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**BALKANS TOWARDS 2000**

**BY**

**COLONEL KOSTAS TSIMOGIANNIS  
Hellenic Army**

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**BALKANS TOWARDS 2000**

by  
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**U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE**  
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## ABSTRACT

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This study provides a brief review of the relations among Balkan nations and their effect on recent developments.

The study took into account historical as well as current developments and struggles, since the contemporary states and peoples of the Balkans have been affected by the nationalist movements of the 19th century, the policies and rivalries of the great powers and the two World Wars.

The study concludes that the formation of a Balkan confederation, based on economic and trade elements, that will include all the Balkan countries may provide the long-term solution for stability in the region.

The European Union and the United States of America must undertake the crucial role of providing economic and technical assistance on an impartial basis to the members of the confederation with the most disrupted economies.



## BALKANS TOWARDS 2000

### Introduction

The collapse of Communism, the passing of bi-polarity and the end of the Cold War created world wide optimism. The expectation was that reason would replace force, that cooperation would replace confrontation, and that the arms race would give way to new forms of economic productivity. These expectations were not met. Reason was overcome by violence among ethnic groups that had co-existed for half a century, while religious fanaticism and nationalism brought about violence and extermination rather than cooperation. These political and social developments do not reflect the historic realities of 18th or 19th century Europe, but, unfortunately, they became prevalent in the Balkans of the 1990s.

In order to comprehend recent developments in the Balkan region and particularly in the former Yugoslavia one needs to look into the history of the region. This study attempts to provide a brief review of the relations among Balkan nations and their effect on recent developments.

### Origins of the term "Balkans"-General Characteristics

The name of the Balkan peninsula can be traced to the Turkish word "balkan" which stands for "wooded mountain range." This peninsula is also known as the Aimos peninsula. The region came to be known as Balkans following nearly four centuries under Ottoman rule.

The peninsula forms the southeastern part of Europe. Three continents come together in this region, i.e. Europe, Asia and Africa, and two seas, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The following countries are found in this region: Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, the FYROM, and new Yugoslavia) and a portion of Turkey (Eastern Thrace). For historical reasons Romania is also included, even though it is located north of the Danube. Generally, the region is mountainous, the coasts are rugged, and there are many islands in the Aegean and the Adriatic. Traditionally, farming has been a major part of the economy of the countries of this region, but there are also many strategic minerals. Ethnic, racial, economic and political differences are additional characteristics of this region.

The ancient Greek civilization influenced this region. Other empires and civilizations followed and left their mark, including the Roman, the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) and the Ottoman empires. East and West confronted each other in this region since antiquity. The Greek nation—the oldest in the region—because of its location bore the burden but also had the privilege of defending the fundamental principles of freedom, national independence and territorial integrity.

### Geographic Characteristics and Boundaries

The total area of the Balkans is 505,000 sq. kilometers and it is bounded to the North by the rivers Sava and the Danube, to the East by the Black Sea and the Aegean Sea, to the South by the Mediterranean, and to the West by the Ionian and the Adriatic Seas. The geographic layout has influenced the region's history. In contrast to the other two Mediterranean peninsulas (the Italian and the Iberian -- which are cut off by high mountain ranges), the Balkan peninsula is attached to the rest of Europe by the Danube. This river was never an obstacle to the movement of people from North to South. On the contrary, this region was the main route for the access of Asiatic peoples into Europe. This access, from North to South and from East to West, explains why the Balkans have become the battleground of conflicting cultures, religions, traditions and nations.

### The Strategic Importance of the Balkans

The Balkans, because of their morphology and location, are one of the most strategic regions of the world because:

- a) This is the place where three continents and two important seas come together.
- b) This region is surrounded by other strategically important regions that have been the focal points of recent rivalries, i.e. Central and Eastern Europe, North Africa, and the Mediterranean.

The Balkans have influenced but have also been affected by these regions.

c) From an operational standpoint two important strategic axis cross the region: (i) Central/Eastern Europe-Balkans-Dardanel-Middle East, and (ii) Central/Eastern Europe-Balkans-Eastern Mediterranean-North Africa.

The Balkans have also provided a meeting place for diverse cultures and religions. The Eastern Orthodox Church with its Constantinople Patriarchate, exerted significant influence to various nations in the Balkans during the years of the Byzantine Empire. The Crusades were accompanied by an eastward expansion of Catholicism, while the Ottoman rule established the Islamic religion as part of the Balkan milieu.

### **Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that contributed to the development of the present political conditions in the region. The study will take into account historical as well as current developments and struggles, and will attempt to draw some conclusions about the future.

### **Short History of the Balkans**

The word "Balkans" evokes images of conflict and confrontation. The Balkans have been described as Europe's "powder keg" largely because of the various ethnic rivalries, ambitions

and unfulfilled aspirations that can and did ignite wider European conflicts, i.e., WWI.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century and the rise of nationalism we have witnessed frictions, conflicts, and external interventions that have affected the region as well as all of Europe. Various factors contributed to this unrest including the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the policies and interests of the great powers, and the ethnic, religious and geographic diversity of the region at a time of rising nationalism throughout Europe. These divisions and the resulting conflicts became a "permanent" Balkan feature.

Historically, the Balkans have been a sensitive region where peoples with diverse cultures, customs and traditions met, intermingled, and influenced each other. Greeks, Romans, Celts, Avars, Slavs, Turks, Germans and others have all left their mark. However, the history of the Balkans has been determined by the Greeks, the Romans, the Slavs and the Turks. The contemporary states and peoples of the Balkans have been affected by:

- i) the nationalist movements of the 19th century;
- ii) the policies and rivalries of the great powers, and
- iii) the Balkan and the two World Wars.

Interstate relations and foreign policies of the states in the region were influenced by territorial claims and unification attempts. Balkan geography and other developments worked against

regional integration. Ethnic divisions limited the influence of the Balkan region. Thus, the political development of the region was determined by the policies and strength of the great powers and their involvement in the affairs of Balkan states.

### **The Establishment of Balkan States**

Even though the foundations of the Balkan world can be traced to antiquity and to the Middle Ages, the Ottoman era has been instrumental in the contemporary development of the region. This is because of three factors. The first is the development of ethnic identity in the Balkans; the second, the dependence on the great powers and, third, the creation of national liberation movements.

These three factors determined the historical evolution of the Balkans. However, the enslavement of the region by the Ottomans created common experiences and linkages among the Balkan peoples and set the foundations and the vision of Balkan unity. The 19th century became the catalyst of change in the region. Struggles and sacrifices brought about the creation of a Greek state in 1830, gave autonomy to Serbia in 1832, brought about the unification of Romania in 1861, and the creation of Bulgaria in 1878. Soon, however, cooperation against the Turks among the Balkan states gave way to rivalries, conflicting claims and irredentist activities.

The Balkan states (Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro)

cooperated against Turkey during the first Balkan War of 1912 that liberated the Christian populations of the region. The peace treaty among the Balkan states and Turkey was signed in London on May 17, 1913. But this treaty did not resolve the problems in the region. Bulgaria, motivated by the vision of the San Stefano Treaty, attempted to incorporate territories belonging to Greece and Serbia. This became the cause of the second Balkan war. This time, the object of the Greek-Serbian alliance was to fight Bulgaria. The defeat of Bulgaria in this war brought about the Treaty of Bucharest on October 8, 1913. Although Greece did not enter WWI until 1916, it played an important role in that conflict. The establishment of the Allied Command in Thessaloniki provided a refuge for the Serbian Army after the fall of Serbia, and a springboard for the 1918 Allied offensive that broke the Bulgarian defense lines in the battle of Skra. The final determination of Balkan boundaries came about at the end of WWI under the treaties of Saint Germain, Neuilly, and Lausanne (1919 and 1923).

### Present Conditions

#### Albania

Albania was recognized as an independent state under the treaty of London (May 17, 1913) because of pressures from Italy and Austria. It was forcefully annexed by fascist Italy in 1939,

and regained its independence at the end of World War II. Enver Hoja established a People's Democracy in Albania in 1946, with initial support from Yugoslavia and later by the Soviet Union. In 1961, Albania left the Soviet orbit and the Warsaw Pact (1968), and aligned itself with Communist China. It remained under Beijing's protection for nearly twenty years. During the last ten years of communist rule, Albania remained isolated.

Enver Hoja ruled Albania for forty five years. His death, the gradual collapse of communism, the first free elections in the country and the dramatic economic and political transition in the country contributed to instability. Consequently, Albanian nationalism has had an impact on minorities living within Albania, as well as on Albanian ethnic minorities living in other Balkan states.

About half of the Albanian population resides outside Albania. In Kosovo, Albanians make up more than 80% of the population. In the FYROM they constitute 30% of the population, and in Montenegro there are at least 300,000 Albanians. This is a classic example of how the great powers arbitrarily drew Albania's boundaries and contributed to minority problems in the region. It is not surprising that the Albanians in former Yugoslavia seek their independence or even their union to Albania. This is particularly so in Kosovo where the Albanians are the dominant element. There is increasing hostility against the Serbs,

especially following the decision of the Serbian authorities to suspend regional autonomy in Kosovo and rule the region directly from Belgrade.

The rise of Albanian nationalism and irredentism, especially after 1981, affected Greece as well. Tension was not uncommon in the relations of the two states over the last seventy years. The cause was the Greek minority inhabiting Southern Albania (known also as Northern Epirus). The Albanian authorities systematically violated the human rights of the Greek population which had been guaranteed under international agreements. This involved repression, limitations in the free exercise of religion, education and the use of the Greek language. Greek-Albanian relations improved during the period of Chinese influence in Albania. This led to the resumption of commercial exchanges in 1970 and of diplomatic relations in 1971. The rapprochement between the two states was speeded up considerably after 1987 when Greece lifted the state of war that had existed since World war II.

Following the collapse of communism and despite the continuing pressures against the Greek minority, Greece was the first European state to extend economic and material assistance to Albania and to receive thousands of refugees. It is estimated that nearly half a million Albanians currently work in Greece as legal or illegal immigrants.

## Turkey

The Turkish Republic was formally established in 1923 following the demise of the Ottoman Empire. The founder of modern Turkey was Kemal Ataturk. Until 1946, Turkey had only one political party, the Republican Party. The second party to appear in Turkish politics was the Democratic Party which ruled the country from 1950 to 1960 when the government was overthrown by the military. Turkey entered a period of unrest that ended in 1971 with another military intervention. The military took over once more in 1980, indicating that the military establishment remains the power behind the scenes.

Greece and Turkey became NATO members in 1952. Turkey's entry into NATO was not only related to the Soviet threat, but also because of the Western interests in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. For the last ten years Turkey has been seeking admission to the European Union, but the Europeans do not appear to be receptive to the idea. Greece is a member. Reasons for the lack of interest on the part of the Europeans include issues of religion, fears that millions of Turks will flood Europe, the problems in Greco-Turkish relations, as well as Turkey's dismal human rights record.

Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has attempted to play a regional leadership role in the Balkans and to become the dominant power in the region. In pursuing these objectives Turkey has

effectively exploited local conditions and conflicts and has implemented a long term strategy toward the Muslim minorities in the region. Judging from the Turkish diplomatic activism and policies, it is clear that Turkey strives to:

- i) enter the European Union as a European state;
- ii) influence and take advantage of developments in the Middle East;
- iii) re-establish itself as a Balkan power.

In seeking ties with Europe, Turkey takes advantage of:

- i) its geographic location in the Middle East and its control of the Straits;
- ii) its claim that it is the bridge between Europe and the Middle East, and
- iii) the potential of the Turkish market and its lure for European investors.

However, Turkey's road to Europe is not an easy one. Turkey faces many obstacles and problems one of which is Greece. The latter has veto rights on Turkey's EU membership issue. Furthermore, Greece currently possesses the necessary means to project its military power over the Straits. In addition, Greek forces operating from their bases in geographic proximity to the Straits, essentially effectuate joint control of this strategic passage. Now that Turkey has lost one of the key elements of its foreign and

security policy, it is attempting under various pretexts and actions to control the Aegean.

Turkey promotes its Islamic personality to the Arabs and to the Middle East. Turkey aims to expand its influence in the region and to neutralize Iran's hegemonic claims. Similarly, it has taken various political, economic and cultural initiatives toward the Turkic republics of central Asia that were formerly under Soviet control.

Of particular interest to Greece is Turkey's activism in the Balkans. It appears that Turkey's aims in the region include:

- i) to act as the guardian of the various Muslim minorities and even to incorporate some of them to Turkey. The Turkish aim is to create a "Muslim arc" in order to gain better access and influence in the Balkans, but also to expand Turkey's security threat to Greece from a new direction, i.e., at the Greek northern frontier.
- ii) to surround Greece from the North along the axis of Albania, the FYROM, and Bulgaria. This would put pressure on Greece on two fronts and would weaken Greece's eastern front. Turkey has been partially successful in this endeavor by weakening the Sofia-Athens axis, and by gaining the recognition of the Muslim minority by the Bulgarian government as a "Turkish" minority.
- iii) to expand into the Aegean and to legalize the current division of Cyprus.

## Bulgaria

Bulgaria's irredentism led her to the disastrous second Balkan war in 1913. During both World Wars Bulgaria sided with Germany. Its aim was to gain control of Yugoslav Macedonia, a good part of Greek Macedonia and Thrace, and of portions of Southern Romania (Dobruja). Bulgaria failed in her quest, returned to her pre-World War II boundaries and has not raised any territorial claims against its neighbors since then. A Communist government was established in Bulgaria in 1947 and transformed the state into a "People's Republic." It became a member of the Warsaw pact and for forty five years remained Moscow's most faithful ally. The socialist system lasted until 1989 when Gorbachev started the process of democratization in the U.S.S.R. In the case of Bulgaria power shifted away from dogmatic communists to moderate communists and eventually, after the elections, to a democratic coalition. Bulgaria has proceeded with its political and economic transition, albeit with mixed results. This has resulted in significant degradation of the Bulgarians' standard of living, political unrest, and calls for more rapid political and economic reform.

Bulgaria's relations with Turkey have been through their own Cold War due to their differing ideological orientations and the issue of the Muslim minority inhabiting the southern part of the country. Initially, Bulgaria did not recognize this minority as "Turkish." The worst crisis in their bilateral relations came in

1989-90, when thousands of Bulgarian Muslims either abandoned their homes or were forcefully expelled, and attempted to enter Turkey. Turkey closed its borders and the refugees eventually returned to their homes even though they had transferred their funds to banks in Turkey. This contributed even more to the country's economic chaos.

After 1991, Turkey normalized its relations with Bulgaria and regained some of the lost ground. With Western support Turkey extended investment and credits for consumer goods to Bulgaria. In return, Bulgaria recognized the Muslim minority as "Turkish." A small "Turkish" party (called the Movement for Rights and Freedom) participated in the election and held the balance of power in the political life of the country. This party has become a source of Turkish access and influence in Bulgaria's political life. Turkey aims to bring Bulgaria in its own sphere of influence using the Muslim minority as leverage, and to weaken the cooperation between Sofia and Athens that had been an obstacle to Turkey's policy in the Balkans.

Bulgaria sought the continuous improvement of its relations with Greece. Bulgaria's president explicitly stated in 1975 that his country had no territorial claims against Greece. This became the foundation of the subsequent cooperation between the two countries despite the fact that they both belonged to different ideological camps. With the passing of the Cold War Bulgaria

continues to struggle with the democratic transition. The foundations of Greco-Bulgarian cooperation appear not to be as stable as in the past. Bulgaria's recognition of its Muslim minority as "Turkish," and its policy on the "Macedonian" issue contributed to the weakening of these relations. In the past the two countries held identical views on the issue of "Macedonia." Bulgaria's recognition of Skopje as Republic of Macedonia seriously undermined its relations with Greece and had negative repercussions in the politics of FYROM.

During the Cold War relations with Serbia had generally been tense mainly because Bulgaria's policy reflected that of the Soviet Union towards Yugoslavia. In 1947, under the Bled Agreement between Tito and Dimitroff, Bulgaria was forced to recognize the creation of this peculiar "Macedonian" Republic and of Tito's "Macedonian nation." After Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Soviet bloc Bulgaria renounced its commitments under the Bled Agreement on the issue of "Macedonia." Even though in 1992 Bulgaria recognized Skopje as "Republic of Macedonia," it has not given up irredentist aspirations of one day uniting this republic to a "Greater" Bulgaria.

Finally, Bulgaria is seeking to revise its defense doctrine through bilateral agreements with neighboring countries. It is also seeking a form of association with NATO and membership in the

European Union and in the Western European Union mainly for economic reasons.

### **The Former Yugoslavia**

Serbia and Montenegro attained their independence in 1877, when the Ottoman Empire was forced to leave their territories. The two Balkan Wars failed to create a unified Slavic nation. It was not until December 1, 1918, that the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes united with Montenegro and Bosnia to form a unified state.

Capitalizing on their resistance against the Germans during World War II, the Communists took over in 1945 and proclaimed the Federated Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. In order to reduce Serbian influence, Croat president Tito created two autonomous provinces inside of Serbia, Kosovo and Vojvodina. Tito's dream was to unite the different ethnic groups in the country using Communism as the link among them. For nearly three decades the system appeared to function well.

In 1948 Tito broke his ties with Moscow. Since then relations between the two countries went through serious tensions. Tito's death in 1980 created anxiety among NATO members because there were concerns as to whether Yugoslavia could maintain its independence from the Eastern Bloc. For NATO a non-aligned Yugoslavia was a bastion between NATO in the Mediterranean and the members of the Warsaw pact.

The collapse of Communism opened the way for the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation. No one anticipated that Yugoslavia's break-up would be painless. The Yugoslav crisis commenced in 1991 when Slovenia and Croatia proclaimed their independence and set a timetable for the withdrawal of the federal army from their territory. Slovenia's separation was quick and painless mainly because of the ethnic and religious homogeneity of its population. In Croatia there was fighting that lasted until 1994. These two republics were first recognized by the European Union on December 16, 1991, and soon thereafter by the members of the United Nations.

Bosnia-Herzegovina became independent in the spring of 1992. This started the greatest recent loss of human life in the region as the three constituent ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats and Muslims) engaged in an incredible civil war that came to an end in 1995 as a result of international intervention.

In response to Yugoslavia's disintegration, Serbia and Montenegro formed a "little" Yugoslavia. This successor state considered Germany as the main cause for Yugoslavia's collapse. There may be some truth to this allegation given that Croatia and Slovenia have been under German influence, and Germany has been seeking to intervene in the Balkans in the context of its European and Mediterranean policy.

Kosovo is an autonomous region of former Yugoslavia. Because of its strategic location it is a key to the Balkans. Its ethnic make-up was forcibly altered in favor of the Albanians first by the Ottoman Turks and then by the Italians. To the Serbs Kosovo is the historical and cultural center of their nation. The fate of Serbia and of the Balkans was repeatedly decided there, and this confirms its strategic importance. It is actually hard to decide whether the Serbs or the Albanians are "right" over Kosovo. The Albanian majority is entitled to autonomy, but the Serbs are also entitled to the cradle of their civilization from which they had been forcibly expelled.

Now the Serbs are in total control of Kosovo and are determined to fight to keep it. They believe that if they give to the Albanians the right of self-determination that will be the first step towards union with Albania which has already recognized the existence of a "Republic of Kosovo." The Albanians in turn believe that Kosovo's annexation will lead to a "Greater Albania." The Italians are supporting Albania as a means of extending their influence in the region. Italy's strategic interests may include its traditional control of the Adriatic, access to emerging markets in former communist states in the Balkans, and avoidance of socioeconomic impacts due to uncontrolled migration. Conflicting foreign interests and influences can upset at any time

the fragile political balance in Kosovo. This may lead to another confrontation that will draw other Balkan and non-Balkan states.

### **The FYROM (Skopje)**

The Federal People's Republic of Macedonia was proclaimed in August 1944. It became the sixth republic of Yugoslavia. It was an artificial creation by Tito who appropriated and distorted another country's historical heritage in order to justify its standing as a separate nationality. The FYROM, in some respects, is part of Bulgaria. Under Czar Samuel, c. 1000AD it was the center of the Bulgarian state. The population was speaking Bulgarian, despite the attempt to create a separate language. The region came under Yugoslav control after the Balkan Wars. Had the San Stefano Treaty been implemented it would have been part of Bulgaria. This is why Bulgaria recognized this republic so quickly in 1992, while Skopje minimized the significance of this action. Had they claimed Serb origins, they would have been incorporated in Serbia. The only way out was the appropriation of the Greek historical and cultural heritage. In addition, the adoption of FYROM's constitution raised territorial claims against Greece, and FYROM proceeded in establishing a military relationship with Turkey. Tito was willing to sacrifice good neighbor relations with Greece in 1945-48 by pursuing this policy, especially since Tito's Yugoslavia in 1944 was aligned with the leftist resistance movement of EAM-ELAS in Greece.

As shown earlier, Bulgaria, under the 1947 Bled Agreement, recognized the creation of this "republic" as well as the existence of a "Macedonian" nation, even though soon thereafter it renounced this action. The Tito-Stalin rift brought Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the West, something that required a revival of the traditional friendship with Greece. This is the moment that Greece should have demanded (but did not) the revocation of the term "Macedonia" from the autonomous republic of Skopje.

The geographic boundaries of Macedonia include the river Nestos to the East, the Albanian highlands to the West, Thessaly to the South, and the valleys of Axios and Strymon to the North.

Today, Skopje advocates that there is a "Macedonian nation" based in the FYROM, and that in Greece and Bulgaria there are "Macedonian minorities" that must unite with the motherland. Bulgaria in turn wants Macedonia as a Bulgarian province, much as in the case of the province of Pirin and has similar claims about minorities. Todor Zhivkov, however, had renounced these claims.

The Greek position, which is based on self-evident truths is that Macedonia is a geographic term as there are no "Macedonians" or a "Macedonian nation." There are Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians who live in the region of Macedonia. Today, Skopje promotes irredentist claims against Greece that have no historical or other foundation. These claims are exploited by opponents of Greece.

## Romania

Romania was recognized as an independent kingdom in 1878. Throughout its history this country has made many sacrifices in order to maintain its standing. Communist rule was established in 1947. After 1965 the country was governed by Ceaucescu who opened diplomatic contacts with the West and formalized diplomatic relations with China. In 1989 he was overthrown, arrested and was put to death for being a corrupt dictator.

The Romanians, after the troubles of 1989, followed the example of other Eastern European states by getting rid of Communism and its institutions. The country has been governed by a National Salvation Front that has attempted to guide the country through the post-communist economic and political transition. During the recent Balkan crisis Romania remained neutral. However, the bad economic conditions of the country have attracted the West and Turkey into Romania and this may create new conditions of dependence.

## Greece

The Greek nation became independent in 1830. Since then it protected its independence through two Balkan Wars and through its participation in and contribution to victory of the Allied forces in both World Wars.

Greece fought on the side of the allies in World War II, confronting the Axis powers and taking its place in history by its

valiant struggle. Following the withdrawal of the German occupation forces Greece faced a Civil War in which the left wing insurgency was defeated. In the years that followed the end of WWII, Greece became a founding member of the United Nations, a member of NATO in 1952, faced considerable political instability in the 1960s, became a republic in 1974, and entered the European Community in 1981 and the Western European Union in 1992.

Greece was cautious in responding to grandiose schemes for Balkan unity. The one successful effort was the Balkan Pact of 1934, consisting of Greece, Yugoslavia, Turkey and Romania. The pact however was ineffective as far as mutual security assistance was concerned in World War II. Tito attempted in 1945 to bring about a socialist Balkan confederation. This effort failed because Greece did not share this political and cultural outlook. In addition, Stalin opposed Tito's ideas. Moreover, Greece was suspicious of Yugoslavia's creation of the so-called federated "Republic of Macedonia." Following Tito's rift with Stalin Yugoslavia turned to the West for assistance. This encouraged Greco-Yugoslav cooperation that lasted until Tito's death. There were occasional moments of friction, however, because of provocations from Skopje.

Greek-Bulgarian relations moved toward normalization following Stalin's death. In the decade of the 1970s, Greco-Bulgarian relations have to be seen in the context of Turkey's

pressures against Greece (Cyprus, the Aegean continental shelf, and the Muslim minority in Western Thrace) and against Bulgaria (Muslim minority). There appears to be a reversal since the end of the Cold War that has been analyzed earlier in this paper.

Improvement in Greek-Albanian relations was delayed because of the persecution of the Greek minority in Northern Epirus. Relations improved by 1960 and this led to the restoration of commercial and diplomatic relations (1971) and to the lifting by Greece in 1987 of the state of war between the two countries.

The point of friction with Romania was over Romania's claims on the "Vlach" issue which affected relations between the two countries for nearly half a century. In recent years bilateral cooperation is excellent at all levels.

The nature of the threats facing Greece has been affected by the developments in Eastern Europe and the break-up of Yugoslavia. Until recently it was commonly accepted that the threat facing Greece from the north had declined and that the permanent threat facing Greece was from the east. Suddenly, Greece has been confronted with the revival of the threat from the north, a threat that did not have a materially independent existence outside the context of bipolar relations during the Cold War. This threat involves the Skopjan republic which is seeking international recognition under the denomination of "Macedonia." With such a denomination Skopje is likely to pursue irredentist policies. In

contrast, Greece has no territorial claims against any of its neighbors.

It should be pointed out that regardless of the developments along the northern frontiers of Greece, the reality of the Turkish threat cannot be overlooked. This threat has been on the increase as a result of post-Cold War developments. The military build up in Turkey complements its revisionist objectives in the region. These revisionist objectives are frequently proclaimed in threatening statements by Turkish officials. For example, a briefing that was conducted by the Turkish military leadership in Ankara in February 1997, raised territorial claims against a large number of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea as far as the island of Crete. The presence of the Turkish "Army of the Aegean," as well as the frequent violations of Greek air and sea territorial boundaries, have given the Turkish military threat against Greece a continuous and concrete significance.

#### **Factors of Instability in the Balkans**

Many of the problems affecting the Balkans can be attributed to internal and external factors many of which appear to be out of control. There are three key internal factors contributing to regional instability:

##### **a) Albanian Irredentism**

This irredentism originates in Kosovo and spreads to the South. The demographic conditions of the area have been affected

by the high birth rate among the Albanians. This is the fuse that may set off the powder keg known as the Balkans. Other factors contributing to this bleak picture include religious differences, poverty, diverse languages and cultures, and ultimately conflicting national aims.

Tito created the Kosovo autonomous region within the Yugoslav Federation. There were problems throughout the 1960s. Following the uprising of 1968, a new constitution was completed in 1974 that extended full rights to the Albanians. In 1981, after Tito's death, there were new disturbances following the Albanian demands for the creation of a "Republic of Kosovo." Albania quietly supported these activities anticipating future benefits from these developments.

In 1987, Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic took away all the rights and privileges that had been extended to the Albanians and prepared a new constitution to replace that of 1974. The new constitution ended Kosovo's autonomous status. In response, the Albanians adopted their own constitution and proclaimed their independence from Serbia. The Serbs, in turn, dissolved the government of Kosovo. The Albanians have withdrawn from the political life of the former Yugoslavia since then.

Albania's first goal is to secure the right of self-determination for Kosovo. Then it can proceed with its annexation. It should be noted that Albania has already recognized the

existence of a "Republic of Kosovo." These developments are likely to impact on the growing Albanian Muslim minority in the neighboring FYROM. The presence of a "Greater Albania" between Greece and Serbia is likely to have serious future implications.

**b) The future regime of the Skopjan Republic**

Skopje's regional policy primarily reflects that of Sofia and Ankara. To a lesser degree that policy is also influenced by Italy who has attempted to extend its influence in the region. Skopje's future objectives are also influenced by two other domestic factors. One such factor is the conflict between the continuously growing Albanian Muslim minority and the majority of the Bulgarian speakers some of whom call themselves "Macedonian." While the former turn their attention towards Kosovo, the latter are turning increasingly towards Bulgaria. It should be noted that the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), was organized during the interwar period and openly advocated union with Bulgaria. In 1990, IMRO was revived and reorganized as the "Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity," and still included pro-Bulgarian elements. Later, IMRO became more openly pro-Bulgarian, while the former communists were expressing pure "pro-Macedonian" nationalist sentiments. Both tendencies are sources of future problems if the end result is the creation of either a "Greater Albania" or an expanded Bulgaria between Greece and Serbia. The Serbs are not likely to remain indifferent to such

developments, especially after the loss of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia. They will fight to secure their vital link to Greece.

Despite these assessments, Greece has repeatedly stated that it is willing to support the survival and the development of the Skopjan Republic, as long as this state does not claim a denomination appropriating Greece's heritage and is willing to give up all irredentist claims.

**c) Turkey's intrusion in the Balkans**

Turkey is seeking to extend its influence in the Balkans through the Muslim element in Western Thrace, in Southern Bulgaria, in Albania and Bosnia. The revival of nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey presents many challenges for that country's regional objectives. There are additional complicating factors, including the promotion of Italian policy in the region and Germany's support for the Catholic republics of Slovenia and Croatia, which appears to be the result of pressure from Bavaria and Austria.

**Conclusions**

1989 marked not only the end of Communism but also the end of an era in international relations. The balance of power that emerged after the end of World War II collapsed with the demise of the Warsaw Pact, the reunification of Germany, Russia's decline, the emergence of the United States as the only superpower and the democratization of the former Communist countries of the Balkans.

Yugoslavia's collapse became the catalyst for the creation of new spheres of influence and new levels of relations among the great powers. Today, the former Yugoslavia remains a source of insecurity and strategic instability in the Balkans. The economic and political viability of many of the former Yugoslav republics is questionable. Moreover, as shown, internal differences and border disputes are likely to contribute to future instability in Southeastern Europe.

The situation is complicated more by the involvement of countries external to the region. These countries have exploited these conditions by capitalizing on their religious or ethnic affinity with portions of local populations. Their purpose is to extend their influence and to create an arc of dependent states. This is done not only through economic assistance, but also through military assistance, through military advisors and various guarantees. This is why only the creation of a new federation by the former Yugoslav republics and regions can help overcome these problems and restore stability to the region.

Albania's serious economic problems have given rise to waves of economic refugees. Yet, Albania, counting on external support—especially from Turkey—is pursuing irredentist dreams of a "Greater Albania." Albania has failed to annex Kosovo mainly because of the disarray in its own public administration and its

antiquated armed forces establishment cannot militarily confront Serbia.

An outbreak of violence in Kosovo will not necessarily involve Greece. Greece is likely to face a wave of refugees. Possibilities for a Greek involvement exist if other countries intervene outside the mandate of international organizations such as the U.N., NATO, or the W.E.U., with support from other big powers that have interests in the region.

The denomination "Macedonia" explicitly refers to a geographic region. A "Macedonian nation" of Slavic origin never existed during the Slavic presence in the Balkans. When the boundaries of the Balkans states were drawn under international treaties, there was never official talk about a "Macedonian nation." Greece therefore does not recognize a republic at Skopje under the denomination of "Macedonia." Acceptance of this denomination by Greece will lead to irredentist claims by Skopje under the guise of the existence of such ethnic minorities. This is certain to lead to conflict in the region with unforeseen consequences.

Recently, the Serbs have been described as traditional allies of Greece. The independence of Kosovo, or its annexation by another country will be against the interests of Greece as well. Such a development will isolate Greece from Serbia, and may place Kosovo under the control or influence of another country whose

interests may conflict with those of Greece. Territorial expansion by Bulgaria, Albania, or Skopje, or an increase of Turkey's influence in the region is not in the interest of Greece.

Turkey's intrusion in the Balkans is based on a coordinated economic and political plan. Turkey has become the economic conduit for the transfer of Western funds to the former Communist countries of the region and particularly in Bulgaria and Romania. In the political arena Turkey has exploited the presence of Muslim minorities throughout the Balkans. Turkey has extended moral, political and material support to these minorities, and has sought their recognition as "Turkish" minorities. In this manner Turkey seeks to create special Turkish regions. It aims to become the leading power in the region.

An assessment of Turkish policy would be incomplete if it reflected only its Balkan dimension. One has to account for the recent changes in the Turkic republics of Central Asia. Turkey is likely to get involved in regional politico-religious confrontations with countries such as Iran. This may reduce Turkish irredentist activities in the Balkans.

Bulgaria, for economic reasons, is seeking admission to the European Union and to the W.E.U. It is uneasy about developments in the former Yugoslavia, but it is also encouraging the idea of a "Greater Bulgaria." Bulgaria does not contribute to the stability

of the region. Unless attention is paid to the strong Turkish minority the country will face serious problems.

Greece is the only member of NATO, the European Union and the W.E.U. that is located in the Balkans. It is interested in the security and stability of the region. It has a stable democratic political system and its economy is growing. It has no territorial claims against any of its neighbors. Greece therefore is the source of stability in the region. It can assist neighboring Balkan states in their economic development and can help them address their security concerns. As a member of the European Union Greece can coordinate E.U. economic assistance to these countries, and can become the link for new security arrangements in the Balkans through NATO or through the W.E.U.

There is a ray of hope in the region if a number of Balkan states become members of the European Union. Membership will help moderate some of the emerging rivalries, and some of the "national" and political trends that were not the products of history but creations of the post-WWII world.

The evolving sociopolitical and economic trends in Europe will definitely influence national and ethnic behavior in the Balkans. Indeed, the vision that is offered by the standard of living and of political stability in the EU member states, is a powerful incentive that may transcend the national, religious and cultural differences that exist between various diverse ethnic and

religious groups in the Balkans. In this respect, the propensity of resolving conflicting aims through the force of arms may well be replaced with such fundamental concerns as economic and social well-being and individual or regional market competitiveness.

The formation of a Balkan confederation that will include the various republics of former Yugoslavia, as well as other Balkan countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, FYROM, Greece and Romania, may provide the long-term solution for stability in the region. The interrelationship among the members of the proposed confederation will be primarily based on economic and trade elements. The EU and the U.S. can undertake the crucial role of providing economic and technical assistance on an impartial basis to the members of the confederation with the most disrupted economies. This confederation will also provide the environment and the means for enhanced stability and security in the Balkans, thus, exorcising the "ghosts" of past Balkan conflicts.

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