1908).

The adoption of Latin letters emerged as a practical choice aligned with Western civilization, reflecting a broader geopolitical shift towards modernity and progress. The common alphabet would be the fundamental

axis around which Tosk and Gheg would unite in a multidimensional and far-sighted struggle. This emphasis on a common alphabet as a unifying force against external threats, such as the Young Turks and neighboring assimilationist forces, showcased the geopolitical dimensions of the language debate. However, divisions persisted among Albanians, with some individuals aligning themselves with Ottoman interests and resisting the adoption of Latin letters. Certainly, not everyone had this goal as their compass. Not everyone could detach themselves from the shackles of personal interests and privileges, or abstract themselves from the directives they received from governmental structures they supported. The clash between pro-independence and pro-Ottoman factions within the Manastir Club highlighted the complex geopolitical landscape in which the alphabet issue unfolded. This is deduced in the telegram of October 21, 1908, from French consul Pichon, which highlights that the majority of members of the Manastir Club “were inspired by the spirit and idea of independence”, while others positioned themselves as pro-Ottoman and justified their stance under the slogan “Albania of Albanians under the Ottoman flag”.

Propaganda from religious institutions further fueled resistance to Latin letters, illustrating the influence of external powers on internal debates. As an illustrative example, we can mention the report of Muderrizi Mehmet, who describes a demonstration of 12,000 people in Elbasan opposing the use of Latin letters (AQSH, 1909).⁵ Here, it should be emphasized that this stance was fueled by intensive propaganda from religious institutions that were in the service of the Ottoman state. Furthermore, the anachronistic reasoning of those who continued to defend the interests of the Young Turks is clearly understood. The content of this report addressed to the Ulema⁶ also reveals the issue of fragmentation among ordinary Albanians regarding the unity of the written language, where it is written, among other things:

“Given that the majority is against the writing of the Albanian language with Latin letters and is for their rejection and condemnation with insistence, and for the salvation of the homeland and the assurance of national unity, it is also preferred and favored (writing) with the addition of Arabic letters. This delicate issue is as important as the life of the nation and, God forbid, it causes disputes and divisions among Muslims. The Ministry of Education has arbitrarily made both (Arabic and Latin letters) optional” (AQSH, 1909).

However, the reaction of the citizens was the same in the case of defending the use of Latin letters. This is evidenced in the notes about the telegram sent to Istanbul by the “Correspondent of the Official English Newspaper Times in Istanbul” (AQSH, 1909), describing the citizens demonstrating in a large rally in Namazgja Square to support the use of Latin letters for writing the Albanian language. The Turkish refusal to use Latin letters in written Albanian is further reinforced in the Memoirs of Eqerem bej Vlora. He recounts an interesting episode between himself, Dervish Hima, and Mustafa Kemal. In their meeting, Mustafa Kemal not only did not show understanding for the nationalist ideology of the Albanians, but he adamantly asserted that the Albanian language should be written with Arabic letters. Furthermore, Eqerem bej Vlora argues that Mustafa Kemal did not accept the use of Latin letters by the Albanians because he saw it as a threat to the Turkish-Muslim-Ottoman unity (Vlora, 2001). Despite these challenges, the push for a unified written Albanian language persisted, driven by a shared vision of national unity and progress in the face of shifting geopolitical dynamics.

III. Geopolitical implications of European Diplomacy and neighboring states at the Congress

The geopolitical implications of the Renaissance activists' efforts in determining the alphabet for the unified Albanian written language were closely monitored by European chancelleries and significantly influenced diplomatic correspondence prior to the Congress of Manastir. The French consul in Janina, Auguste Dozon, highlighted in his telegram to Quai d'Orsay in Paris the strategic role of Albanian political figures, Hoxha Tahsin and Kostandin Kristoforidhi, in shaping the written form of the Albanian language and promoting education in the mother tongue as a means to assert Albanian identity and counter Hellenism (Mile, 1969). Similarly, in July 1901, the attaché of the Austro-Hungarian diplomacy in Manastir, after evaluating the alphabet of the Society of Istanbul as a national pride that cannot be touched, proposed the idea of convening a congress to determine a common alphabet, emphasizing the geopolitical significance of delegates representing Albanian interests. In the content of his telegram, it is underlined that the alphabet congress is the duty and attribute of the delegates sent by the Albanians themselves (Lloshi, 2008).

European diplomats stationed in Albanian cities were cognizant of the potential geopolitical impact of the Congress. The geopolitical significance of the correspondence from Austrian diplomat August Kral to Vienna officials, just five days prior to the opening of the Congress, where he referred to as the Congress of Reconciliation, is notable. Kral's report highlighted the unity of Albanians in Manastir, organized within a club, who had scheduled November 14 as the date for crucial discussions on establishing a standardized alphabet for

⁵ “... a large national gathering of thousand people was held in the courtyard of the Is-hakija mosque, and a pledge was made to reject and categorically remove Latin letters”.

⁶ *Ulema*: a muslim scholars who are recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology. The word comes from the plural of Arabic “*ulama*-learned”. They performed religious and judicial duties.

all of Albania. The telegram dated November 9, 1908, underscored Kral's recognition of the far-reaching impact of the alphabet congress announcement on the Albanian population.

Specifically, when detailing the delegates representing Shkodra in Manastir, Kral described the enthusiastic atmosphere and financial support from the Catholic community in the Shkodra district for the travel expenses of Luigj Gurakuqi and Mati Logoreci, selected by the Catholic Committee. Moreover, in the correspondence of October 26 between the Austro-Hungarian vice-consul in Manastir, Tahy, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alois von Aehrenthal, discussions revolved around the geopolitical developments and potential decisions arising from the congress. Vice-consul Tahy's report suggested the possible approval of Frashëri's alphabet with modifications, emphasizing the importance of integrating the Albanian language into existing schools and establishing new Albanian educational institutions. The Austrian representative in Manastir, Postlin Posfai, diligently kept the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austro-Hungary informed about the geopolitical dynamics and proceedings of the Congress.

Following the conclusion of the Congress, in the telegram dated November 23, Consul Posfai provided an in-depth account of the delegates' speeches and the objections raised regarding the selection of the alphabet, incorporating geopolitical considerations into his analysis. Posfai's report, dated December 14, 1908 (Lloshi, 2008), further delved into the geopolitical implications of the alphabet decision. He argued that while two alphabets were accepted at the Congress, he believed that over time, the Latin alphabet would garner stronger support as the preferred alphabet for the Albanian language. Posfai emphasized that key decision-makers of the Congress, including Fehim bej Zavalani, Grigor Cilka, At Gjergj Fishta, Sotir Peci, Luigj Gurakuqi, and others, were in favor of adopting the Latin alphabet, citing geopolitical factors that may influence the long-term acceptance and usage of the Latin script in Albania.

The Alphabet Congress, with its geopolitical and geographical implications, garnered significant attention from various consulates and foreign entities. On the day of the Congress's commencement, the Italian consul in Skopje, Augustino Stranieri, noted the participation of representatives from the Kosovo vilayet. The participation of representatives from diverse regions, including the Kosovo vilayet, highlighted the Congress's reach across various territories and reflected the geographic and ethnic diversity of the Albanian population. The presence of delegates from different religious affiliations, such as Catholics and Orthodox, further underscored the intricate social and cultural landscape within Albania.

The keen interest shown by foreign consulates, such as the Italian consul in Skopje and the official Rome, in monitoring and reporting on the Congress's proceedings indicated the geopolitical importance attached to the event. The Italian official Rome instructed its consul in Manastir, Kont de Visart, to closely monitor and report on the Congress's proceedings and decisions. The instructions given to consuls to provide detailed accounts of the decisions made at the Congress suggest that foreign powers recognized the potential impact of linguistic developments on the political landscape of the region. The British consul's communication with Sir Edward Grey and the British Foreign Office emphasized the national character of the Congress and the inclusive representation of Albanians from all backgrounds, portraying a unified front despite historical divisions. A telegram sent to the British Foreign Office on November 24 states, "fifty delegates present represented all Albanians without distinction - Ghegs, Tosks, Catholics, and Orthodox" (Lloshi, 2008). The geopolitical tensions surrounding the alphabet issue, particularly the opposition from the Orthodox clergy aligned with Greek political interests, highlighted the complex interplay of linguistic identity, religious affiliations, and external influences. The assertion of Albanian national identity through the choice of alphabet was not merely a linguistic matter but a geopolitical statement, signaling a shift in power dynamics and asserting autonomy in cultural and educational spheres. Ambassador Gerard Lowther's observation that the alphabet issue was the first issue to unite Albanians since the time of Ali Pasha underscored the historical significance of the Congress. The European diplomats' recognition of the Congress as laying strong foundations for a future Albania (Lloshi, 2008) indicated their belief in the transformative potential of linguistic unity and educational reforms in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the region. In conclusion, the Alphabet Congress of Manastir was a multifaceted event with far-reaching implications beyond language and education. It served as a platform for asserting Albanian national identity, navigating geopolitical tensions, and laying the groundwork for a cohesive and autonomous Albania in the future. The convergence of linguistic, cultural, and geopolitical factors at the Congress exemplified the intricate web of influences shaping the region's destiny.

Conclusion

The Congress of Manastir, held in the early 20th century and organized by prominent intellectuals with European renown, holds significant geopolitical implications that extend beyond its cultural and linguistic dimensions. This pivotal event addressed pressing issues of territorial integrity, national identity, and external influences on Albanian lands, shaping the trajectory of Albania's geopolitical positioning and relations with neighboring powers and the international community.

The selection of the Latin alphabet at the Congress of Manastir was not merely a linguistic choice but a strategic decision aimed at safeguarding Albanian national identity and sovereignty. By adopting the Latin script, the Congress sought to establish a distinct Albanian language that would serve as a barrier against assimilative efforts and political encroachments by external forces. This deliberate linguistic choice was a manifestation of

a broader geopolitical strategy to assert Albania's independence and resist external pressures that sought to undermine Albanian territories.

Moreover, the Congress of Manastir played a crucial role in fostering political unity and national consciousness among Albanians, thereby strengthening the country's resilience against geopolitical challenges posed by neighboring nations and Great Powers. The decisions made at the Congress reflected a collective will to assert Albanian sovereignty and counter attempts to treat Albanian lands as *terra nullius*. This unified stance not only solidified internal cohesion but also projected a clear message to the international community about Albania's aspirations for recognition as a distinct nation with its own language, culture, and political agency.

The diplomatic correspondence analyzed in the context of the Congress of Manastir underscores the intricate geopolitical dynamics at play during this period. The strategic importance of language as a tool for geopolitical positioning and national cohesion is evident in the negotiations and discussions that took place at the Congress. The Congress's engagement with the international community signaled Albania's determination to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes and assert its place within the broader European context.

In conclusion, the Congress of Manastir stands as a seminal event in Albanian history with far-reaching geopolitical implications. Its legacy continues to shape Albania's geopolitical positioning, national identity, and relations with external actors, underscoring the enduring relevance of this historic gathering in the context of modern European civilization.

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