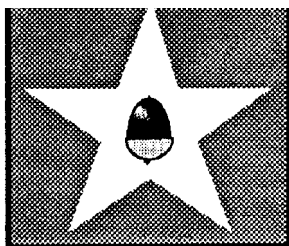


**Conflict Studies Research Centre**

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**Albania, FYROM & Kosova  
Evolving States & The European Union**

**October 2002**



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# Albania, FYROM & Kosova Evolving States & The European Union

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*This paper explores the future possibilities of EU integration of a number of southern Balkan states, and the influences of the competing models of American and European business in the region.*

Albania and its neighbours were for many years after World War II of little international interest, as the poorest region of mainland Europe and under communist domination.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of communism, the path towards Europe and modernization has naturally been difficult, and is closely related to the wider issues of the Albanian national question, and the future inter-kin and inter-state relationships between the different Albanian populations in the neighbouring territories of Kosova, Montenegro, FYROM and Greece. In turn, this progress is related to the development of free market economies, and wider issues of international politics in the Balkans. The evolution of Albania under Enver Hoxha into one of the most severe communist regimes in existence and its gradual isolation within the world communist movement led to serious economic backwardness and extreme political autarky.<sup>2</sup> The Albanian communities in the neighbouring states were the object of ruthless cultural, economic and political repression under the Titoist dictatorship that led to the emigration of hundreds of thousands of people and found its ultimate expression in the Milosevic regime. With the end of communism in the formal sense 1991-2, and the gradual collapse of the remaining institutions of the one-party state under the rule of Dr Sali Berisha's Democratic Party government after 1992, Albania began to open to outside influences of many kinds: cultural, political, religious and economic.<sup>3</sup>

Historic influences from the United States, always the major destination country for the Albanian diaspora since late Ottoman times, began to combine with neighbouring Balkan, mainstream European and other influences to create complex and often largely new external relationships. As Albania and the Albanian language are not widely studied in Europe, and as there were close links between the Berisha government in Tirana post-1992 and the US diaspora of right wing post-Second World War émigrés, it was perhaps not surprising that the United States soon became the major political influence on the new democratic government, and the majority of the Albanian people were happy to look to the USA for moral, economic and political models.<sup>4</sup> A very rapid and dramatic transition from the planned economy was followed; with an adoption, after 1992, of extreme laissez faire free market economic principles, and the minimum of state involvement in business.<sup>5</sup>

This national commitment in turn brought approval of Albania in official US circles, in contrast to the statist and neo-communist Milosevic regime in Yugoslavia. This effect was much less marked in Europe, where Yugoslavia was for a long time seen in a more favourable light, and socialist and centrist EU governments, such as France, were less critical of the Yugoslav economic, social and political system.<sup>6</sup>

As the deepening crisis in Yugoslavia progressed after 1991, and the limited democracy allowed in Kosova under the 1974 Constitution was suspended by Milosevic in 1989 after a period of bitter social conflict and mass strikes, there was also an immediate and real fear of the war spreading to Albania via Kosova, the so-called 'spillover' scenario.<sup>7</sup> In these circumstances, the military protection of the United States, through its dominant role in NATO, became a major priority for Albania. In the absence of any European defence capacity and when EU policy was often generally inclined towards Serbia, the US gained an unchallenged role in the Albanian political and security psychology. The same processes also affected the Albanians in Kosova, who put their faith in President George Bush's famous 1992 'line in the sand' undertaking, threatening Milosevic with military retaliation if the war in Yugoslavia spread to Kosova.<sup>8</sup>

The southern Balkan crisis, slow moving and undramatic compared to the large scale fighting in Croatia and Bosnia, was nevertheless profound, and eventually, in 2000/2001, embraced the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Albania's western neighbour with a 23% plus<sup>9</sup> Albanian minority, living mostly in western FYROM adjoining Albania. In 1993 the United Nations had deployed its first preventative peacekeeping force in the Balkans there, later UNPREDEP, with the first American component of a Balkan deployment, in response to a perceived threat of aggression from Milosevic's Serbia.<sup>10</sup> The preventative peacekeeping mission of UNPREDEP was to defend the FYROM borders against possible invasion, and the force had no mandate to involve itself in internal FYROM matters. In a climate of increasing concern about the stability of FYROM, and the possibility of reopening the historic Macedonian Question, and the US fear that an implosion of FYROM would mean a conflict between Turkey and Greece, the threat to peace remained real.<sup>11</sup>

All southern Balkan regional relationships with European institutions have been conditioned by this poor local security climate, where almost as soon as the last vestiges of the one-party state were removed, external threats to the territory of the Albanian inhabited lands of the southern Balkans meant that the development of normal links with the wider Europe was adversely affected. This did not mean, of course, that the new post-communist Albanian political elites were any less pro-European, in a general philosophical sense, than their counterparts elsewhere in eastern Europe, only that the priority for integration of the country into 'Euro-Atlantic' structures often meant different things in the Albanian lands than in Brussels or Strasbourg, or, for that matter, in Prague or Warsaw. With national security and border stability a priority, the one viable and functioning Euro-Atlantic structure important to Tirana governments was NATO, and as they lacked a defence component, the Council of Europe and the European Union often came a poor second. The geographical proximity of Europe compared to America mattered little in this climate of national security breakdown in the region accompanying the rise of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, and the threat to Kosova of the 'Greater Serbia' project.<sup>12</sup> The United States had, and still has, various geopolitical interests in the region, and a strongly supportive country on the Adriatic seaboard has always had its attractions to NATO.<sup>13</sup>

It is, of course, a debatable question as to how far EU and US policy towards the region really diverged in the early 1990s, before the traumatic period of the Bosnian war and the US-brokered Dayton Accords of the 1995 period. Some Americans prominent in the Bush administration such as Lawrence Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft were often seen in the region as pro-Serb,<sup>14</sup> and Secretary of State James Baker was one of the strongest advocates of maintaining the territorial integrity of

Yugoslavia, a policy which is now widely seen as having played into the hands of Slobodan Milosevic. Some Europeans, for example most of the Scandinavian countries, were supportive of Kosova, if only on human rights grounds. France had close links with Dr Sali Berisha, who had studied cardiology there under communism,<sup>15</sup> Italy and the Vatican had close relations with Dr Ibrahim Rugova, the pacifist Kosova Albanian leader.<sup>16</sup> But direct links between Brussels institutions and the Albanian world were generally weak.

Albania as a nation had traditional relationships dating back to pre-communist times with neighbours such as Italy and Greece, and these were quickly resumed in the post-1991 period, sometimes productively, as in the rising hard currency income from Albanians working in these nations, and sometimes negatively, with the mass emigration attempts of summer 1991. The Albanian diaspora in Europe, and the natural growth of political lobbies for Kosova that came with it did not occur primarily in mainstream, founder-EU countries apart from Germany. Along with Sweden, with its large number of Kosova refugees, Norway has many Albanians, and in another non-EU European country, Switzerland, there had been a growing, predominantly Kosova diaspora for some years, which accelerated rapidly after the rise of Milosevic and the introduction of a police-state regime in Kosova.<sup>17</sup> In the early 1990s the Albanian diaspora in Switzerland was more numerous than in all the EU countries put together, a further background reason for the dilution of EU influence over Albania and Kosova. In the United States, diaspora numbers grew slowly up to about 1994, but have accelerated rapidly since, and by 2001 had reached about 300,000 people. Thus a pattern of external relationships was developing for Albania and Kosova which circumvented traditional diplomatic procedures and international organizations, based in part on large-scale emigration and population movement, and in part on historic links, all taking place under the common security protection provided by NATO. In the crises in the region post-1997 involving Tirana, this has led to some dilution of EU diplomatic influence, and when it was strong, as in the summer 1997 period and the new Socialist-led coalition, the strength was linked to military power, in the form of 'Operation Alba', the Greek and Italian led peacekeeping force that was provided.

In the often chaotic conditions of the post-communist Balkans, in the early 1990's, there were no immediate proposals for EU enlargement for local elites to respond to, as all attention was given to negotiations with more stable central European ex-communist states like Hungary and Poland, in order to strengthen the position of reformists against conservative local forces linked to Russia. In this political vacuum, different international orientations developed for the Balkan countries, particularly Albania, without an apparent external logic. However, in fact, an underlying pattern was consistent throughout these years, of steady Tirana defence commitment to NATO, while Kosova remained under the brutal rule of Milosevic's regime, and in Skopje, substantial Serb and ultimately some residual Russian influence remained under the Kiro Gligorov government.<sup>18</sup>

EU direct aid programmes were important in the early days of post-communist transition in Albania, particularly food aid in the 1991-1993 period, and also in FYROM where the EU ECHO humanitarian aid arm was active throughout the 1990s. Up until about 1995, though, this EU activity in FYROM on the economic front was dwarfed by the role of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which had been mobilized after the winter 1992-3 economic and fuel crisis to stabilize the FYROM economy and the currency at a macroeconomic level. The period of UN economic sanctions against Serbia was very damaging to FYROM, as

before the end of Yugoslavia, the markets of the northern republics had taken a very large percentage (between 60 and 70% in most years) of the Titoist republics' exports. Even now, in 2002, FYROM is Serbia-Montenegro's fourth most important trade partner.<sup>19</sup> Thus when talks opened with the EU about an Association Agreement in 1996, which went on intermittently until 2000, when it was ratified, the key issue from the FYROM point of view was market access for FYROM agricultural products, a valuable prize for the Skopje government, but not something that would basically change very much politically, particularly relations with Belgrade. With a commodity like wine, Bulgaria had enjoyed similar rights, even under communism. In more recent years, FYROM has received substantial funding for infrastructure schemes connected with the Corridor 8 European transroute motorway schemes. It would, however, be wrong to suggest that because of this relatively limited institutional contact and development, FYROM popular life did not have a substantial 'European' dimension under Titoism, something mainly linked to the tourist industry. By comparison with Albania and Kosova, there was much more 'European' contact. The old Socialist Republic of Macedonia had a large tourist industry, centred on Lake Ochrid, and was an important stopping point for road tourists on the way to Greece. Very large numbers of FYROM workers had worked abroad, mainly in Germany. These are both 'European' dimensions at the level of culture, and hard currency earnings which have diminished considerably recently in FYROM. The tourist industry went into rapid decline with the risks to travel by road caused by the wars after 1991, and almost totally collapsed in the conflict years of 2000-2001. Opportunities for migrant workers in most of Western Europe have been in decline recently, although large resident communities of Slav-Macedonians remain in Germany and elsewhere.

Regional patterns of international and inter-state relations in the 1990s were similarly determined. Clearly a state of Cold War existed between Albania and Milosevic's Serbia, with a bare minimum of diplomatic contact, virtually no trade and no local popular travel (except for a short period of 'thaw' in the 1996-7 period), and frequent border incidents, often involving Albanian fatalities. The situation with Montenegro was slightly better, with some tourism and local family cross-border contacts. A different world prevailed with FYROM. Albania had been one of the first countries to recognize FYROM and the new nation was always seen in a positive light in Tirana, as more democratic than Yugoslavia, and most important of all, a barrier state between Albania's two main traditional enemies, Greece and Serbia. Although the Berisha government, post-1992, saw the Gligorov government as unduly influenced by ex-communists and not always a friend of the Albanian minority, in general terms it was a productive and healthy relationship in the early and mid-1990s.

In these circumstances, it is clear that Albania, FYROM and Kosova will not be in the first waves of EU expansion to the East. In terms of economic relationships, links will continue to grow as the Association Agreements signed in the case of (FYROM) and about to be negotiated (Albania) will bring local benefits, particularly to the better sectors of agriculture and agribusiness production. After 1999 the Stability Pact has brought some benefits in increasing channels of communication between the Balkan countries and the EU, but in general has not made a major impact on the region, despite the high hopes associated with it when it was launched. It has become linked in the popular mind with vast promises of EU regional aid that are never fulfilled, complex bureaucracy and many time-consuming procedures with local political elites. As the limited number of competent people in these elites are often under much bureaucratic pressure as a result of trying to carry out existing international requirements, the Stability Pact is

often seen as a burden, rather than a liberating force. In contrast, the private sector performance following the US model has been more encouraging, as the liberating effect of free markets and deregulation has taken root. Albania has averaged the highest growth rate of any Balkan country between 1998 and 2001, over 8%, and industries like construction are booming. Foreign investment in some sectors (eg food, beverages, and cement) has been encouraging after privatisation, with Greece and Italy much the most important participants,<sup>20</sup> although the state financial structure remains weak.

It is equally clear that all countries in the region will be affected by the development of the Corridor Eight road project linking Durrës in Albania, FYROM, Bulgaria and Turkey, the new east-west thoroughfare across the Balkans, and associated infrastructure investment. Although undoubtedly beneficial to the international transport industry, and some aspects of the local economies (eg civil engineering, extractive industries, fuel supply and construction) there is no necessary link with EU-led political stabilization, so that, for instance, the much publicized Corridor Eight offshoot from Ochrid to Tetovo and Skopje actually became a specific focus for military action in FYROM in 2001, much as Ottoman roads had done a hundred and fifty years earlier. The common problems of east European rustbucket industries will not be aided, and it can be assumed they will continue to decline in FYROM and Kosova. There will be continual migrant labour pressures on the EU as the fairly well educated young find it impossible to gain local employment and try to become 'asylum seekers' in western Europe and the EU countries. Organized crime is likely to remain a difficult issue, with all three countries on the main heroin routes to the EU, as drugs are moved from the processing laboratories in Turkey across the southern Balkans, and at the same time trade in women from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Bulgaria is growing rapidly. The weak state structures, wild terrain and long traditions of smuggling and contraband trade make it unlikely that the current EU emphasis on law enforcement as a condition for economic aid will have much immediate effect.<sup>21</sup>

In its own operations, the EU has unwittingly aided the contraband trade in cigarettes, by far the most commonly smuggled commodity. The end of communism coincided with a growth in the influence of health lobbies in the EU countries, and large rises in cigarette taxation in EU countries provided a marked 'prohibition effect' for the smugglers to exploit. Cigarette smuggling has opened many hitherto closed communist-period borders, and has been a policy determinant of some EU nations towards the Balkans, so that Italian opposition to Montenegrin independence from 'Yugoslavia' in 2000-2001 was often justified by claims that cigarette smuggling from Montenegro would be out of control after independence. It is difficult to see how this would be the case, as whether living in independent states or not, most Balkan people see nothing wrong with trading in a perfectly legal commodity like cigarettes. Equally, the vast majority share the wish of all non-criminal opinion in the EU to put an end to appalling crimes in the sphere of human trafficking and hard drugs. The indiscriminate attacks on the cigarette trade by the same officials and international intelligence and police authorities who are responsible for law enforcement against hard drugs and other venal crimes has had a markedly adverse effect on EU influence in the region, particularly in Albania.<sup>22</sup>

Organised crime in Albania is a complex phenomenon with a mixture of new free market underregulation and external influences, but ultimately is fuelled by the EU national population demands for hard drugs and reasonably priced cigarettes and prostitutes, the latter particularly in Italy, the destination of most traded Albanian

young women. As long as EU countries do not appear to be addressing the demand issues in their own countries, whether in the field of hard drug control or cigarette pricing, progress in this field is likely to be slow. The trade in foreign women is equally market driven, whether in the EU or outside it. In Kosova, for instance, there is no doubt that the market for large scale prostitution has been created by the foreign community, the KFOR garrison, the UN and the police, with the great majority of the local population of all ethnic groups unable to afford the services of the women. Yet it is officials from the same community who are responsible for the suppression of trafficking. The Serb lobbies in the West and the EU, particularly in Italy, have seized upon the situation to promote racial and chauvinist stereotypes of Albanians as inherently criminal, a fact which is unlikely to encourage the necessary local cooperation from the Tirana law enforcement authorities. This has had the main effect on EU-local relations in Kosova, where the prevalence of organized crime is often used by EU officials as an argument against independence, but UN Resolution 1244, with its Yugoslavist legal framework for economic life, actually makes the development of a normal free market economy quite difficult, and where entrepreneurs in perfectly legal and desirable new businesses find it preferable to operate in extra-legal ways to avoid bureaucratic obstacles set up by UNMIK regulations, sometimes based on old Yugoslav models.

Minorities are another difficult issue. Although Slovenia is largely pure blooded, this is unique in the region, and many countries are very mixed ethnically. European standards for treatment of ethnic minorities are not generally observed, although the legislative climate has improved considerably in the last five years in most nations. Ethnic issues can affect the stability of entire states, as happened in FYROM in 2001. But in terms of practical matters, there is much to do before standards approach those of the EU or the USA. In the Milosevic period, the Yugoslav state had relatively progressive minorities legislation, inherited from communism, even though it was violated by the government itself in almost every sphere of life. One of the strongest arguments for opening the doors of the EU to the south eastern part of Europe has always been that its entrenched minority problems inherited from the time of the Ottomans, or Royalist Yugoslavia, or communism might be ameliorated in an EU environment. This viewpoint rests on an optimistic evaluation of recent history. Current EU practice involves a highly 'conservative' political practice, where dominant ethnic groups, usually Christian and Slav, are favoured in the interests of 'stability'. This is most obvious in the current perception of Kostunica's Serbia, where real power is held by a coalition of conservative nationalists with roots in the army, the security apparatus and the Church.<sup>23</sup> Although a number of ethnic minority politicians hold office in the DOS coalition, there has been little progress on resolution of outstanding problems with non-Muslim groups, such as the ethnic Hungarians in Voivodina, and none at all with Muslims. In terms of the wartime heritage, there are particularly significant problems in Croatia, after the time of 'Operation Storm' and the removal in 1995 of most ethnic Serbs from the country. EU accession would give these groups effective legal rights for restitution/compensation that they do not possess at the moment. Thus 'Europe' has yet to explain itself to the political elites in these countries, many members of which seem very unclear that major structural changes in the political culture and institutions would be expected of them in the event of accession.

It is clear that the apparently irrational adherence to the 'Yugoslav' concept that is felt so deeply in some EU capitals and foreign ministries rests on a wish, certainly understandable, to avoid facing the full implications of dealing with so many small new nations with claims to EU membership. If a multinational state centred on Belgrade could somehow be rebuilt in the region, the claims of minorities and minor

nations could be subsumed within it. If Balkan countries have to be treated as separate nations, then their internal minority issues are much more likely to enter the central political discourse of the EU itself. The profound nostalgia for Titoism that is currently fashionable does not simply rest on a sentimental foundation, for the advantage of 'Yugoslavism' for foreigners was that it put an external political identity upon its citizens and tried to make them forget that they were a Serb or an Albanian or a Croat. In turn, this removed the old spectre of external backing of particular nationalities in their local quarrels, or so the theory went. In reality, this did not take place post-1991, as the German/Austrian links to Croatia/Slovenia and the British/French appeasement of Milosevic/Serbia showed. By contrast, the United States was not affected by these pressures, and so was able to exercise a leading role in the peacemaking process in Bosnia and in the Kosova crisis.

At a common sense level, there has been no sign whatsoever of the removal of Milosevic and installation of Kostunica having any significant effect on neighbouring countries' general willingness to move closer to Yugoslavia again, except in some formal and diplomatic links between Croatia and Serbia and Albania. In the case of Albania, these were largely forced on an unwilling government by some EU countries. In the case of some neighbours, ie Kosova, it is arguable that the arrival of the new government in Belgrade has led to a hardening of local nationalist commitment, as the pariah regime in Belgrade appeared to provide a scenario of a smooth transition to Kosova independence. The Kostunica project, with its target of a new Yugoslavia, however welcome in some EU capitals, for the reasons outlined above, has revived the nightmare for Kosova Albanians of a Great Power backed neo-Titoist regime. Also threatening to them are the very large sums of financial aid granted to the DOS government although Milosevic was only extradited to the Hague tribunal against the wishes of President Kostunica, and many war criminals remain in leading positions in the state apparatus, quite apart from the issues of refuge given to Karadzic, Mladic and other very newsworthy figures.

The removal of outside influences is also likely to remain a pipedream, as the strategic and political significance of the Balkans has always attracted outside actors in its affairs, and some states owe their creation, or current borders, or both, to backing from external sponsors, Austria in the case of Albania, Russia for modern Bulgaria, Croatia to Germany/Austria in the recent period. The link between apparently intractable minority issues, and the blanket and uncritical support given to the DOS regime is not widely realized, and it may take some time for reality to break through. However, EU leaders are ultimately likely to be disappointed in their endeavours. An important dimension to the creation of 'EU outsiders', though, can be seen in the Serbophile process, as there can be no doubt that the current irrational approbation received by Belgrade will be nothing compared to the enthusiasm the Serbs will receive if they actually do make any significant progress towards coming to terms with the barbaric crimes committed in the recent period and democratizing their society and opening up free markets. But accompanying it, in the Albanian lands, as has already happened with the case of Albania itself, there is likely to be growing alienation between the EU and Balkan states other than Serbia; a greater adherence to the United States model of capitalism and social development based on deregulated markets and absence of bureaucracy and unnecessary state activity; and recognition of the key US role in obtaining peace in Bosnia and the removal of the forces of the Serb police state in Kosova.



Thus, most southern Balkan states are likely to remain EU 'outsiders' in the near future, and unless major structural changes take place in their societies, that is likely to remain the case for a considerable time. Although Albania has espoused it most openly and unreservedly, in practice all Balkan states follow 'Wild West' capitalist models in the pre-EU accession stage, to a lesser or greater extent, with the exception of Serbia where elements of a centrally planned economy may remain if the military retains its current position in society.<sup>24</sup> As time goes on, this divergence may well increase, with 'border' nations such as Slovenia possibly in a position to bridge the transition to the EU.

An important question that will arise from this concerns the relations between the Balkan countries that are on the edge of the EU, and the Central European countries that are likely to be in the 'first wave' of new members. These countries will inevitably surrender a degree of national sovereignty in order to become full members of the Union. Yet in all of them, particularly Poland, there is strong popular nationalism in existence, and Slovenia has only been an independent state away from the Titoist communist system for a very short period. As new members of a large and growing Union, it remains to be seen how successfully these nationalisms will be subsumed into the wider international discourse of the EU.

The growth of further nationalism among the 'excluded' Balkan countries is a real possibility. Much depends on whether a more realistic policy towards Kostunica's 'Serbia-Montenegro' evolves. An important regional issue for the international community in recent years has been the fear of a 'Greater Albania', which it is claimed would comprise Albania itself, Kosova, and western FYROM. It has been said that this is the real political ambition of Albania, post-communism, and this view has frequently been put forward in Serbian propaganda, even though no significant political party in Albania, FYROM or Kosova supports this view. Here the issues of state authority, communist period borders and the development of free markets and international trade collide most uncomfortably for the EU, and determine fundamental matters of inter-state relations. In reality, most Albanians in the region, both in the political elites and outside them, are united in wanting to see real freedom of movement for people, genuine EU and US human rights standards, freedom to trade, and open market access for their businesses. In these conditions, there will be greater unity in the Albanian world, but not one involving major changes of borders or disruptive processes. This can be reasonably easily accommodated as far as the Albanian minorities in Montenegro, Greece and FYROM are concerned, but may be more difficult as Kosova moves towards conditional independence. At some point in the future, a break with Serbia will be required, a prospect that the international community has yet to impress on the Belgrade leadership.

Current EU policy assumptions rest on a profoundly Serbophile understanding of Balkan history. The Albanian people in the Balkans were divided between five nations: Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Kosova in the aftermath of the 1913 Ambassadors' Conference following the Second Balkan War. The borders established then and under the Treaty of Versailles were reinforced by World War II and the onset of communism. Thus, no 'Macedonian' state ever existed before the 1942-43 period of Yugoslav communism, and there were major changes made by Tito in the borders of Kosova post-1945 that were a background cause of the recent conflict in the Preshevo\Kosova Lindore valley.<sup>25</sup> The European Union is currently, through its exclusive attention on a revived 'Yugoslavia/Serbia-Montenegro', reinforcing the division of the Albanian people made by the Royalist and communist Yugoslav regimes, and held by very coercive methods, not only under Slobodan

Milosevic, but under all Yugoslav governments. While this policy position remains, there is little prospect of significant movement towards a more instinctively 'European' orientation of politics in the Albanian world. In turn this policy evolution will be closely linked to the waxing or waning of the influence of the 'organised crime' school of thought about the Balkans, which is usually based in the Customs and Security Service worlds in the EU, and usually reflects the political assumptions of the hard Right in the countries concerned, particularly in Italy. The 'organised crime' lobby in the EU has been the main political ally of Serbia within the EU countries, despite the fact that Serbia itself has a vast 'black' and 'grey' criminal or semi criminal economy, so that, post-October 2000, leading figures in the Serb 'anti-terrorist' world who were once likely Hague indictees as war criminals have been feted by Interpol at anti-terrorism conferences.<sup>26</sup> These lobbies have a major vested interest in keeping the Balkans outside the European Union and maintaining existing border regimes with their roots in the communist period.

A Europe without borders is the ambition of the European Union, and it would clearly be highly desirable to reduce the importance of borders in the Balkans, given that they are a continual focus of military and paramilitary activity, crime, contraband smuggling and local political tension. But borders have a major part in the fiscal regimes of most Balkan states, in the absence of much other effective taxation. Borders laid down in the communist period to separate the Albanian nation were also effective barriers to natural local trade and economic arteries, so that, for instance, the natural economic hinterland of Gjakova in Kosova lies in northern Albania, which in the Ottoman period was the main source of raw material for its industries. The Yugoslav border imposed a major economic barrier here after it was totally closed in the Milosevic period. President Rexhep Meidani of Albania has stated that he sees the essence of Europe for Albania as 'opening borders not changing them' but given the contiguous population structure on either side of most of the Albanian borders, there will be natural pressures for more political links as the liberating effects of free markets take root. There is likely to be pressure on the EU to develop a border police authority with these transition states, as pressure from public opinion in the EU to restrict unlawful popular movement grows.

As the only EU member in the immediate southern region, Greece has a pivotal role in future developments. The territorial issue over the disputed Cameria region of northwest Greece has begun to revive in Albania, with some of the thousands of Albanians who were ethnically cleansed by the Greek nationalist forces there in the Second World War. Greece is a traditional ally of Serbia, and was a major behind the scenes player in the removal of the Milosevic regime, with wealthy Greek Royalists a key component of the coalition providing financial backing for Kostunica, and leading figures in the Greek Foreign policy establishment organizing meetings for the DOS forces. The Greek public is generally vehemently anti-Albanian, and it is difficult for Greek governments to develop new policy positions on the Cameria problem in these circumstances. It has not even been possible for the Greek Parliament to vote to end the formal state of war that has existed between Greece and Albania since 1945, or to open talks on the outstanding property compensation issues. The agreement to end the state of war between the two countries has never been ratified by the Greek parliament, some observers claim, because then the expropriated Chams would have a clear and undisputed right under international law for property compensation.<sup>27</sup>

Although Greece is the only local EU player, in its relationships with its neighbours it often appears as nationalistic as any other regional nation. Within Greece itself, the 300,000 plus Albanian migrant worker community is beginning to put down

roots, and newspapers, clubs, businesses<sup>28</sup> and other civil society institutions are beginning to develop. At the time of writing, Greece could be accused of failing to meet EU human rights standards in quite major aspects of its treatment of this minority, matters connected with culture, religion and education and the use of Albanian as a minority language in particular. The same complaints have been raised by the Slavophone or 'Macedonian' minority living south of FYROM, mostly in the Florina region. Greece is easily the most unpopular country among the Kosovo Albanian public at street level, as a result of the refusal of the Simitis government to take any refugees at all during the 1998-1999 humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless Greece has attempted to follow a balanced Balkan policy towards its neighbours, and has had some quiet successes, particularly in Bulgaria and Romania where Greek investors have played a very positive role in the post-communist transition. However, there is scope for major difficulties to arise in the future on two fronts, firstly on general relationships over a variety of issues with Albania and Kosova, and with FYROM, where Greece's swing from the blockade and hostility policy of the early 1990s to a highly interventionist policy with large investments has not brought stability.<sup>29</sup> Greece was an eager backer of the Serb position during the conflict in the Preshevo/Kosova Lindore valley in 2000-2001, and links with Albania have become less influential after the turmoil in the Albanian Socialist party in 2001-2. The Greek public appears to be moving to the Right on most issues, and it is not difficult to see situations developing where there may be conflict between Greece and its European partners over what should be done over relations with Albania, FYROM and Kosova. A minority in the Greek elite recognizes the unreality of policy positions that assume Kosova can ever be ruled in the future by Serbia, but public opinion does not.

In these circumstances, the key to the future is likely to evolve around the question of whether the EU can adopt a balanced and sensible policy towards the claims of local nationalisms, and devise transition arrangements that will enable the 'excluded' southeast European countries to feel they have some progress to make towards eventual membership. At the moment there is a considerable European ambiguity towards these countries, a fact that can encourage nationalist feelings. On all analyses based on demographic, economic and political criteria, the Albanian nation, in the broadest sense, is the country in the region which has the capacity to expand, while the Slav nations are in demographic and political decline. The end of Yugoslavia marks a watershed that may be as important as the end of the Soviet Union, as the Yugoslav concept was essentially a product of British and French colonial and imperial period developments designed to structure Serb-client dominance of the region.<sup>30</sup> In geopolitical terms, the United States is unlikely to allow the reassertion of Slav power based on appeasement of Russia in the region. The need to forge effective transition arrangements for Albania and for European Union support in Kosova's progress towards independence will be the key issues in this context. The historical injustices that the Albanian people have had to endure for several generations are unlikely to be accepted in this century.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Arben Puto and Hasan Polio, 'A History of Albania', Tirana, 1989; Miranda Vickers, 'The Albanians - A Short History', I B Tauris, London, 1996; Elez Biberaj, 'Albania in Transition', Westview Press, New York, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Albania - from Anarchy to a Balkan Identity', by James Pettifer & Miranda Vickers, C Hurst & Co, London, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> See Biberaj, op cit, for material on changes in the US viewpoint.

<sup>4</sup> Most observers felt there was a gradual change in US attitudes towards the Berisha government as evidence of human rights abuses intensified. For the current situation, see paper by Morton Abramovitz, in 'Foreign Affairs', Washington DC, September-October 2002, 'Can the EU hack it in the Balkans?'

<sup>5</sup> See 'The Contract of the Democratic Party with Albania', Tirana, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> This was part of a wider and deeper process of appeasement of Serbian expansionism in the region in the UK. See Brendan Simms, 'Unfinest Hour - Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia', Penguin, London, 2001 for a masterly analysis of the orientation of the Major government towards Belgrade.

<sup>7</sup> See Noel Malcolm, 'A Short History of Kosova', Macmillan, London, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> See forthcoming publication in 2002 of C Dennison Lane's paper 'Once Upon An Army' about his activity as a Defence Advisor to the Berisha government, G114, Conflict Studies Research Centre, RMA Sandhurst, on [www.csrc.ac.uk](http://www.csrc.ac.uk).

<sup>9</sup> For an introduction to the FYROM issues, see James Pettifer (ed) 'The New Macedonian Question', Palgrave, London and New York, 2001, and material by James Pettifer on [www.csrc.ac.uk](http://www.csrc.ac.uk); Hugh Poulton, 'Who are the Macedonians?', C Hurst & Co, London 1999.

<sup>10</sup> See the study made by Abiodan Williams of UNPREDEP in his book 'Preventing War', Maryland, 2000. The material on UNPREDEP is very interesting and balanced, the view of political developments less so.

<sup>11</sup> The Albanian communist leader Enver Hoxha and his enemies in the West had a shared understanding of what mattered militarily in Albania: the Adriatic coast. See E Hoxha, 'The Anglo-American Threat to Albania', Tirana, 1953, and strongly anti-communist works like Julian Amery's 'Sons of the Eagle', London, 1948. As soon as communism began to break up in Albania, the British Secret Intelligence Service began to deploy resources to study the ex-Soviet submarine base on the coast at Porto Palermo, and Italy now controls Sazan Island, in the Bay of Vlora.

<sup>12</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency had highlighted the importance of the Kosova issue in Yugoslav politics and the slide to war as early as 1989.

<sup>13</sup> In the immediate post-communist period, in 1992-3, US naval personnel visits were frequent to Tirana, and the first US troops deployed in Albania were connected to naval installations, mostly visits to Durres port.

<sup>14</sup> Some of these officials have connections with the Kostunica government, allegedly through organisations like Kissinger Maclary Associates, in the USA, and the Hakluyt private sector intelligence organisation in London.

<sup>15</sup> Dr Berisha was an early Albanian post-graduate student of cardiology in France.

<sup>16</sup> There were very close links with the Kosova Democratic League for many years, and some remain. Under the Milosevic regime, the 'Mother Theresa' charity was the only western NGO allowed to operate in Kosova for a long period.

<sup>17</sup> Swiss Kosovar organisations are concentrated in Geneva and Zurich. See Ueli Leuenberger & Alain Maillard, 'Les Damnés du Troisième Cercle - Les Kosovars en Suisse 1965-1999', Metropoli, Geneva, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> See op cit, 'The New Macedonian Question'. Ex-President Kiro Gligorov's memoirs were recently published in Skopje.

<sup>19</sup> See Yugoslavia - Annual Statistics, 2001, Belgrade.

<sup>20</sup> Italian foreign investment has been concentrated in the food industry, Greek investment in construction, beverages, agribusiness and cement. Greece also has large interests in banking and fuel supply.

<sup>21</sup> A new factor may be the proposed EU border protection force.

<sup>22</sup> The Albanian government has in practice tolerated the existence of widespread foreign intelligence gathering in the country under the guise of general activity against organised crime. It remains to be seen how long this will be the case, in the light of the current 'Klosi affair' in Tirana. The Albanian Intelligence Service SHIK has been alleged to be involved in the murder of prominent right-wing politicians such as Azim Haydari in 1998, and the murder of Kosova Liberation Army leaders like Ilir Konushevci. There have also been allegations of SHIK liaison with foreign intelligence services in Albania over these covert actions.

<sup>23</sup> See an important and informative new work by Norman Cigar, 'Vojislav Kostunica and Serbia's future', Saqi, London, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> See material on defence and security reform attempts in 'VIP News', Belgrade, 2000-2002.

<sup>25</sup> See the CSRC paper G104 by Bob Churcher on the Preshevo conflict, on [www.csrc.ac.uk](http://www.csrc.ac.uk), also the website [www.presheva.com](http://www.presheva.com), for general information.

<sup>26</sup> There have been few arrests of leaders of the notorious 'antiterrorist' squads that were active in Kosova, and some remain in high police and internal security positions.

<sup>27</sup> See CSRC paper by Miranda Vickers on the Cham issue, G109 on [www.csrc.ac.uk](http://www.csrc.ac.uk).

<sup>28</sup> See 'Albania Daily News', Tirana, 28 February 2002.

<sup>29</sup> See James Pettifer 'FYROM after Ochrid', CSRC G106, [www.csrc.ac.uk](http://www.csrc.ac.uk), March 2002.

<sup>30</sup> It is often forgotten that Yugoslavia, in its original form, was set up under the Versailles Treaty after World War I to reward Serbia for allied commitment.

This paper was originally commissioned by the European Department, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, 10 St James Square, London SW1 who on receipt did not wish to publish it.

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UK Ministry of Defence

ISBN 1-904423-12-4

**Published By:**

**Defence Academy of the**  
**United Kingdom**

**Conflict Studies Research Centre**

Haig Road  
Camberley  
Surrey  
GU15 4PQ  
England

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**ISBN 1-904423-12-4**