



Identity Crisis:

A briefing on Balkans key issues

Geneva, May 2001

Based on research by David Solomon

centre for humanitarian dialogue

centre pour le dialogue humanitaire

114 rue de lausanne
ch 1202 genève
t 41 22 908 1130

info@hdcentre.org

<http://www.hdcentre.org>

Contents

1 Introduction	3
About this report	3
Background: recent history	4
Present tensions in the Balkans	6
The international community	7
2 Macedonia: fragile equilibrium destroyed?	8
A moderate past	8
Present threats to stability	9
Corruption and international relations	10
Possibilities for the future	11
3 Kosovo: international intervention	12
The 1990s: persecution and retaliation	12
International involvement	14
Options for the future	16
4 Montenegro: independence or union?	17
Claims for independence	17
Independence as a path to stability	18
Response of the international community	19
Possibilities for dialogue	19
5 Serbia: a new era?	21
Circumstances before the 2000 election	21
Challenges ahead	23
The International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia	24
6 Conclusion: regional overview	25
Can Bosnia Herzegovina remain integrated?	25
Further fragmentation, or re-integration?	26
Lessons learned and suggestions for the future	27

Introduction

A. About this report

The objectives of this report are to:

- Provide a concise briefing on the current state of crisis in Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and the Balkan region as a whole;
- Highlight the main issues of contention and the underlying causes of conflict;
- Identify potential future conflicts, emerging problems and new developments;
- Outline the effects of the policies of the international community on the Balkan region;
- Summarise the current debates being conducted by policy-makers, politicians and various regional groups; and
- Identify areas in which practical political initiatives might be most beneficial in contributing to humanitarian dialogue and regional solutions.

This report was compiled in March 2001, and is informed by published and unpublished sources, as detailed in the footnotes, including many interviews carried out especially for this project on behalf of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

The opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

B. Recent history

Since war broke out in the Balkans in the early 1990s, one cry repeated throughout the region, by Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks and later Albanians as well as Serbian Kosovars, was 'Never again!' Individuals and ethnic communities were not however resolving never again to become the victims of genocide, but that they should never again believe in the ideal of a multi-ethnic state.

President Tito of the former Yugoslavia had persuaded the vast majority of 23 million Yugoslavs that '*Bratstvo-Jedinstvo*' ('Brotherhood and Unity') was the only way forward after the Second World War, in which more Yugoslavs were killed by each other than by any foreign enemy.

It was questionable whether the unravelling of the region under the guise of numerous nationalist tensions was inevitable. After all, the second Yugoslavia was considered by most of its inhabitants to be a reasonable success: far from perfect but certainly a workable framework that could be improved upon. The overarching identity of 'Yugo [southern] slav', as established by Tito, worked especially well for Albanians, but also suited Bosnians and Montenegrins, Hungarian inhabitants of Vojvodina, Macedonian Slavs, and indeed millions of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes too.

The Bosnians had always defined themselves as Muslims who lived with Slavs of the Orthodox and Catholic Christian faiths, so understandably they were perhaps the keenest supporters of Tito's Yugoslavia.

Even though the Albanians were the only major non-Slavic Yugoslav population (except perhaps the Hungarians of Vojvodina and the Roma), Tito's socialist design worked well for them, as it took them out of Serbian, Montenegrin or Macedonian nationalist rule and placed them in an overarching super-state in which their culture, language and rights were constitutionally protected.

In the case of Kosovo, the majority Albanian population were given status akin to that of a republic. Kosovo had a vote at the level of the Yugoslav Presidency equal to that of the Republics. The principal constitutional difference was that as an Autonomous Province as opposed to a Republic, Kosovo was - and is - denied the right to secede from the Yugoslav Federation.

In the name of various nationalisms and ethnic groupings, however, the last decade has seen increasing divisions, deportations and periods of intense persecution, ethnic cleansing, massacre and armed conflict within the borders of the former Yugoslavia:

- Yugoslav National Army (ostensibly Serbia) vs. Slovenia (1991)
- Croatian Serbs and Serbia vs. Croatia (1991–92);
- Croatia vs. Croatian Serbs (1995);
- Bosnian-Serbs and Serbia vs. Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs (1992–95);
- Bosnian Croats vs. Bosnian Muslims (1992–95);
- Serbia vs. Kosovar Albanians (1998–99; but perceived by most Kosovars as 1989–99).
- NATO vs. Serbia (1999)

- Kosovar Albanians vs. Kosovo Serbs (1999+)
- UCPMB Albanians' insurgency operations in Preshevo Valley, southern Serbia (2000-2001)
- NLA Macedonian Albanians' insurgency in Macedonia (2001)

After this tortuous dismemberment of Tito's imposed but also largely embraced brand of Yugoslavism, the Balkans of the late 20th century wanted as little as possible to do with brotherhood and unity. Most people wanted a safe identity that no new ideological shift would be able to take from them again.

When multi-party democracy was introduced in 1991 after the collapse of Tito's Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, it was understood that the hitherto alien concept of 'democracy' would represent only the interests of the majority in each state. Communities then fought to be in the majority prior to 'democratic' elections. This aspiration for power fuelled by resurrected hatreds and the knowledge of what minority status in the region has meant in the past led to the policies of forced expulsion and extermination known euphemistically as ethnic cleansing.

Islam, Catholicism, the Croatian national identity, the various Eastern Orthodoxies, and Albanianism had proved their longevity. Ethnicity and religion were seen as places of refuge for frightened and traumatised people who had experienced the theft of an identity built on shared common values rather than enmity, difference and history.

C. Current tensions in the Balkans

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Balkans continues to be a fragile region inhabited by traumatised peoples in which cultural, religious or ethnic homogeneity has become the single factor defining most people's aspirations for a stable future. Multi-cultural, multi-ethnic pluralism is a concept regarded with fear and suspicion by the vast majority.

The European Union is now perceived as asking aspiring Balkan micro-states¹ 'Who needs independent statehood when you can work towards joining our exclusive club in twenty, thirty or forty years?' However, the people of the Balkans are in no way persuaded that the region is, or will become in the foreseeable future, fertile territory for the growth of idyllic dreams of a civil society along the lines of the United States or the European Union.

The Balkan region is still grappling with a particularly virulent strain of 19th-century nationalism in which self-determination, sovereignty, and the expulsion of foreign rulers, troublesome minorities and dominant 'ethnic others' are the political cancers. Defining democracies by their majorities is as far as democracy goes in South-East Europe; determining the quality of a democracy by the treatment of its minorities is largely unheard of.

Even in areas of the Balkans long regarded as relatively stable, there is evidence of increasing tension and factionalism. Macedonia, for example, has begun to rupture after a decade of defying prophecies of doom. Confidence has been lost in any national project based on tolerance and mutual understanding. It is almost impossible to identify a single territory of the former Yugoslav Balkans today where any population is living in what could be termed a cosmopolitan civil society.

If there was one relationship in former Yugoslavia in which people valued political unity, it was the Montenegro–Serbia dynamic wherein 'Brotherhood and Unity' was regarded as second nature. The majority of Montenegrins had always defined being Montenegrin as being of the Serbian Orthodox faith², yet today many reject any notion of what is perceived as foreign rule from Belgrade. This could change: Albanian separatism has its eye on swathes of Montenegro where the majority population is Albanian.

The following chapters of this report examine the situation in specific sub-regions of the Balkans in more detail.

¹ Such as Kosovo, Montenegro and Republika Srpska. Initially the EU opposed self-determination and sovereignty for the territories of the former Yugoslavia. Subsequently it was very much in favour regardless of the consequences. Currently it is strongly opposed to any further territorial fragmentation.

² Petar Petrovic Njegos' *Gorski Vjenac* (Mountain Wreath) as one, albeit the most prominent, example of Montenegrin national myth being built upon *Srbstvo* (a sense of being Serb). Charles Schlaks Jnr 1986.

D. The International Community

The international community of various states, national and international organizations, including the United Nations and NATO, has attempted in both Bosnia and in Kosovo to design, build and sustain multi-ethnic societies. These policies, despite the reassurances of international diplomats who attempt to sew the fractures and fragments together, are not widely regarded as being successful.

If 'humanitarian intervention' in Kosovo was intended to protect minorities and create a pluralistic democracy, these aims have surely not been met. The humanitarianism of an international army, which always prioritises the lives of its own 'peacekeepers' over the lives of those it has ostensibly come to save, has been questioned repeatedly. Safeguarding peacekeepers and aid workers' lives was often cited as the prime cause for inaction during the three years of war, siege and massacre in Bosnia.

Appalling consequences of this policy have been seen in Srebrenica³. Under the eyes of the UN, the US and NATO, with many Bosnian Muslims having been invited into a 'UN Safe Haven', between 7000 and 8000 men were summarily executed in the worst European war crime since the Second World War. The UN Srebrenica Report makes sober reading⁴, although on the ground it is not clear what lessons have been learned – if any.

It may be that Balkan geopolitics is entering a new phase. This depends on the dynamics of not only the local 'tribes' but also the tribe of international diplomats, foreign policy-makers and military peacekeepers.

For example, the National Liberation Army in Macedonia has called for international mediation to resolve Albanian differences with the Macedonian Slav majority. The threat of bloodshed is regarded as a vital part of their diplomatic baggage without which the Macedonian government and international community would have paid little attention to the grievances of Albanians in Macedonia. These are extremely dangerous lessons learned and taught by the experiences of the KLA in Kosovo and the UCPMB in Southern Serbia.

³ New Revelations about Srebrenica, Transcript of Interview with Deputy Commander Muslim Army Srebrenica, 26 Feb 2001, www.domovina.net (search "Suljo Hasanovic")

⁴ UN Srebrenica Report: http://194.109.221.180/domovina/html/un_srebrenica/un_sreb_1.html#Humanitarian

I. Macedonia: Fragile equilibrium destroyed?

Until recently, Macedonia was regarded as one of the more stable regions of the Balkans. However, there is now serious conflict between the majority Macedonian population and the large minority of ethnic Albanians.

A. A moderate past

It was no secret that the Macedonian equilibrium was always a fragile one. Due to the lack of a militaristic tradition in Macedonian society, some deft leadership by former President Kiro Gligorov and latterly to the moderation of Macedonian Albanian politicians such as Arben Xhaferi, the balancing act survived the 1990s. Arben Xhaferi in particular is highly regarded, and has the support of not only the Albanians who voted him and his party into power but also the professed support of the Albanian political leadership of Albania and Kosovo, and of the international community.

One of the strongest arguments for Macedonia's ability to resist full-scale civil war is partly anthropological and partly anecdotal history. The Macedonian Slavs have no modern historical myth of military heroism, in contrast to the martial national stereotypes of their fellow Orthodox Montenegrins or Serbs. Alexander the Great may have been a Macedonian but he is not seen as a national hero in the sense that he fought for the preservation of what is now Macedonia. National pride is far more tied up with Macedonia's contribution to cultural and academic life in the Slavic-Orthodox world, especially by the brother-monks Cyril and Methodius who invented the Cyrillic script.

However, there has always been enmity between Slavs and Albanians in Macedonia, and the coalition governments including political parties from both communities were and are born out of pragmatic need for the survival of the precarious state. Macedonia had never experienced independent statehood before and was not even recognised in the first Yugoslavia. At that time it was known purely as South Serbia⁵.

Greeks continue to refer to Macedonians as Slav Macedonians who live in a country called Skopje, and Bulgarians reject the notion of the Macedonian language as being anything other than Bulgarian, thus undermining the reasoning for a distinct Macedonian national identity. However, these longer-term differences between Slavs are now overwhelmed by the beginnings of an alignment of Slavs positioning themselves against Illyrians.

⁵ See Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and the Grey Falcon*. Penguin 1985 edition

B. Current threats to stability

Exacerbated by the political instability and uncertainty regarding Kosovo in a post-Milosevic Balkans, independent Macedonia is now facing its greatest challenge to date. With the arrival of Bulgarian arms and promises of Greek support, increasing empathy for Serbia and even the first rumblings of a nostalgia for Milosevic have been registered among Macedonia's Slav population.

In turn, many Albanians in Macedonia feel disenfranchised in what they feel to be their own country. For example, the single official language and script of Macedonia is Macedonian and Cyrillic respectively. Most Albanians speak little or no Macedonian and are thus deprived of the opportunities open to Macedonian Slavs whether at university or when competing for public sector employment. On a day to day basis it is a reliable source of friction. For example, Macedonian Slav officials (such as police, border guards and civil servants) inspect Albanians' identity documents, which as far as Albanians are concerned, do not correctly identify them: the Cyrillic alphabet does not represent certain sounds of the Albanian language.

The newly formed National Liberation Army (NLA), which claims to fight for improved civil rights for Albanians in Macedonia, is gathering support among disaffected Albanian youth. Reports speak of hundreds turning up to volunteer at NLA recruitment centres throughout Western Macedonia⁶. Albanians are increasingly regarded as war-mongering people, 'taking over from the Serbs as regional trouble-makers', according to Kosovar Albanian journalist, Shkelzen Maliqi⁷, who has also described increasing Albanian militancy⁸.

According to Macedonian Slavs, the Albanians in Macedonia are a minority and, as such, receive relatively good treatment according to international standards on minority rights. However, the Albanians in Macedonia do not wish to be regarded as a minority with special rights but as equal stakeholders in their own country. The relative size of the two groups is indeed another point of contention: the Macedonian Albanians make up only 23 per cent of the population according to Macedonian Slavs, but as much as 30 or 40 per cent according to some Albanian demographers.

⁶ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_1383000/1383513.stm (search: 'NLA recruitment')

⁷ Shkelzen Maliqi in Pristina, 'Albanian extremists pose regional threat' IWPR, 7 March 2001.

⁸ Some reactions to current crisis in Macedonia from Kosovar Albanians including dialogue with Shkelzen MALIQI and ex-KLA, 14 Mar 2001, KOSOVALIVE www.kosovalive.com

C. Corruption and international relations

Macedonian newspapers regularly report instances of widespread corruption throughout the Macedonian political and business class, both Slav and Albanian. Expectations of corruption are so great that, when fighting began in Tanusevci at the end of February 2001, it was argued that the conflict was invented in order to distract public attention from a major high-level political scandal regarding unauthorised telephone tapping (and which threatened the careers of the Prime Minister and others).

Internationally, Macedonia has recognised Taiwan (in exchange for \$1 billion which was never received⁹.) In response, China's permanent representative on the United Nations Security Council vetoed the continuation of the UN stabilisation force in Macedonia, which had contained a US contingent and thus been perceived as an important source of security during the turbulent 1990s when conflict was constantly threatening to spill over into Macedonia¹⁰. The sale of state enterprises has been a constant source of scandal, with each political party having established its own commercial enterprises¹¹.

Some commentators are extremely pessimistic about the problems of ethnic division and rising crime in Macedonia, while others, acknowledging the existence of considerable political and economic problems, retain a degree of optimism:

'Clearly, both Macedonian and Albanian communities will grow even further apart as a result of the violence. And with the deterioration of relations between the two groups, the gradual undermining of the country's legitimacy is likely.... Macedonia is ill-equipped to cope with a return to economic stagnation or even recession. Unemployment is extremely high and its perilous financial situation could deteriorate quite quickly.

.... The public perceives the government as being extremely corrupt and ready to compromise national interest. Its readiness to make sacrifices is wearing thin.

.... Yet all these problems notwithstanding, Macedonian stability is still likely to be preserved¹².

⁹ HD Interview with Ljubomir Frckoski fmr Minister of Interior June2001

¹⁰ HD Interview with Ljubomir Frckoski fmr Minister of Interior June2001

¹¹ HD Interview with Vladimir Milcin, Director Open Society Skopje June2001

¹² Shaky Macedonian Foundations By Vladimir GLIGOROV, 9 Mar 2001, IWPR, Economist and analyst Vladimir Gligorov is the son of former President Gligorov. He is credited with contributing to the past maintenance of peace in Macedonia.

D. Possibilities for the future

There is a strong political argument for reforming the constitution of Macedonia, so that it becomes a bi-national state with two official languages. Indeed, this may be the only viable option if Western Macedonia is not to secede from Macedonia and conjoin with Kosovo. However, Macedonian Slav politicians are presently unwilling to consider this option.

Ultimately, it seems likely that a successful political resolution will have to incorporate constitutional changes to recognise the Albanian language, with improved access for Albanians in Macedonia to educational opportunities and jobs in public services.

In summer 2000, discussions were held with both Arben Xhaferi and former President Kiro Gligorov¹³, to consider practical proposals for enhancing the status of the Albanian language. Xaferi was particularly keen to stress the importance of using Latin script (rather than only Cyrillic) in identity documents. Gligorov's argument was that he did not believe that the Macedonian people would tolerate their cultural and linguistic status being 'diluted' any further than it had been by the compromises the government was making on the question of university education.

However, because of the considerable ethnic tension in Tetovo (and spreading throughout Western Macedonia) it seems that it would now be difficult for the Macedonian government to make what would be regarded as concessions to the Albanian population. It is felt that this would be interpreted as providing evidence that armed rebellion is more effective than diplomacy.

According to recent STRATFOR analysis:

*'While there is a large international consensus designed to stop the spread of violence, a number of factors could potentially cause the violence to move once again.... The spread of ethnic Albanian violence could cause Macedonians to view the Albanian population in their country as a potential source of instability, leading to a crackdown on the group. In turn, this could lead Macedonia's ethnic Albanians to rise up and join with the rebels.'*¹⁴

Years of working to build a sustainable state of Macedonia are being undone with great ease. For each day that the fighting continues, the gulf widens between Slav and Albanian Macedonians. Macedonian society seems likely to polarise and radicalise beyond recognition. The idea of an autonomous Western Macedonia later to be federated with Kosovo seems to be gaining credence as a strategy for diplomatic negotiation. A reason given by President Trajkovsky for the breakdown in talks was the tabling of 'Federation' as a solution by Xhaferi. Most Macedonians see Federation as the first step towards secession.

¹³ HD discussions with Arben Xhaferi and Kiro Gligorov, June 2000 Skopje.

¹⁴ Ethnic Albanian Violence On The Move, 8 Mar 2001, Stratfor www.stratfor.com

II. Kosovo: international intervention

Prior to the arrival of the UN international peacekeeping force in Kosovo (Kfor), with the stated aim of maintaining a multi-ethnic society, it is estimated that Federal Republic of Yugoslav (FRY) military, Serbian paramilitary and police forces killed up to 10,000 Albanians. These casualties occurred from the start of the armed conflict between the KLA and the FRY in February 1998 until the arrival of Kfor in June 1999.¹⁵ Since the arrival of tens of thousands of troops, UNMIK international police and UNMIK/OSCE civilian government personnel, Albanians have killed many hundreds of non-ethnic Albanians (according to most estimates)¹⁶. A senior UN official in Kosovo with long experience of Bosnia has expressed fury that powerful elements of the international community have been so sympathetic towards ‘a bunch of gun-slinging thugs’¹⁷.

A. The 1990s: persecution and retaliation

Since Milosevic first came to power in 1987, his Serbian regime persecuted Kosovar Albanians. In 1999 more than 850,000 of them were driven out of their homes and their country, often having their identification papers and photographs taken from them in case they tried to return and prove their rights of citizenship or property ownership. A further 590,000 were internally displaced. Evidence exists of widespread torture and rape, as well as extortion, looting and pillaging.¹⁸

In 1998–99, for example, it was common for Albanians not to be served bread in Serbian-run bakeries, and Albanians had to depend on Serbian friends to go shopping for them. Many Albanians later depended on Serbian friends hiding them from the ethnic-cleansing Serbian MUP which operated during the NATO bombardment of 1999 often by giving people minutes to pack a case and leave for the railway station.

Reports have surfaced recently¹⁹ that Serbian soldiers during the bombardment raped many hundreds of Albanian girls and women. These crimes were mostly unreported due to the immense social stigma surrounding rape. Victims rarely report the crime for fear of being ostracised by family and society, with no prospects of marriage.

Milosevic claimed that the Albanians were fleeing not his police units but the NATO bombing raids. It has recently been reported, however, that the ethnic-cleansing operation was planned by the Belgrade government well before the NATO intervention. An interview with a representative of the Milosovic regime has reported that:

¹⁵ 'The Kosovo Report: Conflict - International Response - Lessons Learned', The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, OUP 2000

¹⁶ Amnesty International www.amnesty.org & Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org

¹⁷ HD Interview with senior UN official, Kosovo: ‘The James Rubin & Madeleine Albright relationship with Thaci seems to have given the “Thaci’s” of Kosovo the green light for their extra-curricular activities. A signal was sent which has never been revoked that respectability is best found through the gun.’

¹⁸ 'The Kosovo Report: Conflict - International Response - Lessons Learned', The Independent International Commission on Kosovo, OUP 2000 www.kosovocommission.org

¹⁹ A War’s Hidden Tragedy: Kosovar Albanian women raped during the war, 6 Mar 2001, Newsweek & MSNBC

'There was a plan for ethnic cleansing. There was above all a plan to reduce the number of Albanians under a million, and after that it could be claimed that there are less than 50 per cent of them and because of that, they do not have the right for autonomy...

Milosevic knew that with such measures he would provoke the Albanians into an uprising, and then he could say, we have a rebellion. And, as for the incidents, I can tell you some statistics from our MUP. Let's say, in 1991 there were 11 terrorist acts, in 1992 there were 12, in 1993 were 8, 1994 had 6, 1995 had 11, but in 1998, when Milosevic started the provocation of the ethnic conflict, there were 1,885 terrorist acts. Then it's clear that the rise of terrorism is a consequence of ethnic cleansing, not its cause...

*Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Albanians led to the strengthening of the UCK, to a massive Albanian uprising, and finally to the conflict with the international community.'*²⁰

In response to their persecution by the Milosevic regime, many Kosovar Albanians reacted with hatred towards the Serbian authorities. However, moderate politician Ibrahim Rugova, the 'Gandhi of the Balkans' who professed and practised non-violent politics, maintained the overwhelming support and respect of the vast majority of his people. Although Rugova repeatedly asked the international community for diplomatic support over a decade, Washington and the EU largely ignored him. Human rights organisations had been highlighting abuses in Kosovo for at least a decade whilst advocating the need for preventive diplomacy: but to no avail.

The suffering of Albanian Kosovars during the 1990s helped to fuel the more radical, uncompromising elements which became the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and which, despite the victory of moderate Rugova in local elections, still holds popular support and controls events beyond Kosovo's borders. The challenge of finding gainful employment for demobbed fighters is as great in Kosovo and perhaps more dangerous. Many analysts see events in southern Serbia (with the UCPMB insurgency) and events unfolding presently in Macedonia (with the NLA) as highly symptomatic of ex-KLA paramilitary structures determined to sustain themselves even if it means acting beyond Kosovo's borders.

The increased paramilitary actions of the Albanian separatists were seen as having generated far more support from the international community in a few months than was achieved by repeated peaceful protest over a decade. The signal sent to Pristina was clear: if you want help turn to violence. The leadership of the violent struggle was then awarded all manner of prizes, and Kosovar Albanians came to believe that they would get no help unless they adopted violent methods.

²⁰ Ratomir Tanic, interviewed by Omer Karabeg of RFE/RL's South Slavic Service, 7 March 2001. The original text of the interview is posted at <http://www.danas.org/programi/interview/>.

B. International Involvement

Although the international community intervened officially in Kosovo to maintain a multi-ethnic region, the protection of minorities failed from the outset of the UNMIK administration. Senior UNMIK personnel²¹ have admitted that it was always going to be an uphill task maintaining a viable Serbian population after so much hatred had been generated by the persecution of the Albanian Kosovars.

The protection afforded non-Albanians who remained in Kosovo after the arrival of Kfor has been shown to be lamentable. Half the Serbian population, together with many Roma, left Kosovo entirely. The lack of a judicial response to the persecution of those who remained together with the apathy of international actors present to protect and apprehend those responsible only gave succour to those orchestrating the latest round of Balkan ethnic cleansing.²²

However, the bigger picture of international involvement in Kosovo is complex. Reports from the specialist defence media²³ indicate that the United States encouraged the development of an Albanian separatist insurgency force in the strip of South Serbia bordering Kosovo, in an attempt to destabilise and ultimately remove Milosevic from power. The Liberation Army for Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac (UCPMB) is based in the southern Serbian Presevo Valley, which has a 60 per cent Albanian population. The UCPMB leadership emanating from Kosovo and leading the Presevo Valley insurgency campaign was also implicated in underworld business, nationalised protection rackets and numerous war crimes.

American forces allegedly supported Ramush Harudinaj, a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, during the civil war in Kosovo and the NATO bombing campaign that followed. Harudinaj maintains that he is now a full-time professional politician (he leads Kosovo's third political party, the AKK, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo), and no longer involved in the military struggle. Others have reported that he terrorised local people and his own forces into paying absolute loyalty to him²⁴, and that he still maintains connections with paramilitaries.

Tension is reported within K-For between the European and American military missions. Senior European officers have accused American forces with Kfor of:

'... deliberately ignoring the massive smuggling of men and arms across Kosovo's borders.... European officers are furious that the Americans have allowed guerrilla armies in its sector to train, smuggle arms and launch attacks across two international borders'²⁵.

²¹ HD Interviews September 2001

²² Human Rights Watch: Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia Abuses Against Serbs And Roma In The New Kosovo. Aug 1999
www.hrw.org

²³ 'CIA's bastard army ran riot in Balkans', backed extremists, 11 Mar 2001, The Observer & Jane's Defence Weekly
www.guardianunlimited.co.uk

²⁴ US 'covered up' for Kosovo ally – Ramush Harudinaj By Nick Wood, 10 Sep 2000, The Guardian
www.guardianunlimited.co.uk

²⁵ 'CIA's bastard army ran riot in Balkans', backed extremists, 11 Mar 2001, The Observer & Jane's Defence Weekly
www.guardianunlimited.co.uk

Questions abound regarding the policy of the international community, and of the US specifically. What is certain is that freelance operations are undertaken under the guise of the UN, which has created an unmanageable situation:

'Many agree that the west fundamentally misunderstood the threat of Albanian nationalism. A series of errors, tactical and strategic, are blamed for allowing a small minority of Kosovans to seize the agenda....

Kosovo's constitutional limbo – it is technically part of Serbia but is a K-For protectorate – has created a vacuum in which frustration flourishes....

Since the day it arrived K-For has failed to control Kosovo. Its failure to disarm the KLA, protect the Serb minority and build a multi-ethnic society has created a climate in which extremists flourish....

Many Kosovans accuse the UN police force of incompetence and corruption. It has failed to establish the rule of law, allowing gangsters and militants to intimidate at will²⁶.

What is abundantly clear is that the international community's policy towards Kosovo has failed so far and continues to be untenable. It seems that no sustainable society is being built, and the initial expectation of a commitment by K-For of five to ten years is turning into visions of a long haul of 40–50 years.²⁷

²⁶ West struggles to contain monster of its own making By Rory Carroll, 12 Mar 2001, *The Guardian*
www.guardianunlimited.co.uk

²⁷ HD interview with senior Kfor military sources in Kosovo September 2000

C. Options for the future

Many Kosovar Albanians feel that there is justification for a continued military option as long as the threat of a returning Serb army and government remains. Continuing prevarication about the future status of the province, compounded by a warming of relations between the international community and Belgrade, is encouraging Albanians to continue to keep the military option open.

However, Kosovars are aware that continued paramilitary activity is exhausting the considerable international sympathy they gained in 1999. Furthermore, the sentencing and imprisonment of Albanians tried and found guilty of crimes has been far below what one would have expected of a UN protectorate with a huge international civil and military presence. An international judge in Kosovo²⁸ has spoken of the lack of political will to prosecute and implement sentences against the Albanian population. His conclusion was that there was a concerted campaign by sectors of the Albanian political leadership to 'cleanse' Kosovo of its Serbs and that the international community was doing very little to prevent it because it saw a Serbian minority in Kosovo as 'more trouble than it was worth'.

The myth of unique suffering, though valuable as a force of social and political cohesion in every nation-building project, has severe side effects such as developing a moral immunity and granting a license to exercise violence with impunity thus severely damaging any chances of building a tolerant heterogeneous society for several generations to come. Since Kfor arrived in Kosovo, it has been dangerous even to speak in Serbo-Croat in public.²⁹

The recently retired UNMIK Chief Dr Bernard Kouchner stated in the autumn of 2000 that more regional instability was inevitable as long as Kosovo's independence was delayed³⁰. He has also been reported as stating:

the United Nations has promised the people here substantial autonomy and self-government, 'and self-government without the vote I don't understand.'

The Europeans, he said, are afraid that a local assembly will lead to pressure for independence.

'They're more worried about destabilizing Belgrade. But they will lose all their success if they destabilize Kosovo. Quick elections here are the only way to keep violence away',³¹.

Clearly the future of the province will have to be found in the context of a wider regional agreement due to the shrapnel-like impact of change in one territory upon its neighbours.

²⁸ Interview with HD, August 2000. Plane journey between Skopje and Split

²⁹ In October 1999 A Bulgarian UN official newly arrived in the Kosovo capital lost his life for giving the time in what was presumed to be Serbo-Croat: http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/news/nation-world/html98/koso_19991012.html

³⁰ HD Kosovo Mission. August 2000 Interview.

³¹ In 'A farewell to Kosovo, U.N. aide urges election', *New York Times*, 14 Jan 2001, Steven Erlanger.

III. Montenegro: Independence Or Union?

A. Claims for independence

There is deep antipathy towards Serbia among the ruling elite of Montenegro, which is convinced that Montenegro should become an independent state. Like those seeking independence in Kosovo, Montenegrin independentists saw the popular uprising against Milosevic and election of Kostunica in October 2000 as a disaster, aware that the West looked more favourably on the prospect of independence while Milosevic remained in power.

Questions of economic viability are generally disregarded by Montenegrins who see themselves as a distinct nation from Serbia, although arguments for economic viability illustrate that Montenegro's small size is not necessarily a barrier to independence³². Most arguments in favour of independence refer to Montenegro's past independence and present conflict with Serbia, and even the claims for a separate language³³.

Demands have increased recently that the language be referred to as Montenegrin (rather than Serbian), and be augmented with an extra four letters to represent certain particular Montenegrin consonantal variations which have never previously been transcribed. This is a sign of Montenegro establishing its uniqueness in a bid to prove its right to self-determination.³⁴

Unlike any other constituent member of the former Yugoslavia, except Serbia, Montenegro has previously been internationally recognised as an independent state (from 1876 to 1918). The present Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) was established as a federation between Serbia and Montenegro in 1992 after the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia. (The FRY also includes Kosovo and Vojvodina, whose 'autonomous provinces' status enshrined in the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 was revoked by Milosevic in 1989.)

³² Montenegro 2010 Analysis of Viability of an Independent Montenegro By Daniel GROS (26 FEB 2001), CEPS

³³ Throughout the Balkans, Serbo-Croat has almost completely fallen into disuse as a name for what is essentially a single language with a variety of mutually intelligible dialects less dissimilar than American and British English. (However, linguo-nationalists, especially in Croatia, are working on the invention of new words so that within a generation the distinction at least between Serbian and Croatian will become significant).

³⁴ The lack of difference between Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Montenegrin dialects of what is essentially the same language brings to mind Marshall McLuhan's definition of a "language as a dialogue backed up by an army and navy".

B. Independence as a path to stability

Although Montenegro has not been at war with Serbia, the past three years and especially the period of NATO bombardment fomented a spirit of military opposition to Belgrade. Milosevic established a special battalion on Montenegrin soil and framed President Djukanovic a traitor for having taken the side of NATO during the conflict.

The Montenegrin government is proud of its record in providing safe refuge for the thousands of Kosovar Albanians fleeing Milosovic's ethnic cleansers in 1999, and of the relations it has established with its own Albanian community.

In a recent speech to European policy-makers, President Milo Djukanovic summarised Montenegrin independents' view of Serbia:

As long as Montenegro stays with Serbia in whatever form of a united state, the project of the Great Serbia will continue to live and will be a threat to the peace and stability of the region. Our model for the definition of our mutual relations is a chance that this illusion finally gets destroyed, and that the most dangerous source of instability in the Balkans gets eliminated³⁵.

The Croatian Ambassador to the EU in Brussels has recently concurred that as long as any semblance of Yugoslavia existed there would not be stability in South-East Europe, as a potential vehicle would remain for all potential Serbian expansionists to exploit. Only through final and absolute disintegration of the Yugoslav project could there be meaningful and far-reaching integration, he argued³⁶.

At the Balkan summit in Skopje in February 2001, Croatia declined membership of any regional bodies insisting that it would conduct all affairs with its neighbours on a purely bilateral basis only, as if the very thought of a regional association was a step towards renewed disaster.

President Djukanovic was asked recently³⁷ how he would tackle burgeoning organised crime in Montenegro (famed for its smuggling of stolen cars and cigarettes). His response was that organised crime would continue to benefit as long as there remains uncertainty about the Republic's political status, therefore permitting only an interim transitional economy.

³⁵ Montenegrin President Milo Djukanovic Speech to CEPS, Bruxelles, 26 FEB 2001, CEPS

³⁶ CEPS Conference on Future of Montenegro, Brussels, Feb 2001

³⁷ HD questions to Djukanovic. Brussels, February 2001.

C. Response of the International Community

Having been regarded favourably by the US and EU while Milosevic was in power, Djukanovic and Montenegrin aspirations for independence are being given short shrift by an international community increasingly keen to work with President Kostunica.

The international community regards Serbia post-Milosevic as a key asset in its experiments in humanitarian intervention in Kosovo especially, but also in Bosnia. The American authorities are aware that US casualties in the Balkans would spell disaster for NATO's continued presence there, and that the natural military partner and potential successor is the Yugoslav Army.

Montenegro is aware that the international community has no plan for resolving the diplomatic and legal problems surrounding the future political status of Kosovo. Given that the US and EU can see no way out of their expensive and dangerous predicament, they are seen as having chosen instead to opt for a status quo which suits no one.

Montenegro asserts that it has the right to withdraw from FRY, as does any constituent member of the Federation except the Autonomous Provinces. The EU and US are not sympathetic to this view.

The argument put forward by Washington and Brussels is that a continuation of FRY is necessary for as long as the issue of how to deal with Kosovo is unresolved. Montenegro is far more useful to the international policy-makers as the guarantor of FRY's survival than as another independent Balkan microstate.

D. Possibilities for dialogue

Djukanovic knows that his allegiance to the cause of independence is critical to his domestic popular support. Before the Milosevic reign, however, an independent Montenegro was the dream of a small peripheral group that never expected it to become a majority-held aspiration. Many Montenegrins, nevertheless, unlike much of the international community, feel that, with regards to Montenegro, Kostunica is no better than Milosevic, because he has not repealed the constitutional changes imposed on Montenegro in July 2000, leaving it with little influence on the Federation.

Proposals have been made which argue for the urgent appraisal, by policy-makers, Serbs, and Montenegrins themselves, of the question of independence for Montenegro, followed by an open and urgent dialogue between the parties to find a compromise solution³⁸.

Since then both Serbia and Montenegro have come up with their proposals for resolving the relationship. Essentially, Montenegro is willing to share federative powers on condition that it is recognised as an independent state internationally. Serbia's proposal does not countenance such a degree of autonomy for the republic with one-seventeenth of its population.

More generally, UN Resolution 1244 is widely regarded as a policy that could be improved upon. Consultations with all parties on developing a successor policy has been suggested as a possible way forward.

³⁸ Extract: A European solution for the constitutional future of Montenegro, By Michael EMERSON, 26 Feb2001, CEPS

Montenegrin Foreign Minister Branko Lukovac³⁹ has indicated his desire for serious dialogue between Belgrade and Podgorica, if Montenegro decides to secede. Most policy-making think-tanks concerned with Montenegro are of the opinion that there is little time to lose in establishing that dialogue. Some have suggested that the EU should have a role in the discussions⁴⁰, while others believe the EU is too directly involved. The inconclusive results of the April 2001 elections have decelerated the rush towards referendum for independence though it is no less at the top of many Montenegrins' political agenda.

³⁹ HD Meetings in Podgorica in summer 2000, and in Brussels in February 2001.

⁴⁰ A proposal for international mediation, Sovereignty, Europe and the Future of Serbia and Montenegro Discussion Paper, 12 FEB 2001, European Stability Initiative

IV. Serbia: a new era?

A. Circumstances before the 2000 election

Field research for this report took place in the last few months leading up to Milosovic's political demise between May and September 2000. The defeat of Milosevic and the election of Vojislav Kostunica as President of Serbia in September 2000 were not widely expected. Many observers considered that Milosevic had a grip on the military and security apparatus so strong that, even on losing the general election, he was expected to attempt to retain office by any means at his disposal.

Almost everyone believed that he would not go without resorting to bloodshed. What had been clearly underestimated was the scale and profound depth of the opposition to his rule. People were waking up to the consequences of having waged – and lost – four wars. A generation of young adults (children when Milosevic came to power, and now of voting age) resented a youth spent living under warfare, sanctions, economic hardship, parental stress and depression.

Not anticipating Kostunica's⁴¹ ability to command public admiration, analysts were convinced that the electorate held the entire feuding opposition in contempt even greater than its loathing for Milosevic. One expert on the Serbian opposition parties⁴² was certain that, given their poor reputation and without media access to change it, they stood no chance of changing voters' feelings of deep apathy, hopelessness and contempt.

Just before the 2000 election, many other factors can be identified as contributory to Milosovic's demise:

- contacts established by Zoran Djindjic⁴³ with organized crime, state security and military intelligence, which allowed him to win over key decision-makers at critical moments;
- elimination from the election of the unreliable and divisive SPO leader Vuk Draskovic, after an assassination attempt in early summer 2000 left him emotionally vulnerable;
- the spate of assassinations, especially those of newspaper editor Slavko Ceruvija and Arkan, each appealing to different strands of the electorate;
- the unexplained disappearance of Ivan Stambolic, Milosovic's mentor and highly respected member of the 'Old Guard', expected to announce his candidacy for the Presidency and to attract votes from disillusioned former supporters of Milosevic;
- the actions of the OTPOR (Resistance!) group and the miners, and considerable opposition to Milosevic in the provinces of Serbia (where, in contrast to Belgrade, there remained an element of independent media)

⁴¹ Serbian Politics: New Rules, Emerging Players, Biography of President Vojislav Kostunica, Aug 2000, IWPR & CER

⁴² Professor Aleksander Fatic who had just published a book on the Serbian opposition believed in June 2000 that the opposition stood no chance of victory. They were reviled deeply and felt to have let down the people after the winter demonstrations of 1996/97.

⁴³ Serbian Politics: New Rules, Emerging Players, Biography of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, Aug 2000, IWPR & CER

- perception by the wealthiest Serbians that Milosevic had become a liability, restricting their freedom to travel internationally – while Milosevic retained power, the names of those associated with him remained on lists of ‘banned persons’ at border crossings;
- in the year since the Kosovo crisis, Serbians had begun to see that (contrary to what the state media had been telling them), they had lost the Kosovo War, and their co-religionists in Kosovo were now being harassed or killed almost daily;
- the dire economic situation, with the average monthly wage having fallen to 50–80 DM from an average of 1,500 DM at the beginning of the decade together with economic sanctions and great shortages of sugar, flour, petrol and heating fuel for the coming winter;
- social collapse of Serbia at every level. For example, it had become the norm for medical professionals to insist on a significant payment in return for treatment or medication. This is in contrast to the comparatively sophisticated socialist society of only a decade earlier in which pensions were ample, foreign travel was common-place and having to pay directly for medical care was unthinkable.

The economic incentive must have been huge as people went to the voting booth in the knowledge that another four years of Milosevic meant another four years of sanctions, isolation and the certainty of continued impoverishment.

B. Challenges ahead

Kosovo's quest for independence is likely to be a significant challenge to the Serbian authorities. If the international community imposes independence, this will create bitterness in some quarters, likely to encourage a resurgence of nationalist elements. Ironically, international sympathies have now shifted from support for the Albanians formerly persecuted and expelled from Kosovo, in favour of the Serbs in Kosovo who continue to be harassed and killed by the Albanians.

In June 1999, a 'ground safety zone' was established in Southern Serbia, as a condition of Milosevic's surrender. The UCPMB Albanian separatist movement had used this zone as a base for operations now threatening to embroil Serbia, Macedonia and K-For. By early 2001, 34 Serbs had nevertheless been killed within the 'safety zone'.

The new Belgrade government began by showing exemplary restraint, managing to negotiate a 20-day ceasefire with the UCPMB. NATO initially agreed to allow the Yugoslav army to re-enter one third of the zone eventually increasing this to the reoccupation of the entire zone.

Montenegro's aspiration for independence is another challenge to Belgrade's authority but one which all parties seem to agree will not provoke a military response (see Chapter 4 above).

The region of Vojvodina, although not yet on any international agenda, could be a point of tension if Belgrade chooses to maintain a strong centralised government and not return the Special Autonomy status which was, as in the case of Kosovo, withdrawn by Milosevic in his 'Bureaucratic Revolution' of 1989.

Rebuilding a shattered economic and social infrastructure is Serbia's greatest immediate challenge. If Serbs do not experience a real sense of change in their daily quality of life, democracy will inevitably fall prey to alternative forces which can persuade the electorate that they can deliver more sooner. For this reason Kostunica and Djindjic have bowed to the local strain of realpolitik and offered up Milosevic to the international community for a hefty billion-dollar bounty.

The nationalist sentiments and ideals that fuelled a decade of war have been exhausted and discredited in Serbia. Present ministers in the Belgrade government voiced their lack of interest in preserving any territories that wish to go their own way including Kosovo and Montenegro.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ HD interviews May 2000, Belgrade.

C. The International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia

Although the Serbian people voted out Milosevic in September 2000, it is unsafe to conclude that they have yet come to terms with their role in the Yugoslav wars. In June 2001 revelations of atrocities committed by Milosevic's henchmen against Albanian civilians received blanket coverage in the Serbian media and significantly impacted upon public attitudes towards their former strongman. Consequently for the first time a majority of Serbs supported Milosevic's extradition to the Hague.⁴⁵

Perhaps the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague will present the most serious challenge to Serbia. It will serve to highlight the importance of each ethnic or national community acknowledging its past, both recent and distant. This in turn seems the best hope for ensuring that the genocide of the 1990s in the Balkans will not be continued too far into the 21st century, nor repeated in future. At present however, ICTY is still viewed throughout Serbian society not as an international court but as a biased tool of American foreign policy, with the aim of humiliating Serbia.

ICTY presents, for perhaps the first time since Nuremberg, a political window to investigate and learn from such misery and inhumanity as perpetrated in the Balkans. This is an opportunity for warring politicians to start to respect international humanitarian law, knowing that they will eventually be held accountable for their political and military decisions.

A poet, diplomat and former mayor of Sarajevo⁴⁶ argues that had the Ottoman Turks been forced to take responsibility for the genocide they committed against 1,500,000 Armenians in 1915, Hitler would never have been convinced that he could possibly get away with an even greater mass murder.

The ICTY is an attempt to replace vengeance with justice and as such must be supported by those committed to preventing the outbreak of the next cycle of Balkan violence. ICTY is proving a central focus in the relationship Serbia is forging with itself as well as with the international community.

⁴⁵ BBC June 2001

⁴⁶ HD interview with Miroslav Jancic, London February 2001

V. Conclusion: regional overview

After the four wars of the 1990s, and despite the intervention of the international community, there are still numerous ongoing conflicts in the Balkans in early 2001:

- Albanian separatists (NLA) & Kosovar Albanians (ex-KLA) vs. Macedonian Army
- Kosovar Albanians vs. Kosovo Serbs (Mitrovica, Gračanica etc. throughout Kosovo);

Other potential or low-intensity conflicts, although unlikely to escalate, include:

- Pro-independent Montenegrins vs. Serbia-Montenegro unionists;
- Montenegrin Albanian separatists (so far non-existent) vs. Montenegrin Army (presently still a police force) or Yugoslav Army;
- Hungarian & Vojvodina separatists, having exhausted political means to reassert their autonomy from Serbia;
- Sandjak separatists aspiring to regional autonomy;
- Bosnian Croats & Croatian elements vs Bosnian Serbs & Serbian elements vs Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) & S-For in the final round of Bosnian disintegration (which most observers believe would escalate if the international community withdrew).

A. Further Fragmentation Or Re-Integration?

Throughout the Balkans, many politicians and others argue that disintegration is necessary before re-integration can happen in a sustainable and peaceful manner. Montenegro claims that by gaining independence it will have finally laid Yugoslavia to rest. Ending the Yugoslav Federation, argues the Montenegrin government, will enable a new regionalism and good-neighbourliness based on mutual respect and international recognition.

However, the international community (the US, the EU, and all individual European Foreign Ministries), states categorically that the very reason it opposes independence is the fear of a resurgence of further fragmentation (the 'domino theory').

For example, it has been argued that if independence is granted to Kosovo, then Republika Srpska will demand independence based on the vast mono-ethnic majority exerting its democratic right for self-determination, and that Macedonia would crumble with Western Macedonia joining Kosovo.

B. Lessons learned and suggestions for the future

Experience of the 1990s shows that no policy regarding one fragment of the former Yugoslav Balkans can or should be applied until the potential ramifications on the remaining interconnected fragments have been assessed.

Others see the guarantees of recognition towards Slovenia, which most analysts argue were justifiable beyond question on the part of the international community, as the first critical error without which Croatia and consequently Bosnia would not have been able to take a similar path.

A policy of inaction is not proposed, although many authorities suggest that the intervention of the international community has to date served only to exacerbate an already difficult situation over the past decade. In Kosovo particularly, the perceived policy of NATO and K-For to preserve the lives of its soldiers at all costs is regarded as untenable. Many international officials in Kosovo are wary of not getting on the wrong side of the majority population.

The Balkans is not a region for complacent diplomacy: it seems always possible to radicalise a segment of the population, especially if a political leadership chooses to exploit past injustice. (Even at the height of the Serb–Croat war, most Bosnians did not believe that a country as successfully integrated and intensely assimilated as Bosnia would choose to resolve its problems through medieval warfare: raping, pillaging, deporting and wholesale executions of civilian populations.)

During the 1990s, even authoritative observers of the region argued that the Serbs were naturally expansionist, aggressive warmongers who found it natural to fight given the slightest excuse. ‘Serbo-phobia’ was the political fashion of the decade and arguably contributed to several humanitarian catastrophes

At the time, Serbs were held responsible for conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Such over-simplification of complex social, political and economic circumstances was exaggerated when Milosevic and a few other political and military leaders (‘war criminals’) were seen as the crux of the problem. Few wished to accept that Serb aggression was fuelled by the experience of an unacknowledged genocide together with fears of being a Balkan minority.

The international community chose to overlook the largest forced migration of the Yugoslav Wars, which was of Serbs who were regarded with particular antipathy at the time (before Kosovo reversed international perceptions). Around a two hundred thousand Serbs from the Croatian Krajina were forcibly expelled by the Croatian Army, with help from private military corporations from the US⁴⁷.

The Albanians are now replacing the Serbs as the villains of the region, and Serbia will not fail to exploit that image to its full advantage.

Similarly, ‘humanitarian intervention’ and first so-called ‘humanitarian war’ engaged in by NATO in defence of a multi-ethnic Kosovo was undermined as the Serbs and Montenegrins who had lived in Kosovo for generations (some for centuries) were hounded out by the KLA with little international sympathy. The Serbs were regarded as having brought this persecution upon themselves.

⁴⁷ Private US firm training both sides in Balkans, 2 Mar 2001, The Scotsman (search MPRI)

By then Serbs were seen as the problem itself. They had lost their identity as individuals, some guilty of having persecuted Kosovar Albanians for over a decade. Their popularity rating was low, so they could be allowed to pay the price. The KLA exploited this, and encouraged ordinary Albanians to do the same.

The demise of the demonised President Milosevic was much awaited in the Balkans and beyond; it was believed that he embodied so much evil that his departure would somehow also remove all the wounds and frustrations of the region. Clearly, this expectation has not been realised.

The present stand-off in Skopje, Macedonia could, if unresolved ignite deep resentments between Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek and Macedonian Orthodox societies and Albanian populations in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Greece.

The treatment and minorities in the republics of former Yugoslavia has been the critical determinant of war or peace throughout the past decade: Slovenia has no significant minority and faces no threats to its security. Croatia no longer has a sizeable minority and there is little chance that the Croatian Serbs will return in significant numbers. Bosnia continues to be beset by deep mistrust and ill-will between the various religious (they are ethnically identical) communities and most analysts believe that violence will resurface the moment the international community pulls out. As aforementioned little protection was afforded the Serb or Roma minorities in Kosovo after the departure of FRY forces.

Tragically, Macedonians have now caught a virulent strain of ethnic discord that both communities had been containing admirably given the neighbourhood they inhabit. The freedom and encouragement granted to the KLA and UCPMB have however helped cultivate a strong motivation for a small number of ex-KLA and ex-UCPMB to try their luck in Macedonia. At the time of writing the Macedonian parliament is being stormed by disgruntled Macedonian nationalists unhappy with the role of EU diplomacy in preventing Macedonia resorting to a military option to deal with the NLA.

In conclusion, these thoughts from UN Special Envoy to the Balkans Carl Bildt summarise the choices to be made:

‘To achieve any progress toward self-sustaining stability in the Balkans, regional leaders must abandon their preoccupation with nineteenth-century concepts of nation-states and borders and embrace the concept of trans-national integration.

But if the opportunities afforded by political change are not seized, the region could be wrenched by renewed strife. Its endemic conflict is now held in check by a quarter of a million NATO-led soldiers committed to the region. If the troops were withdrawn today, however, a new war would break out tomorrow. Self-sustaining regional stability remains a good distance away.

In retrospect, it is obvious that the rights and positions of the substantial minority groups within each of these states should have been firmly secured before independence was recognized.

Now it remains hotly debated whether the international community’s intervention prevented further bloodshed or in fact worsened the situation...’

For most of the old political leaders of Bosnia, peace has just been the continuation of war by other means: the old nationalist issues still dominate their agendas to the detriment of the far more pressing social and economic issues.

On top of all this, there is an acute need for Serbian society to recognize the evil that has been done in its name against innocent Croats, Bosnian, Muslims, Albanians, and others, and to fully understand the resentment it has created in these other societies. Peace must be built on national reconciliation, and this is possible only if there is individual accountability for the crimes committed during all the wars of the last decade. Here, the work of the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague is of critical importance. To be successful, however, the tribunal must be seen as an instrument of reconciliation rather than retribution....

Today the region's fundamental choice is between integration and disintegration –, which, over time, might well mean a choice between peace and war....

The international community must not fool itself into believing that only more smart bombs can handle the problems of the Balkans. It is the smart policies that have been most lacking over the past decade⁴⁸.

Proactive preventive policy-making and diplomacy is urgently required at a regional level if fires are not going to perpetually ignite one or other part of this deeply traumatised region.

⁴⁸ A Second Chance in the Balkans, by Carl Bildt UN Special Envoy to Balkans, Jan/Feb 2001, Foreign Affairs