Moscow and the Muslims:  
The Eternal Soviet-Albanian Friendship, 1949-1959  
with  
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What was the Sovietization of postwar Eastern Europe? Who enabled it? What did it actually entail on the ground? Was it coercive and formal or also co-optive and informal? This presentation analyzes the postwar emergence of the socialist world system through the lens of 1950s Albania. It argues for Sovietization as the crafting of a mental map, in addition to (often coercive) transfers of ideas and institutions, tangled geopolitical interests, and scripted exchanges in people, materials, and goods.

Formerly a colonial outpost of fascist Italy, Albania liberated itself from Nazi rule and escaped Yugoslav designs in the Balkans by siding with Stalin in 1948. Soviet patronage not only ensured the survival of local communist leader Enver Hoxha (and his cronies), but it also provided a blueprint for the country’s vision of modernity. The “eternal friendship” with Moscow, it turns out, was more than mere propaganda. Sovietization entailed more than the mechanical imposition of an external model of development. Embedded within it were distinct ideas and beliefs, local interests, power struggles, and long-standing security concerns.

Elidor Mëhilli is the 2009-2010 Mellon Fellow in Contemporary History at IERES. He is a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University, where he is completing his dissertation after conducting extensive archival research in Albania, Germany, Russia, the UK, and Italy. He will hold the Mrs. Giles Whiting Fellowship in the Humanities at Princeton in 2010-2011.

**Wednesday, May 5, 2010**  
12:00-1:30 p.m.  
Voesar Conference Room  
1957 E Street, NW, Suite 412  
Please RSVP to ieresgwu@gwu.edu.  
This event is on the record.