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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

FUTURE BALKAN SECURITY: THE INTERNATIONAL AND ALBANIAN ROLE IN THE PROCESS

BY

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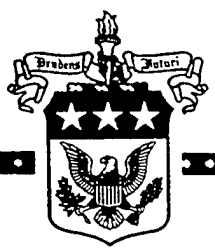

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By

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The aim of my SRP is to express my opinion about the future of Balkan security and especially the role of the international community and Albanian in the process. Because of my direct observation of the many problems that the region has, I hope that my SRP will give to the readers a intimate feeling about the future of the Balkans. Giving a view about the Albanian role in the process could be useful in understanding how important Albania is in preventing war and helping peace in the region.

U.S. Army War College
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ABSTRACT

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The aim that I like to write about is the future of the Balkans and to express my opinion upon my knowledge about the region as a participant in many events in the last few years. Nowadays, the Balkan region continues to be the hot spot of Europe. The end of the cold war has brought in a new environment, which affects the future of Balkan security. The new states and democracy in the region, which are fragile, are posed with many difficulties. Because of the very complicated history of the region, these difficulties are more evident. Nowadays the international community is continuing to play a great role in current stability. Because of that, I would like to share my opinion for the future of these contributions.

Albania is one of the oldest countries in the Balkans. The new environment and the strategic position of Albania, have a great role for the future of the Balkan region. I see the Albanian role in the process as a stability factor, and in full accordance with the idea of international community for the region's stabilization. The sincere dialog and concrete cooperation, for all issues that the Balkan security need, are part of Albanian policy.

To achieve the aim of this SRP, I will use, as much as I can, sources of literature (old and new), which are available in the library, Internet, and from my country. The magnificent experience of AWC will help me to see the problem clearly, from the strategic view.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Balkan region continued to be a very hot spot in Europe. The end of the cold war has brought in a new environment, which affects the future of Balkan security. The new states and their attempts at democracy, because of the very complicated regional history, are posed with many difficulties. I think that the ethnic problems, historical hostility, and religious developments, are possible sources of conflict.

Nowadays the international community is continuing to play a great role in current stability. Because of that, I decided to share my opinion for the future of these contributions, and the Albanian role in the process.

The magnificent experience that I have taken during this year in the Army War College is the best help that anyone can have in these cases. So, I would like to thank everyone who has worked and is working to maintain such excellent study facilities at the Army War College.

I would like to thank my faculty instructors, specifically, and other excellent instructors who were very helpful all of the time. Also, I would like to thank the wonderful people of my class who made a sincerely contribution, in helping me with their ideas and experiences.

I would like to address a very special thanks to Dr Craig Nation for his excellent ideas about my SRP.

Finally, I would like to thank my project adviser Colonel M. Patricia Capin, an expert in the Balkan region for her unlimited help.

In respect to all of these people, I will try to give my sincere contribution on every issue concerning Balkan security. And to continue, it is my belief, that working with the international community and respecting the idea of real partners, the Balkan region will have a good future.

FUTURE BALKAN SECURITY:
THE INTERNATIONAL AND ALBANIAN ROLE IN THE PROCESS

World history is full of events. In this context, the Balkans' history is no exception. Through the centuries, the people of this region, instead of enjoying the wonderful beauty of the landscape have suffered numerous cruel wars. I regret to say that, but history has shown, largely as a result of nationalist feelings and unclear policy, the region is unstable. For more than ten years and with the help of the international community and other democratic organizations there has been an effort to bring peace to the area. Unfortunately the light at the end of the Balkan tunnel is too far away.

To understand the Balkans you have to understand its regions' geography, ethnic groups, wars that have taken place, and the region's economic, political and social development through history. I think the presence of contradictory themes is itself Balkan. The Balkans today are different from what they were ten years ago. Inside the same general area it now includes ten states instead of six states as it had before 1990. Montenegro and Kosova are trying to acquire their independence from Serbia. Briefly, the Balkan states are Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslavia, and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Rumania, Slovenia, and an area in Western Turkey.

Today, in the Balkans, as a result of the democratic principles triumph over dictatorships, a chance has been created to live in a more stable and better environment. Nevertheless, these fragile democracies (with the full support from the international community) need time to consolidate. "Unless the new approach based on conflict prevention.... there is every likelihood that Balkan wars and crises will be a feature of the new millennium as there were of the old".[1]

The future of the Balkans is inside Europeand integration with the international community. Clear objectives and a complete analysis of the Balkans' role will help the region attain security.

Physical and ethnic geography.

The Balkan Peninsula has a wide northern border, narrowing to a tip as it extends to the south. It is 505,000 square kilometers. It is surrounded to the west by the Adriatic and the Ionian Seas, to the south by the Mediterranean Sea, to the east by the Aegean and the Black Seas, and to the north by the Danube and Sava rivers.

Although the Balkans are surrounded on three sides by water, and mountains represent the predominant terrain, the peninsula is not cut off from neighboring regions to the east, west, south or north. In the east, the natural gateway between the Balkans and Asia is the Thrace region of Turkey, along the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. On the west, the Italian peninsula is only forty miles away across the Adriatic Sea from Albania. On the south, the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, islands are stepping- stones to the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt. On the north, the Danube and Sava valleys are the gateways between the Balkans and central Europe.

Three main routes across the region are: "the first route runs along the north shore of the Black Sea and then to the Danube into central Europe, or alternatively southeast through modern day Bulgaria to Constantinople. The second path flows down the Danube from central Europe to Nis and diverges along two paths: down the Vardar River through the Skopje Gate toward Thessalonika; or toward Sofia along the Maritsa River and then to Constantinople. A third route begins in Italy, crosses the Adriatic, moves across Albania and northern Greece, again terminating in Constantinople".[2]

The region takes its name from the Balkan mountain range in Bulgaria (from a Turkish word meaning "a chain of wooded mountains"). The region's mountains divide the peninsula into small units, in which distinct ethnic groups have been able to sustain themselves. These mountains have served as physical obstacles, hampering efforts at regional combinations, whether political, economic, or cultural. Further, they have helped ethnic groups to create their national culture, local economies and political autonomy in a vacuum. The ecological system has supported various cultures in close proximity: trades, farmers, animal herders, forest dwellers, etc. In general, the mountain features of the Balkans have contributed to the continued fragmentation of human groups in the area.[3]

The Balkan Peninsula has a very important geographic, economic, and strategic position. The domination of the peninsula means control over the lines of communications on the three continents that it links."... the peninsula is a cross roads between Europe, Asia, and Africa. Here the peoples and cultures of three continents have met and mingled, or clashed and conquered. The major powers of each historical epoch have made their influence felt here and left their marks upon the peoples. The great imperial power of the past- Greeks, Romans, Turks,

Venetian, Austrians, Germans, French, British, and Russians – all in their turn have dominated or sought to dominate this area".[4]

The Balkan region is a conglomerate of different ethnic groups and as a result the wars between them has had a difficult historical path. The super powers of the past have justified regional wars as the right way to defend various groups. Nowadays, it is unbelievable to justify as their right, the wars that the Serbian regime has caused in the region. One thing is clear, the former Yugoslavia (by that I mean, south Slavs), aiming to support Russia, has no right to enforce its desires over the peoples' will. The fact is that the oldest people in region are Illyrians, Macedonians and Epirots, which were also Pelasgians, but in a wider sense. Later, the Balkan region was occupied by the Slavic peoples who have created a region in which they were dominant.

The Balkans have been inhabited since prehistoric time. Thus a minimum knowledge of the regions' national and ethnic groups is fundamental to its history. At a basic level this means recognizing major ethnic groups, and knowing where they live (now and in the past) and how their religions, languages and cultures compare and interconnect. Placing these groups on the map in the order in which they came to the region is the simple way to introduce them. I know that it is very difficult and critical for several modern political and territorial disputes to expect question of-who has lived where, when and for how long?[5]

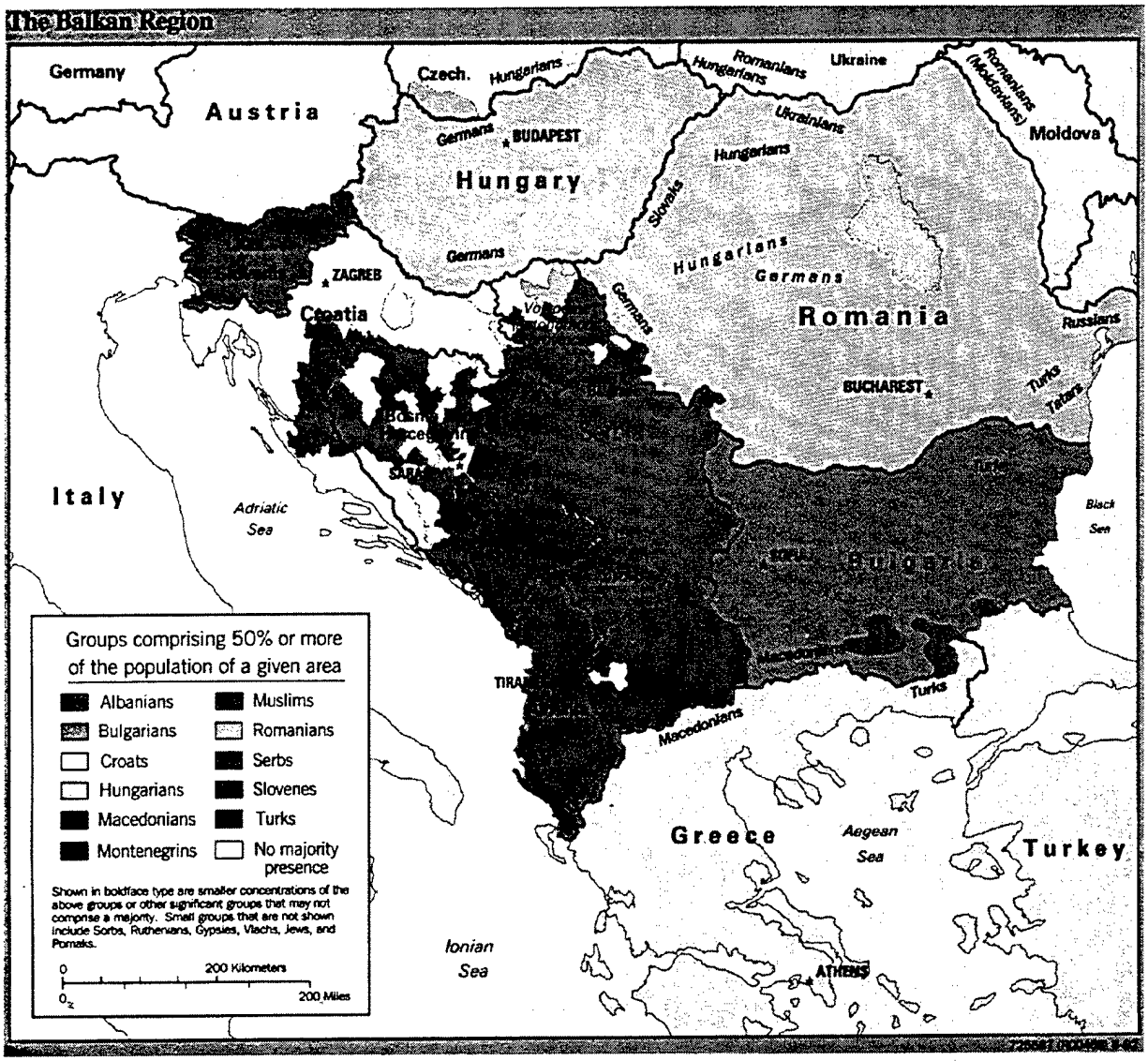

Fig.1. The ethnic map of the Balkan region.

The Albanians

It is generally recognized today that the Albanians are the most ancient race in the Southeastern part of Europe. All indications point to the fact that they are descendants of the earliest Aryan immigrants who were represented in historical times by the kindred Illyrians, Macedonians and Epirots. According to the opinion of most ethnologists and linguists the Illyrians formed the core of pre-Hellenic, Tyrrhenopelasgian population, which inhabited the southern portion of the Peninsula and extended its limits to (the Turkish) Thrace and Italy.[6]

There are many archaeological sites in Albania. The sites contain artifacts in structures that attest to the age of these ancient gravesites. Through all of them you can see how old the culture and Albanian people are. It has been shown that the Illyrians (the modern Albanians) left

no "historic" or written records and according to the Greek records they are described as a non – Greek people to the north and west. That means they have inhabited the region, which today makes up Albania and former Yugoslavia from ancient times. Thus, the Albanians are linked to their ancestral lands while the rest of the former Illyrian region has been populated from other peoples.

According to Albanian history, the dominant religions have been Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic. Later, during the Ottoman conquest, the majority of Albanians converted to the Muslim faith. "The Kosovo region is a good example of competing historical claims to Balkan lands. It has a majority Albanian population today (over 94%), and the Illyrian evidence says that proto-Albanians were there long before the Serbs".[7]Albania is an Indo-European language, entirely distinct from both the tongues spoken by the neighboring nationalities and other languages in the world. It has no linguistic relatives. It was not a written language before the year 1555 and it is believed to have descended from ancient Illyrian. The Albanian language is spoken by a fairly large group of people and continues to be spoken in Albania, Kosovo, the Albanian community in FYROM and Montenegro, and Albanian diaspora around the world, as well.

Albania is a country of different religions. The first split of the Albanian Church occurred in 1054 AD, when the Christian Church was divided between the Eastern Rite and Roman Rite. Thus, the southern part of Albania retained its tie with Constantinople while the northern part of Albania reverted to the jurisdiction of Rome. This split in the Albanian Church marked the first significant religious fragmentation of the country.[8]

Through the centuries Albania has been under different domination, but during the Byzantine Empire (the final occupation of the country in 1347 by the Serbs), Stefan Dusan, caused massive migrations of Albanians abroad. One hundred years later the country was confronted with the new threat: that of the Ottoman Turks, who at this juncture were expanding their power in the Balkans. After 1443, for more then 25 years, under Gjergj Kastrioti (1405-1468), known as Skanderbeg- rallied the Albanian princes and succeeded in driving the occupiers out. His unequal fight against the mightiest power of the time won eastern European support as well as some support in the form of money and military aid from Naples, the papacy, Venice, and Ragusa. The Turks reoccupied the country by 1506.[9]

During the Ottoman Empire, Albanians were cut off from contact and exchanges with Western Europe. Conquest also caused great suffering and vast destruction of the country's economy, commerce, art and culture. The most significant thing for the country at that time, as a result of the persecution by these conquerors, was that about one-forth of the country's

population fled abroad to southern Italy, Sicily, and the Dalmatian coast. Periodically the Albanians rose in rebellion against the Ottoman occupation. As a result of this very long occupation, the Ottomans initiated a systematic drive toward the end of the 16th century to convert the population. By the end of the 17th century, two- thirds of the people were converted to Islam. As a result the Albanian national leader of the time (in 19th century), aiming to keep the country together, used the rallying cry, "The religion of Albanians is Albanianism".

To defend and promote their national interests, Albanian leaders met in Prizren, a town in western Kosovo, in 1878 and founded the Albanian League. The League's goals were: to unify the Albanian territories into one autonomous state. The League spearheaded a movement to develop a written Albanian language, and showcase Albanian literature, education, and culture. The Albanians' attempts continued and brought development, which alarmed their Balkan neighbors, who had already made plans to partition the region. Thus, in October 1912, the Greeks, Serbians, and Montenegrins declared war on Turkey, and their armies advanced into Albanian territories.

To prevent the annihilation of the country, Albanian national delegates met at a congress in Vlore. On 28 November 1912, the congress declared Albania's Independence.[10]

The London Conference in December 1912, created an independent state of Albania, but due to the pressure of Albania's neighbors, the Great Powers largely ignored demographic realities and ceded the vast region of Kosovo to Serbia. Meanwhile in the south, Greece was given the greater part of Camria. Many observers doubted whether the new state would be viable with about one –half of Albanian lands and population left outside its borders, especially since these lands were the most productive in agriculture and livestock.

During the World War One the armies of Austria-Hungary, France, Italy, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia occupied the country. Left without any political leadership or authority, the country was in chaos. At the Paris Conference after the war, the extinction of Albania was averted largely through the effort of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who vetoed a plan by Britain, France, and Italy to partition Albania among its neighbors. After that the Lushnja congress in January 1920, led to the foundations of a new Albanian Government.[11]

During the World War Two Albania was part of the Allied war effort. This war caused more then 28,000 Albanian dead and many others wounded, among more than 70, 000 partisans, both men and women. The allies helped the Albanian Liberation Army with various war materials. An Anglo-American mission was attached to the partisan staff in 1943, in order to help the war organization. The communist party at the end of this war in Albania territory (November 29, 1944) took power on the basis of their wartime strength. They had united much

of the population against fascism and addressed issues of national self-determination by espousing an ideology of communism. As a result, after the war Albania remained out of the western sphere of influence because of the bad policy orientation of the government at the time. The country's economy was very poor and unable to grow. Being out of the western sphere of influence the Albanians did not benefit from American economic aid under the Marshall Plan. The isolation policy of the Communist regime put Albania in greater difficulties. The diplomatic break with Communist Chinese modernizers after Mao's death in 1976, was a dead end, and put the country in total isolation. Sadly, this isolation continued until 1990 when, as a result of the Berlin wall's fall, Albania was able to open up to the West.

Since 1990, the Albanians, changed the communist regime, through a popular revolution, and tore apart its iron isolation, inspired to reach the real values that a democratic society has. Generally, Albania has very good relations with its neighbors, and is working to strengthen that through close cooperation in the region's development.

The Greeks.

The Greeks are as ancient as the Albanians are in their Balkan ties. Ancient Greece encompassed not only today's Greek state, but also the Aegean islands and lands in Anatolia. Greek colonies appeared all over the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, and followed Alexander the Great all over the Middle East.

The Greek territory between 600-800 AD was invaded by Slavic peoples, which went as far as the southern part of the Peloponessus. This is thought to be the time when the Slavic people first came into the Balkan region. In any case, the Greek civilization survived in small cities, and ultimately Slavs became Hellenized. The Greek culture survived even when the Byzantine Empire fell under Ottoman rule. The Greeks practiced the Eastern Orthodox religion and their Orthodox Church, like the Serbian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches, is autocephalous, as a result they do not differ in dogma and liturgy.

The Greek Nation became independent in 1830. As a nation they have protected their independence through the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913, and have been participants in both World Wars. Greece has been a member of the UN since end of World War Two. Greece is very active in European affairs as a result of being a member of NATO, EU, OSCE, and WEU, etc.

Greece has diplomatic relations with all the Balkan countries. Although in its policy towards its neighbors, sometimes it has shown disagreements. For example, they still have not

recognized the FYROM as a Republic of Macedonia, because the Greeks consider Macedonia one of its states. It is important to the Greeks because Macedonia is the birthplace of Alexander the Great. It is interesting that the Greek exports in FYROM are growing every year. There is no doubt that this will have an impact on Greek-FYROM diplomatic relations.

The very small Greek minority in Albania, which enjoys all the rights one would expect, has been used, as a pretext, to irritate relationships between the two countries. Regardless, both countries have a good relationship. The Greeks have the second largest investment in Albania. About 300, 000 Albanians work in Greece, some of whom are legal immigrants, to the benefit of both.

Greece's relationship with Turkey is characterized by a climate of disagreement for a variety of different issues. Among them are the Cyprus Island issue along with some other islands in the Aegean and religious domination. On their shared border in the Thrace, both countries have located active military units, while the modernization of the military and especially their Air Forces are in a highly competitive mode.

Despite these facts, these last ten years have shown better relations in diplomatic and especially in economic fields. Two-way trade has increased significantly.

The Greek government has been very active in what is going on in the Former Yugoslavia. Feelings of Greek isolation increased when Bulgaria, Turkey and Albania recognized FYROM. In response the Greeks initiated closer relations with Serbia its old ally. Supporting the Serbs, its aim to keep them as a power in region, supports the Greek interests on its north and west borders. Greek opposition to NATO air strikes against the Serbian ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and anti-American demonstration on Greek territory are clear actions in support of Serbian policy.

The Slavs

The Slavs reached the Balkans during the waves of "barbarian" invasions at the end of the Roman Empire. The South Slav (Yugo-Slav) groups, which became the Slovenes, Croatians, Serbian and Bulgarians entered the Balkans from the north between 500 and 700 AD. They are located between the Adriatic Sea in the west, and the Black Sea in the east. Because of the terrain configuration they have stayed in small groups, as tribes, and not in close connections with their neighbors. The distinctions among them, especially in languages, are largely a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some other Slavic people arrived in the 600s AD, occupied parts of the Hungarian plain and Greece as well, but those Slavs were absorbed into other cultures.

The Slovenes arrived first, in the 500s AD. They resemble Slovaks in some ways, and are different from Serbo-Croatians. Austrian and Italian influences over the centuries have created a central European culture, thus Slovenes are chiefly Roman Catholic. Slovenia is the first independent country carved out of the Former Yugoslavia. Slovenia has a high standard of living and is working very hard to become a member of the European Union and other international organizations as well. It is active in regional economic and politic initiatives.

The south Slavic **Croatians** reached the Balkans at the same time as the Serbs. Because of western Frankish missionaries Croatia became a Catholic country. In 879 AD the Pope recognized a Croatian state. As all other Slav tribes, they were organized into smaller units under warlords or village chiefs, who evolved into nobility. Later in 1102 AD a coalition of nobles made a pact with the Hungarian king. Thus, Croatia existed as a feudal state under the kings of Hungary. Croatia has an excellent geographic position, which has given it a great benefit in comparison to its neighbors. It declared itself independent on 25 June 1991, and after a long war with Serbia, won its independence in June. More than 3.7 million Croatians or Croats live within the traditional border of the Croatian state, furthermore more than one million live in Slovenia and Bosnia. For years, Croatia was part of the Former Yugoslavia, and Serbo-Croatian was an official language. Their language, made up several distinct dialects, overlaps with Serbian. The biggest difference was the Roman alphabet instead of Cyrillic one that Serbian's use.

The current Croatian economy is expanding very rapidly. The Croatian policy, especially under the new President, is looking toward integration with western countries. The standard of living is getting better day-by-day. Croatia is becoming very active in both the Balkan region and Europe, as a whole. The Croatian capitol city, Zagreb, has been the venue for several conferences looking at the future of the Balkan region. In these last seven years they have created a new and modern army. Croatian since 2000 is also cooperating with NATO in the Partnership for Peace program.

The south Slavic **Serbians** arrived at the same time as the Croatians, with an essentially identical culture and language. Being very close to Byzantine culture they incorporated a lot of their features, and as a result the central state is modeled on Byzantine forms.

During the feudal age, all the land was owned by the ruler for the support of feudal vassals, churches and monasteries. The chief impetus for state building was protection from the Bulgarians. The Serbian medieval state peaked in the 1300s under Stefan Dushan. The Ottoman conquest, in the 1400s, was not a major change in systems because for most

peasants the Ottomans had accepted and preserved the same Byzantine practices being used by the Serbs.

In the Former Yugoslavia, Serbs were concentrated in the Serbian Republic and Montenegro, but with important communities in Bosnia and Croatia.

"Bosnia" is a geographic, not an ethnic or linguistic entity. Medieval Bosnia was a border zone between Croatia and Serbia, just as it is today. The chief ethnic marker of the so – called "Bosnia" today is their Islamic faith, and this came about only later. In terms of language and descent, the modern Bosnians are of the same origin as Croats and Serbs.[12]

Today "Bosnia" itself is inside the Bosnia-Herzegovina Federation. It has the largest population (Bosnian Muslims), but with a very large Serb and Croatian population as well. The Bosnian case is one of the more complicated problems in the region largely because of different culture, in which their religions plays a great role. The Bosnia –Herzegovina Federation is working to consolidate its democratic institutions with the support of the International Community. The changes that have happened in the Former Yugoslavia Republic are a good sign for further positive development in Bosnia –Herzegovina, especially in Republic of Serbska, which still are in the hands of the previous pro-Serbian regime supporters.

The Bulgarians reached the Balkans in the early 600s AD. Later the area was conquered by the Turkish and nomadic "Bulgars". Because of their fewer numbers, after a few centuries the more numerous Slavs absorbed them in term of culture and language. In the 900s, the First Bulgarian Empire defeated Byzantine and Serbian armies. The second Bulgarian Empire was a rival of Byzantium around 1200 AD, but it absorbed Byzantine culture, law, land use patterns and political organization. The religion was Orthodox Christianity, which has been a leading factor in their national identity. Bulgaria has been participant in both Balkan wars, in 1912 and 1913, and even caused the second Balkan war. During both World Wars it was on the side of Germany and the other Axis powers. The aim was to gain control over territories, which they considered Bulgarian. The Communist government was established in 1947 and transformed the state into a "Peoples Republic". Bulgaria became a member of the Warsaw Pact and remained Moscow's most faithful ally.

Bulgaria is trying to maintain good relations with other Balkan countries, and to be active with its foreign policy. It is seeking a form of association with NATO and gain membership in EU and WEU. Nevertheless, the recognition of the Muslim minority and its policy toward FYROM has weakened relations with Greece. Relations with Serbia in general have been tense, because of the Bulgarian minority in Former Yugoslavia.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The region referred to today as Macedonia came under Yugoslav control after the Balkan Wars. The current FYROM became the sixth Republic of Yugoslavia in August 1944, when Marshall Tito consolidated power after the Second World War. The population speaks Macedonian and Albanian, but under the Former Yugoslav administration the official language was Serbo-Croatian. Because of historical relations, (under Czar Samuel, c. 1000 AD it was the center of the Bulgarian state, and spoke the Bulgarian language) Bulgaria recognized FYROM very quickly in 1992. The Skopje government minimized the significance of this action, its aim to avoid any misunderstanding because of their past history.

The current geographic border of FYROM includes the river Nests to the east, the Albanian highland to the west, Thesaly to the south, and the valleys of Vardar and Strymon to the north. The northern border of Macedonia actually is the border with Kosovo. Complicating the region's fracture points, the Skopje Government pretends that in Greece and Bulgaria there are "Macedonian minorities" that must unite to the motherland. From the other side, the Bulgarians want Macedonia as a Bulgarian province; while the Greeks says that there is no "Macedonian nation" largely as a consequence of their refusal to recognize Macedonia.

The Skopje Government is working to have good relations with its neighbors. It is active in the regional initiative and is working to be member of NATO, and other European organizations.

In FYROM the Albanian community is the second largest after the Macedonians. As a result, it participates extensively in political life. The Albanian minority's situation, as result of restrictions towards their rights, sometimes has been very complicated.

Finally the FYROM, represents yet another Balkan country where interconnected interests are linked with others. As we see in Kosovo it is another hot point in the region, and in Europe.

The Romanians

The Romanians also have origins during the classical era, but their history is complicated and controversial. Barbarian invasions in 271 AD, forced the Latin –speaking Dacian ethnic group to flee south. Peasants and country folk probably did not live, but moved to safety in the wooded Carpathians. Through some documents Romanian nationalists are trying to prove they descended from the original Daco-Roman population from the Carpathians. On

the other side, Hungarian nationalists say instead, that the Romanians are remnant Dacians, who fled south and survived for a millennium as a herd's people in Serbia and northern Greece.

However, while linguistic evidence supports the Romanian position, disagreements still exist. Romania included many Turkish and Slavic loanwords, but the basic grammar and vocabulary are recognizable as based on Latin. Inside Romanian are 2 million Hungarians.in Transylvania and a million Roma (formerly known as Gypsies).

Romania was recognized as an independent kingdom in 1878. Throughout its history this country has made many sacrifices in order to maintain its standing as a nation. Like the rest of Eastern Europe, until recently Communist governments led all these countries. In 1989 there was revolution in power and the country embraced the National Salvation Front, which has attempted to guide the country toward the West.

Rumania is trying to create and maintain good relationships with other Balkan countries. During the Balkan crises it remained neutral, but is trying to be very active in the NATO missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo as a Partnership for Peace (PfP) member. Western countries and Turkey are present with investment, which may create new conditions of dependence.

The Turks

The Ottoman Empire was one of the largest and most powerful during the course of history. As a result of its invasion of the Balkans it has forced its religion, education and culture on the people it found there. Indeed, in some Balkans countries there is a living Turkish minority. Anyway, the modern Turkish Republic was formally established in 1923 following the demise of the Ottoman Empire. The founder of modern Turkey was Kemal Ataturk. Political life in Turkey is dominated by different political parties and has had several military interventions. These occurred when the military thought things had gone astray and ultimately lead the country towards its modern policy and government.

Turkey has been a NATO member since 1952. As a NATO member it has played a great role in the interest of peace and stability in the Middle East and in the Eastern Mediterranean. It has also played a significant role during the cold war in shoring-up NATO's southern flank. Turkey has been very active in NATO, and the follow –on NATO Balkan Policy. Since the end of the Cold War, Turkey has attempted to play a regional leadership role in the Balkans. For more than ten years they have petitioned to be a member of EU, but haven't succeeded yet. Turkey is looking for membership in the EU, because of the possibility to take advantage of:

I). Its geographic location in the Middle East, and its control of the sea and landlines of communications;

II). Its declaration that it is a bridge between Europe and the Middle East;

III). The potential of the Turkish market and to draw European investors;

IV). Influence and take advantage of the developments in the Middle East.

Despite the good relationship with Greece during the recent past, they still have a lot of problems between them. The Cyprus situation and some other disagreements in the Aegean are the most sensitive problems.

Albania has a very good relation with Turkey and is working to strengthen these relations. Its aim is that the Balkans becomes more cooperative in the future.

The Balkans and World Wars.

Historically the Balkans region has been a war arena. All the biggest powers of the past have stayed for a long time in the region and as a result, have spread and cultivated their traditions and cultures. As a result, the Balkan countries have fought between them to defend their interests. The real alliances that the Balkan countries have created are clearly seen in the Balkan and World Wars.

The first Balkan war (1912) between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria on one side and the Ottomans from the other side ended the Turkish domination over the region. But... "the victorious allies soon fell to squabbling over the division of Macedonia and Albania. Serbian and Greeks designs on Albania particularly upset Austria and Italy which did not want to see any strong power, specifically Serbia, established on the Adriatic coast. As a result, the Great Powers again imposed a peace settlement on the Balkans that left nationalist expectations unfulfilled".[13]

The second Balkan war (June 1913) was caused by Bulgaria, which attacked its former allies (during the first Balkan War), Greece and Serbia, bringing about interesting development to the region. Essentially the Ottomans joined the Greeks, Serbs, and Romanians in quickly defeating Bulgaria. The London Conference in December 1912, created an independent states of Albania, so the attempt of Serbia and Greece to divide Albania's territory failed.

The Serbs nationalist feelings developed rapidly from this point on. Their intent at that time was the union of Bosnia-Herzegovina with Serbia. The assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo, by an ethnic Serb Bosnian terrorist, caused another Balkan war to evolve into World War One. The end of the World War One brought new territorial settlements in the Balkans and with more hatred between its countries. "Territorial Settlements

created future difficulties as numerous ethnic minority situations emerged from a "fair and lasting peace".[14]

While World War One ended in Western Europe in November 1918, war in the Balkans did not. Turkish nationalism and Greek adventurism in Asia Minor, led to the Greek-Turkish War of 1921-22. After routing the Greeks from Asia Minor, the Turks pushed beyond the Marisa River in Thrace, where hostilities ceased.[15]

The consequences of the Balkan Wars and the Greek-Turkish War vexed Balkan relations for decades. The forcible exchange of populations was another phenomena of the time and increased the simmering hostility.

World War Two included all the Balkan countries. Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria were joined to the Germans, while Greece, Serbia and Albania were in favor of the allies. The total casualties came to approximately, 1.8 million dead, or nearly 10 percent of the region's population.

After the World War Two most of the region's countries, like Albania, Former Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria followed the Communist regimes.

As the revolution of 1989 awoke these nations and the specter of superpower confrontation receded, past animosities quickly bubbled to the surface. Conflict first erupted in the former Yugoslavia and threatened to spill over into the Balkans as a whole.

International military role.

The demolition of the Berlin Wall ended the cold war era. The Eastern countries, which for a long time had suffered the harshest dictatorship of the Communist regimes, now were looking toward new achievements.

The most significant attempt was toward the re-formation of their older states. Thus a chain revolution brought new democratic states with new objectives for their future. Seen in this context, the Balkan region has to pay back what was done wrong in the past. The former Yugoslavia, Tito's artificial creation after the war has been and still is the center of the Balkan conflicts. Meanwhile, the other Balkan countries, Albania, Rumania, and Bulgaria changed their governments through popular revolutions against their dictatorships.

Serbia, because of its nationalist feelings, did not expect the creation of new countries in Former Yugoslavian territory. Regardless of Serb nationalism, in December 1990 Slovenia declared independence. On Jun 25, 1991, Croatia declared independence too and the fighting spread.

The European Community had no desire to wade into a civil war and could not agree on a common posture until Germany abruptly recognized Slovenia and Croatia. Bosnia and Herzegovina then declared independence on December 20, 1991, followed later by Macedonia. The war that had started, and its consequence toward Europe, that of an even wider spread, dictated that in December 1991, the EC and the United States imposed sanctions on these Republics, and a UN delegation sought Serbian support for the cease-fire and peacekeeping forces.

On February 21, 1992, the Security Council approved UN peacekeepers being sent to the former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, the fighting escalated throughout 1992 amid atrocities and evidence of "ethnic cleansing" on the part of Serbs. UN sanctions, imposed on May 30, 1993 had no effect on the belligerents, while the UN peacekeeping forces had no peace to keep and no power to impose one.

As long as the NATO powers were unwilling to discipline the Serbs, and unless the United States was willing to put its own troops on the ground there would be no progress in the situation. Mutual recriminations crossed the Atlantic until the public bombing of a very crowded market in Sarajevo in February 1994 forced President Clinton to threaten Serbia with air strikes. At this point Russia stood on the Serb's behalf and promoted its own plan for a partition of Bosnia.

By mid-1994 the confused battle lines had been somewhat clarified. Slovenia was independent, Macedonia was admitted to the UN, and a small force, including Americans, stood guard there. Independent Croatia controlled almost all its recognized territory, including the Dalmatian coast. So what remained of the Former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was the battlefield, where the Serbs were often on the offensive. The UN peacekeepers, out manned and outgunned, were largely unable to do anything. By the autumn of 1994, far from contributing to peace, the UN forces were literally being held hostage by the Serbs, who were strong enough to retaliate against UN forces for NATO air strikes or to sieze their equipment, should they attempt to retreat.

The UN, NATO, EU, and OSCE (including Russia) made no progress toward a resolution of the Balkan war between 1991 and December 1994. Former President Carter embarked on his third mission as a freelance mediator (before Christmas 1994), which signaled a green light for a possible ending to the bloodiest episode in European history since World War II.[16]

It is essential to mention that the UN Peacekeeping and Peace-Enforcement units were not able to enforce peace. The "peace enforcement" units proposed by Boutros Boutros Ghali

would be more heavily armed than traditional peacekeepers, as mentioned in "An Agenda for Peace"

Intervention in the Balkans under the auspices of the United Nations was an enormous enterprise. The principal function of the intervention was to protect vast quantities of humanitarian aid ... principally for the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina. By May 1994 that effort involved over 33,000 UN military troops, 600 UN military observers, 3,000 UN civilian administrators and staff, and hundreds of humanitarian organizations.[17]

Despite the tremendous attempts of the UN and other organizations to stabilize the situation in the Former Yugoslavia, they were not able to keep the peace. The peace enforcement units that the UN used in this mission did not convince the Serbian army to stop the war and to come to the negotiations table.

In January 1995 the Secretary General retreated from An Agenda for Peace and stated, "The UN operation in Bosnia –Herzegovina ... [was] given additional mandates which required the use of force. These were incompatible with existing mandates requiring consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force. The resultant combination was inherently contradictory. It jeopardized the safety and success of the peacekeeping mission".[18]

The Dayton Agreement, sign by the parties to the conflict signaled the green light for further International Community involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The most significant movement was the NATO authorization, by United Nations Security Council resolution number 1031, for the realization of the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On December 20, 1995 the transfer of authority from UN Protection Force took place between NATO and "IFOR". About 60,000 NATO and Partnership for Peace Forces (actually there are 38 different nations participating) were required for Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is clear, that these troops were well prepared to enforce a peace. The forceful NATO rules of engagement reflect the philosophy of sending a heavy force, authorized to use deadly force for self-defense, force protection, and to enforce compliance with the peace plan. In contrast with the UN mission, there is no compromise in NATO ROE. Every Commander will have authority to defend troops under his command and to ensure compliance with the terms of the peace agreement.

The operation's organization was able to:
-Protect the force.
-Execute transfer of authority from UNPROFOR in every sector.
-Execute Joint Operations.
-Establish a logistic network.
-Expand and fortify base camps in every location.

-Work with International and Non-Government organizations in the area of operations etc.

There were two complementary aspects of the overall peace implementation mission; civil and military. The civil aspect includes the rebuilding of B-H infrastructure, economic development, elections, and resettling. The military aspect (the mission of IFOR) is to create a stable environment for the civil organizations to proceed.

The then-SACEUR, General Joulwan in a press conference on 19 January 1996 pointed out: ".... Our plan, our goal in OPLAN 10405 was to get ten brigade headquarters into the region by D+30. ... Ten brigade headquarters are on the ground now in Bosnia. And they're broken up into Sector North, Sector Southeast and Sector Southeast. And these are their locations. It's multinational brigades, and they are set. ... So it shows movement, clearing-voluntary clearing, and withdrawal from the zone of separation. ... This is excellent news and I think it's very significant on the professionalism of the force that's been committed".[19]

On 26 February 1996, the Secretary-General of NATO, addressed to the UN Secretary-General: "IFOR is now firmly established and fully capable of executing its tasks under the Peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina. With the deployment of all forces of the NATO, by the 18 February, the three Multinational Divisions are well established in their sector respective areas of responsibility. This will be further consolidated as further forces from the non-NATO contributor's transfer under IFOR control. IFOR forces continue to monitor compliance with the military aspects of the Peace Agreement by means which include marking the inter-entity boundary line, patrolling in the zone of separation along the agreed cease-fire line and in the areas of transfer, and monitoring mine clearance in those areas.[20]

Because of very good organization, the IFOR achieved its objective. So the first year of the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia – Herzegovina was overall considered a success. Every step forward has shown how many more steps must be taken for the peace process to be self-sustaining and stable. So the NATO, under Security Council resolution 1088(1996), established the Stabilization Force (SFOR) operations in B-H, to succeed the Implementation Force (IFOR). " The overall situation in the theatre had been calm. However, ethnic tensions persist and we in the international community cannot afford to underestimate the challenges ahead. As we face these challenges, I can assure you that SFOR will implement its mandate as professionally as IFOR, and it will play its full part in helping to bring lasting pace to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Concepts are now in place for the use and exercising of operational reserves from within the theatre and strategic reserves from outside the theatre in order to give the force-enhanced flexibility and to reinforce its deterrent role ". Mr. Solana assured.[21]

The SFOR successfully has achieved new objectives and is continuing to do so. The NATO and Partner country are doing their consolidation through a real mission. The stable situation has helped all international, non-Government organizations, and new investitures to do their duty in more stable conditions. Despite criminal activities, the NATO mission in B-H generally has the support of the people. In essence the work with NATO have been successful against all attempts for regional destabilization. The NATO as the military organization has shown the best values of domination over the anti democratic militaries. The achievements are the result of democratic principles, over which it is built. This is why it has attracted all Partnership for Peace countries to join with it.

The presence of NATO's mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina remains crucial for the future of the country. It shows that antidemocratic regimes will never be allowed to abuse human life and the peoples' rights. While in B-H the situation is becoming better as a result of NATO protectorate troops, the Balkans were still faced with another organized crime by the Serbian Regime; the systematic plan of ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians. So, the Balkans were still in an undeclared war.

The seeds of the Kosovo tragedy can be traced to the rise of power of Milosevic, his now infamous speech at Kosovo Polje in 1987, and the revocation in 1989 of the autonomous status of the province, bringing under the direct control of the government in Belgrade. Milosevic, despite the right of the Kosovo people over their motherland in very provocative way said that Kosovo is the cradle of Serbia and belong to its people (Serbians). In the years that followed, the majority of Kosovo's population was progressively denied the right to govern their own affairs, to earn a living for themselves, to have access to the legal and judicial system and to be able to educate their children in their own language and culture.

The Kosovar Albanians struggled to cope with this situation by peaceful means, but as the Serbs dominated the administrative structures, that was impossible. The KLA was, in effect, a direct product of Serb repression. As the situation in Kosovo deteriorated, the international community became increasingly concerned about the human rights situation and its potential to spread instability to neighboring countries in the region.

The international community's diplomatic efforts, and sanctions against the Former Yugoslavia, the aim to stop the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo continued for a long time. In December 1997, NATO foreign ministers confirmed that NATO's interest in stability in the Balkans extended beyond Bosnia-Herzegovina to the surrounding region, and expressed concern at the ethnic tension in Kosovo. The OSCE led the Kosovo Verification Mission and a NATO-led aerial observer mission.

The Rambouillet talks were the international community's last attempt to reach an agreement. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia resisted any idea of the NATO-led force to guaranty any agreement concerning the Kosovo problem. Also, without NATO presence, the Kosovar Albanian side would not have given their agreement.

The international community, in case of any agreement, had to take account of the fact that President Milosevic had repeatedly failed to honor previous agreements and that an international security presence was essential to guarantee that the accords would be honored. Because of the Serbian refusal to sign the Rambouillet accord, the chance to attain peace in Kosovo was lost and, as a result, the NATO-led intervention remains the right solution.

The Serbian methods of war remained the same as they were in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The conduct of massive war crimes, such as burning houses and driving the people out of their homeland, brought to television scenes of a humanitarian disaster in Kosovo. These scenes further showed a possible destabilization of neighboring and adjacent European countries. While the negotiations were in process, the Serbian paramilitary and police forces were conducting the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians.

The NATO air campaign, against the Former Yugoslavia is one of the most brilliant air campaigns in history. The kinds of weapons used were up-to-date, and able to reduce to an absolute minimum the risk of unintended damage. The domination of the air and the media were the key to success over the Serbian Campaign. "NATO's military action against the Former Republic Yugoslav (Republic) supports the political aims of the international community: a peaceful, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo in which all its people can live in security and enjoy universal human rights and freedoms on an equal basis".[22]

To the entire international community it was clear that the NATO was fighting an army, which had caused many crimes against the humanity in the Former Yugoslavia. The center of gravity in this case was the Serbian leadership and particularly President Milosevic. He was strongly influenced by the extreme nationalist feelings, and particularly against the Kosovar Albanians.

The NATO political leaders did not agree with Milosevic's policy against Kosovar Albanians. The ethnic cleansing which had begun some time prior was a great risk for further destabilization of the situation in the Balkan region, and even in Europe.

"... the statements and actions of powerful Western leaders in the recent war over Kosovo suggested that a break with past traditions might be occurring. Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, declared to Congress in May that the continent cannot be whole and free as long as its southeast corner is wracked by ethnic tensions and threatened with conflict. With

maps of the region by his side, President Clinton went on television to show the American people where Kosovo was and why the peace of Europe depended on securing justice for deported Kosovar refugees. Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair delighted Albanian refugees by promising that they would all be able to return to their homes. Other leaders promised a new Marshall Plan for the region in order to integrate it economically with the rest of Europe".[23]

So, the NATO air campaign was a careful operation to disrupt the Yugoslav violence and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo by attacking proportionately and appropriately the military machine that was conducting these criminal actions.

As happened in the case of Bosnia – Herzegovina, this time Milosevic came to the negotiation table after the NATO bombing campaign. At the end, Belgrade agreed to have the NATO troops in Kosovo in order to support the goals set out by the international community in UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

So, the Balkans for the last 10 years have been the place where international Diplomacy, International Organizations, Non Government Organizations and many other private organizations have used their resources on a peaceful democratization of the region. The only solution for regional stabilization was the use of the NATO-led International Military Force. Because of their presence the region feels safe. The Implementation Force (IFOR), now Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo are playing a tremendous role in building the peace in the Balkan region.

-Their presence has discouraged attempts by the region's military for further destabilization.

-Working for regional stabilization, they have facilitated the activities of IO, NGO, and other organizations that work in the region in reducing human suffering.

-They are working to create a safe environment in which all the communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo can rebuild their lives. During his Sarajevo visit in 1998 President Clinton delivered a very important message to people of the region, that-it is time to work together and to live together. The religions and other problems of the past cannot be an obstacle, for growing up a healthy and modern generation. Our children must grow up together, and away from hostile feeling. He brought as an example the United States of America, where the different races, gender, religions, culture, black and white have no problem living and growing up together. The same message has been sent to the Kosovo Albanians, Serbs and other ethnic groups that are living in Kosovo.

-The clearance of mines, which are a danger to men, women and children, whatever their ethnic origins, is an important mission which can be executed only by professional soldiers and organizations.

-The building of houses and support for restoration of the basic necessities of life such as electric power, water, heating, communications system, and medical care are present in the Former Yugoslavia.

-The support of international community initiatives (such as "the Stability Pact") in order to rebuild the region and to bring it as much as it can, closer to the other European countries.

-The support of the new Governments is the most important role of International Military Forces in the Balkan region. These efforts occur not only in B-H and Kosovo, where NATO missions are in action, but in the other countries through the Partnership for Peace program. Being in the Partnership for Peace program, both NATO and Partnership for Peace countries have reciprocal obligations. Army reformation, along and with implementing NATO standards, is the guaranty for keeping democratic principles in a democratic system.

-The lack of experience in every government in the region and a high level of corruption made the presence of international military forces a guarantor for further social development. The loss of the faith in new governments, political party competition for power, and the high level of poverty require international military presence, which is supported by the people.

Now, the Balkans are included in many new development projects. Without the NATO presence there, the destabilization of the region is possible at any time, and as a result, investors do not feel secure to invest. If destabilization occurs, it will be another case, which can destabilize the region, or even the larger Europe. The interests of some countries in the region (Russia, Turkey, Greece, and Serbia), religious beliefs, and the existence of large minorities of one nation in every other country, are the possible sources of war. These conditions have put the Balkan region at the center of attention within the International Community and other organizations. The many powerful leaders' declaration for possible destabilization of the region, has forced them to be clear for the role that the NATO troops will have in the future of the Balkans.

The Albanian Role.

Historically Albania has been the place, which has been touched by all kinds of wars. Attacked from other countries, it has been obliged to defend its rights and territory. Seen from these perspectives, an unstable region is not in its favor. As a new democratic country, we are

still unconsolidated, and are working hard in this direction. The road to the real democracy is still a long one. The democratization of the Balkan region needs time, and Albania knew this.

Education of our people is the most important issue. It will not happen in a day, a month or a year. The best way to overcome the problems that are posed in the region is to work together. NATO and other international organizations, which are engaged in the Balkans, to prevent the worst sins of the past, are the best way to solve problems and to give a chance for the future.

Democratic developments in Albania are now the reality. Dealing with recovery from the consequences of the communist regime, the democratic movement of 1990 and the March 1997 crisis, the outbreak of conflict in Kosovo in 1998 and the events of mid September 1998, were the biggest problems that we had. Albania, during these years has been in a very critical situation, full of risk and threat to its peace, stability and sovereignty. The advancement of the democratic society is envisaged through institutional, political, social and economic reforms. The tempo, effectiveness and challenges of the period of transition are mainly determined by the state of security, the national values, regional cooperation, and the progress of reforms as a country and region.

The Stability Pact initiated on June 10, 1999, and taken place on July 30, 1999 on Sarajevo of Bosnia-Herzegovina represents a unique and concrete project in this very difficult process. The Pact of Stability, through the spirit of cooperation and co-existence among Southeast Europe, intend to separate these countries away from their historical enmity, by committing them to the democratic principles of settling disputes and a multifaceted revival of the region.

Since Milosevic is away from public life, having been turned out in the recent election (September 00), and he is required to surrender to the International Court in the Hague, the chances for a better situation in the region are in place. Albanian policy has shown keen interest in strengthening relations in the region. Because of its belief in cooperation, as the only solution to overcome the situation in the region, despite the problems that are faced toward Albanian Kosovar, it voted in favor of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia reentering the OSCE. The best way to reach what we are looking for can happen only through constructive dialog and cooperation.

Political instability, poor economic development, organized crime, corruption, the massive migration of Albanian citizens etc., are the problems that we face. The minimizing of these internal risks and threats, which are complex in their nature, is the top priority of the

Albanian State. Despite these problems, the Albanian Government is totally engaged in all regional initiatives.

"The vital interests such as; the exercise of sovereignty; the defense of our national territorial integrity; protection of citizens' lives; respect for fundamental human rights; economic prosperity, the protection of national property and values, are cornerstones of the Security Policy of the Republic of Albania".[24]

Other national interests consist of:
-Restoration of internal stability;
-Disarmament of the population and arms collection;
-Planning and programming of our integration into NATO and the EU;
-Promotion of and active contribution to regional stability processes;
-The development of bilateral relations with neighboring countries and our partners;
-And finding the right solution to social and environmental pollution problems, etc.[25]

Integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures is the main focus of Albanian Foreign Policy. The Albania Constitution has no opposing laws or legal provisions with the Washington Treaty principles. One of the declarations of the Albanian Constitutions states that: international agreements ratified by the Republic of Albania prior to the approval of this Constitution are considered as being ratified in accordance with this Constitution". This means that all laws, dealing with various agreements with NATO and its member countries, remain in power.

These laws include:
-The law No 8034 dated 22 November 1995 "On the Ratification of the Agreement among the State Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty regarding the Status of Forces Agreement-SOFA, signed in London 19 June 1951;
-The Agreement among the State Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty and the other States participating in the Partnership for Peace initiative regarding the Status of their Forces, signed in Brussels on 10 January 1994;
-The Additional Protocol to the Agreement among the State Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty and the other states participating in the PfP regarding the status of their forces;
-The Law 7816 dated 20.04.1994, regarding "The Ratification of PfP Framework Document".

As a Partnership for Peace country Albania is active in NATO activities. Thus, since September 1996 we have contributed to the NATO mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This contribution is an excellent example of Albanian attempts to keep peace in the region. More than just this contribution, Albanian participation in this mission is a message of peace for the countries that have caused the region's troubles.

During the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians, conducted by the Belgrade regime (1998-99), Albania provided temporary shelter for about 600,000 refugees. To be more understandable, this influx of deported people, sheltered in 4 months, compared with Albania's population would be the same as were Germany to shelter about 15-16 million people, or the United States shelter about 50 million people.

Thus, the Albania contribution, during the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo is a brilliant example of the human spirit of the Albanian Nation, and its sincere sacrifices in the interest of peace in the region.

The Albanian Nation both today and in its past, has been the stability factor in the region. The Albanian dimensions in the region due to their numbers, human energy, history, culture, language etc. have an important role for the future of the region. This is a reality, which should be taken into consideration not only from the Balkan countries, but also from Europe and the international community. Because of this reality, the international community is very much supporting this value, in order to create a new climate among the region's countries.

Mother Teresa, one of the greatest people in the world, during her first visit in Albania said –that she was proud of her origin and her country Albania. This example and the others has shown that nations are great, not because of their good economy, but because of their spirit, and value that they are able to create through the history.

"During the conflict there was Albanian Solidarity that was manifested quite clearly and the contribution of Albanian families was quite great".[26]

Because of its obligation toward the NATO, Albania let NATO use its territorial, water area, and air space. Despite the poor infrastructure, the Albanian Army played a great role in refugee transportation from the border to the refugee camps. The coordination between the NATO troops in Albania (AFOR) and other International, Non Governmental and Private Organizations was excellent. So, this humanitarian operation, because of full support of Albanian people, was successful.

Albania sees the future of the region in strengthening of relations with our neighbors and the international community. "This very strong will of the Albanian Government to leave behind the old stories of this region, to underestimate the borders and to give priority to co-operation without considering the borders. This is the best contribution that Albania gives to everybody in the region. And this is a very good message also for the Albanian in Kosovo by making clear to them that for us-for Albanians- that were ignored for centuries even by the Western part of Europe, now it's our time. Not in the sense of revenge, but to show to everybody that we are doing our best to build a common peace, a common future and a common tolerance with everybody in this region and out of this region".[27]

Albanian diplomacy in the future will be the most significant instrument for the establishment of an appropriate international environment to prevent crisis and conflict, to solve them by peaceful means and makes possible for cooperation with neighbors, partners and international institutions.[28]

The enhancement of relationship with democratic countries and institutions and further development with main Euro-Atlantic partner such as NATO, OSCE, and EC are the strategic objectives of Albania.

The willingness to assume and share roles and responsibilities, burdens and benefits of common security and collective defense and adhere to the security approach outlined in the NATO Strategic Concept is the overall aim of Albania. Full membership of Albania in NATO fully corresponds to the national interests of our country. During the Kosovo crises, NATO guaranteed the sovereignty of Albanian territory and its air space. Albania sincerely believes that what happened due the Kosovo crises, was a war between western values and progress on the one hand, and the regressive forces of the past, represented by the Belgrade regime, on the other. Albania shares the same values with those of the Alliance and its member countries. The respect of the rule of law, democracy, human and civic rights, security and market economy are our common denominator.

Because of Albanian beliefs, that the role of the United States in Europe is and will remain a key element for our continent, it has and is working hard to keep a stable relationship with the US. The Albanians believe, that without the United States presence, the NATO air strikes in Kosovo would never have happened. American President Clinton announcing the air strikes said: "Over the last months, we have done everything we possibly could to solve this problem peacefully. Mr. Milosevic has refused. Today, we and our eighteen NATO allies agreed to do what we said we would do, what we must do, to restore the peace".[29]

The NATO presence in Southeastern Europe, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania, and FYROM, has already proved to be one of the most stabilizing factors in the region. Seen from this perspective Albanian membership in NATO would only enhance this stabilizing effect. From the other side, Albania has no open or latent conflict with its direct neighbors or with others in the region. Albania has never shown interests to attack other countries or to join in any alliance that has such tendencies. It is important to mention that the Kosovar, Macedonian, and Albania Albanians, even while the Serb ethnic cleansing was happening, requested that their problem be solved inside international norms. The future status of Kosovo is not only an Albanian problem; it is not a regional problem, but an international problem because the actual status of Kosovo is that of an international protectorate. It supports the idea of Richard Holbrooke, that it is time to be holding another conference like Dayton, in order to determine Kosovo's status.

In regard to Kosovo, Albania respects all international acts and supports the commitment of the international community there. Albania sees the final settlement to the Kosovo status as a

joint outcome of the efforts of the international community, the aspirations of Albanian Kosovo, and the protection of the minorities living there, through its integration and that of the entire region in European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Albania is staying in the same line and is supporting very strongly all initiatives that are taken in the Balkan region. Despite the transition difficulties (Albanian transition), and others posed from the regional situation, Albania has been included in many projects, with mutual benefit. The last European Delegations from different European Institutions supported the development of the Albanian economy and promise for the further engagement in short- and long-term projects.

Conclusions.

The Balkans history is complex, and full of challenges. Because of its geographic position, interests of the past world powers, and its domination over the main lines of communications between Europe, Asia, and Africa, that the Balkan history is so complex. The Balkans, for the fist time in its long history are in the right spot to solve the problems of the past and to work for real democratization.

The road to Balkan integration inside the European Community is a reality. Integration will be achieved after all requires standards have been meet.

The future of Balkan security must be based on development of stable political and democratic systems in the region, inside the process of European integration. Free trade, unification of fiscal legislation, unification of customs and harmonization of property law, even unification of a common market between Balkan countries might be the right solution on increasing the Balkan economy and security, and to open the road for faster European integration.

The backward culture as a result of long communist domination is still an obstacle in dialogue between both the people in the region and the world.

The presence of the international community and the military in the Balkan region is the biggest guaranty for further development of the region. The hostility among people of the region is high, and will remain so as long as conflict among politics and new developments are present.

Europe does not have enough capability to dominate and keep calm the situation in the Balkan region. Thus, strengthening the NATO as a sole instrument for collective defense is the best solution. The presence of the United States in the Balkan region in support of European

attempt for democratization and security are the best guaranty. The Balkan crises have shown that the United States has a determinant role in NATO and European security.

The diplomatic and politic initiatives pursued by the international community in parallel with NATO military campaign were a success. The support of Partnership for Peace countries during the military campaign, the offer of their facilitates to NATO in the interest of its campaign, are the clear demonstration of Milosevic's isolation. The continuing of this attempt is important for the future and rapid development of the region and will be a big impact for a secure Europe.

The creation of South East Multinational Brigade, where the Balkan countries are present, the assistance that US Army and Greece and Turkey as NATO members, are giving to that formation, is another step for further cooperation and security of the region.

The Russian attempt to support Serbia is a lie for all to see, as Russia is busy with its own internal problems. It is the Russian influence in former Yugoslavia, which left the region in confrontation, especially during the Milosevic regime. The Greek support toward Serbia on the other hand is another fact of uncertainty in the region.

Albania is playing a great role in stabilization of the region through its active participation in all programs dealing with regional development. As in the case of Kosovo it will be in the same line with the international community for further regional democratization. Albanians think that the possibility for regional integration, after the defeat of Mr. Milosevic, and Balkan security has more chance to develop in the right way.

The special attention to the restoration of order and the fight against corruption, respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, economic growth and continuance of economic reforms, are some of objectives which must be fulfilled in every regional country in order to assure Balkan security.

The Albanian factors in the region, due to their numbers, human energy, history, culture, language, etc, is very important in the future of Balkan security. In the region there are about 7 million Albanian people who speak the same language. The birthrate of the Albanian population is the fastest growing in the region. The average age of the Kosovar people is about 30 years old, in Albania about 31 years old. Their dream is to build a life and to join in Europe.

The religious orientations are still a big risk in the Balkan region. The support of these religious organizations from outside of the region makes the security system even more fragile. The Moroccan league for Islamic minorities' defense called on NATO to undertake ground operations in Kosovo. "Crimes of this nature, that are happening for the first time since the Middle Ages, and are carried out in total impunity will lead in the loss of trust among the Muslim

people and (a) Europe that claims to defend human rights, multi cultures, religious freedom and tolerance",[30] the statement deplored.

The attempts of some countries to dramatize the "Balkan Syndrome" are in order to convince the others of this risk and to get them to withdraw their troops from the region. This is another uncertainty that exists in the region and which has a negative impact on what is accomplished in regional democratization and stabilization.

It is in the European Union's interests to have a stable situation in the Balkan region and to start to develop common projects among these countries and Europe. The region's possibilities are enough to give impact not only inside the region but to Europe as well. The region's reorientation is the key to a successful future. A strong and secure Balkans is another opportunity for a stronger and securer Europe.

Word count: 11,330

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