A CULTURAL HANDBOOK FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE

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A Cultural Handbook for South East Europe

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A Cultural Handbook for South East Europe

Welcome to our first edition of the *Cultural Handbook for South East Europe*! This document, developed under grant support from the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is meant to provide those of you working with the A-SMYLE and YES programs with relevant information on participants' home countries.

We are very excited that 2009 marks the beginning of the Department of State's expansion of the YES program into the Balkans, increasing youth programming from two to seven countries. These programs provide a wonderful opportunity not only for students from South East Europe to gain skills critical for them as they develop their home countries, but for Americans to learn about this often misunderstood region.

One major challenge of putting together a cultural guide to South East Europe is that the region seems to change at a dizzying rate. From frequent parliamentary elections, to integration into Western institutions, and even the creation of new countries, the Balkans are a delicate web of non-stop political interplay.

Complicating matters is the region's recent history. Many of us remember watching CNN, riveted, as Bosnia descended into civil war throughout the early 1990s and again only several years later as NATO aircraft bombed Belgrade in an attempt to stop fighting in Kosovo.

At the time, the events were written off as ethnic warfare—the inevitable result of the disintegration of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia following the collapse of communism in 1989. Yet the causes of the situation were much more complicated, and they continue to affect matters to this day. We hope the following pages give you some insight into the Balkan region and serve as a jumping off point for future exploration of the area. Presently, the *Handbook* includes a general history of the Balkans, a breakdown of ethnic and religious diversity in the region, and strives to explain each country's current political, social, and economic situation. Future editions will expand into the topics of language, culture, and further hosting information for Host Families.

The A-SMYLE and YES South East Europe programs provide scholarships for high school students from seven South East European countries to spend up to one academic year in the United States. Students live with American host families, attend US high schools, and take part in leadership development activities, civic education, and community service during the program. When they return home, they participate in alumni activities, applying their experiences in the United States to aid their local communities. Funding for A-SMYLE and YES is provided through the Department of State's Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act.

For more information on A-SMYLE and YES, visit the Department of State at exchanges.state.gov.

Skye Wallace
American Councils for
International Education:
ACTR/ACCELS
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Albania

About

Official name: Republic of Albania
Capital: Tirana
Area: 17,863 square miles
Relative size: slightly smaller than Maryland
Population (as of 2008): 3,619,778

Ethnic profile

Ethnicities (as of 1989): Albanian 95%, Greek 3%, other 2% (Vlach, Roma, Serb, Macedonian, Bulgarian)
Religions: Muslim 70%, Albanian Orthodox 20%, Roman Catholic 10%. *Albania has traditionally been a secular country, as religion was outlawed by the communist authorities until 1990.*
Languages: Albanian, Greek, Vlach, Roma, Slavic dialects

Current Issues

Economy
Albania, one of the last countries to democratize, is the poorest in the Balkan region. However, it is making progress in its transition to a market economy.

Much of its economy is unaccounted for by official measures, operating informally—through remittances from family working abroad or from the very large and powerful organized crime network operating in Albania.

Unemployment rates are variable (12-30%). While agriculture only accounts for one-fifth of the country's GDP, much of the population still relies on subsistence farming.

Politics
Albania is slowly but surely taking the steps necessary for entrance into Western institutions. After the victory of a democratic, reform-minded coalition in the 2005 elections, the country was invited to join NATO in April 2008. It is also a potential candidate for EU accession.

Other Issues
Organized crime in Albania has grown remarkably in the past nearly 20 years. With the breakdown in security, the trafficking of drugs into Europe, especially of opium via Turkey, expanded, as did trafficking in persons.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

About

Official name: Bosnia and Herzegovina
Capital: Sarajevo
Area: 31,819 square miles
Relative size: slightly smaller than West Virginia
Population (as of 2008): 4,590,310

Ethnic profile

Ethnicities (as of 2000): Bošniak 48%, Serb 37%, Croat 14.5%, other 0.5%
Religions: Muslim 40%, Orthodox Christian 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, other 14%
Languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian

Current Issues

Economy
Currently, the Bosnian economy is stalled due to an unstable political settlement, corruption, a decimated infrastructure, and over bureaucratization. Though reforms in banking have helped stabilize the financial sector, unemployment remains at an estimated 25-30%. Like Albania, much of the Bosnian economy is informal.

Politics
The Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 left Bosnia and Herzegovina with complicated governing structure. The power-sharing agreement—between ethnic Bošniaks, Croats, and Serbs—allows for a collective presidency and police force as well as strict quotas in the legislative and judicial branches.

The federal government is divided into two states: the Bošniak-Croat Federation and the Serb Republic. Overall authority, however, remains with the UN's Office of the High Representative.

Currently, tensions are high between political leaders; and while there is little chance for a large-scale violent conflict, the international community remains involved.

Other Issues
Religious affiliation among the Muslim community is growing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Though it has been a part of the region since the Ottoman Empire (Bošniaks are Muslim Bosnians), the country remained secular for most of its history. However, since the Bosnian War from 1992-1995, of which most victims were Bošniaks, ethnicity has become a polarizing factor. With the rise of Serb and Croat ethnic nationalism, Islam proves to be the clearest identifying marker for Bošniaks. Countries such as Saudi Arabia have invested money toward Islamic development in the country; and recently, the teaching of Islam became a required part of the curriculum in several state-funded schools.

Bulgaria

About

Official name: Republic of Bulgaria
Capital: Sofia
Area: 68,916 square miles
Relative size: slightly larger than Tennessee
Population (as of 2008): 7,262,675

Ethnic profile

Ethnicities (as of 2001): Bulgarian 84%, Turk 9.5%, Roma 4.5%, other 2% (including Macedonian, Armenian, Tatar, Circassian)
Religions: Bulgarian Orthodox 82.5%, Muslim 12%, other 5.5%
Languages: Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma

Current Issues

Economy

After failing to reform the economy, the Bulgarian Socialist Party, formerly the Bulgarian Communist Party, was ousted in favor of the democratic opposition in 1996. Since this time, the Bulgarian government has remained committed to economic reform. Additionally, growth and stability has led to an increase in foreign direct investment.

Politics

Bulgaria, along with Romania, entered NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007, two processes that have allowed government leaders to undertake austere, though necessary, reforms that would otherwise be impossible, due to unpopularity. It has also opened the country to billions of dollars in aid.

However, corruption has slowed and even endangered development. The EU withheld almost $670 million in 2008 and threatened to keep billions more if Bulgaria did not crack down both on government corruption and organized crime.

Kosovo

About

Official name: Republic of Kosovo
Capital: Pristina
Area: 6,758 square miles
Relative size: slightly larger than Delaware
Population (as of 2007): 2,126,708

Ethnic profile

Ethnicities (as of 2000): Albanian 87%, Serb 9%, other 4% (Bošniak, Gorani, Roma, Turk, Ashkali, Egyptian)
Religions: Muslim, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic.
There is no recent data on religion. The last census to cover it was in 1991, at which time ethnic Albanians led a general boycott against the census. A new census is scheduled for Spring 2009.
Languages: Albanian (official), Serbian (official), Bosnian, Turkish, Roma

Current Issues

Economy
Changes implemented by the international community in the wake of the 1999 war in Kosovo have made Kosovo's market economy one of the most liberal in the world.

Currently, however, the country suffers from a lack of funds. Though external aid is currently one of Kosovo's major sources of income, it has decreased in recent years. Remittances from Albanian Kosovars living abroad are another major source of income (12-15%).

Politics
Kosovo's parliament declared independence on February 17, 2008 after two years of negotiations with Serbia ended in a stalemate. Serbia, of which Kosovo had been a province, was willing to grant the Kosovars a high degree of autonomy. However, Kosovo, having suffered under the rule of Slobodan Milošević, former president of Yugoslavia, would settle for nothing less than full independence.

Other Issues
Though the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was technically disbanded by NATO, many of its members joined the newly-established Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) and have been reported using their power to threaten political opponents, extort, and even continue the KLA's wartime activity of illegally trafficking people and drugs.

Two former KLA leaders in particular have been linked to such behavior: Hashim Thaci, currently Prime Minister and head the Democratic Party of Kosovo; and Ramush Haradinaj, head of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, another governing coalition party.

Macedonia

About

Official name: Republic of Macedonia (recognized by the US and Turkey). Also known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
Capital: Skopje
Area: 15,741 square miles
Relative size: slightly larger than Vermont
Population (as of 2008): 2,061,315

Ethnic profile

Ethnicities (as of 2002): Macedonian 64%, Albanian 25%, Turk 4%, Roma 3%, Serb 2%, other 2%
Religions: Macedonian Orthodox 65%, Muslim 33%, other 2%
Languages: Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Roma, Serbian

Current Issues

Economy

Macedonia's economy did not fare well in its first years of independence. Several factors precluded the country's growth: it lost federal funding when it left Yugoslavia; the Bosnian War interrupted regional trade in general; and Greece placed additional blockades on the country out of fear that Macedonia would incite rebellion in Greece's northern province of Macedonia.

Despite economic stability and reforms in the business sector, Macedonia has had difficulty attracting foreign direct investment and creating jobs. Unemployment remains at a high 35%; and income is supplemented by a large informal economy, which is estimated to be more than one-fifth of the country's recorded GDP.

Politics

Macedonia continues to attempt integration between its two major populations: Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. A power-sharing agreement was brokered in 2001 and has helped the country remain stable.

Macedonia is widely considered to be a strong candidate for eventual NATO and EU accession. Greece, however, has repeatedly threatened to block membership until the country officially changes its name to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Montenegro

About

Official name: Montenegro
Capital: Podgorica
Area: 8,715 square miles
Relative size: slightly smaller than Connecticut
Population (as of 2008): 678,177

Ethnic profile

Ethnicities (as of 2003): Montenegrin 43%, Serb 32%, Bošniak 8%, Albanian 5%, other (Croat, Roma) 12%
Religions: Orthodox 74%, Muslim 17.5%, Catholic 3.5%, other 0.5%, other 3.5%
Languages: Serbian, Montenegrin, Bosnian, Albanian

Current Issues

Economy

Though having only recently cut ties with the federalized, Serbian-led economy, Montenegro has firmly established itself as an independent country in the economic sector.

At 40% of the country's GDP, the production of aluminum is one of the country's main sources of income. The tourism sector, also, has grown tremendously in recent years with the help of foreign direct investment, much of which is from Russia.

Politics

Montenegro is a stable, developing democracy. In late 2007, it signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU—the first step toward accession. However, shortly after it filed its application for EU membership in December 2008, the application was blocked from going to the European Commission for review by several leading EU member states whose leaders felt Montenegro was not yet prepared for such a step. Cooperation between the country and such multinational organizations continue, however.

Serbia

About

Official name: Republic of Serbia
Capital: Belgrade
Area: 48,140 square miles
Relative size: slightly smaller than South Carolina
Population (as of 2008): 10,159,046

Ethnic profile

Ethnicities (as of 2002): Serb 83%, Hungarian 4%, Bošniak 2% Albanian 1%, other (Montenegrin, Bulgarian, Gori, Vlach, Macedonian, Roma, "Yugoslav") 10%
Religions: Serbian Orthodox 85%, Catholic 5%, Muslim 3%, other 7%
Languages: Serbian, Hungarian, Bosnian, other and unspecified. Romanian, Hungarian, Slovak, Ukrainian, and Croatian are all official languages in the region of Vojvodina

Current Issues

Economy
The Serbian economy suffered heavily under the Milošević regime. Successive UN sanctions crippled the country throughout the Balkan wars of the 1990s; by the end of the decade, Serbia's economy was only half of what it had been 10 years earlier.

Politics
Serbian integration into Western institutions has been a slow process. While recognition of Kosovo as an independent country is not a requirement for EU accession, cooperation with the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague is.

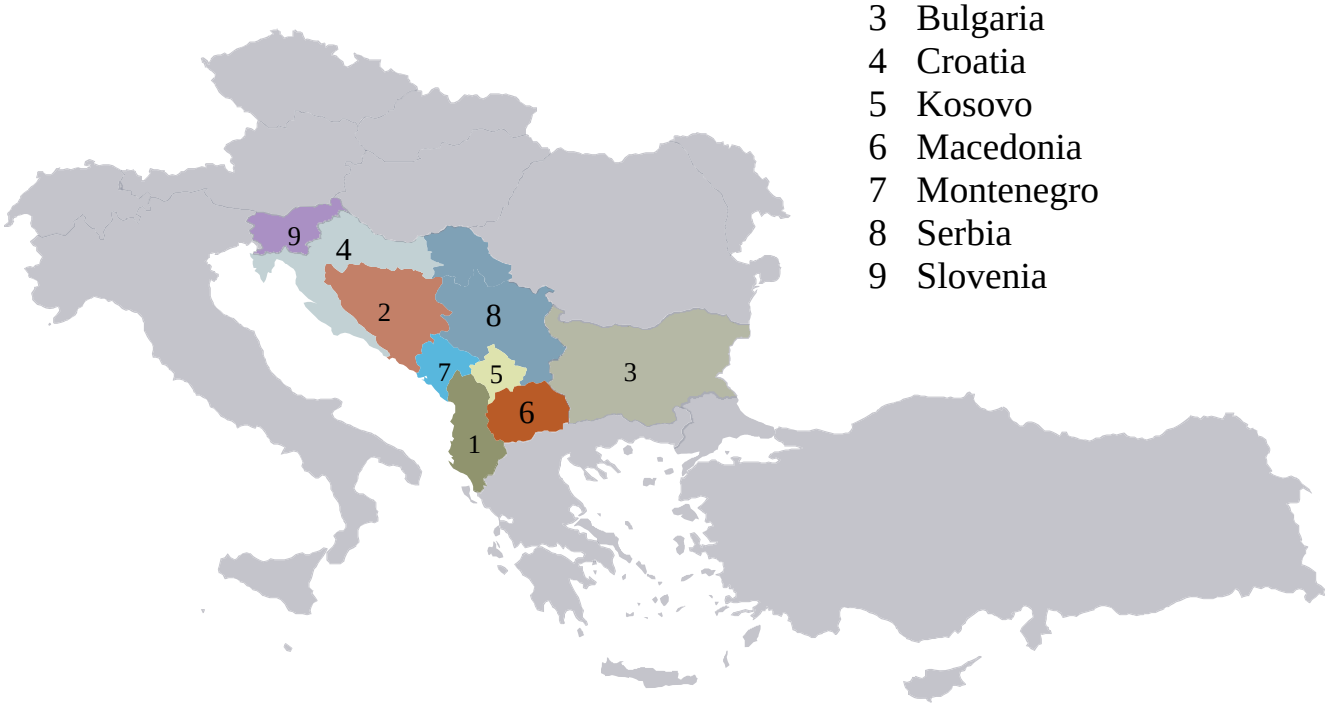
The two most wanted alleged perpetrators—believed to be hiding in Serbia—are Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. Karadžić, the former president of the Serb Republic during the Bosnian War, was arrested by Serbian authorities in July 2008 in Belgrade and promptly extradited to The Hauge. Mladić, former head of the Bosnian Serb Army, is still at large.

Serbia's political development and Western integration has been hampered by the rhetoric promoted by Milošević in the 1980s and 1990s.

Lack of progress, however, is not just an effect of national frustration, it is a compounding factor. With each delayed step on the path of EU accession, the Serbian public grows more frustrated about the austere government measures it has suffered and more cynical about the possibility of joining the organization. In turn, this anger has led to an increase in votes for the right-wing, nationalist SRS, the Serbian Radical Party.

Kosovo's declaration of independence in early 2008 did nothing to allay Western fears of a radicalized Serbia. Nine embassies—including the US embassy—were attacked, foreign property was destroyed, and rioters looted. In addition, the governing coalition fell apart over how to respond; the parliament was dissolved and new elections called. In March, Serbians reaffirmed their determination, however, to ultimately push for EU accession. The Democratic Party (DS), headed by President Boris Tadić, emerged with the most votes and formed a strong pro-Europe coalition; Tadić has consistently stated Serbia will resolve its issues with words, not force.

Regional Background



KEY

1 Albania
2 Bosnia and Herzegovina
3 Bulgaria
4 Croatia
5 Kosovo
6 Macedonia
7 Montenegro
8 Serbia
9 Slovenia

Geography and Overall Development

The Balkan Peninsula is dominated by its rough, mountainous landscape, which has played an instrumental role in the development of the region. High, rugged peaks and low, flood-planed valleys have created a terrain easy to access, via its many rivers and the Mediterranean Sea, but difficult to consolidate.

The mountainous landscape of the Balkan Peninsula has influenced settlement of the region for centuries.

Numerous waves of immigration to the region over thousands of years have led to pockets of interspersed populations. The largest of these groups, known as the South Slavs arrived in the 6th century. It consists of Bulgarians, Serbs, Bošniaks, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and Montenegrins.

Another factor affecting the development of the Balkans has been its strategic location for aspiring empires, which have crossed the peninsula as they expanded their territory. Each occupation left its mark on the inhabitants, but none was able to hold on to the region indefinitely.

This task—centralized control over the Balkans—has proven difficult for the local population as well. In fact, the recent trend has been not the pursuit of a multi-ethnic society, but of a state for each ethnicity. In 1991, the region was home to four countries (Albania, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria); now there are 10.

Antiquity and the Roman Empire

The oldest written history describes two Balkan populations—the Thracians and the Illyrians—divided by major rivers in present-day Serbia and Macedonia.

The Thracians, on the eastern side of the peninsula, had much contact with Greek settlements and eventually the Macedonian Empire established by Alexander the Great. The Illyrians, on the western side of the rivers, were isolated from the east. Illyrian interference with Roman trade in the Mediterranean, however, eventually led the Roman authorities to intervene and annex much of the territory.

The Thracians and Illyrians initially settled much of the Balkan territory, including modern-day Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

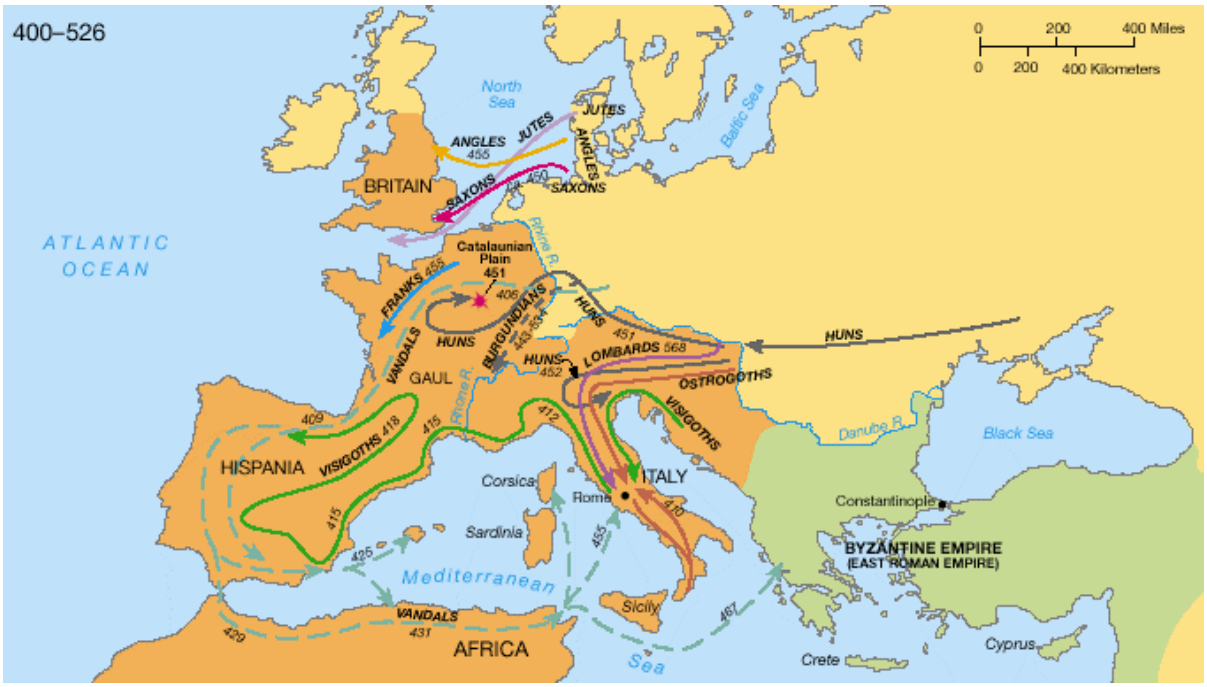
The Roman Empire did not stop in Illyria, however. By the 1st century AD, it had control of the entire peninsula, unifying the Balkans under one political, legal, and security system. This period saw the region more united than it has ever been in its history.

The Byzantine Era

The Byzantine (or East Roman) Empire's military power rested on its use of landlords, who agreed to house the state's military troops in times of war in return for ownership of property in the Balkans. The government's civil service in the region was highly corrupt, which ordinary subjects resented. And as the Empire crumbled following the successful invasion to its east by Muslim Turks and less successful, though still damaging, invasions to its west by Norman Crusaders, the levying of high taxes on its subjects only increased this animosity.

With the Byzantine Empire distracted by invasions on two fronts and resentment brewing at home, the situation provided an opportunity for the Slavic peoples of the eastern Balkans to make their first attempt at self-rule. The Bulgarians, in the 12th century, were the first to form an empire of their own. However, this effort soon collapsed due to financial inadequacies and the inability of powerful leaders to unite.

The Serbs surpassed the Bulgarians in the 14th century as the region's most powerful group, conquering a territory that many Serbs to this day believe is rightfully theirs. The western, Roman territories of the Balkans also made attempts at self-rule, though theirs too were short-lived, as both the Croat and Bosnian kingdoms agreed to join the more powerful Hungarian kingdom to the north.



By the 5th century A.D., the Byzantine Empire controlled the southeastern Balkan territories of present-day Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. The Western Roman Empire had influence over the northwestern territories of present-day Croatia, Slovenia, and parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ottoman Rule and the Spread of Islam

Though the Ottoman Empire's conquest of the Balkans took more than a century to complete, it was facilitated by the Turks' ability to exploit the already-existing divisions on the peninsula, not only between the Christian Orthodox Serbs, Bulgarians, and Macedonians, but between those Orthodox peoples and the Catholic Croats and Slovenes.

The Muslim Turks instituted a political structure very similar to that of the Byzantine Empire—day-to-day political control in the hands of local landlords whose property and wealth depended on their loyalty to the centralized government in Constantinople.

In places like Montenegro and parts of Croatia, both of which had experienced relative autonomy throughout the years, the Turks had little reach. However, Ottoman rule brought total social and political upheaval to the rest of the peninsula. The old aristocracy was removed from power except in places, like Bosnia and Albania, where the majority of nobles converted to Islam.

Though the Ottomans rarely overtly pressured Christians to convert, there were both legal and financial benefits to doing so. Adding to the resentment that this system cultivated was another, occasional practice—known as *devşirme*—wherein male children from Christian households were taken from their families, forcefully converted to Islam, and then trained to be members of the Empire's administrative elite.

By the 17th century, as the Austrian Holy Roman Empire encroached on the northwestern front and Russian Empire on the eastern, the Ottomans lost much influence in the region and were on the path of decline. With this loss of centralized control, local landowning warlords, who had risen through both exploitation of the peasants and systematic corruption, became *de facto* leaders in the region. In some cases, this proved to be a stabilizing factor, but in most it led to malcontent with the Ottoman central government, which no longer possessed the ability to effectively govern the region.

A Gradual Independence

As had become custom over the centuries, outside powers played a role in the next stage of political, economic, and cultural transition in the Balkans—this time, in the eventual establishment of nation-states. As the Ottoman Empire fell and the Balkan people began to demand—sometimes violently—their independence, each new territory did so with the aid of foreign powers. The Russian Empire intervened on behalf of the Serbs, Bulgarians, and also, along with Britain and France, on behalf of the Greeks. As payment for this aid, all were required to accept a Western, monarchical form of government; and, with the exception of Serbia and Montenegro, all were further required to accept the installation of a non-native dynasty.

Despite such powerful intervention in foreign and domestic affairs, three problems plagued the region for years to come. The first was that, despite the attempt to form a territory or state for each dominant ethnicity, no state was anywhere near homogenous, with the exception of Albania. In fact, large populations of ethnic groups commonly lived outside of the areas for which they had been named.

Such interspersion had existed for over a millen-

The Napoleonic conquests spread nationalism throughout the European continent, including the Ottoman-controlled Balkans.

nium, but the numerous violent conflicts that had broken out in the region's battle for independence increased migration. As the Ottoman Empire fell, ethnicities from other parts of the empire—Armenians and Greeks, for example—sought refuge in the newly-created Balkan territories. Additionally, there were internal population shifts. Christians left primarily Muslim areas, and Muslims emigrated from Christian-dominated territories. The obvious problem, then, in developing nation-states was that it was impossible to draw state borders around each, if any, nation of people, and this became problematic over time.

The 19th century witnessed the spread of nationalism across Europe, inflaming ethnic tensions everywhere. In the Balkans, like elsewhere, nationalism entrenched already-existing divisions within society.

For hundreds of years, there had been a separation on the peninsula between Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and Muslims. Because the Ottoman Empire had allowed its subjects the freedom to practice Christianity, it rarely meddled in church affairs or property. Throughout the centuries, therefore, it was these churches that were best able to preserve traditional language, culture, and artifacts. Because the Church (both Orthodox and Catholic) was inextricably linked to nationalism, this traditional division—between the eastern Serbs, Bulgarians, and Macedonians and the western Slovenes and Croats as well as between Christians and the Muslim Bosnians and Albanians—was deepened during this period.

The second problem that would continue to plague the nascent countries was the constant struggle between a centralized government and regional authority. For hundreds of years, village elders had been a major source of influence and stability; and under both the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires, authority had rested in the hands of local landlords, not a centralized power. Thus, the imposition of a Western, centralized form of governance was neither easy for the Balkan people to accept, nor for the new politicians to negotiate.

There existed a third challenge faced by the emerging Balkan states: economic disparity within the region. The southern and eastern half of the peninsula—Serbia, Bulgaria, and Albania—had been under Ottoman control for the longest period of time and, therefore, was the slowest to adapt to the new political and economic models imposed by the international interveners. This frustrated those groups, like the Slovenes and Croats, who had had more experience with Western systems and aggravated the already-difficult process of inter-ethnic cooperation.

WWI & WWII

The Balkans were not a major area of fighting during World War I, despite the fact that the conflict was sparked when a Bosnian-Serb, in association with an underground Serbian nationalist resistance organization, assassinated the ruling Austrian archduke of the region in Sarajevo in 1914. The people suffered the war, however, like most Europeans—with mass causalities and serious economic decline.

Another result of the war was the full collapse of three empires, all of which had jockeyed for influence in the region. The Ottoman Empire was dismantled, as were the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, both of which had been instrumental in the political and economic development of the Balkans.

American President Woodrow Wilson, leading the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, stressed the notion of national self-determination and the establishment of democratic states in Central and Eastern Europe; following this lead, a Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (otherwise known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) was officially established.

Bulgaria, on the other hand, lost territory. Having aligned itself with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it was forced to accept the Allies' terms. Bulgaria had already lost parts of present-day Macedonia during two regional wars just several years prior to the outbreak of WWI, and it lost the remaining Macedonian territory at the war's end.

With the rise of the German threat in the 1930s, the Balkan countries attempted to form an alliance to protect themselves from the devastation they had experienced during the First World War. They proved unable, however, to come to any real compromises on important matters, such as the acceptance of the borders established by the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.

Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia became independent states following the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, along with many other Central and Eastern European territories.

Though no country was eager to take sides in the growing conflict on the Continent, Germany and Italy's expansion eventually began to encroach on the Balkan states, whose leaders then realized the necessity of cooperating with Hitler and Mussolini for fear of having their territory taken by force. However, not everyone agreed to this new alliance. In Albania, the local population spiritedly, though ultimately unsuccessfully, resisted an Italian invasion in 1939. Two years later, the Yugoslav military led a coup against the royal government, which had been governing in-exile, within days of its signing of the Tripartite Pact, leading Hitler to believe invasion was the only way to establish order and alliance in the Balkans. Bulgaria, on the other hand, seeing an opportunity to regain its lost territory of Macedonia through a Nazi invasion, allied itself with the Axis powers.

Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria quickly partitioned the Yugoslav territories, with Germany taking much of Slovenia and Italy annexing the rest along with portions of the Croatian coast. Bulgaria claimed the region of Macedonia, as did Hungary with parts of Serbia. In what remained of Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia, the Axis powers set up puppet governments.

Croatia was nominally allowed to keep its independence in return for the cooperation that the Ustaše—a Croatian nationalist organization that had resisted the authority of the Serb-dominated Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the inter-war period—showed with the German authorities after the local ruling party refused to submit to the Nazis' demands. The Ustaše carried out numerous atrocities on local Serbs, killing some, expelling others, and forcibly converting the remainder to Catholicism.

An Ustaša soldier helps the Axis-powers keep order in Yugoslavia during World War II.

While the Allied and Axis powers struggled for control of continental Europe, various Balkan resistance groups arose in an attempt to overthrow their Nazi-supported fascist governments. The Četniks—Serbian supporters of the royalist government in-exile—initially had the support of the British government. However, this was eventually lost to the Yugoslav-wide communist Partisan movement. The Partisans, unlike the Četniks, refused to wait for outside assistance for their moment to attack the occupying forces.

Led by Josip Broz "Tito", a former soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army, the Partisans took refuge in the mountainous regions of the peninsula. With the goal of encouraging all Yugoslavs to join their ranks, they repeatedly attacked local collaborators despite the retribution that the outside forces inevitably inflicted on the local population. Nevertheless, the Partisans eventually prevailed.

They were successful for two main reasons: first, Tito—half Croat, half Slovene—put an end to inter-ethnic violence and led a cooperative movement to institute social reforms in the territories under his control, thus winning the hearts of the Balkan people. Second, once again, the major powers intervened, with the British supporting Tito's movement and the Soviet Union eventually liberating the peninsula from the east.

Josip Broz "Tito" consolidates power over the region and establishes the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Similar resistance organizations arose in Albania. The National Front saved its resources for the day when the Axis powers would be defeated by the larger, Allied powers; the communist National Liberation Movement, however, carried out a guerrilla war against the Italian troops no matter the retribution on the Albanian people at large. Also, like in Yugoslavia, the two resistance groups warred with each other in addition to their struggle with the occupying forces.

The National Front—a nationalist-oriented movement—feared the National Liberation Movement was merely a tool of the Yugoslav Partisans. When the German army sent several units to reinforce the Italians in 1943, it expanded "Albanian" lands, thus winning the support of the National Front, which quickly morphed from resistance organization to Nazi

collaborator. The National Front, which, unlike the Četniks in Yugoslavia, did not anticipate a restoration of the interwar monarchy, likely saw such an expansion as an opportunity for future security. Yet, such collaboration invigorated the National Liberation Movement, which ultimately toppled both the National Front and the Axis-occupiers in 1944.

The Communist Experience

The Balkans' external aid came at a cost, however, as both Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin used the region as a bargaining chip in their post-war negotiations over their respective spheres of influence in Europe. Churchill allowed Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria to become communist in return for a free hand in Greece, which was fighting its own communist insurgency.

A Soviet stamp commemorating the 25th anniversary of the communist revolution in Bulgaria. It declares the Soviet-Bulgarian partnership "indestructible for eternity".

As communists states, the new governments in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania all carried out purges at the many levels of government and in society. The party took control of all aspects of daily life, instituting large-scale collectivization projects and stripping people of ownership of their land and property.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria quickly became one of Stalin's staunchest allies. Its leaders came to power with Soviet assistance when the Red Army seized control of the country in 1944. The government's ability to quickly squash any domestic opposition—even following the often tumultuous process of de-Stalinization—earned the USSR's full support throughout the Cold War.

Yugoslavia

It was not long before Stalin and Tito came to odds. Tito resented Stalin's attempted interference in the domestic affairs of Yugoslavia, for which Stalin vetoed Yugoslavia's entrance into the international forum for the communist movement—the Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform. He attempted to discredit Tito, but, in liberating Yugoslavia from its wartime occupation, Tito had the people's loyalty. Stalin also tried to block Yugoslavia economically, but the West stepped in to assist.

It is unclear why Stalin did not oust Tito by military invasion, like he would in the 1950s and 1960s elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. Perhaps his decision was due to the fact that Tito had full control of and the ability to mobilize the Yugoslav military and police, or perhaps it was because Stalin would have had to march his troops over Romania and Bulgaria, two loyal communist allies. In any case, by 1948, Yugoslavia—while still communist—no longer towed the Soviet line.

Tito at first remained fastidious to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, but, starting in the 1950s, he adopted a "third-way" option toward governance. He abandoned central planning in favor of industries' ability to manage themselves—opposite from the Soviet Union's model of directing everything from Moscow—and began an era of de-collectivization and of disentangling the party from every-day decision-making. Tito

devolved as much real power from the communist party as possible and put it in the hands of the leaders of each of the Yugoslav republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia.

When Tito died in 1980, he left a fragile system. While Yugoslav citizens were more liberated—including the ability to travel freely to the West—than those in other communist countries, Tito's strategies had negative long-term ramifications. His economic policies led to massive inequality throughout the country, as Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia consistently out-produced Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro, aggravating the already-existing resentment within the region. Additionally, in Tito's attempts to grow the Yugoslav economy without fully embracing the liberal reforms necessary to do so, and the West's eagerness to disprove the Soviet model, Yugoslavia ended up $20 billion in debt to foreign governments by 1991 with no way to pay it off.

Ethnic conflict—though not necessarily violent in nature—had been a worry of Tito's. In 1971, in an attempt to guard Yugoslavia against a breakdown along ethnic lines, he established a collective state presidency with the goal of making sure each republic was represented equally and, thus, invested and dedicated to the federal state. Each republic appointed a member to serve on the collective presidency, over which Tito presided until his death.

The flag of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The flag celebrates the founding of a post-war federation on November 29, 1943 and represents South Slavic unity with a torch for each Yugoslav republic.

However, what Tito failed to appreciate was how great of a unifying force he had been in Yugoslavia and how directionless the country would be without him. With thirty years of each republic governing itself—making its own decisions about its people and its economy—a sudden lack of central vision or authoritative voice left the federal government vulnerable to infighting, which is what ensued in the 1980s.

Albania

In Albania, the direction of the communist party and of the line it would take on foreign policy was unclear following the end of the war. The leadership of the National Liberation Movement—now named the Democratic Front—was in disagreement over how it should behave towards Tito, whose Yugoslavia, the Democratic Front feared, would engulf Albania.

Koçi Xoxe, the organization secretary of the country's communist party and Minister of the Interior, advocated acceptance of Yugoslavia as the dominant, though comradely, force on the peninsula. However, when Tito broke with Stalin in 1948, the party decided to back its Secretary-General and Prime Minister, Enver Hoxha, who was then able to exploit the rift to gain support from Stalin. This support not only secured territorial integrity from any possible advances by Yugoslavia—thus, gaining Hoxha national popularity—it eliminated any and all domestic rivals.

Following Stalin's death, the General Secretary of the Soviet communist party, Nikita Khru-

shchev, led the country—and its satellites in Eastern Europe—through a period of reorganization and reformation. Stalin's model had served Hoxha well in modernizing the country, and such a shift in policy from the USSR threatened to destabilize his control. Additionally, Khrushchev attempted to reconcile the Soviet Union with Tito's Yugoslavia, another move that could shake the power base upon which Hoxha relied.

Hoxha's grip on Albania was supreme, however. He was able to retain control of the country, even after splitting with the USSR over these major changes in policy, and set Albania on a course of military and economic self-reliance that was ultimately to render it the poorest in Europe.

The End of Communism and the Transition to Democracy

Bulgaria

Bulgaria was the first Balkan country to undertake serious reform. Like other Central and Eastern European countries in the late 1980s, Bulgaria had witnessed an increase both in public criticism of the communist government and the government's tolerance of such criticism following the implementation of Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring).

On November 10, 1989—one day after the East German government announced it would allow travel from the German Democratic Republic to the West—the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) withdrew its support of the Prime Minster in favor of the Foreign Minister, whom it portrayed as a progressive reformer. It also underwent a restructuring, in the hopes of holding on to power in the face of communism's collapse in the region.

Though democratic opposition forces were mistrustful of the communists, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, formerly the BCP) won the country's first democratic elections, held in March 1990, with 47% of the vote. However, the opposition, Union Democratic Forces (UDF), believed the outcome to be unfair and accused the communists of rigging the ballot and of maintaining and utilizing a monopoly of the media.

Less than two years later, Bulgaria held another parliamentary election; this time, the opposition won a narrow victory. It formed a coalition government with the Turkish-based Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) party and undertook a large-scale campaign of de-communization within the government. The socialist party returned in the 1994 elections, though, after successfully co-opting the MRF to sustain a vote of no confidence in the governing democratic party.

By the mid-1990s, however, the socialists' refusal to implement reforms had brought Bulgaria to a state of crisis. Rampant corruption, skyrocketing inflation, and a collapse of the financial market eventually led the public to oust the former communists in the 1996 elections, the opposition UDF gaining 52% of the vote and the BSP a mere 22%.

Yugoslavia

Throughout the decade after Tito's death, the interplay of several factors led to the collapse of the country. As debt continued to mount, and the Soviet Union and Poland began to show signs of reorganization and unrest, the future of Yugoslavia was up in the air, and the republics had different ideas about which way the country should go.

Frustrated with the other republics after having bankrolled much of their spending for decades, Slovenian and Croatian leaders believed joining the European Community—now the European Union—was the best option. The Serbian leadership, whose government had aggregated a disproportionate amount of federal power following

Tito's death, wanted to recentralize the country, likely with Serbia itself at the helm.

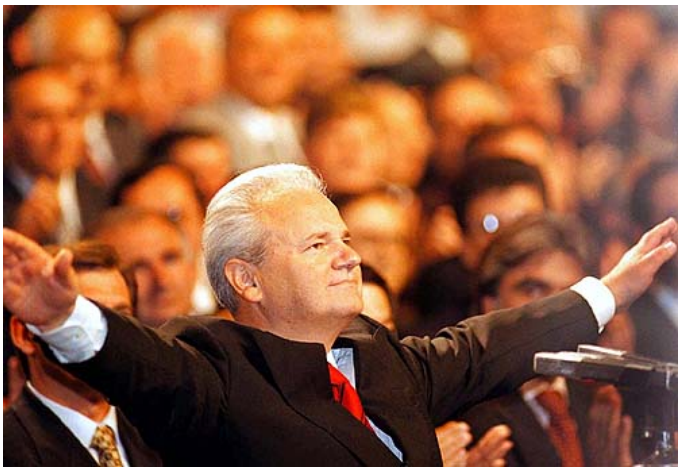
Republican elites saw that to hold on to their power, they would need to use a tactic other than Tito's emphasis on Yugoslav nationalism to keep the people's loyalty. Additionally, this period saw a new generation of politicians—who had traveled and been educated in the West—return to Yugoslavia to lead, only to find older bureaucrats reluctant to hand over power. Resorting to the tried and true method of inflaming nationalist (or ethnic) tensions to gain support for their policies and revolutionizing public discourse with bombastic rhetoric, young leaders brought a new approach to domestic politics that was ultimately destructive. The rise of Slobodan Milošević, leading Serbian politician in the 1990s, is the clearest example of the change that Yugoslav politics underwent during this period.

By interlacing nationalist rhetoric in his attempt to oust older leaders from the party in his "anti-bureaucratic revolution", Milošević gained massive popular support in Serbia. In 1990, he was elected president of Serbia, and young communist leaders loyal to him were elected in Montenegro and the two provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, to which Tito had given autonomy and representation in the federal government of Yugoslavia.

By the collapse of communism in 1989, Yugoslavs had elected politicians who were accountable only to the majority ethnicity in the three leading and most powerful republics: Serbs in Serbia, Croats in Croatia, and Slovenes in Slovenia.

Per the 1974 constitution, any federal state of Yugoslavia could leave the union with a majority vote in a republic-wide referendum; in 1991, Slovenian, Croatian, and Macedonian politicians began campaigns to dislodge their states from the federal government at large.

Having already recalled their troops from the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) after Serbia had requested their use to crack down on its Albanian



Slobodan Milošević addresses the crowd at a political rally.

population's protests in Serbia's southern province of Kosovo, Slovenia easily brushed back Yugoslavia's attempts, led by Milošević, to forcefully keep it from leaving. Macedonia also passed a referendum, which, after a few years, was resolved in negotiated settlements with Serbia and Greece. Croatia, however, was initially less successful. Because of the large number of Serbs living in eastern Croatia—who wished to remain tied to Serbia—Serbia was determined to claim them, and their property, for Yugoslavia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina faired far worse than Croatia. Lying directly in between both Croatia and Serbia, and with an extraordinarily diverse and interspersed population of ethnic Croats, Serbs, and Bošniaks, Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders were in disagreement over what its course should be.

As early as 1991, Milošević and nationalist Croatian President Franjo Tudjman had discussed partitioning Bosnia between themselves; yet in 1992, following a referendum largely boycotted by the local Serb population, the Bosnian state declared independence.

In an effort to claim the Serb population, the Serb-led JNA and JNA-equipped military of the Serb-minority communities captured roughly 60% of Bosnia's territory and carried out an ethnic cleansing campaign amongst the population.

Following suit, the nationalist Croatian Defense Council—the military wing of the self-proclaimed Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia—launched a counter-offensive and conducted its own ethnic cleansing. Radicalized Muslims within the Bošniak population carried out attacks on both Serbs and Croats, and, in turn, Serbs and Croats attacked mosques and Muslim monuments.

The Bosnian conflict ended in 1995 with intervention by the international community and NATO peacekeeping troops on the ground. Earlier attempts by the UN to halt the violence with a peacekeeping force or by economic sanction or regional blockade were not only ineffective, they

A Bosnian special forces solder and civilians are caught in Serb sniper fire during the 45-month long siege of Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo.

sent mixed signals to the warring parties by simultaneously publically condemning the atrocities, yet not stopping them outright. Eventually the United States convinced the Croats and Bošniaks to join forces against the Serbs, which proved effective in recapturing lost territory. It was at this point, in 1995, that Milošević agreed to come to the negotiating table.

Less than two years later, however, Serbia returned to the international spotlight after a violent ethnic-Albanian militia in the province of Kosovo began attacking Serb military and police installations.

Beginning in the 1980s, Kosovar Albanian students at the University of Priština in Kosovo started to protest for greater rights for the province. Kosovo, nearly 90% Albanian at the time, had received autonomous status within federal Yugoslavia, but many wished to see it a full-fledged republic and no longer the territory of Serbia. These protests were violently suppressed, and the Serbian government undertook a harsh campaign to root out the instigators.

This new climate—wherein the Serbian government harassed anyone who had been associated with the movement for independence and laid off Albanian workers, civil servants, and teachers and replaced them with Serbs from the remaining 10% of the population—convinced many young Albanian males to seek refuge and income in other countries, like Germany, Switzerland, and the US as *Gastarbeiter* (or "guest workers").

In the late 1980s, Milošević was further able to curtail Kosovo's independence. In capitalizing on his popularity—and, in fact, increasing his popularity—by staging massive rallies where he inflamed ethnic tensions in order to consolidate his authority and power for Serbia, he gained enough political support to have Kosovo's autonomous status revoked and its parliament dissolved. The Albanian Kosovars, in turn, formed the peaceful Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), declared independence, and set up a parallel government, complete with a parliament and health care and education systems funded by remittances from the Kosovar Albanian diaspora. However, several years later, following the end of the conflict in Bosnia in 1995, the status of Kosovo was left out of the peace talks—one of Milošević's conditions for negotiation. This disheartened the followers of the LDK and its leader, Ibrahim Rugova, and created conditions ripe for ethnic violence.

Some Kosovar *Gastarbeiter* returned home to organize a resistance movement; others, still in Europe and America, sent money with which to purchase weapons and supplies. Other weapons and supplies were paid for with money accumu-

lated by running heroin from Afghanistan, via Turkey, to continental Europe; and in 1997, the toppling of the government in Albania opened up yet another supply of cheap weapons and an unguarded border through which to smuggle them.

Late in 1997, this resistance movement, called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), began targeted attacks on Serb police stations. Wearing ski masks and seeking refuge in the mountains, the KLA proved difficult for the Serb authorities to locate and punish. As attacks grew more frequent, the Serbian police and Serb-led JNA became frustrated with not being able to locate their attackers.

By this time the KLA had recruited numerous Kosovar Albanian villagers to use as militia; and, unable to tell the difference between the true KLA and the impoverished and enthused populace, the Serbs bombed homes and villages—sometimes of a suspected attacker, but often indiscriminately.

By the autumn of 1998, fighting had reached a level the international community could no longer ignore. Without luck, the US, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia presided over peace talks between Milošević and LDK and KLA representatives in Rambouillet, France. When the JNA broke a cease-fire and ratcheted up attacks on Albanian Kosovars as it swept through the province in an attempt to secure the area militarily, the US felt it was left with little choice. It led NATO in a 12-week bombing campaign of Serb military units in Kosovo and even in the city of Belgrade, the capital of Serbia.

Members of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Ski masks kept fighters' identity from Serb authorities.

Eventually, Milošević conceded and NATO troops entered Kosovo, officially disbanding the KLA—which the US had used as ground forces during the bombing—and provided security for the United Nations to install UNMIK, the UN Mission in Kosovo. While still technically a province of Serbia, Kosovo was to be administratively operated by UNMIK until Kosovo's leaders and the Serbian government could reach a negotiated settlement.

Though scrapping "Socialist" from the country's official title (making it simply the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and transforming his League of Communists party into the Socialist Party of Serbia, Milošević maintained an authoritarian grip on Serbia and Montenegro until the end of the 20th century. Relying on his old method of igniting Serbian nationalism, his control of the Yugoslav media, and internal political support, he was able to secure the federal presidency of Yugoslavia in 1997, despite being forced to forfeit his tenure as president of Serbia due to constitutional limits.

Another reason Milošević was so successful was that his political opponents were plagued by disorganization and infighting. However, they received a boost in 1996 when Milošević refused to recognize democratic gains in Belgrade's 1996 municipal elections, which elicited public outcry. The JNA issued a statement saying that it would not intervene, allowing public demonstrations to grow into large-scale protests against the regime. Eventually, Milošević was forced to concede his socialist party had lost.

By the end of the Kosovo conflict in 1999, the Serbian electorate was compelled to oust Milošević in favor of his democratic opposition.

While strategic attacks were carried out by the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA soldiers encouraged Albanian Kosovars to form local militias and join the resistance movement against the Serbian-led Yugoslav National Army, the JNA.

His rivals, Vojislav Koštunica and Zoran Djindjić, undertook a campaign to implement economic reforms, root out corruption in the public sector, and dismantle organized crime networks, which had been profiting from the trafficking of both drugs and people. Djindjić also had Milošević arrested and extradited to The Hague for prosecution by the United Nation's War Crimes Tribunal, a move that was not popular at home.

At the end of the decade, Yugoslavia consisted only of Serbia and Montenegro. However, in 2003, at Montenegro's behest, Serbia accepted the terms of a looser federal union, known as Serbia and Montenegro. In 2006, the Montenegrin government held a referendum to decide once again the issue of secession. The pro-separation movement won 55.5% of the vote—.5% above the EU-imposed threshold—and the country declared itself independent for the first time in over 90 years.

Montenegrins celebrate Montenegro's independence from Serbia.

Albania

One of the last countries in Central and Eastern Europe to take part in the democratic revolution, Albania deposed its communist government in 1992. Though its powerful communist leader, Enver Hoxha, had died in 1985, the country did not begin to emerge from its era of repression until prompted by Hoxha's political heir, Ramiz Alia.

At first Alia was constrained by both Hoxha's powerful widow and by a number of ultra-conservative members of the Albanian Politburo, the executive wing of the communist party. However—recognizing the inefficiencies, corruption, and repression over which the former regime had ruled—Alia slowly began to relax some of Hoxha's harshest policies. After first giving farmers the right to profit from their labor by increasing their amount of privately-held land and allowing them to sell their goods at free markets, he then granted the right of Albanians to travel abroad, practice their religion (strictly outlawed under Hoxha), and he reestablished a ministry of justice, which had been abolished for almost thirty-five years.

Despite being a reformer, Alia was not in favor of fully relinquishing control—his concessions were made to keep his government from suffering the same collapse as those in other Central and Eastern European countries had witnessed.
As the 1980s came to a close, the Albanian peo-

ple began to demand more, however. The existence of competing political parties was legalized, and the communists loosened their grip over social organizations; but the government soon cracked down when popular rallies in provincial areas turned violent, prompting thousands of Albanians to flee southward to Greece. Another, larger, outburst that resulted in the toppling of Albania's most prominent statue of Enver Hoxha again resulted in a communist government crackdown, wherein oppositionists were beaten. Thousands more Albanians fled, this time to Italy.

In the country's first multiparty elections, in March 1991, the communists gained 51% of the vote, thanks mostly to high turnout in the countryside; the parliament quickly elected Alia as president. This government would not last for long, however, as the communists-turned-socialists brought no real change. Alia, prompted by utter governmental paralysis, scheduled a new round of elections for the next year, in which the Democratic party, led by Sali Berisha, won almost 66% of the vote.

Current State of Affairs

Albania

Not everyone was pleased with Berisha's pace of reform. The democratic party's extensive and vigorous anti-communist agenda excluded a startling high number of people from public service, and Berisha's ruthless style worried some Albanians, who feared the country's return to dictatorship.

The popular demonstrations that initially brought the democratic government—headed by Berisha and Prime Minister Alexandër Meski—to power had destroyed the country's already-decaying infrastructure and drastically delayed economic development. However, the Meski government undertook a rapid campaign of economic liberalization, which brought much-needed foreign aid.

Albanian riot police hold back angry citizens after the collapse of a pyramid scheme in 1997.

This aid, together with remittances from Albanians abroad, increased the country's living standards; yet unemployment remained startlingly high. With 10-15% of the population working in Greece and Italy, the domestic unemployment rate leveled at about 33% throughout the mid-1990s.

In 1997, the country utterly collapsed into anarchy after a pyramid scheme failed and lost the investments of approximately 50% of citizens. Albanians took to the streets to riot, demanding government compensation for their losses (which totaled approximately one billion dollars). Police attempted to suppress the rioters but were outmanned by the protesters, who set fire to government buildings all across the country and raided government weapons depots. Many guns were sold to the Kosovo Liberation Army at a low cost and with great ease, as the government had by this time declared a state of emergency and law and military personnel had deserted their posts for fear of popular attack.

Government measures, however, failed to work; and with more violence following the president's

re-election by the Albanian parliament—boycotted by the opposition—Berisha negotiated to create a cooperative government to oversee upcoming parliamentary elections. The socialists emerged with a landslide victory of 118 out of 155 seats, and Berisha resigned in favor of the socialist party's General Secretary, Rexhep Meidani.

The democratic coalition, however, returned to power—with Berisha as Prime Minister—in the 2005 elections, winning roughly 33% of the vote, the socialists 12%, and the remainder split by numerous smaller parties. The socialists challenged the results in court, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reported various instances of disorganization, improper procedures, and even some cases of violence.

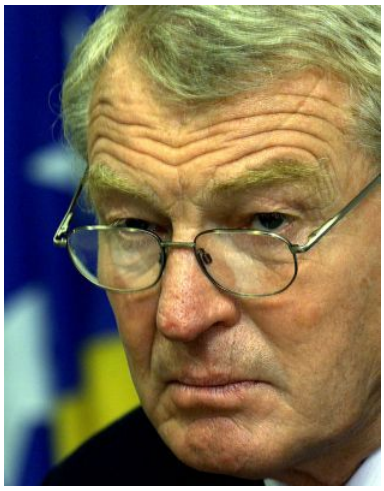
Despite these claims, the victory was decisive. The democratic coalition ran on a platform of fighting organized crime—extraordinarily powerful in Albania—ending corruption, spurring economic growth, and continuing to reduce the government's presence from its citizens' everyday lives. Following the new government's attempt at reform, Albania was invited in 2008 to join NATO, and it remains a possible future member of the European Union.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The 1995 Dayton Peace Accords split Bosnia and Herzegovina into two states under one federal system. The Bošniak-Croat Federation controls 51% of the territory, and the Serb Republic—or Republika Srpska—the remaining 49%. The government system maintains a delicate ethnic balance. Each state has its own police and army, and the federal presidency is collective, with a representative of each ethnicity—Bošniak, Croat, and Serb—taking a turn chairing the position. The legislative branch is similarly divided.

Though much authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina is at the state or canton level, without a doubt the most powerful body in the country is the United Nations Office of the High Representative, or OHR. The OHR serves the purpose of implementing the civilian component of the transfer of power from the UN—following the Dayton Peace Accords—to the federal government.

The High Representative has the power to remove from office any popularly-elected official



Paddy Ashdown, UN High Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2002-2006.

or overturn any piece of legislation passed by government representatives. While this measure remains in order to ensure Bosnia's democratic transition and uphold its policy of respecting human rights, it has also been a source of tension, as overturning free elections and invalidating legislation has appeared less than democratic to many of the country's citizens.

However, ethnic conflict remains a real threat. The system of government negotiated at Dayton ultimately entrenched, rather than eradicated, ethnic tensions. Bombastic, nationalist language has been—and continues to be—a force in Bosnian politics. Additionally, the thousands of internally displaced persons, who still cannot return to their homes without fear of violence, remains a source of tension.

Recently, there have been worries—both within Bosnia and from the international community—

that the country threatens to collapse into ethnic conflict once again. Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in February 2008 increased tensions within the rotating federal presidency, which had already reached a debilitating deadlock.

Despite the fact that the UN has repeatedly stated that Kosovo's independence—recommended, though still unrecognized, by the UN itself—does not create a precedent for succession by minority communities, the fear is that the Republika Srpska will now succeed—a threat the Serb Prime Minister has made—and that this will lead the Croat and Bošniak populations to take up arms. Though security is still provided by the international community, worry remains high.

Also crippling is the country's poor economic performance. Following the outbreak of war in 1992, the already-low level of industrial production dropped off completely. With the end of the conflict in 1995, many Bosnians returned to agriculture for lack of any other source of income; the most recent estimates put Bosnia's unemployment at 25%.

Though international aid has reached over $18 billion, corruption and organized crime have impeded the development and growth of business, as has the problem of over-bureaucratization in government, whose employees' salaries currently cost Bosnia one half of its GDP.

Bulgaria

The democratic UDF was elected in 1996 because its leaders promised Bulgarians economic, social, and political reform; and, once in power, they quickly set the country on a path toward economic stabilization by initiating a large-scale privatization program and consulting extensively with the World Bank.

They also changed direction on foreign policy. Bulgarian leaders blamed Milošević for regional instability and, in turn, offered their military support in NATO's on-going peacekeeping efforts in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. In 2003, while occupying a seat on the UN Security Council, Bulgaria backed—and even sent troops to support—the United States' invasion of Iraq. And in 2007, Bulgaria, along with Romania, joined the European Union in its second round of expansion.

The UDF was not able to retain power, however, after Bulgaria's King Simeon II, the country's ex-monarch, returned to politics by forming his own party. The populist National Movement Simeon II (NMS) was extraordinarily popular and drew away support from the UDF in the 2001 elections, winning almost 43% of the popular vote and taking half the seats in the parliament.

While the NMS reassured the public—and the UDF opposition—that it would continue along the path of reform, it was unable to follow through on the high expectations its leaders had created during the campaign and was ousted in favor of a coalition of the Bulgarian communist and socialist parties in the 2005 elections. While in some ways a set-back for democratic reform, the new government—Coalition for Bulgaria—moved ahead with the democratic government's plans for European integration, which they had been against in the early 1990s.

The current issues Bulgarians face are common not only to the Balkan region, but to many former communist countries; and while it has been more successful than Albania and the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria lags drastically behind its fellow EU member states.

Unemployment, while stabilizing at 10% in 2005, was 16%-17% for most of the transition. In addition, income disparity continues to grow—the highest being between urban and rural areas. In 2004, unemployment in Sofia, Bulgaria's capital, stood at about 3.5%, while in some small towns it reached over 27%. Lack of jobs has led to a mass emigration from the country, as many, even college-educated young peo-

ple, have left in favor of menial, under-the-table jobs in Western European countries, like Greece and Italy.

Corruption also remains a crippling factor. Bribery and extortion have been rooted in many aspects of everyday life; and at the political level, the Bulgarian mafia has had, as of late, the upper hand. As of October 2008, there had been 125 contract killings of businessmen and politicians in Bulgaria since 1993, and 75% of businessmen retained professional security protection.
Despite being a member of the EU—and, it seems, even because of the economic aid pro-

Funeral procession for Georgy Stoev, a writer on organized crime in Bulgaria, in April 2008

vided by the EU—the mob has grown ever stronger. EU officials frustrated with leaders' inability to clean up politics, especially the justice system, froze nearly $670 million in aid in 2008 and threatened to halt billions more. However, Bulgaria's challenges remain difficult, as some highly influential mobsters have left bribing politicians in favor of running for office themselves.

Ethnic issues are less of a concern for Bulgaria than for other Balkan countries. Unlike the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria has never—at least in modern history—suffered from violent ethnic conflict. However, some problems remain. In the 1980s, the communist government undertook an assimilation campaign of the ethnic Turkish community (about 9% of the population). Many Turks fled to Turkey during this period, but the government was reluctant to allow the ethnically Slavic Muslims to emigrate along with them. However, following the collapse of communism, many rights were restored. The government renounced the practice of forced assimilation. Property was returned to those who had abandoned it when they fled the country, and Turkish language was even integrated in the school system.

The country's response to its ethnic Macedonian population, however, has been less conciliatory. The government, despite criticism from the Council of Europe and human rights groups, refuses to acknowledge Macedonians as a minority population. They are viewed, with the remainder of the population—with the exception of Turks, Slavic Muslims, and Roma—as Slavic Bulgarians.

Kosovo
Under the administration of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) following the end of hostilities in 1999, the former Serbian province of Kosovo has attempted to find stability, economic opportunities, and recognition as an independent country. However, this has been difficult for several reasons.

Stability initially came in the form a strong presence by the international community. Under UN Resolution 1244, UNMIK was given transitional administrative control of the day-to-day functions of governing Kosovo. The UN provided a police force, a stable currency (the Euro), and personnel who would attempt to teach and slowly transfer authority over to Kosovars.

However, Kosovo's provisional institutions for self-government were slow to start. The capacity for civil society was low, and the recent war had polarized the region. Tensions between ethnic Albanian and Serb Kosovars, already tense before the eruption of violent conflict, were at a boiling point; and KFOR troops more often than not were protecting Serbs, their property, and

Orthodox shrines from Kosovar Albanians rather than the other way around.

Unrest and an unstable political situation meant that businesses development and foreign direct investment were practically non-existent, which made finding a job difficult for the thousands of young adults pouring into the cities from the countryside looking for work.

A UN vehicle is set aflame in March 2004, during two days of demonstrations in which rioters overtook both UN police and NATO forces.

With such high numbers of unemployed, frustrated, politically-charged youth living in overcrowded cities, conditions were ripe for violence; this is what resulted in March, 2004 when a group of ethnic Serbs allegedly killed two young Albanian Kosovars. The Albanian Kosovar community erupted into rioting; and before KFOR troops and UN police could restore order, 900 people had been injured, 19 killed, 4,500 displaced, and 700 Serb and other minorities' homes, ten public buildings, and 30 Orthodox churches had been damaged or destroyed.

Much of the frustration behind the rioting emanated from the lagging economy and from the international community's inability to broker independence for Kosovo. The Serbian government insisted that Kosovo remain part of Serbia, though with a high degree of independence. However, after almost five years of separation from Serbia, it was not likely that anyone in Kosovo, save the ethnic Serbs, would consent to anything less than full independence.

In February 2008, after two stages of negotiations, which spanned two years, ended without any resolution, the province declared independence. Though recognized by the United States, most member states of the European Union, and over 30 other countries, Kosovo remains unrecognized by Serbia and, more importantly, the United Nations.

In 2005, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan appointed former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari to conduct an investigation and make recommendations on Kosovo's status. Ahtisaari found that a gradual, supervised independence would be the best—if only—way forward. However, Russia and China—both with their own break-away minority communities—vowed to veto, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, any motion that stripped Serbia of its former territory.

The future of Kosovo is still somewhat unsettled. Divisions between the ethnic Serb and Albanian populations have widened over time. One third of the ethnic Serb population lives in the region of Mitrovica, north of the Ibar River. This area is subsidized and supported by the Serbian government, which has encouraged the creation of

Albanian Kosovars celebrate Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia in February 2008.

parallel institutions, thus creating a *de facto* partitioning of Kosovo. This proved problematic in late 2008 when the region initially refused to accept a new, European Union-led security force, EULEX, in place of UN police.

While the Albanian Kosovar population has proven less than tolerant of the remaining two-thirds of the Serb population, Kosovo's government has repeatedly, at least in rhetoric, reached out to the minority community and has begun implementing the steps recommended in the Ahrisaari plan. Though demonstrations celebrating the country's independence have been peaceful, KFOR troops remain on the ground and continue to provide both overall security and protection for Kosovo's ethnic Serbs and their property.

Macedonia

Macedonian independence from Yugoslavia, while non-violent for the most part, has not been without conflict. Border issues with Serbia proved to be one difficulty, though a surmountable one, as Macedonia was without a sizeable Serb minority and, therefore, less important to Milošević than Croatia or Bosnia.

However, problems with Greece, which borders Macedonia to the south, have proven harder to solve. Greece initially refused to recognize the former Yugoslav republic as an independent country. With rising tensions between Serbia, Greece, and even Bulgaria—which historically had called the territory its own—the UN deployed a peacekeeping mission to Macedonia in 1992.

Eventually Greece agreed to independence, with several concessions from Macedonia. One demand, however, remains unmet. Greece contests the country's official name of the Republic of Macedonia, believing the Macedonian government to harbor aspirations for territorial expansion into the northern region of Greece, also named Macedonia.

Currently the United States and Turkey—a long-time rival of Greece—are the only other countries to recognize Macedonia by its self-proclaimed title. The rest of the international community, including the UN, recognizes it as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Until its demand is met, Greece has vowed to block the country's entrance into both NATO and the EU, for which, by most accounts, it proves to be a strong and capable candidate.

Though untouched by the violence of the Bosnian war in the early 1990s, Macedonia witnessed the ramifications of the Kosovo conflict several years later. Many Kosovar Albanians fled the province for Macedonia following attacks by the Serb police and JNA in 1998 and 1999, as did a handful of former Kosovo Libera-

Macedonian citizens protest in April 2008 after Greece blocks Macedonia's accession to NATO over disagreement on the country's name.

tion Army members who wished to carry the independence movement to Macedonia, where ethnic Albanians account for 25% of the population.

This influx of ethnic Albanian immigrants, some of them violent, unsettled the fragile democracy, which accepted the aid of NATO peacekeepers in 2001. Additionally, the European Union and United States helped broker the Ohrid Agreement, which guarantees more rights for the Albanian community at large, while maintaining the territorial integrity of the country. In this time, Macedonia has become a stable democracy; however an OSCE mission—in place since 1992—remains to monitor the country's development.

Montenegro

Since severing its ties with Serbia, Montenegro, already equipped with most of the tools required to govern, has established the remaining institutions necessary for independence. In the economic sector, especially, changes were made to adjust to the new reality. A central bank was established, and the government chose to adopt the Euro as Montenegro's currency, rather than continuing to use the Yugoslav or Serb dinar. Currently a member of the World Bank and IMF, it has also entered into its own negotiations with the EU and hopes to one day be a member.

While Montenegro suffers from higher than usual unemployment, about 15%, the economy is successful by regional standards, especially considering development was delayed by its association with Serbia, which suffered sanctions throughout the 1990s for its aggressive policies. Continuing along the path of democratization and economic reform, Montenegro has privatized many industries and has even attracted foreign direct investment, especially in the area of tourism.

Serbia

Since Milošević's ouster, Serbia has been more stable and maintained better relations with its neighbors and with the international community. However, the country's development has not been smooth or easy, and many steps remain to be taken before Serbia can reach the same political and economic integration into Europe as the rest of the peninsula.

Following the rise to power of the 18-party opposition coalition, Democratic Opposition of Serbia, in the 2000 elections, populist President Vojislav Koštunica and reformist Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić began to differ on the direction the new government should take, and the coalition soon fell apart.

Some of the issues at stake—Kosovo, Milošević's extradition to the War Crimes Tribunal, Serbia's relationship with the West, and a crackdown on organized crime and corruption within the government—stirred opposition not only within the new governing coalition, but within the government at large. In 2003, after several close calls, Djindjić was assassinated; the alleged perpetrator was a former commander of the police's special operations unit under the Serbian Interior Ministry.

This conflict of approach to reform is visible in Serbia's elections as well. The Serbian Radical Party (SRS) has consistently won a sizable portion of votes, due to citizens' dissatisfaction with the concessions Serbia has had to make on its path toward Western integration.

One concession that has been particularly unpopular is Serbia's cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The extradition of Milošević and other Serbs wanted for trial at The Hague has been a difficult issue for politicians to navigate. Though Milošević was no longer a desirable political leader to the majority of the country, he and others like Radovan Karadžić and General Ratko Mladić—both former leaders of Bosnia's Republika Srpska—have been viewed as heroes by many because of their protection of ethnic Serbs from Croats and Bošniaks during the Bosnian conflict. After more than a decade of

Milošević-style rhetoric and two complicated and devastating wars, it has proven hard to eradicate nationalist politics.

Another reason for the SRS's popularity is the party's critique of the reforms pushed through by successive democratic governments. While austere, these changes to the constitution and the economy especially have been necessary to move Serbia forward with integration into Western institutions and for future democratic development; yet many citizens are frustrated by the EU's slowing pace for expansion and are doubtful that giving in to the West's demands will help solve the country's problems.

Though the SRS is popular, its party's leaders have yet to form a coalition government, as few others will work with them. The presidency has also consistently been won by a member of a reformist party, yet only after multiple rounds of voting. In the end, the Serbian electorate has proven its desire to move toward governmental reform, economic growth, and regional stability. Just how to do it, however, remains a heavily debated issue.

President of Serbia, Boris Tadić, reaffirms Serbia's commitment to reform. In February 2009, one year after Kosovo's declaration of independence, Tadić told media that Kosovo was "not a state", though he reassured the international community that Serbia will pursue its foreign policy regarding Kosovo with words, not violence.

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